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Ti Similla

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Baguio chemistry professor named UP Scientist

Professor of Chemistry Elsie Jimenez has just been conferred the title of UP Scientist as part of her U.P. Scientific Productivity Award. She is among the first batch of 23 faculty and researchers recommended by the System Committee on U.P. Scientific Productivity to the Board of Regents which approved the awards during its 1211th Meeting on July 28, 2006.

The awardees were nominated by the different CUs and were evaluated as "deserving of the title and Award based on their scientific and technological outputs during the period January 201 until December 2005 as well as their scientific and professional standings in the international scientific community." Prof. Jimenez has ten ISI publications, two patents and a book chapter.

From the BOR minutes, "the title shall be for a period of three years, 2006-2008, unless earlier separated from service from the University or retired." The award comes with an annual monetary component.

"It took a lot of hard work and persistence," said Prof. Jimenez who acknowledges that her output only came about because of her collaborative work with other researchers at the University of Utah. With very limited laboratory facilities locally, she says the least that UP can do to enable the faculty to contribute to the generation of scientific knowledge is to support their collaborative activities with researchers outside the country.

Professor Jimenez has received four International Publication Awards in 2005 for co-authoring four articles in ISI journals: *Journal of Biological Chemistry* (280, 4247), *Biochemistry* (44, 7897), *Biochemistry* (44, 8176), and *Federation of European Biochemical Society Journal* (272, 4178). The articles are connected to her continuing research on *Conus* venom.

Also, former UP Baguio instructor in Biology Malona P. Velasco-Alinsug received an IPA award for co-authoring with GC Rivero and T. Quibuyen the article "Isolation of Mercury-binding Peptides in Vegetative Parts of *Chromolaena odorata*" in *Zeitschrift fur Naturforschung C* (60, 252).

Dr. Jimenez said this could be the last of the International Publication Awards with the institution of the new UP administration's award scheme. ■



REVISITING CORDILLERA AUTONOMY

■ Charita A. Delos Reyes

On the occasion of the celebration of Cordillera Month in July, the Cordillera Studies Center (CSC) sponsored a forum that rekindled the Cordillera autonomy issue on 25 July 2006 at the UP Baguio Multipurpose Hall. A plurality of voices on autonomy was generated from four resource speakers, representing a multi-sectoral group from the government, the academe, a people's organization, and an NGO.

Regional autonomy for the CAR Development Agenda

Leon Dacanay, the Director of NEDA-CAR, shared that the Regional Development Council's (RDC) perspective on *regional autonomy* is the overarching theme of CAR Development Agenda from 2006 – 2010. The re-emerging interest to pursue autonomy rests on the need to speed up regional development which is hindered by the state of flux of CAR DevAd structures and processes. Also, the recent initiatives for change in the national administrative set-up are perceived to bring opportunity or threat to the autonomy quest.

In addition, Dacanay stressed that re-as-

serting the right to autonomy is advantageous to the CAR in as much as the region is perceived to accomplish more economic gains under an autonomous set-up. The eventual political and fiscal autonomy would make feasible the implementation of the regional development agenda. In addition, the region would also be able to establish a position of strength for future negotiations on autonomy through the reinvention of the RDC. Reinvention means that the RDC would continue to assume the powers and functions granted to the CAR bodies under EO 220, and that the RDC would take steps to prepare the region for autonomy; and to advance the socio-economic and cultural development of the region. Part of this reinvention scheme is to ask for a presidential amendment of EO 30 and of EO 220 from Congress.

In preparing for the regional autonomy, the reinvented RDC has three-pronged objectives: Firstly, to gain insights from its experience of past autonomy exercises and procedures by surfacing the true sentiments on the autonomy issue. This could be done by

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AT THE HELM: Chancellor Priscilla S. Macansantos, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Ma. Nela Florendo, Vice Chancellor for Administration Teofina Rapanut, College of Social Sciences Dean Raymundo Rovillos, College of Arts and Communication Dean Elizabeth Calinawagan, College of Science Dean Wilfredo Alangui, University Registrar Teofino Macabiog, Director of Student Affairs Anavic Bagmaspad, Cordillera Studies Center Director Delfin Tolentino and Public Affairs OIC Jimmy Fong, and areas of collaboration, were presented to the community on August 14



DACANAY: Showcase the region towards genuine fiscal autonomy through the implementation of EO 220 provisions

conducting a study to reassess the awareness of Cordillerans on the autonomy issue and to gauge their preparedness to push anew the call for autonomy. Secondly, the RDC intends to showcase the region towards genuine fiscal autonomy through the reimplementation of EO 220 provision on taxes and resources. Under this, the RDC would prepare a position paper on the issue that the Local Government Code of 1991 (a general law) cannot amend EO 220 (a special law). Thirdly, raising substantial revenues to replace national government subsidy through (a) collection of fees and charges; (b) incomes of economic enterprises. Strategies in implementing this would include completion of a study on potential sources of fees and charges, including an assessment of foregone national subsidies with the sidelining of EO 220 provisions on taxes and revenues; exploring how CAR could embark on economic enterprises through surrogate equity ownership; and taking steps to evolve itself into a quasi-LGU in order to have a corporate character.

Finally, in advancing the socio-economic and cultural development of the CAR, the RDC is tasked to implement the regional development agenda by aggressively pushing for the Key Focus Areas (KFAs) for regional development. It plans to review and update the RDIP for projects that will push for the realization of the KFAs; and to promote CAR

as a prime investment area for projects that will push for the realization of the KFAs.

Frustrated and productive discourse on Cordillera autonomy

Dr. June Prill-Brett, Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at UP Baguio, reiterated the salient findings of a previous study by Dr. Athena Lydia-Casambre entitled, *The Frustrated Discourse on Regional Autonomy in the Cordillera (Northern Luzon, Philippines) and Notes Toward a Productive Discourse*. Prill-Brett confirms that there is a continuing academic and political puzzlement on the failure of the establishment of the Cordillera region as provided for in Article X, Sec. 15 of the 1986 Constitution, with the rejection of the Organic Acts on two occasions – in January 1990 and in March 1998. This she attributes to four positions, namely: a more practical alternative is the regularization of the Cordillera region as an administrative unit; the law ought to provide clearly for an autonomous region, but R.A. 8438 is seriously flawed as unconstitutional; any law is inutile so long as it regards the region as a “resource base” for exploitation by the elites, and so long as other laws (e.g. IPRA, Mining Act) contravene the objective of genuine regional autonomy; and that the law provides for new governmental structures, entailing additional offices available for electoral contests among interested politicians.

Further, she says, the failure is caused by *ignorance* due to the lack of information, education and communication (IEC); *indifference* due to the lack of strong feelings for autonomy; *skepticism* due to questions on equitability of resources and the possibilities with Baguio; and *disagreement with the law* of POs, militant groups, and the Cordillera Peoples Alliance.

Prill-Brett shared options regarding the autonomy issue. If the Organic Act is repealed, there is a need to either pass one of the several House bills proposing a regular region or a third organic act for an autonomous region. If amended, then one has to consider EO 325 (administrative decentralization) or a proposed option drafted by an ad hoc committee under the Senate Committee on Development Administration and Autonomy.

A second point raised is an attempt to

identify the direction for a productive rather than a frustrated discourse on Cordillera autonomy. She suggests one of distillation of the essences of the Cordillera heritage: “The substantive discourse on Cordillera regional autonomy for the past 15 years or so has bogged down on the issue of the diversity of Cordillera indigenous and customary practices, and the attendant wariness about the ascendancy of one group in an autonomous Cordillera region...the constitutional provision referring to a distinct Cordillera culture cannot be taken to imply a particular set of indigenous social practices, but rather the fact itself of indigenous and customary practices still existing in the Cordillera. Thus the rationale of an autonomous Cordillera region is



PRILL-BRETT: Autonomy is from the grassroots as opposed to a discourse that is driven by the political scenarios of would-be officials

to preserve and promote indigenous and customary practice in the Cordillera, granting the diversity of indigenous practices, and granting the dynamic – not fossilized – character of these practices.”

Prill-Brett culls from her studies certain requirements of a productive discourse on Cordillera autonomy as follows: *land ownership* that rests on the primary of access to land by the people and the value on equality demonstrated in the redistributive function of ritual feasts; *resource management*; and *conflict resolution* through legal pluralism as an essential fea-

ture of regional Cordillera governance.

Lastly, she argues that a regional autonomous government must focus its efforts in upholding *ili* (village) level self-governance, not on creating or amalgamating a new locus (i.e. region) of self-governance. She challenges political leaders in the Cordillera to imagine a structure of governance that is not simply a mirror image of the national government and mainstream local governments. The meaning of the call for the definition of autonomy is “from the grassroots” as opposed to a discourse that is driven by the political scenarios of would-be officials or leaders of an autonomous Cordillera region.

Federation: A good perspective for the Cordillera

Marcelina Bahatan, the president of the Cordillera Bodong Administration-Kalinga, asserts that the movement for regional autonomy is a collective endeavor rooted in the history of the Cordillera people’s struggle. According to Bahatan, the regional autonomy is a constantly negotiated autonomy. She insists on the need to compromise by accepting first the Organic Act that created the CAR (E.O. 220) before revising or amending the act.

She added reasons as to why the Organic Act on regional autonomy was rejected. For one, many people feared the alteration of their status. Others were alarmed over the uncertainty of the future considering the vacuum of credible leadership in the Cordillera for a new concept and system.

Moreover, Bahatan enumerates three major stages of challenges, such as: unification for a common demand for one last Organic Act plebiscite and a unified popular decision to accept or finally reject the Organic Act and the subsequent autonomy; the active participation of all sectors in the installation of credible leaders in the regional elective positions; and the struggle within the regional autonomous government legislative assembly for the right direction and perspective of leadership to truly serve the interest of the Cordillera people.

The CBA-CPLA affirms that federalism is a good perspective for the Cordillera, provided that it should not be less than the benefits of an autonomous region. Federalism, however, remains a remote possibility as of



BAHATAN: Compromise by accepting first the organic act that created the CAR before revising or amending the act

today, thus it is not an immediate option for the region. Besides, the proposed federal states would merely follow geographic locations (i.e., Luzon will be divided into the Northern, Central, Southern, and NCR) and CAR would remain a “mega-region” with no separate identity, hence the region’s annexation to Regions 1 and 2. The Cordillera would still demand autonomy under a federal system.

Genuine Regional Autonomy (GRA)

Windel Bolinget, the secretary general of the Cordillera Peoples’ Alliance, stressed that an appropriate form of self-determination for indigenous peoples of the Cordillera is a Genuine Regional Autonomy (GRA), which is differentiated from a structural autonomy or local government autonomy. By GRA, the CPA and militant mass movement mean “democratic self-rule for a politically united Cordillera.”

Bolinget enumerated eight essential aspects of an autonomous set-up as an expression of self-governance, namely: (1) full recognition of the ancestral land rights of the people in accordance with their traditionally defined boundaries, and to include all natural resources therein; (2) respect for the territorial integrity of the Cordillera region as the collective homeland of the Cordillera peoples

with prior collective right and patrimony over the natural resources of the region; (3) equal respect for the diverse indigenous socio-political systems and culture of the various indigenous groups in the region and the active promotion of consensus building, cooperation and mutual understanding; (4) setting up of an autonomous government with democratic representation of IP groups and sectors and that is directly accountable to the people. It should be with respect to and consistent with existing positive indigenous practices of self-governance. This autonomous government shall be democratically chosen and shall uphold democratic processes and direct people’s participation; (5) recognition of the democratic rights of the different sectors, of both indigenous peoples and non-indigenous residents in the region. This includes recognition of valid land and property claims or ownership based on just grounds; (6) equal access to government basic services and needed infrastructures shall be provided; (7) recognition and respect that will allow the majority to contribute to the process of defining a development thrust and program for the region that is people-centered, consistent with the needs of the majority, geared towards a self-reliant and sustainable use of resources with respect to the environment and people’s overall development; and (8) appropriate educational system that will recognize the use of local languages, geared towards literacy development, nondiscriminatory, scientific and nationalist.

The envisioned genuine regional autonomy embodies the democratic processes and principles of self-governance and full control by the people of their land and resources, thus ensuring the material base of the region and the political power to exercise self-governance. The CPA holds that there can be no genuine regional autonomy in the Cordillera without real national democracy in the country. “Bogus democracy only begets bogus autonomy.”

While regional autonomy remains to be an elusive goal in the immediate future, attempts at strategizing through policy formulations, advocacy, information and educational campaigns, and feasibility studies remain to be in the offing. ■

2006 International Conference on Mathematical Analysis and its Applications

MATH, BANGKOK AND LOVE

■ Jerico B. Bacani

The 1999 classical romance movie *Anna and the King* was the story of Anna Leonowens (Jodie Foster), a British school teacher who traveled to Siam (ancient name of Thailand) to educate the 58 children plus 70 housewives and concubines of King Mongkut (Chow Yun-Fat).

I appreciated the splendid settings (such as the huge palace of the king and the temple where Anna taught the king's children) and the glittering costumes and magnificent performance of the stars. I also remember the movie because of the love story.

Last month, I watched the movie for the second time on DVD. To my surprise, I heard the name Chulalongkorn as I was viewing it. The name was never instilled in my mind the first time I saw the film. Perhaps, I often do not mind the other stars except for the leading ones when I watch movies.

I have been in Thailand lately and I thought that this word is just the name of a historic place. I never knew that Chulalongkorn was the name of a significant person in Thailand. I found out in the movie that he was the eldest child of King Mongkut. Because of that name, I got even more interested to watch the film.

Why am I so interested in that name? Primarily because I attended a conference in Thailand last May 24 to May 26, 2006, which was hosted by the Chulalongkorn University (commonly known as Chula). Specifically, I attended the 2006 International Conference on Mathematical Analysis and Its Applications (ICMAA 2006) which was held at the four-star Montien Hotel in Bangkok, in celebration of the 72nd anniversary of Chula's Department of Mathematics.

My first international journey

I was so excited and pretty nervous because it was my first international flight. I could not believe that I will be able to travel abroad just by doing research. I was really more than excited to experience what it feels to be in another coun-

try for a very short period of time. While in the craft, I entertained myself by talking to a lady seated beside me, read the current news, and watched the movie *King Kong* on a small screen in front of me. After a while I was already at the Bangkok International Airport. I arrived at 2 p.m. but in my watch it was only 1 p.m. I realized that their time is one-hour ahead of ours. It means that I was 60,000 ft. above sea level for about two and a half hours. At the airport somebody picked me up as expected.

My hotel transfer from the airport was included in the package provided by a travel agent. We were six passengers in the van, all Filipinos – the four guys were going to a business meeting, a lady will be touring, and I will go to a conference. On the way to my hotel, I saw the very big and wide Grand Palace where royal residences and government offices are also situated. I also saw a tricycle-looking vehicle called *tuk-tuk* which can sit about three passengers at the back of the driver. And believe me they can overtake taxi cabs.

The four other guys were brought to Arnoma Hotel, opposite the eight-storey World Trade Center building. (I thought World Trade Center can only be seen in New York). I and a lady were brought to Mandarin Hotel located at Rama IV (Fact: Rama IV is King Mongkut, Chulalongkorn's father). Exhausted, I slept without having dinner.

Morning came. I had my free breakfast.

The good thing in this hotel is that they serve breakfast buffet style. Eat what you want, eat all you can. With no hesitation, I ate a lot. Then I wandered around Bangkok.

I spent my first morning by first visiting the venue of the conference which is 10 minutes walk from my hotel. Then I walked through the host school just to get familiar with the location. Afterwards I went to MBK (*Mab Boon Krong*) Shopping Mall, located across Siam Square, where most of the goods are smuggled in making this mall one of the cheapest places for Panasonic, Sony and Aiwa appliances. Here people sell a lot of fake designer goods and clothes which, for the locals, are the cheapest. But for me the products are more expensive than ours, because what you can buy there for 150 baht (the Thai currency and where one baht is equal to two pesos), you can buy here for 150 pesos. But, of course, I bought souvenir items that cannot be found in the Philippines, mostly shirts printed with elephant, tiger, tuktuk, and Grand Palace pictures. By the way, I went to MBK by bus which is number coded. This way, I supposed that their heavy traffic jams will be reduced. Bus 56 led me to MBK.

I spent the rest of the day roaming around the city. I knew that I could hardly find time to tour Bangkok once the conference started. First, I went to Thailand's historical river, the Chao Phraya. They say that a visit to Bangkok would not be complete without a trip on this river. So I had one. I learned that the Thais in the past traveled through the rivers and canals (they still do). I saw houses on water and the people on small boats selling souvenirs. I saw typical old houses, the impressive architectures of the temples, and the magnificent Grand Palace. The guide told us that the Emerald Buddha



inside the palace compound is the protector of their kingdom, Buddhism being the major religion in Thailand. The boat stopped at a certain place and we fed a school of big fish with bread.

The Temple of Dawn on the west bank is a 79-meter-high pagoda designed with ceramic tiles and multicolored porcelain fragments. I paid 30 baht to enter but Thais are admitted free. I posed for some pictures, and went home to prepare for the conference.

My first day in the conference

ICMAA 2006 commenced on May 24. Registration fee is 6000 baht. The organizers, through the sponsorship of the Mathematical Association of Thailand, the National Research Council of Thailand, and the Chulalongkorn University brought together 144 mathematicians, scientists, economists, and users of Analysis and its tools. Eight of these were plenary speakers; 42 including me gave short talks; the rest just attended. Participants came from different regions of Thailand and various countries like India, Malaysia, France, the Philippines, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, The Sultanate of Oman, Singapore, Vietnam, Uganda, United States of America, Armenia, Pakistan, Nigeria, and Iran.

Prof. Soottiporn Chittmitrappap (a nice name, huh?), Vice President of Research and Development at Chulalongkorn University, opened the conference. Short talks happened simultaneously in Rooms I, II and III of Montien Hotel; plenary sessions were in Room I only. In these rooms we shared our respective works, exchanged ideas with other researchers and educators, and discussed research findings and 'new knowledge' in modern mathematics.

On the first day I was able to listen to lectures mostly by Chula faculty members, some of which were the following: *Nonexpansive mappings defined on unbounded domains*; *Non-commutative Geometry and categories*; *Convergence criteria of a new three-step iterations with errors for nonexpansive nonself – Mappings*; *Some random fixed points for pseudo-contractive random operators*; and *Fixed point solutions of variational inequalities for nonexpansive semigroups in Hilbert spaces*.

Meanwhile, I met Prof. Wilson Cordova, a famous young math professor of De La Salle University. Probably he is 3, 4, or 5 years older than me. He teaches not only

in La Salle but also in three other schools in Manila. I envy this guy because at his young age, he already traveled abroad more than ten times. He is a writer, too, of math textbooks for high school. We were the only Filipinos in the conference. I was the only Filipino who presented a paper though. I also met Prof. Fulton Gonzales who teaches in Tufts University in the U.S. He was born in the Philippines but raised in the U.S.A.

I also met Dr. Sajee Pianskool, a member of the organizing committee, who informed me that I was accepted to present a paper. I thought she was a man because of the sound of her name. I just smiled upon meeting a young, shy-type lady.

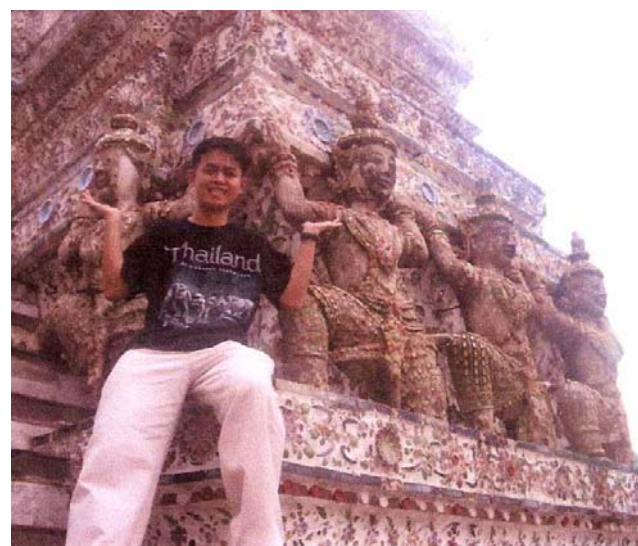
I also met the friendly and accommodating Dr. Kritsana Neammanee. He accompanied the foreign participants on a campus tour where I learned that Chulalongkorn University was the first institution of higher learning in Thailand, founded by King Rama VI (another one of Chulalongkorn's son). We were not able to go inside their department for some reason. He took us instead to the top of one of their school buildings to see the wide university area and to view Bangkok. Then I dropped by a bookstore on campus and bought some souvenirs.

At 6 p.m., we were gathered in a place for a warm welcome dinner. Food was abundant. As expected, most were spicy – but not that much, so I enjoyed eating. They also served abundant fruits like guyabano, pineapples, bananas, oranges, guavas as big as avocados, rambutan, and many more. This was also my first time to eat a mangosteen fruit and what I can say is... *a-roy!* (in Thai it means delicious). The organizers encouraged us to bring home some fruits. This was the time I believed Prof. Cordova will never forget me because he was laughing when he saw me with a plastic bag half-full of fruits. I brought this home and gave it to a beautiful lady in the hotel.

Research in Analysis

Mathematical Analysis, or simply Analysis, is a discipline of mathematics that depends on the concepts of limits and convergence. It deals with topics like continuity, differentiability and integration. These topics are often discussed in the context of real numbers, complex numbers, and their func-

tions. In fact, Mathematical Analysis arose from the rigorous formulation of calculus. Furthermore, this branch of mathematics has the following subdivisions: real analysis, complex analysis, harmonic analysis, and functional analysis, among others. I'm working under a new subfield of analysis: spectral analysis. Spectral analysis includes the study of some differential operators' properties like *spectrum* and *nullities*. There are several types of differential operators but I am interested in operators known as Special Expressions. The spectrum of operators is also classified



as *point spectrum* and *essential spectrum*. I am concerned with the latter property. On May 25, I presented my paper entitled *On admissible perturbations that preserve essential spectrum in $L_2^w(I)$* . The main objective of the paper was to define an *admissible perturbation* in weighted space and give appropriate conditions on a *weight function* so that the admissible perturbation would preserve the essential spectrum of a specific class of special expressions in that space.

It was a wonderful learning experience for me to present my research result before foreign mathematicians. Though it was only for 20 minutes, I was very proud to share with them what I did for almost a year, one of the results I got when doing my master's thesis. I am very thankful to two important persons – my thesis adviser Dr. Marian Roque, and thesis reader Dr. Julius Caesar Agapito, both from the Department of Mathematics in UP Diliman. Without them, probably I would not appreciate doing re-



Husband and wife on top of one of Chula's buildings overlooking Bangkok

search in mathematics. I am also grateful to my colleagues in the department for their continued encouragement and to UP Baguio for the funding.

At around 6 p.m. we had a dinner party. Everyone was happy especially when the so-called Ponglang I-san Chula Show started. The performers are members of Chulalongkorn's Isan Arts and Culture Club. (Isan is the poorest region of Thailand, located at the northeastern part.) They performed several cultural dances using their native instruments like *Kan* (a famous Isan instrument; a wind instrument similar to a flute), *Pin* (a stringed instrument similar to a banjo), *Klong* (a drum), *Hai* (an earthen jar that produces a resonating sound when the elastic string stretched over the opening is plucked), and the *Ponglang* (which is a hardwood percussion instrument similar to the modern xylophone). The opening dance was the *Bie Sri Soo Kwan* which they believe would bring luck and happiness to tourists during their stay in Bangkok. Next was the *Serng Yae Kai Mod Dang*. *Kai mod dang* is ant eggs, and in the dance they showed the method of poking these ant eggs from a tree. *Ae Dok Koon* dance followed. *Dok Koon* is a famous Isan flower and they demonstrated how Thai women use it to beautify their hair and body. They also performed *Serng Kapoh*, a coconut shell dance, similar to our *Maglalatik*. What I liked most was the *Fon Kan* dance. It was portrayed why Isan girls preferred boys who can play *Kan*, and how they imagine their boyfriend every time they hear its sound. I enjoyed every fast and lively music they played.

Then somebody sang *Superstar* by the Carpenters. Afterwards, she sang a Filipino song, as requested by the organizers. And she

sang *Himig ng Pag-ibig* by Asin. Surprisingly Prof. Chariya Uiyasathian, called me on stage to sing its English translation. I was a bit shy but I did it just for fun. She sang one line at a time, and I plainly translated it the same way. Then I saw everyone smiling and laughing at us and heard the audience's cheerful applause. But it's unfair because only the lady was given a souvenir, huhu.... Moreover, Prof. Chariya initiated a fun game that required common sense and/or mathematical thinking. Though there was no exact answer for each problem, most of the participants appreciated my answers and so they gave me a reward, a Thai silk scarf. Wow! I enjoyed the fun that night.

Through Bangkok's night markets

The next day, I went back to the conference to attend the remaining plenary lectures. The Fil-am professor was one of the speakers. (I forgot to mention that this professor also translated in English the song *Dabil Sa Iyo* by Pilita Corales during the party.) He presented a paper entitled *The Matrix Radon Transform*.

We had our farewell lunch but before I left, I approached the three nice faculty members I met and gave them something that they would remember me by. I handed them copies of my own Math poems.

I spent my last night in Bangkok by going to Bangkok's newest night market, the Suan Lum Night Bazaar, located east of Lumpini Park on Rama IV road. I reached the place by taking the subway train (my first time, too). It was really a great place to go at night time. There I saw a very big ferry's wheel which I have never seen before. Lots of stalls sell mostly shirts, arts and crafts. There was even a big stage with bands playing to keep everybody entertained. I left with lots of souvenirs in my backpack.

It was already late in the night when I passed along Montien Hotel. Little did I know that across the hotel is Patpong road, the place where visitors love to stay at night. *Patpong* is a large night market, too, with quality clothes, leather goods, watches, etc. But be sure you know how to bargain well because most of the products are sold to foreigners for about six times the original price. You can also see t-shirts with pictures of naked women printed on them, or shirts with nasty drawings. Foreigners flock to the place because of the many bars along the road

where one can see from outside a group of 30 or more Thai bar girls in their bikinis dancing and seemingly attracting possible customers. Though I have not seen such, I heard that inside the bars are sex live shows, and naked girls doing the so-called ping pong show (where a girl blasts a ping pong ball from her pussy for a target about 15 ft. away) and smoking with their genitalia (censored!). I might have seen these things if my wife were not with me (Just kidding!).

Once-in-a-lifetime experience

I learned that Analysis is advanced and keeps on extending. Researches in this branch of mathematics are done everywhere. Every participant or group seeks a unique result in their fields of specialization. Though most of the lecturers have different problems to work on, I observed that most Thai mathematicians were working on things related to non-expansive mappings and fixed point theorems. I hope I could collaborate with them in the future.

The conference, too, became my means of knowing Thailand, particularly Bangkok. Though it was just a brief stay, I believe I learned new things, especially on how the Thais preserved their rich cultures and architectural designs. I also observed that Thais are very much like Filipinos – how they dress, how they smile, and how they look like. But we are still much ahead in English.

Lastly, I shall say that the conference will be forever remembered because of the presence of my loving wife. Yes, it is true that I traveled together with my wife, Cecil. She was the lady seated right beside me inside the plane, the lady in the van, the gorgeous lady to whom I gave the bunch of fruits, and that 'somebody' who sang the Asin song in the party. She was there when I presented my paper. She was my inspiration. She was with me wherever I went during my five-day stay in Thailand. Actually we got married two days before my flight. And I worked hard just to bring her with me to Thailand. It was really a wonderful, memorable, and a once-in-a-lifetime experience to travel abroad for the very first time and to present a paper in front of people with beautiful minds from around the world, and seeing a beautiful, very supportive partner in life listening to your abstract work. The honeymoon in Bangkok is, of course, a different story. ■

Walking the streets of Istanbul

■ Anna Christie Torres

In her proposal for funding of several academics from underrepresented countries to attend the sixth Crossroads in Cultural Studies Conference, Association for Cultural Studies chair Meaghan Morris had to grapple with the question, "What makes an international conference truly international?" She contends that the practice of some conference organizers is to have one or two token participants from at least one other country. The ACS deliberately organizes its conferences so that it is not dominated by a certain group of scholars, not only in number but in the propounded theories and ideas as well. At the July ACS conference in Istanbul, Turkey, the association was able to support the participation of at least 30 academics that would have been unable to attend due mainly to economic constraints.

The composition of speakers in the plenary sessions of the conference showed the political will of the organizers to open up the theoretical discussions to more views and color by including scholars from other parts of the world. The keynote speaker, for instance, is Partha Chatterjee from Calcutta. He presented a critique of the critique of popular culture which, he said, should focus on the set of practices or discipline involved in the production of cultural texts.

Yet despite the efforts to enable all those interested to participate, the conference was not without criticism. A Turk participant pointed out that even Turkish professors would find the conference registration fee which is half their monthly pay impractical. Conference chair Lawrence Grossberg said they were willing to accommodate graduate students to the sessions if they asked to.

Accumulating some form of cultural capital, we were lucky to have been among those participation was fully supported by the ACS. -JBFONG

When center becomes periphery

In his memoir, *Istanbul: memories of a city* (2005), celebrated Turkish novelist Orhan Pamuk manifests his sharp eye for the ordinary yet strangely insightful spectacle of the metropolis by drawing on, among others, the image of stray dogs. As portrayed in many common vintage postcards, the loitering dogs are a powerful image of the lost grandeur of the teeming city of Istanbul. Founded six centuries before Christ as Byzantium, re-founded in A. D. 330 as Constantinople, and

conquered by the Ottomans in 1433, Istanbul was the great eastern European imperial capital for almost 16 centuries (Campbell and Brosnahan 9).

The *Lonely Planet* guide book is indispensable when attempting to explore any foreign city. But during this particular trip, Pamuk's novel was equally significant. His historical and narrative flair carefully guided Jimmy Fong and myself, both readers-cum-academic flaneurs, or fritterers away of time (in Wilson 93) through the back streets and alleys, towering monuments, crumbling Ottoman villas, ostentatious yet abandoned buildings that reflect traces of the city's once glorious past. Yet the author's childhood reverie is more than an end-of-empire nostalgia and melancholia. His recollections help first-time travelers to Istanbul understand what Arjun Appadurai calls the 'ethnoscape,' or the landscape shifts that express the fluidity of social formations under conditions of global cultural interconnections (Johnson, et. al. 115). In other words, there is dynamism of place and its structuring spatial relations, marking a shift from a concrete to an abstract notion of spatiality. By turning away from the geographical notion of space, spatiality is deterritorialized, meaning it now resists the fixed concept of land and its inhabitants.

Taking possession of the city

After shaking off our jet lag, Jimmy and I set out to explore the city on foot, or as Michel de Certeau would have it, by 'walking in the city.' This way, its 'rhetoric' would unfold as naturally as the Istanbulers themselves went about their everyday routines. We were not disappointed. Leaving our dormitory, we chanced upon a little shop, tucked away in some street corner lined with old buildings. Its sign read, 'King Arthur's Manila Shop.' And if that were not enough to tweak our curiosity, the Philippine flag was flying alongside the Turkish flag! Was it a side-line of the Philippine consulate, or perhaps one of a global chain of shops owned by some enterprising OFW? Neither. It was owned by a Turk who was a dead ringer for Edu

Manzano. The funny thing was he knew that and he went by that monicker. We learned that he named the shop after his dear brother Arthur and that he had an imagined affinity with all things Philippine because he once had an *Ilongga* girlfriend who taught him a smattering of *Tagalog* and *Hiligaynon*. Their affair may have fizzled out but not after our astute Turk learned of the OFW's penchant for things that glitter. So he set up his jewelry-cum-tailoring business. "Why the haberdashery façade," we ask. His answer was simple. Since his shop was located in the



With Chatterjee on the Bosphorus boat trip

seedier part of town, what better way to camouflage his gold collection than by using shirts and trousers and other men's accessories as fronts?

When it came to sampling the shops, there was no topping the Kapali Carsi (Grand Bazaar), with over 4,000 dazzling shops and several kilometers of shopping alleys. Our eyes feasted on copper pots and pans, hand-painted ceramic wares, belly dancing costumes, silver trinkets, the evil eye key chains, carpets, rugs and many, many more. What could have been an overweening experience was prevented by a gracious Turkish-Ukrainian named Ali whom we befriended along the way. Ali spoke zero English but the desire to shop breaks all language barriers. He nodded when the price was reasonable and vehemently shook his head and squinted when he felt my haggling was not enough.

Istanbul is also a city that ought to be possessed through the taste buds. We started with the famous *rahat lokum* (Turkish delight), that sweet and gummy ‘comfortable morsel’ that the young Edmund of C. S. Lewis’ *The Chronicles of Narnia* chose over his siblings. Flavors range from rose, orange and other citrus fruits to hazelnut, pistachio and almond. We hit the first *pastane* (pastry shop) we saw and immediately asked to taste the delicacy. Again, we were not disappointed. We also sampled the *baklava*, a kind of Middle Eastern pastry made of layers of paper-thin filo dough with a filling of ground nuts baked and drenched with honey or sugar syrup. The pastry chefs were generous with their ‘free tastes’ and even gave us paper napkins with which to wipe our sticky fingers.

Any European experience is incomplete without dining *al fresco*. Lunching on seafood, fresh from the Bosphorus and boiled rice that seemed rather oily was special only because the waiters graciously and tirelessly stopped passersby and invited them to dine at their cafes. One such waiter was an Antonio Banderas look-alike and his restaurant had been highly recommended by Edu of the Manila Shop fame. On another occasion, we lunched on huge, fluffy omelettes and crispy thin Anatolian bread at a traditional café that featured low tables and brightly colored Turkish woven tablecloths. This time, we were strangely mistaken for Spanish tourists and because our Spanish was *puede pasar*, they could hardly believe we were Asian, much less Pinoy. We also licked our chops over street food like the broiled fish sandwich with a splash of lemon juice and the cheap yet filling *simit* (traditional sesame seed bun shaped like a pretzel).

Of *hûzûn* and making do

Structural anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss in *Tristes Tropiques* asserts that tropical cities bear little resemblance to Istanbul. For one, it has a gentler climate; also its state of poverty is not so harsh. But the fragility of Istanbul’s lives, their treatment of each other, the distance they feel from the centers of the West make them possess, to a Westerner, a mysterious air. This is what he refers to as *tristesse* (in Pamuk 89). Pamuk, Istanbul that he is, however points to the more appropriate Turkish word, *hûzûn*, which means melancholy. This distress is rooted in worldly losses, related for instance to the collapse of the Ottoman empire. But more importantly, Pamuk links the word to spiritual anguish of not being able to be close enough to Allah. *Hûzûn* is thus central to Istanbul culture, poetry and everyday life because it is seen as an honor. They suffer because they feel they have not suffered enough ((81).

Quite literally, Istanbul is the only city in the world where east meets west. It is after all located on a waterway linking the Sea of Marmara and the Black Sea. An evening cruise on the Bosphorus may then seem bizarre to an outsider. As she sails with *Aya* (Asian Istanbul) on one side and *Avrupa* (European Istanbul) on the other, twinkling lights and all, there is a distinct limbo-like feeling that is difficult to fathom. A visit to the famous Aya Sofya, a Byzantine structure completed in A. D. 537 is another example. It was first known as the largest church in the world but was turned into a mosque after the Ottoman conquest. When the Ottomans took over, four minarets were added to the structure and the mosaics of the Blessed Virgin and the saints, side by side with the leading rulers of the day

were plastered over. Today the Aya Sofya is a grand museum that displays both Christian (the plaster has since been scraped to reveal the original mosaics) and Muslim influences. Notably, for the insider, there is no reason to fret because distinctions hardly matter at all. It is something that the Istanbulis, perhaps like the stray dogs, have learned to accept as part of making do.

Four days in Istanbul are certainly not enough to feel the *tristesse* or the *hûzûn* of the Istanbulis. But after taking in the everyday sights, sounds and tastes of the city as flaneur, one gets the impression that the city inhabitants have never wallowed in melancholia and suffering. On the contrary, they seem to wear *h * z * n* like a distinct badge of honor, a kind of certainty and optimism that fuels Edu as he patiently waits for the ship bearing the Pinoy seamen to dock. Soon, his *sukis*, who have saved up their precious dollars/euros would buy a thick gold chain or a bracelet perhaps to brandish to their *kababayans* as the just reward for their labor (*katas ng paghibirap*). The waiters at the fish restaurants would still be enticing other flaneur wannabes to savor their specialties. The Alis who stroll along the piers of Eminounou would still extend a helping hand, maybe even life and limb to many a weary stranger. And of course, the Tahirs, those wily vendors at the Grand Bazaar would politely ask prospective customers no end, “May I help you spend your money?”

Pamuk proudly says of his city: “Istanbul’s greatest virtue is its people’s ability to see the city through both Western and Eastern eyes” (232). In many ways, he is right. ■



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