



Nayjama: search for harmonious communication

In Bolivia, Comunidad Nayjama tries to revitalise traditional ways of passing on knowledge. Traditional and contemporary information are mixed, while the farmers' cultural identity is not violated. David Tovar would like to know about your own experiences in trying out harmonious new ways of information exchange.

David Tovar

In Andean communities, all life is a result of the interaction between the descendants of the God Father Sun (Tata Inti) and the Goddess Mother Earth (Pacha Mama). Since the beginning of times, messages have been passed on from generation to generation, keeping values alive even though they have been modified in the course of time. It is a well-known fact that since colonisation times, the mechanisms of passing on traditional knowledge have been severely affected. But they have not been destroyed: cultural expressions and practices containing both ancestral and contemporary information continue to be of value in the Andean communities. In this way, social groups react to the world in which they live.

Traditional technologies recreate and maintain the cultural identity of rural communities that have survived the influence of modern technologies. It's now up to us, the present generation, to take responsibility and help revalorising these traditional technologies in our programmes of technology innovation and transfer.

The Comunidad Nayjama is a group of musicians, agronomists, trainers and

young people from the rural communities. We started to work in 1975 in the Bolivian region Chuquisaca, near Sucre. Our name refers to one of the four most important gods in the Andean cosmology, Nayjama, who is the "searcher" for harmonious paths for all offsprings of Tata Inti and Pacha Mama. We are an informal group who want to support the revival and diffusion of cultural expressions in the rural communities.

Festivals of communication

Days of communal work (e.g. sowing, harvesting) are festival days or fiestas. These are days of communication, living and working together and exchanging experiences. Our group begins its activities by participating in these fiestas, highly respecting the knowledge and tradition of the community. This is a time of apprenticeship for the members of the group, because we get to know and learn to play the instruments and indigenous melodies and the mythical stories of the very local site and time. In exhibitions, we showed these indigenous musical instruments to rural and urban people. We also documented pieces of music and performed these in the communities to feed back and revalorate the cultural history.

In 1986, Comunidad Nayjama and sev-

Nayjama stimulates farming communities to present their experiences in "agroecological music".

eral farmer groups organised the first cultural festival in Chuquisaca. Farmer musicians came together to exchange different ways of making music, story telling and poetry and they presented traditional clothing. The Comunidad Nayjama recorded and documented the great variety of these cultural expressions. Because of the success of the first festival, others have been organised in nearby regions, supported by our group.

Recording knowledge

Our group is now planning another step: we want to use the music to express local knowledge and reasoning, identifying and revitalising traditional agroecological knowledge and practices. The success of the festivals made us think of the following methodology. We will compose musicals by combining traditional topics and music with agroecological contents. Then we hope to meet the local authority of the Farmers' Federation of Chuquisaca, explaining our ideas and asking for their authorisation to realise a festival in the region. We will invite them to participate and coordinate common activities.

In the communities, farm families will participate in preparing the agroecological festival by discussing and deciding together which agricultural issues they want to integrate in the musical and in what way they want to be involved in the realisation of the festival. In these preparatory meetings, farmer groups will make their expectations and ideas more concrete. A kind of musical contest will be organised to be able to win prizes like tools, construction material or travelling opportunities. In the final festival all participating communities will give a presentation of their "agroecological music". The Comunidad Nayjama will play an important part in recording and systematising the experiences and giving a follow-up to the festival by realising concrete extension activities.

Call for experiences

We would very much like to get in contact with other people who are in a similar way involved in searching new paths of extension by promoting exchange of experiences, dissemination of information and communication adapted to rural realities and respecting cultural expressions. We want to share our experiences, ideas and visions with you who are, like us, joining women and men in the Andean rural communities on their tracks between past and future times.

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