

COMMISSION ON THE HISTORY
OF GEOGRAPHICAL THOUGHT

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The Commission was renewed by acclamation as a commission of the IUHPS, Division of History of Science, at the IGU general assembly meeting held in Mexico City, July 10th, 2001. The first important scientific meeting of the Commission this year was held in that city, as part of the XXIst International Congress of History of Science (8-14 July 2001). An important symposium was organized on the theme "Unity and diversity of geographical thought in the world: Issues and approaches". It was one of the best attended symposia of the entire congress, and it is expected to produce a book on the basis of a selection of the symposium papers.

The fact that the symposium was not only well-attended but included a large number of participants from Latin America was a special kind of success, and one not always achieved at IGU sponsored activities. This success is largely due to the open, non constraining, linguistic approach which is used by the Commission and encouraged by the IUHPS (English, French and especially Spanish were largely spoken). In order to sustain this momentum, it was decided to hold a symposium of the Commission within the forthcoming EGAL (meetings of the geographers from Latin America), in Merida, Mexico, 2003.

It is noteworthy that geographers were present throughout the congress. Several of them (such as A. Postnikov, from Russia, and member of the Commission) participated in other symposia or scientific sessions. Geographer H. Capel (Spain) gave one of the five plenary lectures of the Congress, shortly after having participated to the symposium of the Commission.

The activities of the Commission in Mexico were mostly concerned with the first objective of its programme, that is, working toward a truly global history of geography. The book which is planned from the congress in Mexico, and the symposium planned for Merida in 2003, are mostly concerned with this furthering this objective.

The second objective, which is related to other modes of thought and knowledge, will also be dealt with in Merida, Mexico, especially through cartographic activities. It is also expected that a

meeting concerned with this objective be organized for another venue as well.

The third objective – related to the prospect of geography – is structured around the tenth anniversary of the Conference of Rio (1992). The proposition made by V. Berdoulay and encouraged by A. Vallega of having geographers contribute to the Rio+10 event, has been taken over by the whole IGU. On behalf of the Commission and the IGU, and with Bertha Becker (Brazil), V. Berdoulay is coordinating a group of geographers working on the epistemological and thematic challenges which are set for geography by the goal of sustainable development. Two meetings have already been held with this perspective in mind: V. Berdoulay has organized a workshop in Pau on "Science, policy and geographical contexts. Issues of sustainability" (June 5th, 2001), which made it possible for a few participants selected from all continents to identify major issues.

B. Becker has organized a very successful special session on "Rio+10" within the "2001 Open Meeting of the Human dimensions of Global Environmental Change Research Community" (Rio de Janeiro, 6-8 October 2001). Chaired by V. Berdoulay, this well attended session used the example of the Amazon to clarify the major aspects of the evaluation to be made of what has happened since the goals set forth at the Rio conference in 1992. It is most noteworthy that the conclusions drawn from this special session were mentioned during the Closing Ceremony as some of the main conclusions to be drawn from the whole Open Meeting.

The Regional Congress to be held in Durban (see below) will be another step for the advancement of the objectives of the Commission, and it is hoped that it will make possible the contribution of countries from the "South" once again.

Vincent Berdoulay

The geographical symposium in Mexico 2001

The 21st International Congress for the History of Science took place in Mexico from 8 to 14 July 2001. Around 800 participants from 50 countries gathered for the first time in Latin America to present and discuss research on the history of science and cultural diversity.

Among the activities arranged by the UIHPS/DHS, the Commission for the History of Geographical Thought, which is also a member of the IGU, held a symposium on the “Unity and Diversity of Geographical Thought in the World: Issues and Approaches.” The symposium was organized by Héctor Mendoza Vargas, with the collaboration of V. Berdoulay and J. Gómez Mendoza

20 scholars, from Spain, Argentina, Italy, France, Russia, Japan, Indonesia, and Mexico presented their work at this meeting. The sessions were held in the hall *Las Sibilas du Palacio de Minería*, in the Center for History, from 9-11 July. In accordance with the announced themes of the symposium (Bulletin No. 20), the objective of the meeting was to analyse the problems posed by the global history of geography, in relation to the diversity of countries, of historical periods, and of criteria of scientific scholarship.

The research presented can be classified according to four major themes. The first of these, **methodology**, considered the “viability of the global history of geography,” beginning with “regional/transnational scales and key concepts, chronologies and milieux,” with a case study of the example of France and Spain (García Alvarez, Gómez Mendoza y Cantero), as well as the importance of indisciplinary and of research on the “new epistemological directions,” such as medical geography (Pickenhayn). From another perspective, the “durable images” of Argentine territory which were created by the geographical texts which accompanied the national censuses of 1869 and 1895 were examined (Quintero), as were geographical discourse and forms of legitimacy in Italy (Gaffuri).

In regard to the theme of **territory and modernization**, the French geographical model and how it was adapted to the needs of the new Mexican state after independence in 1821 was considered. The priority for this critical epoch was to organize public administra-

tion and to support the work of geographers and engineers on the most pressing problems of the day: international boundaries, coasts, and interior regions of countries (Mendoza Vargas). Recent research has revealed the key role which geographers played in determining the boundary between Mexico and the United States in 1849-1857 (Tamayo) and also the great variety of their publication in the fields of geodesy, practical astronomy, and cartography (Moncada). The theme of “regional identity” was examined in an analysis of the forms of “appropriation” of Patagonia in Argentina (Souto).

The theme of culture figured in research focused on the analysis of the diffusion of ideas in geography and planning. Japanese economic development from the 17th to the mid-19th centuries and the appearance of numerous works on agronomy was discussed. These works constituted an important source of information about concepts of the relations between humans and the natural world in Japan (Takeuchi). The subject of the planned city was considered in regard to the diffusion of urban experimentation, such as medieval Aragon, which reverberated as far as 16th-century Hispanic America. Localism as well as diffusion appeared as processes in which the history of geography crossed with historical and cultural geography (Berdoulay et Bielza de Ory). The importance of local culture was stressed for the morphology of cities resisting globalization, the standards of which fail to take account of regional or national identities.

The theme of **Education** was raised in regard to the contribution of Elisée Reclus, who was the subject of 2 papers. The first dealt with Reclus’ relations with the New University in Brussels, where he occupied a chair permitting him to prepare maps and write “Man and the Earth” (Vincente). The second paper examined Reclus’ geographical significance from the standpoint of his anarchism, his studies on the relations between nature and man, and the study of social relations in cities (Hiernaux). The role of ideology was emphasized, through the example of geographical teaching in Brazil. If nationalism and advent of the Republic in 1889 brought about political changes, the status of geography was little affected, insofar as it was taught indirectly,

and was biased by the language of national history. Scholarly works adjusted themselves to this evolution (Avila Melo et Vlach).

A visit on October 10th to the ruins of Teotihuacan, 50 miles northeast of Mexico City, enabled the participants to bring together the history of ideas with urban and cultural geography.

Héctor Mendoza Vargas
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(This report is available in Spanish on the website of the Commission)

Geographers : Biobibliographical Studies

Geographers: Biobibliographic Studies is published by Continuum, simultaneously in London and New York. In 2001 the series celebrated the publication of its 21st volume. As in previous volumes, a wide variety of individuals who have influenced the development of geography and geographical thought were described, their contributions summarised and brief bibliographies provided. Figures from most of the continents and from the twelfth to the twentieth centuries appear. These include the pioneer Oxford ecologist Charles Elton and the mediaeval Welsh traveller Giraldus (Gerald of Wales). The enigmatic figure of Charles Montagu Doughty who explored Arabia in the nineteenth century is figured, as is Yi Chung Hwan, described as “probably the greatest geographer Korea has ever produced”. The feminist writer Harriet Martineau is included; so too are two nineteenth century Thai kings: Mongkut and Chulalongkorn. North America is represented by Donald Putnam and J. Russell Smith. Julian Tenison Woods—Catholic priest, naturalist, palaeontologist and explorer of the Australian outback—is depicted; also from Australia is John Septimus Roe – surveyor, colonial administrator and explorer.

Volume 22 is now “in press” and should appear in 2002: it contains a comparable range of essays on those who have influenced the development of geographical thought. Amongst them are R.P. Beckinsale from the United Kingdom, and J.K. Wright from the other side of the Atlantic. From colonial Africa comes Samuel Baker. Other interesting figures depicted include the Russian-

Australian N.N. Miklocho-Maclay, the influential geomorphologist Armin K. Lobeck, and Governor George Grey, who profoundly affected developments in South Africa, New Zealand and Australia.

The editors are always happy to receive suggestions for figures who might be described in a chapter. Potential authors should contact either of the editors.

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Recent publications by members of the Commission

Patrick Armstrong is the author of *The History of the English Parson-Naturalist: a companionship between Science and Religion*, Gracewing Publications of Leominster, 2000.

A book which is related to the work of the Commission has been edited by V. Berdoulay and P. Claval, *Aux débuts de l'urbanisme français. Regards croisés de scientifiques et de professionnels de l'aménagement (fin XIXe - début XXe s.)*, Paris, L' Harmattan, 2001.

Gary Dunbar is editing a book on the institutionalization and professionalization of geography, to be published at Kluwer's.

Forthcoming meetings

• IGU Regional Congress, Durban, South Africa, 4-7 August 2002

Information is available on the Congress website <http://www.turners.co.za/igu>

The theme of the *Symposium of the Commission*, “Culture, environment, development in the history of geographical thought”, has been selected in order to welcome all those who wish to contribute to the advancement of the history of geographical thought.

Contact the local organiser Dr Di Scott scottd@nu.ac.za, or Athanase Bopda, I.N.C., BP 14704 Yaounde, Cameroon bopda-at@cam-net.cm

A *special session on “RIO+10”* is planned within the Regional Congress. Those who are interested to contribute should contact V. Berdoulay vincent.berdoulay@univ-pau.fr

• A multi-disciplinary conference dedicated to the works and thought of Jean Gottmann is

being presented on December 18-19, 2002, by the Bibliothèque Nationale de France and the Département des Cartes et Plans under the auspices of the IGU Commission on the History of Geographical Thought and of the Société Française pour l'Histoire des Sciences de l'Homme.

The conference will focus on revisiting the work of Gottmann, with particular emphasis on his theoretical model of the genesis of space partitioning as an explanation for current geographical transformations. Participation is open to all interested: historians, geographers, geopoliticians, political scientists, philosophers, sociologists, economists, environmentalists and urban planners are all welcome. The conference will take place in Paris in the BNF's new facility in Tolbiac.

For further information, contact Luca Muscara : muscara@unive.it

• In preparation: **A Symposium within EGAL (Encuentros de Geografos de America Latina), Merida, Mexico, spring 2003.** Contact Héctor Mendoza Vargas hvargas@servidor.unam.mx

• **International Congress of Geography (IGU), Glasgow, Scotland, 2004.**

• **International Congress of History of Science (IUHPS), Beijing, China, 2005.**

Attention: This is the last issue of the Newsletter in this printed form. The large contemporary diffusion of internet makes it possible to give information in a more continuous form on the Commission's web site. The persons who don't have access to internet can receive a yearly printed newsletter if they ask for it by writing to V. Berdoulay.

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