

where, tumbled as they are into endless connection, it is increasingly difficult to get out of each other's way.

Geertz also provided me with the concluding flourish of an earlier book of mine, *The Convict and the Colonel*. In any case, I am very pleased to have my name associated with this distinguished ancestor.

As for religion and *Travels with Tooy*, there's something of a paradox. In the very final, comparative, chapter of the book, I write:

Astute readers may note that this is my first use of the word "religion" in regard to Saramakas in this book... For Saramakas, "religion" is not a separate or separable realm of life and unlike, say, Candomblé or Vodou or Santería, it has no name. Nor is religion—that which gives Saramaka life much of its meaning—a domain that is easily separable for the analyst. "Religion" cannot be described by saying that practitioners believe this or that, but can only be understood by describing and analyzing the connections between events, experience, social relationships, and the ways people represent these to themselves. In the comparative context of this [final] chapter, I use it simply as a convenient label or shorthand.

Let me end by citing one of my favorite snippets of Geertzian wisdom, as he tried to sum up the new challenges facing anthropology in the 1980s (which, I believe are still very much with us). There has been a "transformation," he said, "of the people anthropologists mostly write about, from colonial subject to sovereign citizens," which has "altered entirely the moral context in which the ethnographical act takes place" and which performs "leaves contemporary anthropologists in some uncertainty as to rhetorical aim." "Who," Geertz asked, "is now to be persuaded? Africanists or Africans? Americanists or American Indians? Japanologists or Japanese? And of what: Factual accuracy? Theoretical sweep? Imaginative grasp? Moral depth?" And he continued, "It is easy enough to answer 'All of the above.' It is not quite so easy to produce a text that thus responds." But at the same time as the moral foundations of ethnography had been shaken, its epistemological foundations, Geertz noted, had also been cracked by general questions raised in other disciplines about the nature of representation. To the anthropologists' worry about "Is it decent?" there was now added "Is it possible?"—a concern, Geertz claimed, "with which they are even less well prepared to deal." Geertz concluded his overview by arguing that what we needed was effective art: "If there is any way to counter the conception of ethnography as an iniquitous act or an unplayable game," he wrote, "it would seem to involve owning up to the fact that, like quantum mechanics or the Italian opera, it is a work of the imagination."

I would like to think that this prize recognizes *Travels with Tooy* as fitting into that imaginative Geertzian tradition of ethnography.

Please send column ideas, news and items of interest to Jennifer Selby at jselby@mun.ca.

Society for East Asian Anthropology

JENNIFER HUBBERT AND GORDON MATHEWS,
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"Humanity, Development and Cultural Diversity": IUAES in Kunming

By Sandra Teresa Hyde (McGill U)

The 16th World Congress of the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES) was held this past summer, July 27–31, 2009, in Kunming, Yunnan Province (PRC), to mixed success. Organizers and participants were glad that the congress went forward following its cancellation a year earlier in 2008. China in 2008 was facing the aftermath of the Sichuan earthquake, protests in Lhasa, and the August Beijing Olympics. In Kunming itself, two bombings during the previous year were still under investigation. Although distant from Beijing, Kunming and Yunnan Province are home to 26 of China's 55 ethnic minority groups, and the Chinese central government is extremely sensitive to ongoing international critiques of its policies toward ethnic minorities, especially Tibetans and Uighurs. Perhaps it was unavoidable that this postponed congress itself became a microcosm of these conflicts, which are often presented as one-sided: between China's sovereign interests and the incursion of a meddling West. Although IUAES Secretary-General Peter Nas was dismayed when the central government cancelled the conference less than one-month prior to its opening in July 2008, he and tireless Chinese colleagues re-scheduled the conference for 2009.

The Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Societies is organized by IUAES and is held every five years. The 2009 congress was co-organized with the Chinese government's Ethnic Affairs Commission and was opened by Hui Liangyu, a member of the Politburo (the Chinese Communist Party's highest body). It was also reported to be one of the largest anthropology events in the world (with over 4,000 participants), and received widespread national television, radio and newspaper coverage. The Kunming city government itself allocated it five million yuan. Yunnan University (Yunda), the host of the Congress, was shut down for the duration of the congress. Everyone entering or leaving the campus was screened through the badges assigned at registration and all bags were scanned upon entry to the conference buildings. In spite of the heavy security, it was nice to see Yunnan University—in many ways considered a backwater to the larger and more well-known universities in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou—acknowledged as a place where key scholarship on anthropology is taking place. Yunda is renowned for both its Ethnology Institute and its work in visual anthropology and ethnographic film. In



2002 Yunnan University was designated a national center for ethnological studies.

The panels in which I participated were organized under the rubric "Yunnan Studies: Humanity, Diversity and Development in Interdisciplinary Perspective." This large collection of papers—over thirty individual papers in six panels—was organized by two key professors at Yunda: Lin Chaomin, the former vice-president of Yunnan University and a professor of history, and Shen Haimei, of the anthropology department and Institute for Ethnology. Topics ranged from critical studies on infectious disease to questions of authenticity in film. There were panels on Yunnan's regional and cross-regional history as well as on contemporary issues about ethnic minorities in the context of China's massive economic development.

What stood out at this congress was the recognition that top government officials paid to the work of anthropologists the world over. According to US-based anthropology blogs about the conference, some of the more interesting panels included two on "rewriting culture in Chinese," organized by Gao Bingzhong from Peking University and Hor Ting. However, as one blogger pointed out, "at these panels there was too much talk about wresting the West's discursive hegemony away from it and about presenting a Chinese perspective, and too little about the epistemological need for such research." Overall, the conference reached far and wide to discuss anthropology around the globe, and at the same time, displayed the vibrant work of a new generation of Chinese scholars, those who came of age after the Maoist era when anthropology was considered "bourgeois and dead."

Please send contributions to this column to Jennifer Hubbert (hubbert@lclark.edu) or Gordon Mathews (cmgordon@cuhk.edu.hk).

Society for Humanistic Anthropology

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Weltschmerz. As we write in mid-March, we and far too many people we know seem to be living it. *Weltschmerz* is one of those wonderful German words that packs in immense meaning by stringing together different words, in this case *welt* (world) and *schmerz* (pain). World-pain. World-weariness. No question, there's enough specific cause for such a feeling: devastating earthquakes in Haiti and Chile, ongoing violence in several parts of the world, a pair of apparent suicides on campus, partisan bickering and tea partying nabobs of negativity, and such overwhelmingly negative news for friends and students applying for jobs and graduate programs that some are starting to talk in terms of a Lost Generation of young academics. But *Weltschmerz* isn't driven by specific events; it's a more despairing attitude of existential angst.

What can we, as scholars and as mere humans, do in the face of a crushing world? Where does one find the energy to carry on? The answer