

NEWS IN BRIEF

IUAES 16TH WORLD CONGRESS IN CHINA

The 16th World Congress of the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, *Humanity, Development and Cultural Diversity*, took place in Kunming, China, 24–31 July, 2009. The main organizers were IAUES and China Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (CUAES), Yunnan University and Yunnan Nationalities University. The large congress convened more than 6,000 researchers from all over Europe, America, Africa and Asia.

Different exhibitions were displayed, e.g. on the research history of ethnology and anthropology in China. A large exhibition showcased different academic publications, as well as arts and handicrafts. The organizers had also displayed old instruments, never previously seen in Europe, yet still played by Chinese people. The participants had a possibility to see some old videos about China or visit the special sessions of anthropological films. At the end of the congress days there were concerts of traditional music and dance. International exhibitions and posters of research projects provided a multi-faceted overview of the trends and events in the field. The delegates could take part in day trips to the Kunming ethnographic museum, other places of interest, local museums, temples, familiarize themselves with the everyday life, thus obtaining an understanding about China's past and future.

Panel 6, focusing on the transfer of knowledge and children agency: reconstructing the paradigms of socialization, was chaired by Marine Carrin, France. M. Carrin, aiming at examining global children's culture, stated that "culture changes from one generation to another and the classic paradigm of socialization – conceived as learning or assimilating one's culture has, rightly, been criticized as too simplistic. Cultural knowledge is not only transferred from one generation to another, it is also generated among children, giving rise to a children's culture which forms part of the base of the knowledge of the young."

Panelists Alexis Avdeeff, Olga Artemova, Dominique Blanc, Cécile Guillaume, Mare Kõiva, Hasnia-Sonia Messaoui, Harald Tambs-Lyche, Marine Garrin Tambs-Lyche, Gladys Chicharron Saito, Marine Carrine, Lidia Guzy, Véronique Bénei and Uwe Skoda observed mainly Indian, Australian and European children's culture. The discussion entailed etymological and metaphorical levels of *Dalkai* dance, concerning the adaptation of dance and music into the children's life, and the meaning of *Dalkai* (sisters worship their brothers who pay for dancing and singing), unfortunately the archaic tradition is quite rare. The presentation on ritual practices in a Saoro village paid attention to how children learn rituals (among the group of peers, adults, at school, at religious rituals and from ritual specialists). Children's games are an important tool: mimic and parody of adult activities is at the same time part of the learning process. Kim children, for example, do not want to obey their parents and are not interested in going to school. The members of the Australian aboriginal Aurukun society tend to look at education from two contradictory perspectives, from inside and outside. Children



*Congress participants with a folk art group of students.
Photo by Andres Kuperjanov 2009.*

often prefer dance and more traditional ways of life because of the negative implications from outside.

The presentation on Chinese youth language demonstrated different ways of writing Chinese on the computer. Actually, there is a special computer-language with shortened words, emoticons, Chinese and international abbreviations. The newest trend is to use some loans from Japanese *mangas*.

M. Kõiva's presentation (in cooperation with L. and R. L. Vesik) introduced computer-based communication and the learning processes in social networks Rate.ee, Orkut, etc.

The general discussion encompassed educational problems – school graduates experience a contradiction between economic and cultural knowledge obtained from school, and the local life and social networks. School-leavers tend to have insufficient knowledge of local languages, this bringing about cultural oppression and making it difficult to construct personal identity in the circumstances of global ideologies, political parties, churches, NGOs, schools and families. How to change and influence the choices: children whose parents are militants would often follow their path. Are there other possibilities, do the traditions help change the worldview and behavior? Oral transmission of knowledge and learning from other generations is still important in contemporary society. Formal learning is one part in the transmission process, but very important is the essential transmission of experience.

Andres Kuperjanov, another Estonian participant in the IAUES congress, gave a presentation in the folklore section on Moon-lore.

As the congress took place in the university, there were plenty of student volunteers, and although some of them could not speak perfect English they did their best to help the delegates. The volunteers were extremely nice and helpful, it was really fun to talk to them and they could tell a lot of things about China.

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