

REPORTS AND NOTICES

Tibetan Peoples and Landscapes

a conference and a day of events open to the public, geared toward students and a general-interest audience

Portland State University, April 28, 2001

Tibet stands high on the earth's surface and perhaps at least as high in the imagination of the Western world. This conference brought together those interested in Tibet and its peoples in a one-day event that showcased the work and explored the interests of a diversity of scholars and friends of the region.

Session 1 Tibetan Peoples

Tibet's Religions

Donatella Rossi (Religious Studies, Marylhurst College)

Tibetan Identity

Kenneth Liberman (Sociology, University of Oregon)

Tibetan Pilgrimage

Anne Parker (Environmental Studies Program, Naropa Institute)

Music of the Tibetan Diaspora

Keila Diehl (Anthropology, Stanford University)

Session 2 Tibetan Landscapes

Environmental Issues of the Tibetan Plateau

Justin Lowe (Tibetan Plateau Project, Earth Island Institute)

Landscape, Land use, Global Climate, and Tibet

Julia Klein (Environmental Science, Policy, and Management, University of California, Berkeley)

A Treatise on the Yak

Barbara Brower (Geography, Portland State University)

Photography Exhibit and Reception

exhibited the winning submissions in the Tibetan Peoples and Landscapes photography competition

Film: *Himalayan Herders*

the prize-winning documentary film about Melemchi, Himalayan Herders, and a post-film discussion with filmmakers John and Naomi Bishop

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Continental Meeting of the Roma People of the Americas

THE OTHER SON OF PACHA MAMA – MOTHER EARTH

Quito (Ecuador), March 12 – 16, 2001

The following organisations and Kumpania Roma assembled at the event under the heading

The Forum of the Americas for Diversity and Plurality

Considering

- That distinct *kumpanias* and Roma family groups have been living in various countries of the Americas from the colonial period to the present day, and that our presence as a people predates the creation of many of these States
- That collectively the Roma people have a long presence and history in almost all the countries of the Americas
- That our contributions to the process of the formation of the nationalities of these various countries of the Americas have not been acknowledged by *Gadje* society
- That the Roma People have never pretended to dominate or impose their culture upon other peoples, on the contrary, have been characterised by their respect of diversity and plurality
- That the Roma population in the Americas is over 4 million and is still today immersed in invisibility
- That throughout history, yesterday as today, our people have been victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance which brought other cultures to consider us in the worst and most pejorative manner
- That when there is talk about diversity of peoples and cultures of the American Continent, our existence is systematically forgotten
- That we are a thousand-year old people with our history, traditions and a proper language and because of that we have a right to self determination
- That we do not accept the label of ‘ethnic minority’ given to us in some international issues, because it does not reflect our reality as a dominated people
- That we claim the full recognition of our collective rights, constantly denied and violated, and
- That, although our people do not have, as an option, a prospect of a proper State, that does not represent an obstacle to our being properly represented at all international levels, and to participate in the United Nations

The Roma organisations and Kumpania of the Americas express here their devoted commitment to make the following demands :

1. Urge the States and Governments to recognise the right to self determination for the Roma people.
2. Urge the States and Governments to recognise, promote and guarantee the collective rights of the Roma people.
3. Defend, recover and value the history, the ethnic and cultural traditions of our people and to protect also the inherited common law, as well as the cultural and intellectual heritage of the Roma people.
4. Eradicate all forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance towards children, youth, men, women, or older Roma people .
5. Promote ourselves and inform *Gadje* society about the traditional knowledge and wisdom of the Roma people as well as our ethnic and cultural values.
6. Urge the States and Governments of the Americas to apply the standards of international legal justice to protect the rights of the Roma people.
7. Work to develop spaces for the self determination and self government of the Roma people, urging the recognition of our own authorities, and to validate our special jurisdiction, the *Kriss*.
8. Facilitate the creation of intercultural opportunities as a way to promote the future autonomy of the Roma people of the Americas.
9. Ask the States and Governments of the Americas to consult fairly with the Roma people when initiating ‘development plans’ that affect their culture, lives, identity and fundamental needs, and to take into account the requirements for the full development of our institutions, economy, education and accreditation.
10. Urge the States and Governments to guarantee the establishment of bilingual and intercultural educational programs suited to the Roma people, as well as giving to our youth and women access to middle and higher education in the best conditions.
11. Demand that the States and the governments of the Americas provide health care alternatives for the Roma people which guarantee access to active, convenient, compatible and quality health care services, which ensure health promotion, the prevention and treatment of diseases and the rehabilitation of the sick.
12. Make sure that the medical plans and health programs take into account the knowledge, practices, and uses of the different forms of diagnosis and treatment of the Roma people themselves.
13. Urge the States and Governments of the Continent to guarantee the freely consented information for Roma people, through our authorities and representative institutions, each time that projects of development, legislature or administrative measures will affect us directly.
14. Facilitate the fair, permanent and adequate access to the mass media of social communication for the Roma people.
15. Demand access by Roma representatives to different levels of participation created by government institutions and public affairs.

16. Create and consolidate the institutions and proper committees that the Roma people will need for the recognition of our collective rights in the Americas and the World.
17. Create mechanisms which permit contacts, relations and exchanges between the Roma of the Americas, and with all the international Roma communities.
18. Ensure that the nomadic and itinerant forms of life, which some Roma family groups are conserving, be maintained; that States and Governments create special places, encampments and rules, which facilitate the free transit over the international borders of the Continent.
19. Request that the States and Governments recognise the refugee status of the Roma people and draw up public policies, programs and adequate actions to assist the Roma who, for political, social, cultural, ethnic, religious and economic reasons are obliged to look for refuge and immigrate to the Americas.

Based on these legitimate demands, we request

the United Nations:

1. To start a large and profound democratisation process of its own structures, to avoid the more relevant levels of the U.N. ending up being controlled by a small, but powerful number of States which, in the majority of the cases, take controversial decisions in the international community, without consulting the international community.
2. To create mechanisms and procedures which enable full and equal participation of the Roma in the United Nations and its structure in relation to the States. As a first step towards this, we propose the creation of a ‘Roma Permanent Forum’, which at the highest level is of equally mixed composition. This would be a broad-spectrum mandate, which would include civil rights, political, economical, social, cultural, and gender-balanced elements to prevent conflicts, etc. To facilitate the dialogue between the members states of the U.N. and our agencies, about themes and interests that affect our people.
3. To start a process of large and egalitarian participation of our delegates to discuss and approve a ‘United Nations Declaration of the Roma People Rights’, to be used as an international instrument to guarantee, with acceptable standards, the full rights of our people.
4. Recognise and institutionalise in the U.N. system, and the U.N. member states the 8th of April as *Roma International Day*, to celebrate the first Congress of the International Romani Union, held in London (England) on the 8th of April 1971, which marked the beginning of the contemporary associative movement of our people.
5. As part of the meetings and activities preparatory for the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, The Office of the Human Rights High Commissioner will facilitate the

creation of a *Continental Meeting of the Roma People of the Americas*, where we could unify criteria, build consensus and draw strategies, from the distinct realities of our people throughout the Continent.

6. To not forgot to include the Roma people in the different processes and levels of the U.N. system, but on the contrary, to involve us actively in the reflections and discussions on subjects that directly or indirectly affect us.

the Organisation of the American States:

7. To constitute a permanent committee which incorporates the existence of the Roma people of the Americas on an equal level.
8. Facilitate the involvement of the Roma people of the Americas in the process of the evaluation and discussion of *The Project of Pan American Declaration of Indigenous Peoples Rights*, as is mentioned in its Article 1, that the legal disposition of this Project of Declaration is available to the Roma People, in our condition as Tribal People.
9. With an adequate participation of the Roma people, to create a large study of our human and collective rights as they are today.

the States and Governments of the Americas:

10. Recognise fully our existence as a people and guarantee the exercise of our civil and collective rights. Due to our trans-national and large geographical mobility, the Roma people must be considered by the Continental States and Governments as a people which is also American by tradition and historical presence.
11. To create, with broad, consensual participation of our people, legal instruments and regulations which guarantee our civil and collective rights as well as our ethnic and cultural integrity .
12. Those who have not yet ratified Convention 169 of 1989 of the International Labour Organisation on *Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries*, to do so. And to those who have ratified the Convention to apply it in totality in their legal dispositions, keeping in mind that they also apply to our people.
13. To guarantee a large and appropriate participation of Roma delegates from the Americas in the *World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance*.
14. Receive into their respective territories the Roma refugees, who, escaping from wars and persecution, came to the Americas, seeking guaranteed safety and an opportunity to restart their lives.

the NGOs and agencies of cooperation:

15. Keep in mind the needs and actual problems of the Roma people of the Americas in their programs of actions and interventions.

16. To commit themselves to cooperating with the Roma organizations of the Americas, to financially and technically support all initiatives and projects seeking the fulfilment of our principal demands.

The indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants, as well as other traditional peoples, who are attached to this continent:

17. Support with solidarity and brotherhood the aspirations, demands and claims of our people to pull us out of invisibility, and recognise and respect our collective rights.
18. Reciprocity and mutual acknowledgment as another offspring of Pacha-Mama–Mother Earth, which means that, though not being natives of this Continent, we have an old presence and history which led us to suffer the same problems as the Indigenous people and Afro-descendants
19. Recognise that the Roma people is a social actor in the Americas, which is emerging from invisibility to add to the construction of a more diverse, pluralistic, more democratic, free and just society.
20. The Roma people value profoundly the demands and claims formulated by the Indigenous people, Afro-descendants and other Traditional peoples who live on the Continent, considering that they opened the roads that our people are taking today. In a certain way, our people are successors to the organisational work developed by these peoples, and proudly make it their own.

To conclude, the organisations and Kumpania Roma of the Americas announce the creation of an instrument of continental coordination: ‘COUNCIL OF THE ORGANIZATIONS AND KUMPANIA ROMA OF THE AMERICAS’, whose fundamental mission is to contribute to the consolidation of the associative Roma movement, in the continent and around the world, bringing it out of invisibility into the international community.

This document was signed in Quito, on March 15, 2001 by representatives of the following organisations and Kumpania Roma of the Americas:

- Asociacion Identidad Cultural Romani de Argentina
(e.mail: jberna@sagyp.mecon.gov.ar)
- ASOCIACION NACIONAL DEL PUEBLO ROM DE ECUADOR
(e.mail: asorom@yupimail.com)
- PROCESO ORGANIZATIVO DEL PUEBLO ROM DE COLOMBIA
(e-mail: prorom@gitanos.casa.as // viamultiple@hotmail.com)
- GRUPO ROMA - KUMPANIA ROM DE CHILE (celular : 005694142937)
- SA ROMA (U.S.) (e.mail : w9duna@stthomas.edu)
- AMERICAN ROMANI UNION (e.mail : vinkroma@hotmail.com)
- ROMANO LIL (CANADA) (e.mail : hsjercic@home.com)
- WESTERN CANADIAN ROMANI ALLIANCE (e.mail : celtrom@uniserve.com)