

*INTERNATIONAL GEOGRAPHICAL UNION*

*INTERNATIONAL UNION OF THE HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE*

## **COMMISSION ON THE HISTORY OF GEOGRAPHY**

**NEWSLETTER N° 24**

**DECEMBER 2009**

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**2) COMMISSION'S RENAMING, PRECEDENTS AND MAIN GOALS FOR 2008-2012**

The International Geographical Union General Assembly held in Tunis in August 2008 approved the renaming of the former Commission on the History of Geographical Thought to Commission on the History of Geography (UGI C08.20). With this slightly different name and a renewed program, the new Commission will intend to continue and reactivate the Commission on the History of Geographical Thought, which was created in the 21st International Geographical Congress, held in New Delhi in 1968.

Through its 40-year existence, the Commission on the History of Geographical Thought has made important contributions to our understanding of, among other subjects, the life and work of leading figures on the field, both national and international; the formation of the main “national schools” of geography; the professionalization and social institutionalisation processes of the discipline; the role of geography itself within the processes of nation building; and the exchange and circulation mechanisms of geographical ideas at different scales. In its last working period before its recent renaming (2001-2004), the Commission has also considered the thematic and methodological challenges involved in the development of a world history of geography that might overcome the traditional, Western-orientated and internalist approaches to the discipline’s historiography.

The new Commission will seek to build on these achievements and will consider an even wider range of topics beyond the history of academic geography. It will seek in particular to encourage new research on the history of non-academic geographical practices and experiences and on the development of a “geographical imagination” associated with travel and exploration, within a wider public arena.

The Commission on the History of Geography expects to be a forum for exchanging ideas and outcomes on both the history of the field and, more widely, the history of geographical knowledge, experiences and practices, and their consequences and usefulness for understanding contemporary world. In this respect, the symposia and conferences planned within the work program for 2008-2012 will consider socially relevant questions and outstanding issues in the light of the history of the field. These include topics like geography's role and image within the public sphere; the relationship between geographical and environmental thought; the political role of geography and geographers; the geographical dimensions of the heritage concept; the connections between landscapes and territories and the building of identities and places of memory; and the position of geography and lay geographical knowledge, experiences and practices in conceptualising world's cultural diversity. Paraphrasing the words of Prof. Vincent Berdoulay, Commission's Chairman between 1996 and 2004, we believe that the history of geographical thought can turn out to be a fruitful and useful instrument of reflection about the future, and, by the same token, a fertile source for the development of critical conscience.

Prof. Jacobo García-Álvarez  
Chairman  
Commission on the History of Geography

### **3) MEETINGS HELD IN 2009.**

#### **3.1) Report on the International Symposium "Languages and visions of landscape and territory" (Miraflores de la Sierra, Spain, February 5th-8th 2009), co-organised by the IGU Commission on the History of Geography**

The International Symposium "Languages and visions of landscape and territory" was held in Madrid last February 2009. It was organized jointly by the History of Geographical Thought Working Group of the Association of Spanish Geographers (AGE) and the International Geographical Union Commission on the History of Geography, formerly named Commission on the History of Geographical Thought. It was the first meeting driven by the IGU Commission on the History of Geography since its recent renewal and renaming, approved during the IGU Conference held at Tunis in August 2008. The Symposium coincided with the IVth Colloquium of the aforementioned Spanish Working Group, which was created, in its turn, in 2001. It was held at "La Cristalera", a residence and a conference hall owned by the Autónoma University of Madrid in the village of Miraflores de la Sierra, which is located in the foothills of the Sierra de Guadarrama, 50 km North of the city of Madrid. A Committee made up by professors and researchers from Autónoma and Carlos III Universities of Madrid was responsible for the Symposium's local organisation. Likewise, Professor Nicolás Ortega-Cantero (Autónoma University of Madrid), current chairman of the AGE Geographical Thought Working Group, and Professor Jacobo García-Álvarez (Carlos III University of Madrid), current chairman of the IGU Commission on the History of Geography, were in charge of the scientific coordination of the meeting.

Two special lectures were given throughout the Symposium, one at the very beginning and the other one at the closing ceremony, by Prof. Eduardo Martínez de Pisón. There were twelve paper sessions, in which forty-eight communications were presented and discussed by fifty participants coming from ten different countries. Two excursions, closely related to the main topics of the Symposium, took place into the Sierra de Guadarrama and the historic city of Toledo.

The opening lecture was given by Professor Vincent Berdoulay (Pau University), Chairman of the IGU Commission on the History of Geographical Thought between 1996 and 2004. He lectured on the topic *L'histoire de la géographie au défi de la prospective: patrimoine, mémoire et enjeux iconographiques*. The communications presented at the Symposium were organized around two thematic axis, having the same number of participants, and carried out in parallel sessions. The first thematic axis was devoted to languages of landscape and territory, emphasizing three essential realms: cartography, rhetoric and iconography; whereas the second one focused on connections between landscapes and territories, and the building of identities and places of memory. As a complement to the working sessions, an ending lecture was given by Professor Eduardo Martínez de Pisón (Autónoma University of Madrid), who dealt with the history of the scientific and cultural discovering of the Sierra de Guadarrama and with the ongoing process of declaring this mountain range as a National Park, within which Prof. Martínez de Pisón has played a fundamental role. On the occasion of the Symposium, a business meeting of the IGU Commission on the History of Geography did also take place, in order to work out the guidelines for the next three years. It was the first Commission's business meeting since the recent renewal of its Steering Committee, and some members of the preceding Steering Committees took part in it too.

The results of the Symposium were very positive, because, among other reasons, the high quality of the lectures and communications (most of which will be published soon in a book), as well as the cordial atmosphere, affection and intense relationship among participants, who were all accommodated in "La Cristalera" residence. Many of us will also recall for a long time the special beauty of the Sierra de Guadarrama's landscape during these days, due to a particularly strong snowfall, one of the biggest in this region over the last ten years, which everyone had the chance of experiencing during the excursion carried out on February 7<sup>th</sup>. Finally, the Symposium turned out to be very successful in its purpose of relaunching the IGU Commission on the History of Geography's activity, and working out its future guidelines, full of encouraging projects (for the Commission's forthcoming meeting, see section 4 of the present newsletter).

Prof. Jacobo García-Álvarez  
Chairman  
Commission on the History of Geography



The Symposium participants at the Mirador de los Robledos (Rascafría), during the excursion into the Sierra de Guadarrama. Photo by Paloma Puente-Lozano.

### **3.2) Report on the Commission's presence at the XXIII International Congress of History of Science and Technology (Budapest, Hungary, July 26th-August 2nd 2009)**

As member of the International Union of History and Philosophy of Science (IUHPS), the former IGU Commission on the History of Geographical Thought took part in many of the International Congresses of History of Science and Technology held during the last twenty years. Aiming to continue this tradition, the Commission on the History of Geography has been present at the last International Congress organised by the IUHPS, which was held in Budapest between 28 July - 2 August, 2009 July 2009 around the general topic of "Ideas and Instruments in Social Context". Although, unfortunately, the possibility of organising a specific Symposium within the Congress was closed when the current Commission's Steering Committee was elected in August 2008, the Commission on the History of Geography took part in the Congress in two ways.

First, the Commission did patronage the paper session devoted to the History of Geography in the Contemporary Period, which was held on August 1<sup>st</sup> under the chairmanship of Professor Alexei Postnikov (former full member of the IGU Commission on the History of Geographical Thought from 2000 to 2004). Four papers were presented within this session, namely: "Paper Fortresses: Renaissance Military

Architecture in the Context of Hapsburg Cartography”, by Dr. Zsolt G. Török (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest); “Experience and Rhetoric in Sixteenth Century Spanish Atlantic Cartography: Utility and Conformity in Double Graduation Charts”, by Dr. Antonio Sánchez-Martínez (CSIC, Madrid); “Perception of Geographical Features and the General Concept of “Shui-kou” in the Feng-Shui Thought of East Asia”, by Prof. Shizuki Shibuya (Chubu University, Kasugai, Japan); and “The English and Americans in the Eastern Siberia and the Russian Far East (Nineteenth - Early Twentieth Centuries): On History of Geographical Exploration and Geopolitics Dreams”, by Prof. Postnikov (Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow).

Second, the Commission was represented by Dr. Jan Vandersmissen in the General Assembly of the IUHPS-Division of History of Science and Technology, held on July 30<sup>th</sup> and August 1<sup>st</sup> within the framework of the Congress. Among other important decisions, the Assembly elected the new DHST Council for the period 2009-2012 (which will be chaired by Professor Liu Dun) and voted the venue for the XXIV International Congress of History of Science and Technology, which will take place at the University of Manchester, between 22 and 28 July 2013, under the organisation of the British Society for the History of Science.

Dr. Jan Vandersmissen  
Commission on the History of Geography

#### **4) FORTHCOMING MEETINGS: 2010 IGU REGIONAL CONFERENCE, ISRAEL.**

On the occasion of the July 2010 IGU Regional Conference in Israel, the IGU *Commission on the History of Geography* will organize a Symposium made up of several sessions: some sessions will be held at Tel-Hai Academic College (on July 11, within the framework of the pre-conference field trip that will take place on July 9-12) and the rest in Tel Aviv (during the major conference, on July 12- 16).

##### **Scientific topics for the Commission’s Symposium:**

The general topic of the IGU *Commission on the History of Geography* Symposium will be ***Geography, Civilizations, and Cultural Identities in Historical Perspective***. Special attention will be paid to the historical contribution of Geography and geographical thought in conceptualising world’s cultural diversity, at different scales and in different times and places. The Symposium will consider the following topics:

- “spatial” issues of cultural differentiation general categories (nations, ethnic groups, races, civilizations, etc.);
- Geography’s contribution to identity creation at national and regional scales;
- the relationships between geography, colonialism, and imperialism within the cultural order (taking the colonial processes into account, not only in their

- aspects of domination and acculturation, but also within their “positive” aspects of encounter and transculturation);
- the role of geographers in the development and popularisation of the main global “metageographies” and world regional representations;
  - Geography’s contribution to universalist, internationalist and cosmopolitan thinking;
  - the relevance of geographical knowledge for recent cultural and political debates, such as the “clash”/“alliance” of civilizations theories, multiculturalism and globalisation.

### **Guidelines for submission of abstracts**

Participants are welcome to submit abstracts on the topics listed above, but are not limited to those mentioned.

Sessions dedicated to the IGU *Commission on the History of Geography* will be held both during the conference (at Tel Aviv, July 12 - 16) and during the pre-conference field trip (at Tel Hai, July 11 Morning). The number of papers that can be presented in the sessions to be held during the preconference at Tel-Tai will be limited to 16. With regard to the conference in Tel Aviv, we recall you that, apart from the Commission’s sessions, there will be general conference sessions which will cater for a wider audience, addressing topics not necessarily related to the Commissions.

Participants may present abstracts during the Commission’s sessions (either during the pre-conference or within the conference) or during the general sessions of the conference. Please indicate at the bottom of your abstract whether you would like to present your paper within the framework of the commission’s sessions, indicating the name of the commission, or in the main conference sessions.

- a) If you prefer to present your abstract within the Commission’s sessions, please indicate whether you intend to register for the pre-conference or for the conference, or for both.
- b) If you prefer to present your paper within the main conference sessions, kindly indicate one or more study area corresponding to the commission titles (as advertised on the conference website: [www.igu2010.com](http://www.igu2010.com)), compatible with the context of your abstract.

Abstracts will be sent for review and authors will be informed in due time whether their abstract/s have been accepted. Inclusion of abstracts in the scientific program and on the Disc of Abstracts is dependent on payment of registration fees. Abstracts should be submitted online at [www.igu2010.com](http://www.igu2010.com) or via email to: [geography@targetconf.com](mailto:geography@targetconf.com). If by email, the abstract should be saved as a Word document and sent as an attachment, please do not send as a PDF file. If using Word 2007, please save file as a document that can be opened in Word 2003.

**DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF ABSTRACTS: FEBRUARY 1, 2010**

## **Pre-conference field trip and sessions: Historical Geography of the Galilee, July 9-12, 2010 – IGU Commission on the History of Geography**

**KEY THEMES AND PLACES TO VISIT:** Archaeology, sacred history, modern settlements, European activity. The field trip will include Acre, Segev Region, Kfar Tavor, Safed, Metulla, the Lebanese Border, Gish, Yiron, Kiriat Shemona, Hula Valley, Rosh-Pina, Sea of Galilee.

## TRIP PLAN:

Friday, July 9, 2010

All day: Arrivals and overnight

Hotel: *Dan Panorama, Tel Aviv*

Saturday, July 10, 2010

Day trip to include Acre, Segev Region, Kfar Tabor and Safed.

Dinner and overnight

Hotel: *Kfar Giladi, Upper Galilee*

Sunday, July 11, 2010

Morning: Commission Sessions, Tel-Hai Academic College (General Topic: *Geography, Civilizations, and Cultural Identities in Historical Perspective*).

Afternoon: Metulla, the Lebanese Border, Gish, Yiron, ending with a reception at a winery.

Dinner and overnight Hotel: *Kfar Giladi, Upper Galilee*

Monday, July 12, 2010

Kiriat Shemona, Rosh Pina, Hula Valley, Sea of Galilee with visits to Sacred Christian Sites and a stop in Tiberias.

Continue to Tel Aviv for overnight. Drop off at official Conference hotel, as per reservation for the duration of the conference.

RATE:

Rate per person in single room US\$ 750

Rate for two people in a double room: US\$ 1,000

### Rate includes:

1 overnight on bed & breakfast basis at the Dan Panorama Hotel, Tel Aviv

2 overnights including dinner, bed & breakfast at Kfar Giladi, Upper Galilee

Touring in an air-conditioned tourist coach including a guiding by the organizer and local experts.

Entrance fees as per itinerary

# Registration

For further details regarding submissions of abstracts, registration for pre-conference field trip and IGU Regional Conference 2010 please visit the conference website: [www.igu2010.com](http://www.igu2010.com), or by contacting the conference secretariat:

Target Conferences  
Tel : +972 3 5175150  
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## **5) COMMISSION'S PUBLICATIONS: *GEOGRAPHERS. BIOBIBLIOGRAPHICAL STUDIES, VOL. 28 (2009)***

*Geographers Biobibliographical Studies* (GBS) is an annual serial publication devoted to critical assessment of the lives and works of geographers from all periods, nations and geographical constituencies. First published in 1977, *GBS* is now in its twenty-eighth volume (in 2009) and has provided detailed studies of over 420 geographical scholars from over twenty different countries. At a time of widespread and critical interdisciplinary engagement in biography and in biographical writing as a scholarly genre, and when work within the history of geography and of geographers has made important methodological and substantive connections with the history of science, with the history of cartography and with the humanities, *GBS* is the only publication devoted to the assessment of scholar's contributions to geography and to geographical knowledge in international context. *Geographers Biobibliographical Studies* is published by the Continuum International Publishing Group and on behalf of the IGU Commission on the History of Geography.

The most recent volume of *Geographers* (GBS 28, 2009) has essays on the early modern English geographer and churchman Peter Heylyn (1599-1662), on the Danish political geographer Gudmund Hatt (1884-1960), the Hungarian regional and political geographer Tibor Mendöl (1905-1966), Koji Iizuka (1906-1970) the Japanese economic and political geographer, on the leading geomorphologist Richard ('Dick') Chorley (1927-2002), and on J. W. Karl Oestreich (1873-1947), also a geomorphologist, together with studies of Charles Patrick Daly (1816-1899), the founder of the American Geographical Society, Marion Isabel Newbigin (1869-1968), editor of the *Scottish Geographical Magazine* for nearly thirty-five years, on the French urban and political geographer Jacqueline Beaujeu-Garnier (1917-1995), and on the Scots-born explorer of western Africa, Captain Hugh Clapperton (1788-1827). Forthcoming essays include studies of the medical geographer Andrew Learmonth, French explorer Aimé Bonpland, on Denis Cosgrove and, from physical geography, on Luna B. Leopold and John Thornes.

### **Extending the range and coverage of *Geographers Biobibliographical Studies***

There are, of course, many geographers whose lives and works have not been the subject of study in *GBS* (a full list of those people already studied appears on the Commission's webpages at <http://web.univ-pau.fr/> RECHERCHE/UGHIG/02 Commissions/commission.html). Because the coverage is still incomplete and because the coverage is also in several respects 'uneven', we are always keen to receive

suggestions for intending contributions, to broaden coverage from different geographical constituencies and to make connections with other biographical studies of geographers in other contexts. Here, it is appropriate to summarise some of the remarks we offered in an earlier *GBS* editorial introduction: H. Lorimer and C. W. J. Withers (2007) ‘*Geographers: Lives, Works, Possibilities*’ *GBS* 26, 1-5. Simply, there are too few studies of women geographers: with the two essays in *GBS* 28 (2009), the total for women geographers is now only nine. This is a very poor reflection of women’s place in the making of geography. Coverage overall within *GBS* is heavily skewed toward Anglo-American geography and geographers, and, within Europe, to France and to Germany. This, too, is an inadequate reflection of geography’s internationalisation and of the subject’s traditions in its many national contexts. And coverage tends to privilege the later nineteenth century and the twentieth century. This is in one sense a proper reflection of the subject’s institutionalisation and its formalisation within universities and other such bodies for that is when departments tended to be founded and research agenda laid out. But in another sense, this overlooks the important presence and activities not only of geographers working ‘outside’ and before the subject’s educational dimensions, but acts also to marginalise those many contributions made to geographical knowledge by persons who, although they did not profess the title ‘geographer’, nevertheless made major contributions to geographical understanding of the globe.

Our point is not that we suppose there to be fixed definitions of geography or of geographers. It is the reverse: we know there are not such things as single definitions, or modes of practice, or standard biographical traditions or histories. The range of scholarship in different geographical traditions, encompassed in several ways by the work of the IGU Commission, demonstrates that geography has had in the past, and has now, vitally different traditions and that it has been part of the politics of knowledge in a whole series of ways. It is surely important if we do want to take seriously the many histories of geography and the many lives and works of geographers that these different perspectives are brought into scholarly view, that there are more studies of women geographers, further work on countries outside Europe and north America and more studies of the pre-foundational chronologies of geography as a taught subject in universities and other such institutions. For this to happen, and for *Geographers* to flourish, we need you to propose people as the subjects of study and to suggest possible authors for *GBS* essays.

### **Contributing to *Geographers Biobibliographical Studies***

We are always delighted to receive suggestions for essays in *GBS*. Although the essays will continue to be in English, we are committed as part of IGU policy to have abstracts in French. Essays need not follow the ‘standard’ format of ‘Education, Life and Work’; ‘Scientific Ideas and Geographical Thought’; ‘Influence and Spread of Ideas’ since we recognise that there are different styles to biographical scholarship and we are committed to developing those. Pictures other than the portrait are encouraged where they add to the dimensions of the essays. *Geographers* is not, then a fixed resource so much as a space for the continuing critical treatment of geography’s many histories and to critical acknowledgement of the lives and works of its myriad practitioners. If you’re interested

in writing an essay, or want to know more of the GBS series, please get in touch with one of the co-editors below.

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## 6) OTHER ACTIVITIES: THE COMMISSION WEBSITE

Along the lines of the former *Commission on the History of Geographical Thought*, chaired by Prof. Vincent Berdoulay (from 1996 to 2004), the new Commission has relaunched a website to spread its own works and activities: <http://web.univ-pau.fr/RECHERCHE/UGIHG/index.html>

Hosted by the Laboratory SET (UMR CNRS n°5603), the website gives account of the main news and information concerning the Commission's recent life, including not only its current activities and work plans for the next years, but also the newsletters and other relevant documents relating the period 1996-2004.

We will be delighted to receive suggestions in order to improve the website, just like we will welcome any relevant news and meeting announcements concerning the vast field of History of Geography. Those interested in issuing this kind of information within the Commission website, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Finally, from the very beginning of its relaunching, the Commission website has tried to report in three languages: English, French and Spanish. Certainly, this effort consumes a lot of time, but we will intend to continue it as much as we can. Even if this language selection is still very limited, we consider it an important challenge and a valuable step in order to disseminate the Commission's work across the international geographical community.

Prof. Jean-Yves Puyo  
Secretary-Treasurer and Webmaster  
Commission on the History of Geography