

Conservation of Medicinal Plants and Indigenous Healing Knowledge

Rains Have Begun and We are Harvesting

The long rains commenced early this year in Arusha region and members of our tree planting networks are busy sowing seeds to continue their cultivation of traditional medicinal plants in the villages of Nadosoito and Mkonoo. Thanks to a generous donation by two Terrawatu supporters from the United States, the rain harvesting system so sorely needed by the Oreteti network in Nadosoito can finally come to be realized. Construction of the 15,000-liter rainwater storage tank began mid-March with the community providing some of the materials and labor. This system will make it possible to more than quadruple the number of seedlings raised and transplanted from this nursery and truly help to speed-up reforestation of this area.

Health Clinics Multiplying

In January, Terrawatu joined forces with a young Maasai traditional healer, Kimani Mollel, to scale-up our program of establishing traditional health clinics utilizing the medicinal plants and indigenous healing knowledge of the Maasai. Kimani has been operating a traditional medicine clinic located near Mt. Meru Hospital for three years, often receiving patients who have not succeeded in being treated at the allopathic hospital. Together, we have opened another clinic in the Unga Limited area of Arusha, bringing the total number of traditional health clinics managed by Terrawatu to three. Young Maasai, between the ages of 25-30, who have interest in conserving this traditional aspect of their culture, are being identified to work at the clinics as apprentices.

Current visitors to the clinics include local residents of Arusha from all ethnic backgrounds, citizens of other African nations who are working at the UN International Criminal Tribunal for Rwandan Genocide (ICTR) in Arusha, and tourists from Western countries interested in learning and trying some of the traditional medicine of the Maasai. The traditional healers working at the clinics explain that they are successfully treating patients most commonly for malaria, typhoid, and digestive problems. Psychological/spiritual counseling rooted in the traditional Maasai healing paradigm is also being provided at the clinics.



Healer Kimani Mollel explaining the use of one of his medicines to Co-Director Pergola.

While income from the sale of medicines is being used to purchase additional medicines and provide support for staff at the clinics, we are seeking external support to be able to improve clinic facilities, acquire informational resources, and to conduct systematic research on the efficacy of the medicines.

Cross-Cultural Journeys

Time is running out to register for the next Global Exchange Reality Tour Tanzania, "Culture, Economy, and Sustainable Development" set for **16-29 May, 2004**. Contact Sarah Dotlich sarah@globalexchange.org, or +1.800.497.1994 ext. 221, at Global Exchange in San Francisco, California with any questions about this trip and to reserve your place in the tour. A detailed itinerary can be found on our website www.terrawatu.org (click on "Journeys") and at Global Exchange www.globalexchange.org.

If you, your family, and/or friends would like to book your own customized ecological-cultural safaris into the wildlife areas and indigenous communities in northern Tanzania, and/or to find out dates for a future *Oloipung'o Experience* with Terrawatu, send us an email at info@terrawatu.org.



Organizational News

On 18 March, Co-Director Lekoko Ole Sululu's presented at an on-line conference entitled "Indigenous ICT for Development". The 2-day conference was hosted by KNet of Canada (www.knet.ca/) and its mission was to highlight ICT projects in First Nations communities in Canada and share experiences with indigenous communities from around the world. The international gathering brought together people from Guatemala, Bolivia, New Zealand, Australia, and, of course, us from Tanzania. Sululu's presentation "Linking Transitional Maasai Villages to the Global Community" had the most number of participants in attendance. The session was recorded and is available in the conference archives at: <http://smart.knet.ca/international/>

A long-time member of Terrawatu, Allan Alais Meing'arana Mollel, has been selected to participate in the 2004 EarthCorps International Program in Seattle, Washington, USA (www.earthcorps.org). Born in a Maasai village near the Tanzania-Kenya border, 23-year-old Allan will be traveling to Seattle in June for a 6-month training program in environmental restoration strategies and leadership skills. Upon return from the States, Allan will become responsible for initiating new projects within our indigenous plant conservation program. Allan is currently fundraising in his community to cover the costs of his travel (passport, US visa, flight from Nairobi) to the United States. If you are interested in financially supporting this exciting opportunity for Allan and Terrawatu please visit the "Contribute" page on our Website and earmark your contribution for "EarthCorps Participant".

What You Can Do

There are several ways to get involved in Terrawatu activities:

- ❖ **Sponsor a child's education.** Your financial support helps an individual child successfully complete primary school and have a special opportunity to attend secondary school. More information can be found on our Website under Child School Sponsorship (CSS) program.
- ❖ **Continue your financial support or become a new supporter of Terrawatu.** Choose to contribute to the development of a traditional medicine clinic, an indigenous tree nursery, curriculum development utilizing IT, or general support for keeping Terrawatu activities going. Click on "Contribute" on our Website (www.terrawatu.org) to make a secure on-line donation *or* send a check made out to "*Tides Foundation/Terrawatu Fund*" to Finance Department, Tides Foundation, P.O. Box 29903, San Francisco, CA, 94129, USA. All contributions are tax-deductible.
- ❖ **Keep us in mind when you hear about grant opportunities** and/or partnering possibilities with other foundations and organizations that work in similar projects as Terrawatu. Many of you have already provided us with excellent contacts and recommendations that have helped us grow and blossom. Thank you and keep up the good work!
- ❖ **Tell your colleagues and friends about our work.** Forward this newsletter and Web address (www.terrawatu.org) to those you think may be interested in hearing about Terrawatu.



Recipe- East African specialties

Chapati

Very different from the tortilla-like rounds you can purchase in some supermarkets, freshly made chapatis are served all over East Africa with the morning coffee or chai and alongside African curries for lunch or dinner. You can use white or brown flour, or a combination of the two. Women are typically seen rolling out chapatis on a round, wooden chapati board, but you can use any flat surface and a rolling pin. This recipe makes 5-7 chapati, depending on how thick you like them.

What you need:

- 2 cups white (or whole wheat, or a mixture) flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- warm water (3/4 to 1 cup)
- cooking oil

What you do:

1. Sift flour and salt into a bowl. Slowly add enough water to make a fairly stiff dough. Mix in one tablespoon of oil. Knead dough on a cool surface for several minutes, adding a few spoonfuls of dry flour. Return dough to the bowl, cover with a clean cloth, and let rest for 30 minutes to one hour.
2. Lightly oil and pre-heat a heavy skillet or griddle (cast iron is best). Divide the dough into balls and roll them into 8 to 9-inch (22cm) circles, add some dry flour if necessary to keep from sticking.
3. Fry chapati, turning once, until each side is golden brown with spots.
4. Cover the finished chapatis and place them in a warm oven until all are done.



Of Having Cakes and Eating Them, Too

By Jack Whelan

In this article, Jack Whelan makes a captivating case for the tension between freedom and tradition. He explains that as the developing world (inevitably) modernizes, people in the developed world seek to retrieve and preserve what has been lost in their societies characterized by ultimate choice and freedom. The communities in Tanzania where Terrawatu is working find themselves in the "transition zone" between traditional and modern lifestyles. In many ways, Terrawatu is assisting in managing the social and ecological changes happening in these communities; or, using Whelan's words, educating villagers to keep their indigenous cakes around because they may taste good with something called ice cream.

We Don't Realize What We've Lost Until It's Gone

If there is one thing that can be said for certain about human beings it's that they are ambivalent, conflicted, and contradictory. What they think and what they do more often than not has very little to do with one another, because human beings want their cake and to eat it too. But often enough we choose one thing and don't realize what we've lost until it's gone. That's the story of modernity in many ways. We choose freedom and we lose tradition; we choose secular rationalism and we lose

our natural sense for the sacred; we choose Wal-Mart, and we lose our towns and local, community-oriented businesses.

We choose when we think there's something to gain, but we always lose something, too. That's just the way it works. But if the modern period, the time roughly marked out from 1500 to World War I, was primarily about rejecting the restrictions that came with an authoritarian, theocratic, feudal hierarchical society, the postmodern period will in large part be about retrieving what the modern period rejected, recovering what the moderns thought not worth keeping. But, and this is the important thing, this will be attempted without at the same time losing the great modern values of freedom, individuality, critical consciousness, and innovation.

Having your cake and eating it too, I think, is possible if you think about it in dialectical terms, but I will eschew such technicalities in the hope of saying the same thing in more or less plain English. That's the hypothesis anyway, and I invite you all to punch holes in it. But let me make my case. First, let's talk about the tension between freedom and tradition.

Freedom and Choice Trumps All Other Values

The idea that Americans are the freest people on earth is an essential part of American identity and central to its sense of national pride. Whether Americans are indeed freer than Swedes, Canadians, or Australians might make for an interesting bar-room discussion, but the important thing is that Americans embrace freedom and choice as their most cherished value. It trumps all other values. In the mainstream public imagination anything that constrains freedom is bad; anything that promotes it is good.

But as with anything, too much of a good thing becomes a problem. As Barry Schwartz argues in his book the *Paradox of Choice: Why More Is Less*, the presumption that the more choices people have the more free they feel and therefore the happier they will be is just not true. The psyche shorts out when it is confronted with too many choices, and this creates problems that are hard to see because it just seems counter-intuitive to believe that fewer choices would be better because fewer choices means less freedom. Having more choices can't possibly be a reason behind anyone's unhappiness.

But the problem with freedom as Americans understand it is that it promotes social fragmentation rather than community. When people have a choice, they do what they want. All things being equal, if the typical human being is given the choice between a bowl of spinach and a bowl of ice cream, the smart money will be on his choosing the ice cream. And the same dynamic applies when it comes to choosing between being free or being restricted by traditional norms and codes necessary for traditional community life—they're going to choose individualism and freedom over community and restriction. Americans say they value community, and long for it. But that's not how they behave.

The Center of Gravity is Not the Community

The fragmentation that characterizes American social life is a direct result of people feeling dissatisfied with this or that lifestyle, religion, spouse, geographical location, political philosophy, value system, etc., and moving on to choose or create another one. Such a social dynamic promotes innovation, choice, change, but it shortchanges people in their need for security, connection, warmth. The American choice-centered lifestyle has created a social world where more and more people are feeling isolated, disenfranchised, and lost. They don't want to give up their freedom, but they don't like feeling so disconnected. They may join communities for a while, but at best it's a provisional arrangement. Sooner or later "it's time to move on."

The research shows us time and again that few Americans belong to stable, homogeneous communities. They participate in several, moving in and out between them. The center of gravity is not the community but the autonomous individual. In traditional societies, the community always comes first. In traditional cultures one's sense of self, one's values, one's entire worldview is a

given, a pre-established meaning framework that the individual has no choice about and it's a framework that resists mightily any attempts to change it. Nothing could be more different from what mainstream American society has become.

This kind of social fragmentation that comes with a choice-centered lifestyle isn't something that just happens out there in the public social world but right at home and within more and more American families. How many families sit down and share the same meal? It's just assumed that it's better if everyone gets to choose what he or she wants rather than eat what everyone else is eating. If there are other choices available, what difference does it make if a frozen lasagna or a frozen enchilada gets microwaved. Nuke them both, let people have what they want. Or chances are, when the kids reach their teens, they'll just fix what they want to eat for themselves when they're hungry to eat it. No need even to sit down to eat together even if what everybody eats is different, people are increasingly inclined to graze all day according to their own eating rhythm.

How many middle-income families now have more than one television that gives different family members different options to watch the show of their choice rather than to sit together and watch whatever's on? With the enormous proliferation of channel choices, does anyone expect anymore that the water cooler conversation at work will be about a show that everyone saw the previous evening? Sports these days seem to be the only kind of culture-wide event that has resisted this kind of choice-driven fragmentation of interests. And yet, what could be more different than the values worlds of the athletes and the fans who watch them?

It's What Scares the Spit Out of Traditionalist Muslims

Freedom and individuality has always been in a precarious balance with tradition and community. People want both, but the balance is hard to find, and in American culture since the sixties, there has been a greater-than-ever emphasis on freedom and liberation from the constraints of community and tradition. But as suggested above, we want our cake and to eat it, too. But mostly we want to eat it, and when it's gone we miss it. And we want it back, and some of us might romanticize how wonderful it would be to live in a traditional community, but when it comes down to it, few are willing to pay the price to live in one. Traditional communities are something people live in when they don't have other options. The restraint and discipline required to live in them are the opposite of what most Americans think they need to live freely and happily. It's like most people's response to public transit. Great idea, but not for me. Takes too much time, too many restrictions.

This is not a conflict that began in the 1970s; it's been a long time in the making, at least for five hundred years in the West, and it's what scares the spit out of traditionalist Muslims, because they see that as soon as the choice-centered lifestyle typical of Americans and other Westerners gets a toehold in their traditional societies, goodbye tradition, goodbye community, goodbye everything that they hold sacred. Because the mullahs know that the West is offering their people ice cream, and their traditional spinach dish can't compete. It would take enormous personal discipline or group cohesiveness to resist.

Resistance will occur here and there, but in the long run, maybe even as soon as the end of this century, traditional cultures will all but have disappeared. This assumes there won't be some cataclysmic ecological, political, or economic catastrophe that could send us all back to the Dark Ages, but it will otherwise be a gradual generation by generation global transformation. Why the inevitability? Because choice-centered societies and tradition-centered societies are completely antithetical, and the more choices people in the developing world are given, the more quickly will their traditional way of life be destroyed. The temptation to eat something other than spinach will be too strong. In the long run these local traditional cultures merge into what looks like it will be a global fusion culture.

The Urge for Retrieval

I think that a key theme to frame at least one aspect of the changing American lifestyle is the idea that as the developing world modernizes, the modern world will be *pre-modernizing*. Americans, while they cherish their freedom, also feel that something is missing. This profound longing in certain precincts of the American soul to restore this “something” that has been lost is explored in an interesting way in Tom Cruise’s recent film, *The Last Samurai*. Cruise plays Nathan Aldren, an American ex-Civil War and Indian Wars veteran hired by the Japanese government in 1876 to modernize/westernize its army. He’s portrayed as a fearless warrior who nevertheless feels the need to drink away his shame because of his participation in a My-Lai-like massacre of innocents during the Indian Wars.

His story is one of finding his soul and restoring his honor after spending time in captivity with the Samurai tribal leader, Katsumoto. During his captivity he was forced cold-turkey to stop his drinking and to eat his spinach; he found out it wasn’t half bad, and he chose to keep eating it. He’s someone who recognized that there were refreshing spiritual depths in this ancient traditional culture that he had been asked to destroy. So he goes native, and becomes its defender.

This is ultimately a story meant to contrast the nobility of the chivalric, premodern warrior vs. the mechanized, soul-less affair that modern warfare was becoming, but it’s really about so much more than that. The entire dramatic movement of the film is driven by Aldren’s longing to recover what the modern world no longer affords, and which the film suggests can only be found in a traditional way of life.

The film illustrates the urge for “retrieval.” Retrieval runs parallel to the historic dynamic that’s driving change in the developing world. As the developing world modernizes, people in the developed world seek to retrieve and preserve what is being lost—to pre-modernize, but in a post-modern idiom.

People born today into traditional societies don’t have any choice about it, but as they become increasingly aware of other options available to them, they will inevitably choose to modernize. Though cultural conservatives would like to, Americans can’t go back to a tradition-structured society in which their cultural world is a unified world of pre-established traditional meanings. A choice-centered culture cannot coexist with a tradition-centered culture except insofar as the former tolerates the latter as subculture, like the Amish, Hutterites, or Hassids are tolerated in the U.S. American conservatives who extol free-market capitalism while at the same time excoriating American society’s loss of traditional social norms are astonishingly naïve in their assumption that the two can go together. They never have and they never will. It’s just another case of wanting your cake and eating it, too. But some how or another this is a tension that must be resolved.

The Basic Social Dynamic for Renaissance

Because while there is no possibility of the mainstream culture returning to a traditional way of life, the longing that drove Cruise’s Nathan Aldren to make his choice is one that resonates with many Americans. For they long for what was lost in modernity’s destruction of the traditional. The option that is still left open to Americans is “retrieval,” which is like Nathan Aldren’s choice for the traditional, but instead of going to where there is a traditional culture, you retrieve the parts of a traditional culture you admire and bring them here to where you are—you integrate elements of the traditional into a contemporary, post-modern, post-secular, choice-centered lifestyle.

In other words, as cultures in the developing world modernize, there will be a continued and probably increasing interest among Americans and others in the already-developed world to retrieve what is being lost. We see it already in the increased interest in Asian religions, martial arts, Chinese medicine, shamanic ritual, in the celebration of aboriginal art forms. I’d argue that the body piercing, tattooing, rap, raves, fight clubs, street gangs, and any number of trends popular among

the young are driven by this longing to retrieve the cake that earlier generations ate. They are all driven by the longing to break out of the anonymity and isolation which a society that overemphasizes freedom has created. And they seek relief in traditional forms whose origins more often than not lie in premodern cultures.

In the short run this is an eclectic, often superficial, syncretistic, trendy cultural phenomenon. But the longing behind it is real. And in my next columns, I'll explore a little what it means for religious and political life. For it is, when everything lines up in the right way, which it may or may not do, the basic social dynamic for renaissance.

Jack Whelan currently teaches a communications course at the Business School at the University of Washington in Seattle. A graduate of Yale Divinity School, Whelan worked as senior editor for The Seabury Press in New York and for the University of Washington Press. He is currently working on a book entitled "After the Future: Eschatological Ruminations on Culture and Politics" and maintains an intriguing Weblog at www.speakeasy.org/~jwhelan/ This article is a reprint of Column 15. Jack can be reached at: jwhelan@speakeasy.org



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"I believe that individuals can make a difference in society. Since periods of change such as the present one come so rarely in human history, it is up to each of us to make the best use of our time to help create a happier world."
- The Dalai Lama