

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Supporting World Anthropologies

A Report on 2008 Initiatives and Dialogue

SETHA LOW
AAA PRESIDENT

This report covers the AAA Commission on World Anthropologies (CWA), World Council of Anthropological Associations (WCAA), and Other Presidents' Breakfast meetings that were held at the 2008 AAA Annual Meeting in San



Francisco. I also address the recent joint conference of the Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and the Commonwealth (ASA), the Association of Social Anthropologists of Aotearoa/New Zealand (ASAANZ) and the Australian Anthropological Society (AAS) held in Auckland, New Zealand in December 2008.

This overview is intended to bring members up to date with discussions on how the AAA might contribute to the development of a more global anthropology.

Commission on World Anthropologies

Nearly all members of the CWA were able to attend this year's annual meeting, including representatives of a number of international institutions and associations, such as the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES), Wenner-Gren Foundation, Brazilian Association of Anthropology (BAA), European Association of Social Anthropology (EASA), Pan African Anthropological Association (PAAA), World Archaeological Congress (WAC) and Japanese Society of Cultural Anthropology (JASCA). Additionally, the four major anthropological subdisciplines were represented. Topics of discussion included ways of promoting international anthropological meetings within AAA; the relationship between IUAES, WCAA and CWA; efforts to develop multilingual publishing and presentation opportunities; and ways to better include international scholars in AAA meetings. Additional information on this meeting and ongoing CWA projects is available through CWA's columns in February *AN* (page 29) and March *AN* (this issue, page 20).

World Council of Anthropological Associations

This meeting was attended by representatives of WCAA member organizations who were present at the AAA annual meeting in San Francisco. These representatives included Gordon Matthews (Hong Kong Anthropological Association), Leslie Aiello (Wenner-Gren Foundation), Ricardo Fagoaga (Mexican Association of Ethnologists and Social Anthropologists) and Hilary Callan

(Royal Anthropological Institute), as well as four members of the WCAA Organizing Committee including myself, Gustavo Lins Ribeiro (BAA), Shalini Randeria (EASA) and Junji Koizumi (JASCA). Organizing Committee Chair Junji Koizumi led the discussion, asking members to report on funding for WCAA participation in international meetings, WCAA webpage development, the addition of three member groups, and the publication of WCAA Osaka meeting presentations in the *Journal Des Anthropologies*, to be organized by Laurent Bazin of the French Association of Anthropology. At the suggestion of Deputy Chair Thomas Reuter, who could not attend the meeting, the group voted on (and passed) a governance amendment to the WCAA constitution. The updated WCAA constitution is to be posted on the WCAA website and circulated to all participating members. The meeting concluded with a reiteration of WCAA's support of the IUAES as an organization and of the IUAES meeting in China, and a discussion of what steps the WCAA could take in this regard.

Other Presidents' Breakfast

On Sunday morning of the annual meeting, the AAA president traditionally invites the presidents of other anthropological associations to a breakfast gathering. This year, because of my interest in international networks and connections, the table was filled with presidents and representatives from a number of anthropological associations from outside of the US as well as a few presidents of US organizations. Interestingly, the conversation covered issues of translation and publications—topics the CWA is examining—but in contrast this group discussion focused on academic politics and the ranking of journals. According to representatives from the UK, Switzerland, Hong Kong and France, European journal ranking systems give priority to those journals that are published in English, rather than in the national or native language of the publishing country, with a special emphasis (and high ranking) given to journals published in the US and the UK. The implication of these ranking systems is that non-US- and non-UK-based traditions of anthropological thought will suffer, as will anthropologists' ability to publish in the language of the peoples' that they study. This "audit culture" is primarily used for tenure and grant reviews, meaning the power structure it creates will have a lasting impact on the viability and diversity of world anthropologies. It is not clear what action should be taken, but it is an important conversation to begin.

Also during this breakfast meeting we learned more about problems with the restructuring of

French social sciences and humanities, and its marginalizing consequences for anthropology. Further, there were questions about the reach of poorer and developing countries' journals and anthropological legacies in the face of neoliberal changes. There was agreement, however, that bilingual publication and multilingual abstracts, especially in English-speaking and publishing countries such as the US, might help in the current situation. Nonetheless, the meeting ended with a word of caution, in that it is unclear exactly what the role of the AAA should be in these national and international debates because of perceptions of academic imperialism whenever the AAA becomes involved.

Joint Conference of the ASA, ASAANZ and AAS

The final meeting I attended in 2008 was the joint conference of the ASA, ASAANZ and AAS in Auckland, New Zealand. This conference was an opportunity to meet with the presidents of these associations: Judith Macdonald of ASAANZ, Gillian Cowlshaw of AAS and John Gledhill of ASA. Organizers Veronica Strang and Mark Busse made it possible for me to address the conference attendees at the opening plenary, where I discussed CWA's and AAA's support of diverse world anthropologies and greater participation in the global anthropological community. I talked about translation and publication challenges as well as about the political action network being developed through the WCAA.

Perhaps most importantly, I asked conference attendees what the AAA could do to further their anthropological and associational concerns. From the perspective of ASAANZ and the AAS, graduate student networking and developing closer intellectual ties are very important. Scholars and faculty in New Zealand and Australia would like to know more about research and post-doctoral opportunities for their students, and develop more programs for academic exchange. The idea of joint meetings and having CWA sessions at AAS and ASAANZ meetings was welcomed, as was our discussion of collaborative websites. The AAA website is an important tool for students to find out about meetings and opportunities, in addition to listservs and informal communications. Although faculty in Australia and New Zealand may have ties to US-based colleagues, it is more difficult for graduate students to make these connections. ASA is also interested in having a stronger web presence, and would particularly like AAA to increase the visibility of international anthropological associations through the CWA webpage. In summary, my participation in the joint conference, as well as the other meetings described above, not only generated goodwill but also gave us a stronger sense of ways in which we can support global anthropologies through CWA and AAA more broadly. □