



Why Achamán Created the Human Being

Guanches – Tenerife Island (Spain)

In the beginning, there was only Achamán, powerful god of heaven, who was self-sufficient and had no need of anything or anyone.

Being eternal, before him there was nothing. Everything was empty. There was no sea reflecting any sky, nor was there any light painting the colours of the rainbow in any sky.

Achamán created everything. He created water and earth, fire and air, and he also created all beings and things that inhabit the world.

And, falling in love with everything he had created, he descended from the heights to contemplate his creation from the tops of the mountains.

One day he landed on the high peak of Mount Echeyde, and his whole being was moved to tears as he contemplated the beauty around him. It was as if he saw everything for the first time. Suddenly, a thought flashed through his immortal mind: 'So much beauty cannot be only for my eyes!'

That was the moment he decided to create the human being, a creature capable of perceiving and valuing the beauty that his own eyes had contemplated.

In this way he moulded woman and man, and instilled in them the capacity to witness his work. But not only that. He put them in charge of preserving and protecting it, living in harmony with all that he had created, and transmitting this sacred task to their sons and

daughters, and to those generations that would come later, until eternity.

And Achamán discovered then that, by not keeping his delight in beauty to himself but sharing his joy, he had given to the work he had created its fullest meaning. □

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Comments

The Guanches were the aboriginal settlers of the Island of Tenerife, in the archipelago of the Canary Islands, Spain, who were colonised by the Kingdom of Castile from 1496.

The Guanches, like other aboriginal peoples of the Canary Islands, were linked to the Berber peoples of the Maghreb in both their genetic and cultural traits. However, such a connection would occur in various phases throughout the centuries. It is estimated that the first inhabitants of the islands date from around the 6th century B.C.E.

The Guanches began to suffer incursions from other European peoples as early as the 14th century, with sporadic arrivals of Majorcan sailors. Subsequently, in 1402, the Norman conquerors toured the island in search of slaves. Castile tried to take possession of the island in 1464, but the Europeans were expelled eight years later. The definitive Castilian invasion took place at the end of 1495, after Guanche forces were seriously reduced due to illness. According to Tejera, López and Hernández (2000), this disease could well have been the flu, the plague or some type of typhus, possibly transmitted by the Castilians themselves.

In the Guanche language, Achamán, their supreme god, had the meaning of ‘what is above’, and hence ‘heaven’ or ‘celestial vault’. On the other hand, Mount Echeide is the name that Guanches gave to the Teide volcano. This mountain, which lies 12,198 feet above sea level –



24,606 feet above the seabed– is the highest mountain in the Spanish state.

Interestingly, the extinct aborigines of Tenerife left their genetic legacy in other parts of the world not only in the Canary Islands, but also in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic where, it has been discovered, that their current population has a high level of Guanche genes in their mitochondrial DNA.

Sources

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Associated text of the Earth Charter

Principle 4: Secure Earth's bounty and beauty for present and future generations.

Other passages that this story illustrates

Preamble: Earth, Our Home.- The protection of Earth's vitality, diversity, and beauty is a sacred trust.

Principle 12c: Honour and support the young people of our communities, enabling them to fulfil their essential role in creating sustainable societies.

