



terrat

Bridging the Indigenous and Modern

I. Solstice 2001 Southern Summer Northern Winter

About this Newsletter

Terrat is a publication of Terrawatu, a non-governmental organization based in Arusha, Tanzania, East Africa and Seattle, Washington, USA. The word "*terrat*" means "village" in the language of the Maasai people of Tanzania and Kenya.

Terrat is published quarterly on the solstice and equinox. Our newsletter contains:

- updates on our activities
- news gathered from people who send us interesting artifacts about the meeting of the indigenous and modern
- activist corner – what you can do from where you are
- recipes from East Africa
- needs – resources that would help us do our work

In the interest of keeping trees in the ground and ensuring reliable dissemination out of Africa, *Terrat* is published electronically. The best way to view it is to visit our place on the web at www.terrawatu.org and click on the "activities" link.



The Mission of Terrawatu

Terra = 'earth' in the Italian language
'village' in Maa
watu = 'people' in Kiswahili language

Terrawatu is dedicated to providing consulting, educational, and experience-based services regarding environmental stewardship and cross-cultural relations.

We work towards providing organizations and individuals the information, insights, and inspiration needed to reach the goal of a more sustainable habitat for humans and the other life with which we share this earth.

At this time, our focus is on Maasai communities in East Africa and activist communities in America and Europe.

All of our projects and activities combine modern and indigenous knowledge and practices to build bridges between non-governmental organizations, academia, grassroot businesses and individual value systems.

Our project updates

medicinal plants and indigenous knowledge

In April, Terrawatu, together with local Tanzanian cultural organization, Aang Serian, began fieldwork in the Monduli District of Northern Tanzania.

The research team spoke to male and female elders, age-set leaders, and traditional herb sellers in a Maasai village and a Wa-Arusha community about their medicinal plant species.

Funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) as part of the East African Cross Borders Biodiversity Project, and the UNDP Small Grants Program in Dar es Salaam, this project documented the indigenous use of plants and trees for medicinal, ritual, and nutritional purposes, and gathered data on the conservation status of these resources.

The project report describes the connection of plant biodiversity to indigenous culture and management of resources based on customary laws of the community.

During a “de-briefing” in the villages in November, Terrawatu members presented villagers with copies of the project report translated into Kiswahili and Maa by Terrawatu and Aang Serian.

We are using this scoping project as a platform for further development work in these and surrounding villages that will include education in resource management, cultivation, and medicinal plant microenterprise.

adopt-a-school

Terrawatu has chosen Natterma Primary School in the Arumeru District of Tanzania as its first in our “adopt-a-school” program. The goal is to develop strong bonds between “parents” outside of Tanzania and the students, teachers, and parents of Natterma. The first phase of this newly forming relationship involves the construction of new classrooms. At this time, there are at least two classes (grade levels) occupying each very crowded room. Terrawatu has agreed to raise the funds for purchasing the materials for construction as long as the parents of the students do the majority of the construction. An engineer will supervise and direct the building.

If you would like to contribute to the purchasing of materials and/or become more involved as an “adopt-a-school” parent, please send us an email at offerings@terrawatu.org.

cross-cultural exchanges

In March, Terrawatu helped to orchestrate an educational program in a Maasai village with eleven students from the School of International Training (SIT) program. Lecturing on environmental sociology perched on a sacred tree overlooking the Ngorongoro Highlands, Dr. Pergola described to the students how their experiences in Africa can be integrated back into their life in America and how they can work towards making their daily life more in harmony with the needs of the earth and their individual values.

Terrawatu has also had the opportunity to guide several other groups of visitors from the United States, Australia, and the UK on journeys to ecological and culturally significant places in Northern Tanzania. In July, we guided a group working with the American-based NGO, Visions in Action, to a Maasai community two hours outside of Arusha town. During a particularly poignant moment of cultural sharing over a goat-roasting ritual, a Japanese-American woman taught a Maasai elder how to make a jumping frog using the origami paper-folding technique.

Terrawatu’s journeys in Tanzania are called Oloipung’o Experiences. *Oloipung’o* is a Maasai word meaning “a person who travels outside of his or her compound to explore a different part of the world and then turns back to share with his or her village”. Our journeys differ from traditional African safaris in that we take you into the National Parks and beyond. Your guides are a Maasai elder, native to Tanzania and a Western-trained Doctor of Environmental Sociology. These tours include educational information about conserving the natural environment and indigenous cultures and can include community projects such as planting trees, teaching a class at a primary school, or participating in a “circle

meeting" with indigenous people of the Maasai or Hadza tribe.

To receive more information about Terrawatu's customized ecological-cultural safaris in Tanzania, send us email at journeys@terrawatu.org.

Organizational News

After a long and arduous process of interacting with Tanzanian local and national government officials, Terrawatu received official registration in October as a non-governmental organization (NGO) with the Registrar of Societies in the United Republic of Tanzania. Many thanks go to Co-Director Lekoko Ole Sululu for successfully negotiating the many bureaucratic dams along the way. For the record, our societies number is SO. NO. 11220.

Terrawatu's website is up and running. Designed by a young, self-taught, Arusha-based graphic designer, Sajid Mohammad, and hosted by Virginia-based SolarHost, our site is completely powered by sunlight. You can find us at www.terrawatu.org.

Co-Director, Dr. Tanya Pergola will be in the United States during the months of December and January. She will be speaking in Seattle about Terrawatu's work at Dandelion Botanical Co. on 14th of January.

Needs section

© *Used Laptop Computer* for Terrawatu office in Tanzania – Running at least Windows 98, with floppy disk and CD-ROM drive, Ethernet network port (either internal or Pcmia card). New computers are too risky to possess in Tanzania. If you have one and can get it to Seattle before the end of January, Co-Director Pergola will be able to hand-carry to Africa and not risk it being stolen or over-taxed by customs workers.

© *Contributions for resource center.* Terrawatu is building a collection of written materials in Arusha focused on Tanzania, African medicinal plant re-

search, and sustainable development projects. Believe it or not, it is much easier to get articles, books and journals on these topics outside of Tanzania than in. Users of this center will be Terrawatu staff, international students and visitors working and studying in Arusha, and local people. Materials can be in English or Kiswahili.

Do contact us at offerings@terrawatu.org to let us know what you have and we will let you know the best way to get it to us. Electronic versions can be emailed to us at the same address. Thank you so much.

Activist corner – what you can do from where you are

* If you think that any of your friends and colleagues may find something in this newsletter interesting, feel free to pass it on! We believe that a global community of like-minded folks exists and news from places like the heart of Tanzania may contribute to the conversation out there. Thank you Internet and the digital cable services of Arusha, Tanzania!

* Many of us hear that the majority of the world's population live on less than a US dollar a day. Living among people here in Tanzania who do indeed live on 500-900 T-shillings a day (60 cents- \$1) has given us amazing insights on how life is under these conditions. EVERYTHING changes. The way you spend your time, the things that become important, and the choices you make during your day. While we know it is impossible to live on less than a dollar a day in the US or Europe right now, how about trying to live on \$2 a day (OK, excluding rent/mortgage, but try shutting off electricity and using water from a couple of buckets like most people do here.) Try for a day and send us your experiences and thoughts and we'll publish them in the next newsletter. Asante sana (thank you in Swahili).



Recipe- East African specialties

Mtori is a traditional Tanzanian soup made out of a type of banana often known as plantains in the Americas. It is a healing soup good for women when pregnant or for general cheering up/feeling good for both men and women.

Mtori

Boil ½ kilo beef or goat chunks 1 hour in water with some smashed up garlic cloves, salt, and black pepper to make strong stock. If you have some medicinal herbs you can boil with the meat. (use veggie stock for non-meat version)

Saute onions and garlic in butter, add 1 small tomato.

Peel 4 large green peeled plantains and cut into small chunks.

Strain stock and combine with plantains and sauted vegetables. Simmer for ½ hr., or until plantains are soft.

Smash bananas, or blend depending on how like it (chunky is good!)

Add in ½ squeezed lemon, salt if needed, and some small pieces of the meat if you like.

Serve hot with good bread or chapati.

If not pregnant, serve with a Safari Lager or a bottle of red South African wine.

What inspired me to action

by Tanya Pergola

Do you ever look back on the trajectory of your life and look for patterns? Patterns you couldn't see at the time because you were inside the fabric. Succession of jobs you had, patchworks of relationships that formed, fashions of clothes you were attracted to. Many of us probably laugh a lot at the seeming randomness of it all; but then, if you look at it with a different lens, sometimes you would be surprised what you see. Sometimes it makes sense to be where we are. Even if only *you*

know that it is exactly what you were put on this earth to do.

So, how did a woman who was born in a wealthy suburb of southeastern Connecticut in the United States of America find herself living and working with indigenous people in Northern Tanzania? The entire story is too long to tell here. I will relate only the final scenes. Mainly these involve my formal education, as I spent most of my life in institutes focused on these endeavors. My undergraduate major was in Sociology/Anthropology. Not because it was an easy major to graduate with, but because I loved it. I really truly enjoyed learning about different cultures and different ways in which humans organize themselves on this earth. I loved it so much that I entered a graduate program in Sociology. I had trouble deciding between psychology, anthropology, and sociology because I really couldn't understand why they were separated but chose sociology because it seemed like the best umbrella. I spent eight years immersed in many high-level conversations (first through reading books and articles, later through research and talking) on topics as diverse as the social construction of deviance and the impact of government regulations on native people's subsistence use of natural resources in Alaska. I always employed anthropological methods when I could in my research as I believed that talking to the people who were at the heart of the problems we identify was the best way to find out what was really going on.

From the beginning of my graduate school years, I had a fascination with the natural environment. It never occurred to me that I should switch my studies to the natural sciences. Why? Because I loved studying people. People and their interaction with the natural environment. This was an odd field of study at the time in the sociology department I was in. But, I stuck to it because I enjoyed helping to pioneer this relatively new terrain. I finished with an MA and a PhD in Sociology from the University of Washington in Seattle. My doctoral dissertation was on the decline of the salmon fishery and subsequent conservation

efforts in the Pacific Northwest of the United States. I learned an incredible amount about how humans interact with the natural environment in this region of the world, and how we *think* we can solve all of our problems if we continue to do more and more scientific research.

My last years of graduate school I became intrigued by Americans' increased interest in natural products and alternative methods of healing illnesses. Yes, what in the world does this have to do with fish other than salmon are high in Omega-3 fatty acids that some scientists claim have multiple health benefits including lowering the risk of heart disease? Well, in my mind there was an obvious connection. The salmon population was declining and the health of Americans was declining at the same time. Why? Because their interaction with their natural environment was being altered, in dangerous ways. The salmon were being trucked down the freeways in oil tanker-like lorries because hydro-power dams had been put in their rivers, blocking their migration to the ocean; and humans were stuck on the freeways sitting individually in their vehicles attempting to get to high-rise buildings to sit in front of computers for long hours, often without ever interacting with natural clean air and light. Both species were stressed beyond their capacity to handle life and their natural habitat had become unrecognizable to their souls.

I noticed that some of the fisheries managers and the alternative health practitioners had an eye towards looking at indigenous practices on maintaining the health of natural resources and the human body. These were the stories I found most interesting. There was something about the people who lived in non-post-modern societies that we could perhaps learn something from. I wanted to know what.

So, I completed my PhD and came to Tanzania to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro. Another pattern of my Gemini-twin-personality, had to climb TWO mountains in one year. Something grabbed me here, in Tanzania. Something I did not under-

stand at the time. But something I knew would help me answer the question of what indigenous people know that can help us in our modern life.

I turned back to Seattle, a few weeks before the WTO conference was to convene in 1999. It was cold and rainy and I felt different. I struggled to follow the pattern that was laid out for me given my educational trajectory. Consulting for a natural products and alternative health marketing firm and keeping an eye out for academic jobs in my field. It all felt forced. I turned on the television one November day and watched Seattle police tear-gassing American citizens about a 20-minute walk from my house. Why? What is happening? Do I join in the fray? This seems big, really big. I couldn't. I was too tender. I didn't know why. Something about seeing, just a month earlier, people living in one of the ten "poorest" countries in the world, indigenous people of the Maasai tribe, living on the earth, with almost no material possessions, smiling more than any of the people in the cars I saw stuck on the freeways of Seattle. I listened to the news reports. Globalization, anti-corporate protestors, labor rights, environmental destruction, increased gap between the wealthy and the poor...and there were people who claimed to understand this all enough to stand out there on the streets of my home town and say something. I was impressed, and confused.

I spent months digesting all of this. At times it seemed like I was trying to take the pulse of the earth. My PhD-brain helped to analyze what I was feeling. I listened to rhetoric in the media. There were a lot of people really pissed-off about the state of the world. A number of folks in the wealthiest of countries were getting tired of shopping and being slaves to their jobs, and those in the developing/less-consuming nations were anxious to graduate to developed status. Anarchists were being interviewed on CNN and many of my colleagues were writing article after article about the causes of environmental degradation, loss of ecological knowledge, and increased dis-ease around the world.

While many of the words I read were important, there were voices that stayed on the level of pure criticism. I couldn't just sit back and become a complainer. I had to do something. I had to go and be with the people that were at the heart of some of the problems. Not the corporate executives, as they were just following the scripts of their own life trajectories. No, the people in the developing nations who were being lured by the Western lifestyle. Who were continuing to work as slaves and didn't even recognize it. Because now they could afford Coca Cola and pirated Microsoft software. They were ashamed of their indigenous past, their mother languages, their traditions. I had to get back to Africa. To put into practice all of what I learned throughout my lifetime in school. To practice what my colleagues and I were preaching. I found my way back to Tanzania. To work at the grassroots. To share the wisdom of indigenous people's with those in the west. To figure out if it is possible to bridge the indigenous and modern worlds. In this newsletter we share some of what we have been up to.

My travel agent here gives me missionary rates for my flights out of Africa. A missionary for the earth? I guess I always have been.



In America, the most modern people eat something they call stone-ground wholemeal bread. It's just like our traditional bread, but there it's much more expensive than white bread. People over there are building their houses out of natural materials, just like ours. It's usually the poor who live in concrete houses. And the trend is to dress in clothes with labels saying "100% natural" and "pure wool." The poor people wear polyester clothes. It's not what I expected at all. So much that is modern in America is similar to traditional Ladakh.

- From the drama *Ladakh, Look Before You Leap*
N.E. Kashmir, Indian-Tibetan border
Quoted in the book *Simply Living, The Spirit of the Indigenous People*, edited by Shirley Ann Jones.



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