

Los Angeles Geographical Society

Southland Geographical Notes

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April

2010

President's Message *2010-2011 Lectures*

By Gary Booher

The 2010-2011 Lecture Series will again span the breadth of geography, with regional, physical, and cultural topics presented by prestigious and popular faculty from local colleges and universities. The entire Lecture Series is summarized on the last page of this Newsletter.

On September 10, the Lecture Series will begin with Dr. John Keyantash speaking on the topic of *Rivers, Streams, and Waterfalls of Yosemite*. The presentation will be a melange of interesting topics and photos related to the hydrography of the Yosemite backcountry, including the physical geographic setting and scenery, hydrological measurements being conducted, and GIS maps of selected drainage basins. Dr. Keyantash is an Associate Professor of Geography at California State University, Dominguez Hills who earned a PhD in Civil Engineering and MS in Atmospheric Sciences, both from the University of California at Los Angeles, plus a BS in Environmental Science from Oregon State University.

UPCOMING EVENTS

May 8, 2010
8:00 pm

Student Presentations Night

Geography Student
Research at Universities
in Southern California

LA City College
Science-Technology

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Los Angeles Geographical Society

Free illustrated lectures are presented each month during the academic year about geographical research and world travel. Lectures are usually on the first Friday of the month at 8:00 pm at Los Angeles City College. For directions, go to the website at:

www.lageography.org
www.lageographic.org

Inquiries may also be addressed to either our e-mail or mailing address:

lageographicsociety@yahoo.com

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 Los Angeles City College
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	Vienne Vu

President's Message – 2010-2011 Lectures
 (Continued)

On October 1, our perennial favorite Matt Ebiner will return with a presentation about *Cyprus: An Island Divided*. Cyprus has an odd mixture of Greek, British, and Turkish influence, and remains divided after three decades of civil discord. From ancient Roman ruins to modern ghost towns abandoned due to civil war, Cyprus is one of the least known countries of Europe. Mr. Ebiner is a Professor of Geography at El Camino College who earned an MA degree in Geography from the University of California at Los Angeles. He received the 2002 Outstanding Educator Award from the California Geographical Society and is a former President of the Los Angeles Geographical Society. He recently began a Travel/Tour company called GeoTours.

On November 5, Dr. Judith Carney lecture topic will be *Seeds of Memory: Botanical Legacies of the African Diaspora*. The magnitude of this stimulating topic is suggested in her abstract: "One striking feature of the plantation period is the number of historical accounts that credit slaves with the introduction of specific foods, all previously grown in Africa. This paper lends support to these observations by identifying the crops that European witnesses attributed to slave agency and by engaging the ways that African subsistence staples arrived in the Americas. In emphasizing the African components of the Columbian Exchange, the discussion draws attention to the significance of African food crops as a crucial underpinning of the transatlantic commerce in human beings and the role of enslaved Africans in establishing African food staples on their subsistence plots."

President's Message - 2010-2011 Lectures
(Continued)

Dr. Carney is a Professor of Geography at the University of California at Los Angeles. She earned a PhD from the University of California at Berkeley and is known for related research now in publication: *In the Shadow of Slavery: Africa's Botanical Legacy in the Atlantic World* (2010) and *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas* (2002). [Look them on a major e-tailer and you will be amazed at her fascinating research.]

On December 3, the Annual Banquet will again be held at Taix French Restaurant. Dr. Gerald Tyner will share his recent travels and insight gained concerning *The Forgotten People: Ethnic/Tribal Minorities of Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam*.

On February 4, the Lecture Series will resume with Dr. John Kirchner presenting information about *Transforming Public Space: Return of the Streetcar to U.S. Cities*. Dr. Kirchner is a Professor of Geography Emeritus at California State University, Los Angeles. He earned a PhD from the University of Chicago and has research interests in historical geography, transportation, tropical and plantation agriculture, and Latin America.

On March 4, Dr. Jacqueline Mills will lecture about *The Geography of Post-Disaster Recovery*. Dr. Mills is a new Assistant Professor of Geography at California State University, Long Beach. She earned a PhD from Louisiana State University and she uses Geographic Information Science (GISc) approaches to study hazards and the urban environment with a particular emphasis on Southern California and Louisiana.

On April 1, Dr. John Agnew will speak on *Globalization and Sovereignty*. Dr. Agnew states that Globalization has been variously presented in dispensationalist terms as the harbinger of the "end of history," "end of society," "end of state," and "end of geography." In this lecture political geographer John Agnew takes issue with the assumption that globalization has tolled the death knell for the state or geography. He posits that such an assumption is premised on a flawed vision of globalization as an homogenizer of the world and a mythic vision of the state as an essentially territorial political unit. Questioning the necessarily territorial basis to state sovereignty, he offers an alternative vision of four sovereignty regimes: classic, integrative, globalist, and imperialist, each with different geographical characteristics. Taken together, he calls these sovereignty regimes "effective sovereignty." As a result, he rejects the view that globalization is producing an homogenized world set to engender a single worldwide model of sovereignty. Dr. Agnew is a Professor of Geography at the University of California at Los Angeles. He earned a PhD from Ohio State University and has led the discipline with distinction as former Chair of the UCLA Geography Department and as the current Past President of the Association of American Geographers.

On May 6, the annual Lecture Series will close with Geography students at local universities presenting their best research covering the range of geographical inquiry. The evening will be a "mini-conference", with 20-minute presentations scheduled both simultaneously and sequentially in multiple rooms. Those attending may choose papers that interest them, plus view a display of posters and maps.

November 2009 Lecture

Deserts and Desert Environments: The Role of the Wind

Presentation by Dr. Julie Laity
Professor of Geography
California State University, Northridge

Review by Matthew Thomas
El Camino College student

Dr. Laity began with an explanation of Aeolian processes shaping the Earth's surface. These processes are much more effective in areas with large amounts of unconsolidated sediments, like desert environments. Aeolian pertains to wind, and more specifically the wind's ability to change surface features over time. This is done by erosion, transport, deposition. In order for particles to be eroded from their parent material they must first be broken down into smaller particles through weathering. Aeolian processes erode earth's surface with the wind, as well as with the loose particles that are floating in the wind, effectively sandblasting Earth's surface. These processes can produce sculpted landforms called yardangs.

Yardangs can be found in nearly every desert on the globe. These landforms are often ridge shaped and elongated, forming from soft rock material, but can also be formed from a cemented dune core. Depending on the unique prevailing wind patterns in the area, yardangs may have very unique and unusual shapes, and striations will be drawn in the direction of the winds. They can be very small (only a few centimeters high) or miles wide and hundreds of feet high (these super structures are called mega yardangs).

Professor Laity then described the origin of sand dunes in the desert. Water is the main source of fine sediment material, whether rivers, lake, ocean or marine deposits, and this material is what has created these constantly moving sand dunes. The building blocks of these dunes are created by water transportation and deposition and then set in place by the patterns of Aeolian processes active in the area. These winds constantly shape and move the sand dunes. The windblown sediment climbs up the gentle upwind side of the dune by saltation or creep. Sand accumulates at the top of the slipface. When the buildup of sand at the top exceeds the amount the dune can bear, a small avalanche of grains slides down the slipface. Grain by grain, the dune moves downwind. This particular movement is caused by a dominant prevailing wind in the area. If many winds consistently converge on an area they may create amazing star-shaped dunes, which can exceed hundreds of feet high. The cause of the patterns in desert environments is the consistency of the Aeolian processes.

All sediment and dust from these wind systems do not stay confined in the desert. The Bodele depression in the southern Sahara Desert is so powerful and consistent that it can carry dust as far west as South America, as shown in pictures. This constant cloud of dust over the eastern Atlantic Ocean may be the cause of hurricanes due to the higher number of particles for water vapor to condense onto. This dust has even caused snow in areas of Russia to be tinted orange.

Professor Laity packed a lot of information in one hour, giving students a taste for desert environments and sparking interest to continue study on these environments.

February 2010 Lecture

Environment in Western China: The Disappearance of Lop Nur Lake

Presentation by Dr. Hong lie Qiu
Professor of Geography
California State University, Los Angeles

Review by Zia Salim

Dr. Qiu began by describing the physical environment of Xinjiang in Western China. Xinjiang is in the geographic center of Asia and has the hottest recorded temperature and lowest elevation in China. Climate is arid and semi-arid. Numerous inland basins are surrounded by steep mountain ranges. Lop Nur Lake is a dried up salt lake in the Turpan Basin. Parts of the Turpan Basin have substantial agricultural production due to irrigation projects expanded in the 1950s. By combining remotely sensed imagery, ground survey data, and historical literatures, Dr. Qiu examined how changes of inland lakes such as Lop Nur could provide proxy data to reconstruct past climate.

The Tarim River basin provides clues about previous climates and climate change because it is relatively isolated. Studying the inland lake of Lop Nur helps understand the basin's past. Although now dried up, Lop Nur was a "wandering lake" fed by the Tarim River. "Wandering" was caused by river sediment blocking the river course and diverting water, resulting in the lake's shifting location.

Dr. Qiu's hypotheses were: (1) the water volume in the former Lop Nur Lake was a function of hydrological processes in the Tarim basin; (2) the history of the former

Nur Lake could provide information on the basin's past environment; (3) digital elevation models could show water level and location and the change over time.

One discovery is that Lop Nur Lake looks like a large "ear" when seen from satellite images (see photo on page 9). Research combined historic maps of the area, accounts from various travelers, aerial and satellite photographs, data from the Space Shuttle Radar Topography Mission (SRTM), and field observations and sampling at different points on the "ear". Remote sensing and GIS techniques were used for analysis. The fieldwork was painstaking. The lake bed's salt crust was difficult to dig into and some surfaces were softer and others were as hard as concrete. On the second field outing, the team actually brought a jackhammer to dig up surface samples. Temperatures were also challenging with some places hot enough to cook eggs on the sand. Dr. Qiu analyzed data for features such as baymouth bars and small cliffs to reconstruct the lake's extent.

Dr. Qiu concluded that since the basin is large and shallow, a small change in water volume was able to produce a large change in the lake extent. The past size of the lake grew as the basin received more precipitation. The lake dried multiple times prior to 1921, and the "big ear" feature shown in photos is comprised of the rings of the receding shorelines after 1921. Finally, the institution of agricultural projects in the Tarim River Basin in the 1950s contributed to the lake finally drying up. The lecture was enhanced by visual images and the project is an example of how past climate can be reconstructed from different data sources.

March 2010 Lecture

Arabian Opposites: Yemen and Dubai

Presentation by Matt Ebner
Professor of Geography
El Camino College

Review by Yuki Konishi

Matt Ebner compared and contrasted two countries on the Arabian Peninsula, ultra-modern Dubai on the Persian Gulf and traditional Yemen on the Gulf of Aden, based on visits to United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.) in 2006 and Yemen in 2008.

Dubai's population has many migrant workers and only 1/8 of the population of U.A.E. are citizens. Many cranes were building Manhattan-tall and Las Vegas-lavish buildings. The Burj Al Arab Hotel is the first self-proclaimed 7-star hotel, with room rates from \$17,000 to \$280,000 per night. The Burj Dubai recently became the world's tallest building, with a height twice as tall as the former World Trade Center in New York. However, due to recent global recession, Dubai is now overbuilt and the construction of new buildings remain on hold and uncompleted. Consequently, many migrant workers lost their jobs and many are stuck in Dubai without enough money to return to their home countries.

Dubai has incredible themed malls, one of which honors Ibn Battuta (an Islamic scholar and explorer from Medieval times) with sections devoted to Persia, Tunisia, India, and China. Mr. Ebner said that although Dubai was interesting and convenient, he felt that traveling there was less rewarding than in Yemen.

Mr. Ebner traveled in Yemen for 5 days. The capital city of San'a is surrounded by a very rugged, almost lifeless landscape. The 12,000-foot high mountains protected Northern Yemen from outside control and that area was never colonized, while the previously British South Yemen was briefly Marxist following independence. The Haraz Mountains near Sana'a have fortified villages spectacularly situated on craggy peaks, with terraced agriculture stretching down the slopes below.

Since Islam came to Yemen, all women are covered in black and only show their eyes and fingers in public. In contrast, men freely express their maleness in public, wearing rhino horn daggers and chewing qat in public. Qat is a narcotic plant that is used for "social lubrication", and men in Yemen are said to spend 30% of their income for qat. Mr. Ebner said that old Sana'a is like a "city frozen in time". Tower houses in Old Sana'a almost look like gingerbread and they seem surreal.

Mr. Ebner said that being captured and forced to stay in Yemen as a hostage for a while might not be a bad idea, which shows that Mr. Ebner is a true geographer and explorer. If Ibn Battuta is considered one of the greatest travelers ever in history with his extensive travels and explorations, then Mr. Ebner is surely one of them too.

The lecture ended with a visually authentic photo of three women in black walking in a narrow street in Yemen. The photo was almost like a fine painting. It was certainly beyond a great photo. Mr. Ebner takes amazing photos, which always capture the right moment so that his photos communicate well with people.



Haraz Mountains, Yemen



Sana'a Women

New Travel & Tour Company
Established by Matt Ebiner

"GeoTours is a travel company dedicated to providing the highest quality, best-value travel experiences on the market. All tours are organized and led by Matt Ebiner, a college Geography Professor, experienced tour leader, and former President of the Los Angeles Geographical Society." More information can be found on-line at:

geotours.us

*The Los Angeles Geographical Society
website can now also be found at:*

www.lageography.org

April 2010 Lecture

Easter Island: Mysteries and Adventures of Rapa Nui

Presentation by Dr. Ray Sumner
Professor of Geography
Long Beach College

Review by Rebecca Donegan

Dr. Ray Sumner began her lecture with an introduction to four words, *Ahu*, *Moai*, *Pukao*, and *Reimire*. As the lecture progressed, her enthralled audience was educated on the meanings. *Ahu* are the stone platforms upon which are found the *Moai* statues that have made Easter Island so famous. The *Pukao* are the cylindrical red volcanic stone hats found on the head of *Moai*. The *Reimire* is a breastplate worn by the ancient Rapanui people. It is also the flag of Rapa Nui, bright red with the face of a bearded man at each end facing in an upward direction.

The lecture discussed the isolation and physical location of Easter Island in the South Pacific Ocean off the coast of Chile. Dr. Sumner explained the history of the island's multiple discoveries. When the first explorer, Jacob Roggeveen, found the island on Easter Sunday in 1722, explorers did not have full knowledge of latitude and longitude, thus Easter Island was discovered multiple times. It is located 2000 miles west of Caldera, Chile.

Dr. Sumner lectured on two narratives, or discourses, regarding Easter Island. She began with mysteries and moralities followed by realities and contemplation of Rapa Nui being a microcosm for the whole

planet. She explained that it was the arrogance of European discoverers adding mystery regarding the creation of the *Moai*. The Europeans could not fathom the indigenous people creating the *Moai*. She elucidated that of course the transplanted Polynesians/Tahitians of Easter Island carved the *Moai* statues. Credit for their creation does not belong to aliens from other planets, but is squarely on the shoulder of the past inhabitants of the island. The *Moai* are indeed wonderful to behold and a growing tourist attraction.

Dr. Sumner explained that most of the island's indigenous plants and trees are gone and its inhabitants are supported almost exclusively by imports. Yet she is unambiguous that Easter Island is simply too small to be used as a microcosm for the whole World. She explained that to compare Rapa Nui to the World is to compare a cup of water to the ocean, and is not a microcosm for the entire World.

She completed her fascinating and enlightening lecture with a discussion about the future impact of tourism on this very tiny island. The problems of garbage, sewage, water supply, and least of all the social impact on the people living there are a growing concern. However, after her lecture this geographer is ready to pack her bags for the long trip.

*The monthly Lecture is now in
the Science-Technology building
at Los Angeles City College.
For location and updates go to:*

www.lageography.org

California Geographical Society
Annual Conference
April 30 to May 2, 2010

The Spring Conference of the California Geographical Society will be April 30 to May 2, 2010 (Friday to Sunday) on the campus of California State University Fullerton in Orange County.

The theme of this year's conference is the Geography of Tourism and will feature papers, posters, maps and special panels from faculty and students that address this and other topics relevant to geography. An exciting array of field trips are planned that will showcase the diversity of physical, cultural and urban landscapes of Orange County and nearby environs. The event will kick off with the Friday barbeque at the Fullerton Arboretum and the newly constructed "green" Nikkei Heritage Museum Pavilion.

Please visit the conference webpage soon to make your online reservations for the conference and lodging. April 10 is the deadline to avoid a late fee and to submit abstracts for papers, posters and maps (cash prizes for best by student category).

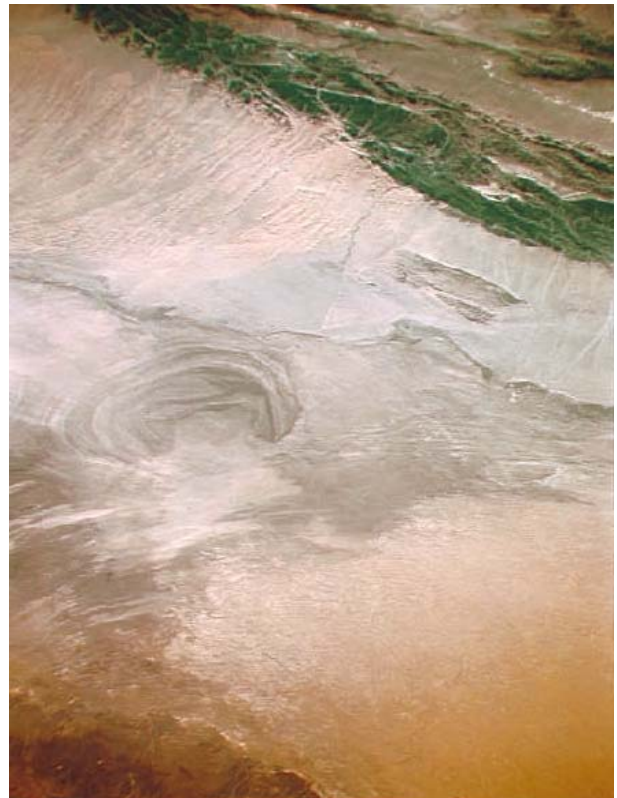
<http://www.csun.edu/~calgeosoc/>



Faculty Opportunities

Los Angeles Community College District at www.laccd.edu has tenure track faculty positions announced or soon anticipated in Geography/GIS/Environmental Science at both Pierce College and East Los Angeles College (closing dates in May or June).

El Camino College also anticipates a possible retirement that will be temporarily filled by hiring part-time Instructors for courses in physical geography (and lab), weather and climate, and possibly GIS.



**Lop Nur Lake
 Western China**



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Los Angeles City College
 855 North Vermont Avenue, Box # 1259
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Free Public Lecture Series

8:00 p.m. – First Friday of most months

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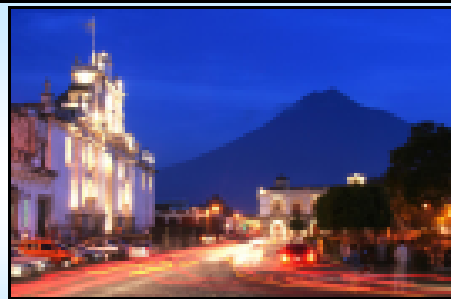
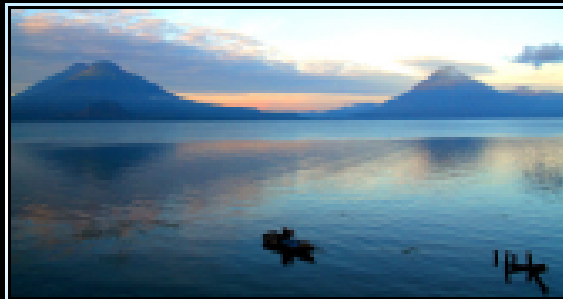
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 Complimentary Refreshments after the Lecture

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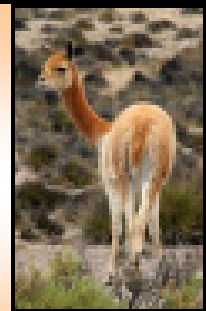
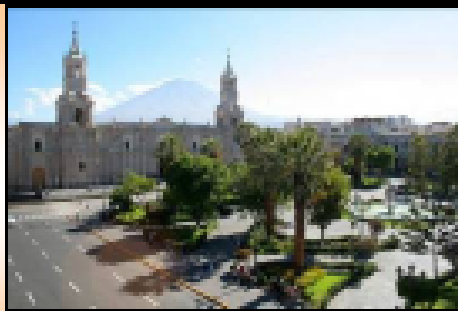
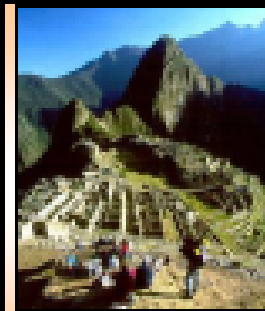
FALL 2010	SPRING 2011
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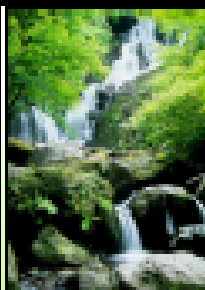
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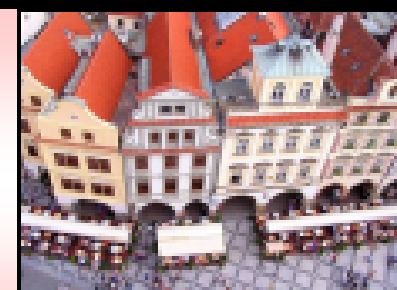
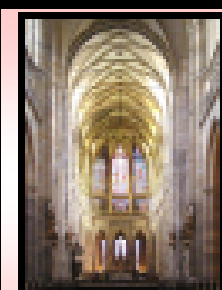
GUATEMALA & HONDURAS - JUNE 2010



PERU - JULY 2010



IRELAND - AUGUST 2010



PARIS & PRAGUE - AUGUST 2010

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