

# TRADITIONS FOR TOMORROW



## A piece of Andean music is no Coke

How can an unknown filmmaker from Benin resist Hollywood productions? How can a Vanuatu storyteller hope to prevail against Harry Potter? How can an Andean musician producing his first CD at his own expense face the show-business monsters?

What is at stake here is not just the idealistic defense of those left behind. What is at stake here is cultural diversity, which is one of the most basic richness to all dwellers of the planet. Cultural diversity serves as a basis for exchange and communication.

It is true that globalization has created greater access to new communication technologies, which, in theory should increase the opportunity for everyone and lower the cost to everyone to produce and disseminate cultural works and products. It should come as no surprise that reality is not living up to theory.

How will the filmmaker from Benin, the Vanuatu storyteller or the Andean musician resist the compression of globalization and international trade liberalization if their artistic or cultural production continues to have the same status as the famous black Coke bottle: the symbol of global consumerism present from the dusty and shabby stall in the South all the way to the gleaming shelves of shopping malls in the North?

The time has come to be aware that valuing cultural identity, besides preserving our common heritage, is a way to

help prevent the descent into violence of some religious, ethnic and other fundamentalists. It becomes a way to open new paths to peace.

The international community is confronted with a crucial challenge to dignity, to peace, and to economy (cultural and communication products are the first US exports). In 2001, UNESCO took the first step in adopting the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity.

In 2003, UNESCO worked further to start drafting a constraining normative legal instrument to promote cultural diversity. This instrument is not just a simple declaration, but an international convention that grants a specific status to the cultural product distinct from the standard consumer product. Only that way will the capacity of creation and production be preserved whoever may be the creator.

It is a daunting task. It is nonetheless important to act diligently to find a solution that is acceptable to everyone, that promotes harmony among people, that protects inherited cultural values and preserves the dignity of all cultures.

Diego and Christiane Gradis



### Our regional office in Guatemala has moved to the countryside

The Mayan NGO **FUNDEBASE**, which represents Traditions for Tomorrow in Mexico and Central America, recently had the opportunity to purchase a new office in a recently built residence. FUNDEBASE has left its rented office near the center of Guatemala City for its new office about 20 kilometers east of the city. The new

office is well situated on the edge of the Pan-American Highway that links all of Central America.

Now people coming from the villages no longer need to enter the polluted and violent maze of Guatemala City, where Indians from the countryside are so often victims of humiliation and other types of troubles.

## SOME RECENT PROJECTS:

### **Ecuador**

#### **There was chemistry in Chamaná**

Reaching this peasant village lodged in the foothills of an Andean summit, in the north of the country, is not easy. It is a particularly arid area. The four-wheel drive quickly sinks into patches of sandy monticules blown by the winds. Imagine dunes at 4000 meters above sea level!

When we finally got to the hundred or so houses scattered on the hillsides, the people are busy helping the company in charge of installing the electric poles. In just a few weeks time Chamaná will have electricity, for better or worse. For this technological leap, every peasant has paid the equivalent of six months income.

They are anxious for the benefit, but also concerned because they are aware that their tranquility, their customs, their social relationships, and the benefits they get from being distant will suddenly be threatened.

Without a doubt, electricity is a necessity. However, the authorities of this village, with fewer than 3000 inhabitants, also understood how urgent it was to take some action to keep



centuries-old values that maintain links among the villagers from disappearing. If they take appropriate action, they could keep the cohesion, harmony and spirit of solidarity and exchange within the community from disappearing.

Even more perhaps than in the rest of the world, disjointed images of an idyllic world are brought in by television, and intoxicate minds, none more forcefully than those of the children. Nothing as such to eliminate once for all the scale of values.

In their effort to best manage the transition, the whole community decided to build and equip, with the support of Traditions for Tomorrow, a community hall to hold cultural activities, evening meetings, and to run the "memories machine" at high speed.



### **Guatemala**

#### **Maya-Mam children of Taltimiche recover the joy of being Mayan**

The San Marcos Department, west of Guatemala, close to the Mexican border, has suffered specifically because of its distance from the capital, especially in the time since the cruel war that hit this country for over 35 years and that mostly affected the Mayan population. Consequently, San Marcos benefits very little from the country's reconstruction efforts, again because of this geographic isolation.

This region actually was not part of Traditions for Tomorrow's action field either, mainly for security reasons. The relationship with the small village of Taltimiche (1600 inhabitants from the Maya Mam people) goes back to 1999, when we were contacted by a group of parents from the village. They got organized to bring schoolchildren complementary sensitization to their Mayan roots, which was not given by the school-teachers.

On their own initiative, they organized meetings between Taltimiche elders and children so the elders could teach the children about the traditions and customs that were repressed by fear during the war. People also suffered from the obstruction of some local church authorities that had wrongfully linked Mayan culture and guerilla warfare.

Among the Mayan people that are divided among thirty ethnic groups, the Mams are among the most traditional. Their strong traditions are one of the most important factors that allowed them to survive. In addition to their language and the traditional costume worn by women, as elsewhere in Guatemala, the Mams can be recognized by their particular way of greeting each other, and especially by the respect shown to their elders.

Support provided by Traditions for Tomorrow to Taltimiche, thanks to Swiss Solidarity (Geneva) and to the Federation for Cooperation and Development of the Vaud Canton (Switzerland), will allow the Mams to purchase a sound system, Mayan musical instruments including the traditional marimba, and material for making costumes for the children who will accompany by their dances, Taltimiche's social events and Mayan spiritual encounters.

### **¡Madre Tierra !**

#### **Por el renacimiento indígena**

by Daniel Wermus, prefaced by Prof. Yves Coppens

The author, journalist at the Swiss InfoSud press agency, recounts his journey at the heart of Traditions for Tomorrow, from Mexico down to Panama. Numerous practical information to learn and travel; an insight into this Amerindian revival through breathtaking figures.

*Editions in French (Albin Michel, Paris) and in Spanish (Abya Yala, Quito and Casa Juan Pablos, Mexico), maps and color illustrations, 280 pages.*

*On sale at bookshops and via Traditions for Tomorrow (US\$ 24, € 19, CHF 28.- including postage - trad@tfg.ch)*

# Peru

## When lamas and men hold hands

To the Andean peasants, Quechua or Aymara, material life is in all aspects inextricably bound to beliefs. The relationship to Mother Earth, "Pachamama", is omnipresent in agricultural production, in cattle breeding, in cottage building, in the preparation of rituals, in social relationships and also in the organization of the village.

Traditions for Tomorrow has supported dozens of villages north and south of lake Titicaca that have maintained their vital ties to Pachamama through cultural expressions such as dance and music. Traditions for Tomorrow has made it possible for these villages beaten by the Andean winds, burnt by the sun, hit by frost and hail, to own hundreds of musical instruments to join in the agricultural, social and spiritual life.

These instruments include "Troupes of Panpipes" (sets of a



dozen instruments constituting a harmony), charangos (small 10 string guitars made out of an armadillo shell), drums to give rhythm to dances, and so many others.

Beginning in 2005, the Geneva Federation for Cooperation and Development will grant funding to the "Chuyma Aru" Aymara organization that Traditions for Tomorrow has been in contact with for years. Three agronomic engineers created the organization: They realized, upon returning with their university degree to their village in the Puno region, that the entirety of their ancestors' wisdom and knowledge had been ignored in lieu of straight technical knowledge.

While they wanted to use their education to benefit their own people, they felt they first had to unlearn what they had been taught and devote their efforts to rebuilding the peoples trust in their ancient techniques for agriculture and cattle breeding.

Chuyma Aru convinced us of the necessity of allowing it to develop in a much larger scale than what we had already set

up in the area. The additional funding will allow Chuyma Aru to identify and accompany initiatives in the villages so the peasants can define their own projects and carry them out with Chuyma Aru's support.

These culturally oriented activities will be an essential contribution to the restoration of the cultural confidence that is indispensable for the communities that rely on Andean dignity to create sustainable development.

## Traditions for Tomorrow and UNESCO



Since 1992, Traditions for Tomorrow has had consultative status with UNESCO. Its counterparts at UNESCO are mainly based within the Culture Sector; however, there is frequent contact with the Education and Communication Sectors too.

Traditions for Tomorrow has been consulted for its expertise on issues related to cultural revitalization processes undertaken by indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities, as well as those dealing with the subject of "Culture and development".

Recently, Traditions for Tomorrow has been particularly active in the establishment of the Programmatic Commission "Dialogue between cultures for peace", and has actively contributed to working on the drafting of the International convention for the protection of intangible cultural heritage, which was adopted by UNESCO at the end of 2003.

In Switzerland, the organization has been active, among other areas, in sensitizing interested politicians and professionals, in the discussion and adoption of an essential law to fight illegal trafficking of cultural goods. An important UNESCO Convention was simultaneously implemented in Switzerland to make international art trade more fair.

In 2004, Diego Gradis was appointed member of the Swiss Commission for UNESCO where he holds the position of Vice-President for culture. He is specifically in charge of issues related to cultural diversity, both at the Swiss and international level. He brings the invaluable experience of Traditions for Tomorrow's field work in Latin America to this effort.

# OK!

## So who really runs Traditions for Tomorrow?

Traditions for Tomorrow's volunteers are, in some ways, workers in the dark. Most volunteers are in France and Switzerland. There are also volunteers in other European countries, in the US, and in the field in eight Latin American countries where the organization has local representatives.

In total, about thirty volunteers give their time and talents collecting mail, setting up exhibitions, holding information stalls, representing the organization in committees or general assemblies, creating web pages, translating documents, accompanying our field partners during visits to our continent, of course

overseeing projects from Europe, in some cases carrying out a mission trip to the field, managing our documentation center, taking care of the technical aspects of events, and so many more actions on many other occasions. Yes, without them, Traditions for Tomorrow would not have become what it is.

Since 2004 an in-house newsletter allows volunteers to

communicate with each other and gain a greater appreciation of totality of the organization's numerous activities. Juggling between their professional activities, their family obligations and their other commitments, they always show an extraordinary availability.

Our volunteers work relentlessly and in close association with both of our part-time workers, Catherine Felder and Geneviève Herold, as well as with Pedro Camaja, in charge of our regional office in Guatemala City, and finally with the board members.



Whenever an opportunity presents itself, we meet around a pizza or have a moment of communion, for instance like during the visit of our main partner from El Salvador in October 2003, Miguel Amaya, mediator of the Mayan spirituality (cf. photo). We are so grateful to them for their contribution.

If you wish to join us, contact us at [trad@fgc.ch](mailto:trad@fgc.ch). Please mention your motivation and your field of competence.

### Amerindian peoples, partners of Traditions for Tomorrow since 1986

|                  |                     |                    |                |
|------------------|---------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| <b>GUATEMALA</b> | <b>MEXICO</b>       | <b>COLOMBIA</b>    | <b>CHILE</b>   |
| Aguacateco       | Chamula             | Afro-colombiano    | Aymara         |
| Axi              | Chinanteco          | Embera-Chami       | Huilliche      |
| Chalchiltecos    | Chol                | Wavuu              | Mapuche        |
| Ixil             | Choloteco           |                    |                |
| Jacalteco        | Chontal             | <b>ECUADOR</b>     |                |
| Kaqchiquel       | Huichol             | Afro-ecuatoriano   | <b>PANAMA</b>  |
| K'aniobal        | Mam                 | Cañari             | Kuna           |
| Mam              | Mazahua             | Quichua            | Naobe-Büale    |
| Q'eqchi          | Mixe                | Saraguro           |                |
| Quiché           | Mixteco             | Shuar              |                |
|                  | Nahñu               |                    | <b>PERU</b>    |
| <b>NICARAGUA</b> | Nahuatl and Nahuatl | <b>EL SALVADOR</b> | Andino         |
| Criollos         |                     | Lenca              | Aymara         |
| Garifuna         | Tojolabal           | Nahuatl            | Quechua        |
| Miskito          | Triqui              | Kakawira           |                |
| Mavanqna         | Tzotzil             |                    |                |
| Rama             | Zapoteco            | <b>COSTA RICA</b>  | <b>BOLIVIA</b> |
|                  |                     | Bribri             | Aymara         |
| <b>HONDURAS</b>  |                     | Cabecar            | Guarani        |
| Chorti           |                     | Naobe-Büale        | Quechua        |
| Garifuna         |                     |                    |                |

### Traditions for Tomorrow

Traditions pour Demain - Tradiciones para el Mañana

#### Central office in Switzerland

12, promenade John Berney, 1180 Rolle, Switzerland  
Tel. + 41 21 825 23 31, Fax + 41 21 825 23 62  
[trad@fgc.ch](mailto:trad@fgc.ch) Postal bank account CCP 10-17148-0

#### Local office in France

B.P. 477-07, 75327 Paris cedex 07, France  
Tel. + 33 1 47 05 16 24, Fax + 33 1 45 56 05 51  
[trad@fgc.ch](mailto:trad@fgc.ch)

#### Local office in the USA

4400 Greenwich Parkway NW, Washington DC 20007, USA  
Tel. + 1 202 625 15 14, Fax + 1 202 625 12 11  
[trad@fgc.ch](mailto:trad@fgc.ch) (IRS 501C3 tax-exempt status)

#### Regional office for Central America and Mexico

Residenciales Alamos, Casa 1, San Bartolo Milpa Altas  
Zona 3, km 30-4 Ruta interamericana, Guatemala  
Tel. + 502 78 31 23 03, Fax + 502 78 31 23 09,  
[tradguate@intelnett.com](mailto:tradguate@intelnett.com)