

## **LISTENING TO THE ANDES**

Victor Alexander Huerta-Mercado Tenorio

The Centre of Andean Ethnomusicology was founded in 1985 at the Riva-Agüero Institute of Peru's Catholic University with support from Ford Foundation. Its main aim is to record, preserve and make Andean musical traditions known in Peru and abroad.



Staff at the The Centre of Andean Ethnomusicology.

*What problems do we face?*

As in many parts of the world, the major problem we face is funding. In a country with few resources, the state allocates a minimal

budget for cultural issues. Fortunately we can count on the financial support of private foundations. We have also seen that many private collectors are unwilling to share their collections with us as they are suspicious of our motives and worry about issues such as intellectual property rights, considering that there is no benefit from sharing their information with us. There is little governmental or public interest in the utility of archives and in their importance as part of a collective memory. An example of this is the deplorable state of the National Archive. The reason for this can be traced to the modern sense of identity in Peru which is constructed on the basis of denying its past history and traditions in favour of the modern and the foreign. Particularly in the cities, this is reflected in racism and marginalization as well as in embarrassment over our Andean roots. Anthropologists in Peru have traditionally limited themselves to description rather than preservation as an aim of their research.

We can focus our efforts on promoting an interest in our traditions in school education, especially our artistic traditions, as a vehicle for constructing an identity which is not lost in a global hegemony but rather, underlines the specific characteristics that every developing country has. This leads us to promote the adaptation of the archives' material into an educational format so that our traditions and a sense of their importance is transmitted to our children. Within a development project, the state can consider the importance of constructing a sense of national identity as a primary objective.

#### *Research Policy*

We have been working for 15 years preserving traditional rather than commercial music. This has involved systematic field recordings. We do not archive commercial recordings but only the originals with written descriptions. Specifically, we deal with the peasant, native and Mestizo music of the Andean countries.

In the last few years we have planned our recording strategies in areas which have been affected by the political violence that has marked recent Peruvian history. These areas were considered very remote from the big city. We discovered that our recordings and the diffusion of music in these areas has provided a bridge to bring the

city and countryside closer together. Our material served to promote help to the affected areas; we also collaborated in programmes that helped people return to their homes in the countryside. This led us to discover the strength of the links between the city and the country and the negotiation between tradition and modernity. In the future we plan to develop the idea of parallel studies of urban traditions for the next century.

*Institutional Backing*

The Pontifical Catholic University of Peru supplies our institutional and administrative costs and the Ford Foundation funds the audiovisual and production equipment as well as specific projects.

An academic environment is a good area to develop an archives such as ours. Public institutions related to tourism and the promotion of Peru's image in an international setting have shown an interest in the archives' productions. However this is not on a regular basis. Although they are invariably looking to project a 'nice' image of the country, they do help in our dissemination activities.

*Self-funding*

We generate some income through royalties from our recording series with Smithsonian Folkways, sale of videos, cassettes and books. We are also producing a CD-ROM. Nevertheless, our costs are greater than our income. We plan to increase our income by expanding this area of our operations. We have discovered that distribution is a different ball game from research and preservation and requires special attention. This is presently our most important concern.

*Technology*

Lima is a very humid city; we have to pay special attention to provide air conditioning so as to prevent deterioration of the materials in the archives. At present, we are in the process of transferring the recordings on tape onto CDs at a rate of four tapes a day.

Digital equipment, which is both easy to handle and technologically advanced, is being used for the filming input in fieldwork. However, it is still not easy for us to get the necessary batteries and

film for digital equipment in Peru. For audio recordings, we have now switched to the DAT format and we are working with computer experts in order to process our research material.

In the last few years we have strengthened the use of video as a way of increasing the diffusion to a wider section of the population which finds an audiovisual format particularly attractive. It is important to stress that we have a stronger oral culture than a written one. The musicians also enjoy seeing as well as hearing the performances of their relatives who have already passed away.

#### *Dissemination of Research*

Our strategy of disseminating research can be broadly divided into the following categories:

1. AUDIO PRODUCTIONS: Since 1986, the archives has produced nine commercial records which have been published in Spanish. We have also produced five CDs with English liner notes in collaboration with the Smithsonian Institution.
2. EDITED VIDEOS: We have published nine videos with both Spanish and English versions based on fieldwork video recordings.
3. PUBLICATIONS: We have published a book in Spanish—*Music, Dance and Masks in the Andes*—whose first edition has already sold out. We have also published a catalogue of our material.
4. CD-ROM: We are in the process of producing our first CD-ROM on festivals, rituals, instruments and dances in the Andes.
5. BROADCASTING: We have a web page which is part of the University website and an hourly slot once a week for classical music on the radio. We also supply information to television programmes that deal with Andean cultural issues. The reaction to our website has been impressive with many people contacting us by email.

#### *Dealing with Author's Rights*

According to Peruvian law, folklore is a public commodity and we

have never had problems with performers in this respect. Our CDs tend to be wide anthologies of different performers, never highlighting one person in particular.

There are also great practical and geographical difficulties in handing out the author's rights and commissions. We often record in very remote locations and a CD may include up to 15 different artists from 15 different villages. The result is that if we try to distribute the small profit made from our CDs, the cost of the journey would consume the profits.

We do make a policy of giving the communities copies of the products that we have recorded there. This normally results in the community gathering in a public place to listen to the recordings or even to watch the videos. Local teachers and leaders are often keen to use this material in order to show them to the children and thereby help to maintain these traditions which are often in the process of being lost.

#### *Networking*

We are currently trying to strengthen contacts between Andean traditional archives throughout the continent. We have been seeking funding to set up a network among the Andean countries, and at a later stage, to set up a regional centre which would include the whole continent.

We would like to share some ideas that have been born in the last years of the 20th century yet leading us into the 21st. Culture changes and invites us to change.

#### *Urban Tradition*

In our attempts to record, archive and diffuse Andean rituals and music, we have faced a number of difficulties in deciding what exactly we should be studying and in choosing a final product which will find a willing public.

In Peru, when traditional music, or rather, that music which is understood to be traditional, is published either as a cassette, CD or video, the only people interested are academics. There is a minimal interest from the public who tend to prefer modern rhythms.

These national problems are exacerbated by the consequences of globalization which not only reduces the quantity of traditional music but also its market.

The object of this paper is to contribute to the viewing of this process as part of a negotiation which will allow the archives to broaden its scope as well as to promote a greater interest in its functions.

*From the Countryside to the City*

In my experience of fieldwork, both in the Andean and Amazon regions, I have discovered that to find what is considered traditional I have to undertake ever longer journeys to areas ever more inaccessible. These areas, which are considered the most traditional, are often also the poorest areas affected by the political violence which shook Peru for more than a decade. It was a painful experience to approach a community where the villagers hoped to receive some sort of economic support or help, and to confront them with the reality that all we wanted was to record or film their traditional festivities.

If, at any moment, we were under the impression that culture was not an economic commodity, the painful truth that confronted us was that the majority of musicians wanted to be paid in cash if we were to record them. Although our modest budget led us into complicated theoretical debates on the wisdom of our paying them to be in a traditional fiesta, it was not long before their economic realities made us understand that the demands for money were not gratuitous. There is a common perception in the Peruvian rural communities that the investigator will become wealthy by publishing a book, a record or a video and is therefore exploiting and taking advantage of the musicians.

This perception does have an empirical base in the sense that many anthropologists and filmmakers have visited the rural areas and left nothing more than their gratitude. The growing poverty, political speeches on social justice and the integration of the global market have meant that this gratitude is no longer enough. Singing and dancing is becoming a service rendered and therefore a product for sale.

During a recent trip to the Amazon, I discovered that a large part of the traditional music has been lost. The heads of community blame this on schooling and its westernizing influence. Faced with this situa-

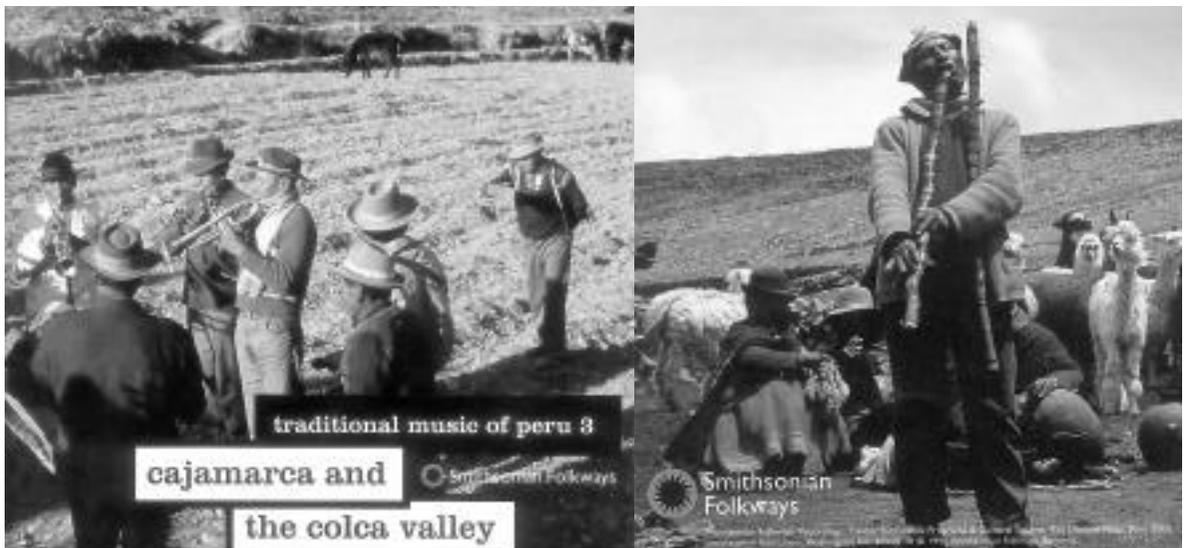
tion, we had to resort to requesting performances at times when they would not naturally occur. Almost no natives could remember their traditional music and those that could charged a set rate for different songs and demanded that we supply alcohol as further inspiration to sing. The price would vary according to the length of the performance.

Apart from this, they constantly asked for our addresses and phone numbers in order to be able to contact us if they travelled to Lima. Lima has always been a desired destination for the rural population.

I believe that the distance has diminished between us. We are no longer faced with someone who is far removed from us but rather with someone who is in the process of negotiating his or her entrance into modern society. My own view is that an anthropological study can be made of the anthropologist himself who goes in search of information and finds a product, who is looking for 'tradition' and in the end has to buy it. I must stress that what we are facing is not the issue of the author's rights but rather of tradition becoming a commodity.

*Recording in the City*

I have spoken about globalization reaching the countryside and also about the countryside approaching the city. Political violence, economic crises and various political measures have accelerated the process of urban migration. The result is that the capital of Peru has



(This and facing page) CD covers: "Traditional Music of Peru" series published by Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, 1996.

been converted into as rich an ethnological source as the rural communities themselves.

Lima, therefore, is a mosaic of the different traditions that cohabit in a country, a microcosm of our continent. The city is basically made up of a migrant population who live in extreme urban poverty and one in which the economically dominant sectors are involved in a process of radical globalization.

The provincial migrant in Lima has to adapt to a city which speaks a different language, which values foreign ways and which submerges him in a context of discrimination and racism. If I use the term migrant, I am in reality speaking of a very varied reality which covers various cultures. At this stage it is worth underlining the concept of identity. It is in the city that it becomes more important to have a clear concept of which group one belongs to and to which group one does not. Local and family institutions, social events and support networks are the most common strategies for achieving a successful integration into the city.

In the last few years our work of recording provincial fiestas has focused on Lima. Processions and dances, music and traditional foods that originated in the countryside are transferred to an urban setting, the streets transforming into temporary sacred ground. These festivities are no longer only religious occasions but also serve as a meeting



place for the purposes of mutual support and the strengthening of a common local identity.

Music has played a particularly important role in this process. The traditional instruments, songs and dances that form a part of these celebrations, however, have been adapted by the new generations to include a modern aesthetic. This has resulted in the creation of a music that is based on local traditional sounds but is infused with the influences of modern popular culture.

At present, a majority of the Peruvian population lives in the cities, maintaining direct or indirect links with their places of origin. Their tastes have changed, globalized, so to speak, as has the consumer. I believe that one of the most important roles of the ethnomusicologist is not only to bring people closer to their musical roots but to also help in a better understanding of the modern consumer, including what we call 'urban traditions' of contemporary music in the archives of traditional music which will allow the archives to reach a wider public.

By making too radical a distinction between 'the traditional' and 'the modern' we are limiting the understanding of the process of change and adaptation as well as the negotiation and combination of foreign rhythms that will create a new product. By including the urban tradition we can see the dynamic aspect of the culture and understand its path.

#### *Aims*

Interest in traditional music or, more specifically, interest in the Centre for Andean Ethnomusicology is limited to researchers and, in a few but valuable cases, to performers, scholars and users. The study of the urban tradition would allow us to widen the range of those interested beyond anthropologists, musicologists and ethnomusicologists to include teachers, psychologists, social workers, artists, communicators and, above all, a wider public. In the traditional music archives, this public would discover, as if anew, the traditional roots of their own music. Giving the descendants of the performers access to this music would act as a Trojan horse for the discovery of their traditions.

*Diffusion*

The main hurdle to overcome would be that of the author's rights, salaries and taxes. The diffusion of this music, however, would be far greater since one could combine in a single product (be it video, cassette or CD) both modern urban and rural traditions thereby reaching a wider public and creating greater interest.

I must emphasize that our main aim will always be to protect and preserve the manifestations of tradition which are threatened by the hegemony of globalization. However, we also believe that a parallel study of the processes of change in the elaboration and consumption of music will widen our understanding of the importance of music as a part of the cultural process.