

huge. (What is it about glbtq communities and coastlines? San Francisco, Fire Island, Provincetown, Key West, Brighton . . . is it that we are being pushed from the center of our countries? Or are we just adept at snapping up the best real estate before the straight folks notice?)

What really struck me about the whole day, from the packed London express train to the Pride fair itself, was the importance that many people placed on the idea of this particular Pride being "local" and serving the "community." I first heard Brighton's event described in these terms from a London man who sat opposite me on the train. He said that he had skipped the London Mardi Gras because of its crass commercialism. He could not stand the idea of lining the pockets of corporate sponsors or having his day choreographed by outsiders. Brighton, he said, is a friendly, local affair. The whole community puts something into this Pride and therefore gets something out of it too. It's really ours!

As I sat listening to him claim this event as his own, I wondered about his definitions of "local," "community" and "ours." Clearly he did not live in Brighton, since I had met him on the train. Indeed, from the meager show of hands at the main stage when one of the performers asked who was from Brighton, very few people at the event were, geographically speaking, members of the Brighton community. In addition, as with the London Mardi Gras, Brighton Pride also had corporate sponsors, a big name act (Jimmy Somerville) and extremely expensive amusement park rides, carnival games and food stands. Yet, from the people I met at the event (locals, tourists, Londoners and many others) and from some of the material on the Internet (<http://eurogay.co.uk/article/0700/brightonpride.html>, in particular), Brighton Pride's success hinges on the belief in its being a local, community event. Rather than focusing on these examples of commercialization, people focused on the fact that Brighton is seen as a gay community, and its Pride event had free entry, a large number of local acts and the camaraderie of people heading to the bushes for a pee or a shag.

Since returning home from my travels, I have thought quite a bit about this event and the way its participants spoke about their experiences, their identities and their communities. In the end, the theme of this year's Brighton Pride, "Mythology," provides the closest thing to an explanation. While most costumed participants took this theme to mean something having to do with ancient Greece, I see it as the primary factor that allowed event participants to consider themselves a "community." The Londoner experienced Brighton's Pride as his own because he believed it to be so. He believed Brighton's event more closely approximated the "mythological" Pride events from the 1970s—small, local events organized by and for a small group of community members. The fact that Brighton Pride was not this at all is irrelevant because communities form around mythologies not realities.

Of course, as anthropologists, we are aware of the shifting boundaries of our ethnographic com-

munities and take great pains to explore their mythological bases. As the recent SOLGA debate on the nature of our community (academic, activist or both) and this Pride event highlight, we also need to continue to explore the foundations of our own belief in what constitutes a particular community.

*Please send your comments, new column ideas or other information to Barb West at [bwest@uop.edu](mailto:bwest@uop.edu). To sign up for the SOLGA listserv, send a message to [listserv@american.edu](mailto:listserv@american.edu) with "subscribe solga-1" in the body of the message.*

## Society for Linguistic Anthropology

• RICHARD SENGHAS AND JAMES STANLAW;  
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

### Nu Shu

Laura Miller, a very active SLA member, brings the following important item to our attention (as well as the interesting accompanying graphic):

"A few years ago on the LINGANTH e-mail list, there was a discussion about Nu Shu, a writing system used by women in southern China. A review [written by Miller] of Yue-Qing Yang's documentary film *Nu Shu: A Hidden Language of Women in China* is found in the latest 'Asian Education Media Service News and Reviews' (Vol 4, No 2, pp 6-7). Free copies of *News and Reviews*, which also contains ordering information for the film, may be requested from Sarah Barbour, Asian Educational Media Service, U of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, 805 W Pennsylvania Ave, Urbana, IL 61801; tel 217/265-0642; [www.aems.uiuc.edu](http://www.aems.uiuc.edu)."



Nu Shu

Nu shu—a writing system apparently developed by women in Jiangyong County of Hunan Province to record their personal correspondence and folktales to tell at story gathering—seems to go back to about the 15th century CE. Nu shu literally means "female writing" (as opposed to the "male characters" of standard Chinese). However, as Miller points out in her review, this writing system hardly was secret (she mentions William Chiang's 1995 book *We Two Know the Script; We Have Become Good Friends* as an English source). Ten years ago, however, Zhimin Xie published a massive three-volume, 2,000-page study of the script (*Jiangyong Nushu Zhi Mi*—"The Myth of Jiangyong Female Writing") challenging some of the romantic legends and sensationalized stories that have come out of the discovery of the Nu Shu script. Xie argues that the Nu Shu writing system is a descendant or outgrowth of the ancient oracle-bone scripts of 3,500 years ago that are the basis of modern Chinese ideographic characters.

Dingxu Shi reviewed Xie's book in *Language* (Vol 69, No 1, pp 174-178). He disagreed with Xie's hypothesis, arguing that it would be very hard indeed for a branch of oracle-bone script to survive for so long without being noticed. Also, the alleged similarity of Nu Shu characters to oracle-bone equivalents is not especially convincing.

In any case, as Shi says, "The linguistic and scientific significance of this discovery [of Nu Shu script] is often overlooked." But books such as Xie's (offering a corpus of 63,000 characters from some 200 works, allowing for rigorous study) and films such as Yang's (offering a human, visceral account of women's writing in a unique context) could give many anthropologists, linguists and teachers much food for thought.

### Asian Englishes Today

A new book series on the use of English in different Asian contexts has been started by Hong Kong U Press. An announcement from series editor Kingsley Bolton states, "Today it is widely recognized that the English language is no longer the possession of traditional Anglophone societies such as Britain or the US, but is widely used as an additional language in 80-odd societies from the Caribbean to Africa and Asia, where it is officially recognized alongside such national languages as Hindi, Bahasa Malaysia and Filipino. In societies such as Hong Kong, India, Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines, which were earlier the colonies of Anglophone powers, English has been retained for a range of pragmatic functions in such domains as government, law and education. The number of English-user residents in Asia totals over 600 million people. English is also an important pan-Asian lingua franca in the business world; so that, for example, when a factory manager from Vietnam sells garments to a Singaporean merchandiser, the language of choice is usually English." This series sets out to provide a contemporary record of the spread and development of English in South, Southeast and East Asia from both linguistic and literary perspectives. The first volume, *Asian Englishes: Be-*

*yond the Canon*, by Braj Kachru, is scheduled for release this fall. Subsequent volumes will include studies of English in Hong Kong, China, the Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, India and Japan.

Please send your comments, contributions, news and announcements to Richard Senghas ([richard.senghas@sonoma.edu](mailto:richard.senghas@sonoma.edu)) or Jim Stanlaw ([stanlaw@ilstu.edu](mailto:stanlaw@ilstu.edu)).

## Society for Medical Anthropology

FRED BLOOM AND ANN MILES, CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

### 2001 SMA Invited Sessions

By Suzanne Heurtin-Roberts (SMA Program Co-Chair)

The Society for Medical Anthropology will sponsor five invited sessions this year. Four of the sessions are cosponsored by other AAA sections, providing some exciting opportunities for expanded discussions in medical anthropology. "New World Disorders: Exploring the Intersections of Medical and Environmental Anthropology," chaired by Krista Harper, will be cosponsored by the Anthropology and Environment section. Anthropology's growing concern for human rights draws attention to environmental issues and the topical and theoretical interests shared by both medical and environmental anthropology. Presenting recent ethnographic research, the panel will examine how power relations of gender, race, class and knowledge affect environments and bodies. Panelists will explore shifting roles of the ethnographer as social scientist witness and advocate for communities facing environmental health risks.

"Rewriting Disability: Agency, Silences and Social Landscapes" will be cosponsored by the American Ethnological Society, and chaired and organized by Sumi Colligan, Gelya Frank, Faye Ginsburg, Gail Landsman and Rayna Rapp. This session will seek to discuss anthropological perspectives on politics and social activism in disability studies while placing disability within the production and reproduction of broader forms of social inequality. Papers will map the interrelationship of governmentality with commercial, scientific, medical and kinship institutions in producing and transforming disability.

Daniel Lende and Claire Sterk will chair "Anthropology and Addiction," a session to be cosponsored by the NASA. This session will explore how anthropology can help to explain addiction and how it can inform interventions, including prevention, treatment and policy. Presenters will draw on a broad range of theoretical approaches coupled with holistic, person-centered research to understand and address fundamental issues of drug abuse. Emphasis will be placed on bringing greater definition and consistency to anthropological approaches to the study of drug abuse.

The anthropology of aging and later life will be explored in the session "Will Anthropology Grow

Up Before It Grows Old?" Chaired and organized by Jay Sokolovsky and Dena Shenk, this session will bring together scholars who have conducted long-term research on aging-related issues in diverse cultural settings. Each paper will address how anthropological studies of aging and maturity can force our field to reassess an understanding of classical issues that anthropology has addressed over its history.

"Suffering, the Body, and Religion" will be cosponsored by the Anthropology and Religion Section, organized by Betty Wolder Levin and chaired by Sara Bergstresser and Margaret Souza. The panel, which will explore the importance of both the secular and the religious in the experience of suffering and pain, will include discussions of physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual aspects of suffering.

"Illness and Illusions of Control" will be explored in a session chaired by Cameron Hay. This session will seek to understand how anxiety over perceived chaos and control (or illusions thereof) are related to illness. This issue will be addressed by medical, psychological and biocultural anthropologists, using ethnographic and comparative data. This session's goal will be to draw these diverse points of view into a dialogue about the insights a focus on control can provide. All SMA members are encouraged to attend all of these sessions.

See the AAA website for specific dates, times and locations of forums, sessions, workshops and section business meetings at the Annual Meeting.

### Last Call for Abstracts

By Ruthbeth Finerman (U of Memphis)

As reported in last month's column, the Society for Medical Anthropology will hold meetings in conjunction with the Society for Applied Anthropology in Atlanta in Spring 2002! See the Co-opportunities section in this month's *AN* for more information about submitting abstracts.

To submit to this column, contact Ann Miles, Dept of Anthropology, Western Michigan U, Kalamazoo, MI 49008; tel 616/387-3983; fax 616/387-3999; Miles@wmich.edu; www.cudenver.edu/public/sma.

## Society for Psychological Anthropology

KEVIN BIRTH, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

### SPA in DC

The SPA is sponsoring several very interesting sessions at the AAA meetings this year.

The invited session "Culture, Disability, and the Adolescence to Young Adulthood Transition: Longitudinal Ethnographic Studies of Young Adults" will be organized by Thomas S Weisner (UCLA). The papers will be: "I Speak a Different Dialect": Teen Explanatory Models of Difference and Disability," by Tamara C Daley (UCLA) and

Thomas S Weisner (UCLA); "A Good Friend is Hard to Find: Meanings and Consequences of Friendship among Adolescents with Disabilities," by Catherine C Matheson (UCLA) and Rebecca J Olsen (UCLA); "Family, Friends and Faith: The Use of Faith-Based Services as Social Networks among Families with Developmentally Delayed Teens," by Louise E Tallen (UCLA) and Catherine C Matheson (UCLA); and "Beyond the Three R's: School Experiences of Adolescents with Disabilities," by Mary P Dingle (UCLA/Sonoma State U) and Nancy Miller (UCLA). Debra Skinner (UNC-Chapel Hill) will be the discussant.

The invited session "Suffering and Identity" will be organized by Rebecca S Norris (Boston U). The papers will be: "Suffering as Success for Aymara Women," by Winifred L Mitchel (Minnesota State U-Mankato); "Starving to Life," by Andrea N Frolic (Rice U); "Burning into a Bodhisattva: The Paradox of Taiwanese Buddhism," by Hillary K Crane (Brown U); "Forbidden Ideologies: The Experience of Suffering among Religious and Political Prisoners in the Soviet Union," by Catherine Wanner (Penn State U); and "Suffering, Sacrifice, and Identity among Biker Veterans," by Jill Dubisch (Northern Arizona U). Paul Brodwin (U of Wisconsin-Milwaukee) will be the discussant.

The invited session "Modern Minds: Psychological Dimensions of Globalization" will be organized by Conerly Casey (UCLA) and Alex Hinton (Rutgers U). The papers will be: "The Global Ecumene and Mental Life," by Daniel Linger (UC-Santa Cruz); "Global Flows and Local Realities: Khmer Rouge Ideology in the Cambodian Genocide," by Alex Hinton (Rutgers U); "Kothi, Panthi or Gay? Globalization of Homosexual Identity in Bangladesh," by Michael Adair-Kriz (Northern Arizona U); "Security and Morality in a Northern Nigeria: Youth Gangs as the Keepers and Breakers of Sharia Law," by Conerly Casey (UCLA); and "Passionate Props Facing Civilizational Clashes in Central Africa," by Renaat Devisch (U of Leuven/Louvain-Belgium). Fred R Myers (NYU) will be discussant.

The invited session "Cultures of Trauma" will be organized by Joshua Breslau (Harvard U). The papers will be: "Cross-Cultural Counting: The Global Epidemiology of PTSD," by Joshua Breslau (Harvard U); "Pavlov vs. Freud: The Role of Trauma in the Etiology of Mental Disorder in Late Socialist Vietnam," by Narquis Barak (Harvard U); "Nostalgia for the Past in the Traumatic Present of Late Capitalist Chile," by Clara Y Han (Harvard U); "Negotiating Discourse and Practices of Trauma: The Kurdish and Bosnian Refugee Experience," by Corina Salis Gross (U of Bern) and Mitchell Weiss (U of Basel-Swiss Tropical Inst); "Where Is a Poor Man to Find Happiness? Emotion, Poverty, and the Politics of Suffering among Somali Returnees in Ethiopia," by Christina Zarowsky (Intl Development Research Ctr); and "The Political Economy of Trauma: The Uses of 'Victims' in Haiti," by Erica Razafimbahiny (Harvard U). Robert Desjarlais (Sarah Lawrence C) will be discussant.

