

Every Papuan Must Be Reborn as the Black King Bayano

A Manifesto of Sovereignty



The Sentence

- 1 The colonised, dispossessed, and besieged Papuan must be reborn as El Rey Negro Bayano, the Black King Bayano.*
- 2 Not as the return of a crown, a throne, or a man, but as the emergence of a consciousness that knows it is sovereign and can no longer be tricked out of knowing it.*
- 3 Boukman is the night a people refuse to die. Bayano is the long day that follows: the day a people must govern themselves, defend themselves, and survive the enemy's kindness as well as its cruelty.*
- 4 For Papua has learned that the empire does not conquer with guns alone. Where the gun fails, it sets a table. This manifesto is written so that Papua will recognise the table before she sits down.*

The King of the Mountains

- 5 In the middle of the sixteenth century, on the Isthmus of Panama, the narrow land across which Spain carried the silver of Peru, enslaved Africans broke their chains and fled into the mountains. The Spanish called them cimarrones, a word also used for cattle that had run wild: the ones who would not be tamed.*
- 6 They had been carried across the ocean to dig gold, dive for pearls, build roads, and herd cattle for their masters. In the mountains they built something else: free settlements called palenques, where they lived by the customs of the lands from which they had been stolen.*
- 7 Among them rose a leader named Bayano. He united the cimarrons of the Atlantic coast, and soon some twelve hundred men and women followed him. They served him as a king, and he governed them as one.*
- 8 For six years his people struck the roads and rivers between Nombre de Dios and Panama, the arteries through which the wealth of an empire flowed. Expedition after expedition was sent against him. One was destroyed with its commander; only four soldiers escaped alive. Captured once, Bayano was pardoned and released, and he returned to the mountains to fight again.*
- 9 Remember what this means. Enslaved people, owned by the most powerful empire on earth, built a kingdom inside its most valuable corridor, and the empire could not take it back by force.*

The Name the Enemy Gave

- 10 The Spanish were his enemies. They called his people fugitives, rebels, apostates, and property. And yet even they called him El Rey Negro Bayano: the Black King Bayano.*
- 11 This is the confession hidden inside the enemy's language. The empire could not admit that an enslaved man was a sovereign. But it could not call him anything else.*
- 12 Papua knows the empire's vocabulary. Her people have been called primitive, backward, separatist, and criminal, and since 2021, her armed resistance has been called terrorist. These are not descriptions. They are permits: names that license what would otherwise be called crimes.*
- 13 Listen beneath the names. A state does not spend sixty years, an army, and a fortune hunting a people it believes to be nothing. Every name the coloniser invents for the Papuan is a reluctant admission of what it fears: that this people are sovereign, and know it.*

The Fortress on the Hill

14 Bayano's palenque stood on the summit of a high, steep hill, wrapped in jungle and mountains. Two narrow paths climbed to entrances guarded by strong palisades. Between the houses, deep pits held the food that would let the people outlast any siege.

15 Further away, hidden in the forest, was a second refuge where the women, the children, and the elders lived. The Spanish did not find it until Bayano had already been taken.

16 This is the architecture of survival: a high place that cannot be stormed, food that cannot be cut off, and a hidden heart that cannot be found. The empire could see the fortress. It could not see what the fortress protected.

17 Every Papuan being carries such a fortress. Its summit is the land. Its storehouses are the language, the songs, and the genealogies. Its palisades are kinship and memory. And its hidden refuge is Wone: the primordial order, the sacred interior that no occupier has ever entered.

18 Psycho-Cosmocide is the empire's long war against that fortress. The empire knows it cannot take the hill by force, so it labours to persuade the people to open the gates.

The Feast

19 In 1556, a new commander, Pedro de Ursúa, marched for twenty-five days through swamp, jungle, and mountain to reach Bayano's hill. He made camp within sight of the fortress, studied it, and understood that he could not take it.

20 So he chose another weapon. He offered peace. He told Bayano that he had the power to divide the land in two, one part for the Spanish and one for Bayano's people: a kingdom recognised at last.

21 Weeks of friendship followed. Spanish soldiers and free Africans competed in sport, hunted together, and fished together. Ursúa sent for gifts of clothing. He also sent for poison. When the first supply lost its strength while he waited, he sent for more.

22 Then he gave a feast in Bayano's honour. Bayano and forty of his captains came down to it. They were served wine, and the wine was poisoned. When the poison worked too slowly, they were invited into Ursúa's own dwelling, given more gifts of clothing, and served a second cup.

23 Dazed and weakened, Bayano and his companions were seized. The soldiers climbed the hill over the bodies of the poisoned and found the gates of the fortress open.

24 The hill that no army could take was surrendered for a cup of wine.

25 Here lies the first truth of this manifesto. The empire that cannot climb the hill sets a table at its foot. Its most dangerous moment is not when it attacks, but when it smiles.

The Licence to Lie

26 Before the feast, Ursúa gathered his soldiers to quiet their consciences. These people, he told them, were fugitive slaves and rebels against their rightful king. Worse, they had dared to crown a king of their own. Worst of all, they had been baptised and had returned to the rites of their ancestors. As apostates, they were owed no honesty. A promise made to them could be broken without shame.

27 Read that reasoning slowly, because it has never stopped being used. First the empire defines a people as outside the law, outside the faith, and outside humanity. Then it discovers that its own promises to them need not be kept.

28 Papua has heard every version of this sermon. A people branded as primitive could be signed away in 1962 without being asked. A people branded as not yet ready could have their Act of Free Choice performed by just over a thousand hand-picked representatives in 1969. A people branded as separatist can be promised dialogue for decades and sent soldiers instead. A people branded as terrorist can be bombed.

29 Every label is a licence. Every licence is a permission to lie. The first defence of the Papuan being is to understand that the label comes before the betrayal, and to treat each new label as a warning that a feast is being prepared.

The Wine of Papua

30 Papua has been served Ursúa's wine many times, in many cups.

31 It was served as autonomy: a land divided on paper, a special status, money flowing in, and sovereignty kept firmly in Jakarta. Bayano, too, was promised a kingdom of his own. He was given chains instead.

32 It is served as development: roads, offices, budgets, and projects that arrive like gifts of clothing, beautiful and warm, carried in by those who have come for the hill.

33 It is served as office: titles, salaries, uniforms, and seats in distant capitals, offered to the captains of the people while the people themselves are left behind on the hill.

34 And sometimes the feast is not a metaphor at all. On 10 November 2001, Theys Hiyo Eluay, chairman of the Papuan Presidium Council, was a guest at a Heroes' Day celebration at the base of Kopassus, the Indonesian special forces, in Jayapura. He left the celebration and never came home. He was found dead the next day, and soldiers of his hosts' own unit were later convicted over his killing.

35 The guest of honour. The celebration. The road home that ends in death. Four and a half centuries apart, the empire's hospitality has the same shape.

36 Not all the wine kills at once. Most of it works slowly. It dulls the vigilance of the captains, loosens the bond between leader and people, and makes the gate seem safe to open. By the time its effect is felt, the soldiers are already climbing the hill.

The King Who Called His People Down

37 Now comes the hardest truth in Bayano's story, and this manifesto will not hide it.

38 When their king was taken, the strongest of the cimarrons fled deeper into the mountains, still free. Ursúa could not follow them there. So, he made Bayano a new promise: call your people back, and you will remain their king, and a town will be built where you and your people may live as free men.

39 Bayano, deceived again or desperate to save his life, called. And because he was their king, most of them obeyed. They came down from the mountains and walked back, behind their king, into slavery.

40 What no army could do, the voice of the people's own leader accomplished. This is the empire's masterpiece: not to defeat the leader, but to capture him and then to speak through his mouth.

41 Papua knows this voice. It belongs to the Tokoh, the elite, the captured captain who tells the people that the struggle is over, that the hill is unsafe, that the town below is better, that the empire's peace is real. Sometimes the speaker believes it. Sometimes the speaker is only trying to survive. Either way, the voice is his, but the words are Ursúa's. This is how Ap becomes Ap-ap: not only by being defeated, but by being made to call others down.

The Hostage in Seville

42 Bayano was not killed. He was more useful alive. Ursúa carried him to Peru as a trophy of victory, and from there the viceroy banished him to Seville, the city whose merchants had grown rich on the very road Bayano had once closed. There he lived as a perpetual hostage, at the expense of the royal treasury, until he died.

43 A king who had once commanded twelve hundred free people ended his days fed and housed by the crown he had fought, far from his mountains, unable to return, kept as living proof that the empire could tame even kings.

44 This is the most comfortable cage the empire builds: the hostage who lives well. The salary paid by the occupier. The residence in the coloniser's capital. The honours that cannot be refused, and the homeland that can no longer be visited on one's own terms. A Papuan leader kept in comfort far from the valley is not free. That leader is Bayano in Seville.

45 And the people? Those not reclaimed by their former owners were declared slaves of the king and sold for the profit of the soldiers who had captured them. It was ordered that they be scattered and sold far from the region, so that they could never come together again. Papua knows this order too. It is written today in new provinces carved from one land, in clan set against clan, in a people cut into administrative fragments so that they can never again gather as one.

The Man Who Chased El Dorado

46 As for Ursúa, the empire rewarded him. He was given command of an expedition to find El Dorado, the legendary king covered in gold. Deep in the Amazon, his own men murdered him, and his command passed to Lope de Aguirre, whose name has become a byword for madness.

47 The man who poisoned a Black king for the empire died chasing a golden king who never existed. Here is the civilisational savage in his purest form: treacherous to those he despises, devoured by those he leads, consumed by a greed that can never reach the end of itself. Such is the parasite's fate. The host feeds it, but its own hunger eats it.

The Mountains Were Never Empty

48 Bayano was taken. His fortress was taken. His people were sold. The empire wrote the word 'pacified' over the Isthmus. It was wrong.

49 The few who escaped returned to the mountains. Other runaways joined them. Within a few years, the palenques had been rebuilt, and by the 1570s the cimarrons numbered three thousand or more, divided among several communities, each with a king of its own. The empire's victory over Bayano had been a victory over a man, not over a consciousness.

50 And they remembered. A generation later, when Spanish envoys came to the cimarrons of Vallano with fresh promises of peace, the negotiations failed. Among the reasons the Spanish themselves recorded was the resentment and mistrust of a people who still remembered the treachery of Pedro de Ursúa.

51 Here lies the second truth of this manifesto. Memory is a palisade. A people who remember the poisoned feast cannot easily be invited to another. The empire's deceptions work only on those who have forgotten the last one.

52 This is why Papua must remember every broken promise by name: 1962, 1969, every dialogue offered and withdrawn, every guest of honour who never came home. Not to live in bitterness, but to live awake.

The Pirate Is Not the Liberator

53 In those years, English and French pirates, enemies of Spain, arrived on the coast. The cimarrons allied with them, guided them through the jungle, carried their sick, fed them, and fought beside them. Some believed the foreigners would defeat their oppressors and set them free.

54 But the most famous of those pirates, Francis Drake, had earlier sailed on English slaving voyages to the same African coasts from which the cimarrons' ancestors had been taken. The pirates came for silver. When they had it, they sailed home. For years afterwards, some cimarrons kept watch on the coast for a pirate ship that had promised to return.

55 Papua has kept such watches. She has waited for the United Nations, for Washington, for Canberra, for the conscience of the world, for some friendly ship on the horizon. Solidarity is precious, and every true friend is welcome. But the empire's rivals are not the people's liberators. Foreign ships come and go according to their own interests. The mountain stays.

56 No one will hold the bill for Papua. Papua must hold it.

The Price of Peace

57 In the end, the cimarron communities made peace with Spain. Their freedom was recognised, and they were given land, cattle, and towns of their own. But the price was written into the agreements: three times a year, the former cimarrons had to search the mountains for new runaways, and they promised never to shelter those who fled.

58 Freedom was granted on one condition: that the freed become the hunters of those still seeking freedom. When Drake returned to the coast years later and looked for the bonfires of his old allies, none were lit. By the end of the century, the cimarron kingdoms of Panama were gone. Their kings and armed followers, as one historian has written, remained only a memory.

59 This is the final art of the parasite: not to destroy the host, but to employ it. Papua sees it in every Papuan in uniform sent to hunt Papuans, every local official paid to report on his own valley, every leader whose recognition depends on keeping the young away from the mountains. The Kugi is not abolished. It is given a salary.

60 A peace that requires a people to guard their own cage is not peace. It is the cage, completed.

Two Bayanos

61 There are therefore two Bayanos, and the Papuan being must choose between them.

62 The first is the king of the hill: the man who united the scattered, built the fortress, filled the storehouses, hid the heart of his people where no enemy could find it, and defeated the armies sent against him.

63 The second is the guest at the feast: the man who believed the enemy's promise, drank the enemy's wine, and from captivity called his own people down the mountain into chains.

64 Papua must become the first Bayano and refuse to become the second. She must honour the king without repeating his fall. This is not a judgement on a man betrayed more than four centuries ago. It is a lesson he paid for with his freedom, so that those who came after might pay less.

The Great Inversions

65 Where the empire offers a feast, the Papuan being must ask who poured the wine.

66 Where it offers to divide the land, the Papuan being must remember that the land was never the empire's to divide.

67 Where it calls the Papuan apostate for returning to the ancestors, the Papuan being must return to the ancestors without apology.

68 Where it captures the leader, the people must not wait for the captive's voice to tell them what is true.

69 Where it takes hostages in comfort, the Papuan being must refuse to be bought with their own exile.

70 Where it scatters the people, the Papuan being must gather them.

71 Where it names the Papuan terrorist, the Papuan being must hear the confession beneath the name: sovereign.

72 Where it offers freedom on condition of hunting one's own, the Papuan being must refuse that freedom, for it is only slavery with a salary.

The Question

73 Boukman's question was how a dying people refuses to die.

74 Bayano's question is harder:

How does a sovereign people remain sovereign when the enemy that could not defeat them in war returns bearing gifts?

75 The answer is not to refuse every conversation, every road, and every friendship. It is to know, always, where the hill is, what the fortress protects, and who is offering the cup. Sovereignty is not only won. It must be guarded, above all against those who come in peace.

Every Papuan Must Become Bayano

76 Papuans must become the Black King Bayano.

77 Not the crown, but the hill. Not the feast, but the fortress. Not the captive in Seville, but the king whom even his enemies could call nothing else.

78 Let every Papuan who gathers the scattered valleys into one people be Bayano.

79 Let every Papuan who fills the storehouses of language, story, and genealogy, so that the people can outlast the siege, be Bayano.

80 Let every Papuan who guards the hidden refuge of Wone, the sacred interior no occupier can find, be Bayano.

81 Let every Papuan who remembers the poisoned feast, and teaches the children to remember it, be Bayano.

82 Let every Papuan captain who is offered the cup and pushes it away be Bayano, as Bayano himself should have been.

83 The empire will come again bearing gifts. It will offer divided land, borrowed thrones, and comfortable exile. It will call its feasts dialogue, development, and peace. Let it come. A people who remember Bayano's hill will not walk down to the empire's table.

84 In the mountains of Panama, enslaved men and women once crowned a king of their own, and the empire that claimed to own them was forced to speak his title aloud. In the mountains, valleys, coasts, and swamps of Papua, let that title be spoken again:

85 We will not drink the wine. We will not open the gates. We will not call our people down.

86 Papuans are not fugitives in their own land. They are her sovereign people. Let the empire learn, once more, to say so.

The views, words, and ideas expressed in this manifesto are personal, reflective, and diagnostic rather than declarations of settled truth — a reading of the human condition through the Psycho-Cosmocide lens, offered to provoke thought and questioning rather than to close it.

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