

## Call of Life

Karin Jana Beck, Switzerland

In spring 2008, at the Swiss «NaturStimmen-Festival» (Natural Voices Festival), I was lucky to meet a group of Kalinga folk and ritual musicians, singers and dancers, led by Manung Sapi Bawer. We sang together in the same concert project. Their indigenous traditional songs, sounds, dances and costumes touched my heart and soul in a very deep place. It felt like coming home and remembering the deep wisdom and medicine of the indigenous pathway: a medicine that brings a strong message of togetherness, solidarity and dignity of the «Grassroots- and Soil People» – a precious gift for our world. To share life and make music together was a rich experience and an invaluable gift.

In 2012 I took a sabbatical. My original plan was to work on an organic farm in Italy to be with soil, plants and animals and at the same time improve my Italian (my favorite language) and later go to Norway to meet some yoiking Sami people and learn from their indigenous «soul-tune» singing culture.

But life itself showed me with many amazing signs that it wanted me to visit my Kalinga friends and the Mabilong community in the Cordillera Mountains in the Philippines:

- One day, one of the Italian farmers showed me his favorite photobook and when I saw it I was rather overwhelmed because it was a book about Kalingas!
- In a workshop one of the participants came to me during a break and wanted me to listen to her favorite song «Kalinga»!
- Swimming in the river Rhine one summer's day I met an old friend by chance whom I hadn't seen for a long time. He told me that he was here only for a short holiday because he and his wife were now living in the Northern Philippines and working in NGO projects also in the Cordillera mountains.

The signs (I have mentioned only three of them, there have been many others!) were strong and unambiguous. I finally surrendered and let go of my preconceived plans – what a good decision to follow the call of life. After an adventurous journey on a cargo ship it felt like coming home when I arrived in Mabilong and was able to share everyday life and celebrations with the children, the villagers and the old folks.

In the several weeks in which I stayed in Mabilong the idea and wish grew to document some of the indigenous traditional songs and sounds, so that also the children and later generations would still have access to these treasures (...)

and also that foreign people would be able to feel its wisdom and medicine). Manung Sapi organized several meetings with traditional folk singers and instrumentalists and I had the great pleasure and honor of recording their songs and sounds. During one recording session a wonderful double rainbow appeared in the sky. It was like a greeting from the ancestors who appreciated that their songs and sounds are still alive, loved, cherished and passed on.

In the land- and soundscape of Mabilong I found a place of home in my heart and soul. Through these indigenous songs and sounds I feel a strong connection to the community of Mabilong.

Back home again, working on the CD and enjoying listening to the songs and sounds, my heart becomes warm and my soul expands.

The Kalinga songs accompany me here in Switzerland every day! When I ride my bicycle to go shopping or to go to work I sing, or let's rather say I am sung by one of these songs. They are very much present and deeply rooted in my heart and soul. Also my friends and singing community here in Switzerland like them. Sometimes people need some time to immerse themselves in these melody patterns and then suddenly they start to understand and feel the wisdom and medicine of these deep and natural songs and melodies.

In great thankfulness I greet all the people in Mabilong who shared life and the indigenous wisdom with me.

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