

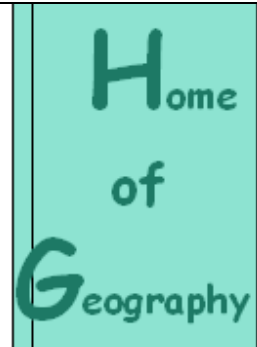


IGU/Home E-Newsletter

Quarterly

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This Newsletter is circulated to more than 1000 individuals and bodies. Announcements, information, calls for participation in scientific events, programmes and projects are welcome.

Please send them to <g.bellezza@homeofgeography.org>

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Home of Geography



1) MESSAGE OF RONALD ABLER, President of the IGU

Dear Colleagues,

I am deeply grateful for the confidence and trust my election as President of the International Geographical Union represents. The honor that has been done me is considerable. I am humbled to have been entrusted with the leadership of one of the oldest international scientific societies in the world. Though the IGU itself was formally organized only in 1922, our congresses and conferences stretch back to 1871, and the list of the Union's accomplishments over the intervening 137 years is long and distinguished.

The weight of the IGU's longevity, as well as its recent history, lie heavy on my mind these days for several reasons. First, it would be disingenuous to say that I am not pleased and even a little proud, to have been chosen as IGU President. At the same time, I am deeply saddened at the prospect of not seeing my colleagues on the outgoing IGU Executive Committee as often as I have over the last eight or twelve years. Second, when the 2004-2008 executive committee began its work, we were all buoyed by Adalberto Vallega's plans and his enthusiasm for the tasks ahead. The untimely deaths of both Nikita Glazovsky in 2005 and Adalberto in 2006 introduced into our group a sadness that lingers, and that will continue to haunt us. Third, it was my profound hope that the individual who would write these remarks would be 2004-2008 IGU First Vice President José Palacio-Prieto. The IGU would have benefitted greatly from being led by someone with José's executive skills and with his contacts with Latin American geographers. Certainly one of the 2008-2012 executive committee's priorities must be improved contacts with the Latin America community of geographers, and we hope that progress toward reaching that goal will be aided by the planned 2011 Regional Conference in Santiago, Chile.

Offsetting my wistfulness at separation from old friends and José's inability to continue, of course, is the excitement of welcoming a large number of new members to the IGU Executive Committee. The incoming vice presidents from Australia, China-Beijing, Germany, Israel, Italy, Mexico, and South Africa, coupled with the pleasure of working with continuing members from Finland, Russia, and South Korea, is exhilarating. The new executive had a brief meeting in Tunis, and everyone is eager to start addressing the challenges the IGU faces today and over the next four years, starting with the committee's first regular meeting in Seoul in November.

The executive committee members' individual priorities for the IGU for the next few years are set out in their respective statements submitted to the members of the IGU General Assembly prior to the election in Tunis. We also received a number of valuable suggestions from the national committee chairpersons who attended the Tunis General Assembly, and from a recent solicitation sent to the chairpersons of IGU National Committees, Commissions, and Task Forces. The focus of the executive committee's meeting in November will be on sifting and synthesizing these suggestions to select a limited number of goals and sound strategies for achieving those goals by 2012. The IGU can best enhance geography's stature in international science by doing a few things well rather than many things only adequately. I strongly believe that the IGU must reserve its limited energies for projects that are essential to global geography and for which IGU possesses a strong comparative advantage.

In closing, I wish to express my deep appreciation to the outgoing members of the IGU Executive Committee for their selfless and tireless work on behalf of the union since 1996 and 2000. The IGU is greatly in their debt for their many contributions. On behalf of those who participated, I

also thank our Tunisian hosts and the people of Tunisia for the warm welcome we received in Tunis.

Finally, queries and suggestions from members of the IGU community are always welcome. I hope to hear from many of you in the months and years ahead.

Ron Abler, President
rabler@aag.org

2) MESSAGE OF GIULIANO BELLEZZA, Director Home of Geography

The IGU new EC elected in Tunis on 13-14 August met for the first time on the following day (15 August); several members were absent, so we could only welcome the proposal of the General Secretary Woo-ik Yu to host in Seoul the second one. In fact this will be the first with a previous Agenda to be discussed. After some e-mail exchanges, the final decision has been the next 11-13 November, in Seoul. As is probably known, I have been one of the elected Vice Presidents, and this will surely produce some changes in the Home of Geography organisation.

On this issue, the first argument to be discussed relates to the opportunity for a single person to be in the same time IGU Vice President and Director of the Home. Going back to the history of the Home, from 2000 through 2005 Anne Buttimer has been President of both entities, but in 2004 Adalberto Vallega, once elected in Glasgow as IGU President, didn't want to have any position in the Home.

By my part, I can say that being double President has been no hindrance at all for Anne Buttimer, who has always been very active in providing me with suggestions and help (as she previously did with the former Home' Director).

Surely many people will maintain reasonable doubt about the opportunity of holding both positions, if only for the mere fact that my opinion can influence somehow the next EC's decision about the Home. Given all this, it is very likely that this communication is going to be my last one as Director of the Home. So, please, forgive me because this time I cannot say too much about my future projects: I will surely accept whatever tasks the new EC will assign to me, but I don't know at all of what kind they will be.

Therefore, in a few weeks I will probably leave the work which absorbed the major part, if not all, of my strengths during the past 5 years. My research activity has been limited to the participation in a big project of my University Department (in Cappadocia Turkey), but is a long time project, whose results will not be printed before 2010; moreover I did some surveys', in Satellite images more than in the field, along political borders, and this allowed me to present two papers in two Conferences in India: not very much, I should admit.

I have no regret at all about the strong slowdown in my researches, as from 2004 to 2006 I have been very close to Adalberto Vallega, as his best friend and not only collaborator during the last two years of his life. This has been necessary in order to accomplish with his ideas, as he wanted the Home to improve its tasks: to mention but a couple of issues, the Home was entrusted with producing a much better website and starting the diffusion of a quarterly e-newsletter to be diffused not only to the IGU Corresponding Members, but to any person (whether geographer or not) willing to be informed. He deemed this necessary, as it was very difficult for IGU to diffuse yearly the official paper Bulletin. Moreover, he wanted the Home as a centre organising and inviting people about new projects.

He launched two programs, known as Cultures and Civilisations for Human Development (CCHD) and Mediterranean Renaissance Project (MRP). While the CCHD was a worldwide

endeavour, the MRP could be seen as the field of practical research for the Mediterranean Regional Network (and the hope was that other Regional Networks also would have organised similar researches plans on their own regions). He appointed a Steering Committee for CCHD and MRP: for the first we held a Meeting and a Workshop in the Home of Geography in October and December 2005, while the MRP held its first Meeting in Cairo in April 2006.

Before the end of the year, after his untimely demise, I try to push forward these projects, with the help of the members of the Steering Committees: a good work has been done under the leadership of Benno Werlen (CCHD) and Mahmoud Ashour (MRP), and eventually the state of the art was exposed in the Tunis Congress. In October, Prof. Maria Paradiso, Secretary of the MRP, following a decision of the Steering Committee, submitted a request to join the Euro Mediterranean University (EMUNI) located in Slovenia. EMUNI is a promising project for scientific and educational cooperation in the Mediterranean, one of the big projects of the new EU policy for the Mediterranean, initiated by the French Premier Sarkozy, potentially driving MRP into a 'club' linked to the EU research and educational programs. EMUNI replied positively and MRP joined and signed EMUNI Charter as a co-founder member.

Beside the activity for the last Vallega's projects, I followed in updating the Home website, regularly producing the e-newsletter and organizing in the Home some other meetings and workshop. It's worth noticing that some of these were requested by non geographic scientific entities.

During the past months, the Società Geografica Italiana and the IGU National Committee of Italy discussed about the future of the Home, and a document was presented to the General Assembly in Tunis Congress. I contributed to the text, of course, and I conclude including a shortened version of the document in this message of mine: a sort of legacy for the future Celimontana Committee. You will not find a report about the CCHD, as this project is now in the hands of Prof. Benno Werlen, Chair of the IGU Commission on The Cultural Approach in Geography.

THE HOME OF GEOGRAPHY - PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES (July 2008)

In recent years the role of Home of Geography, in spite of the difficult financial conditions and lack of a definition for an explicit strategy at the core of I.G.U., did improve. Work proceeded on such projects as coordinating Archives, assisting various scientific events promoted by numerous international organizations (ICSU, IYPE, ERODOTE, etc), welcoming visitors, publishing books and – above all – distributing information concerning I.G.U. activities, accompanying the current Secretariat.

In order to redefine an outline wherein the relationship between I.G.U. and Home of Geography are clarified once and for all, we are submitting a possible strategic plan centred upon *four different lines of action* wishing to upgrade not only Home of Geography, but I.G.U. activities on the whole.

Planning Outline 1 – I.G.U. Storage, research resource *Home of Geography as a Documentation Centre*

Ever since its beginning, there has always been among Home of Geography's primary functions, that of gathering scientific documentation, dispersed for decades between various Secretariats and Commissions. We are dealing with material of great interest for I.G.U.'s history as well as for research in many other fields covered by the work of the Commissions.

The material is available for scholars coming to the Home (hosted by the Società Geografica Italiana, in Roma, Villa Celimontana), but our goal is to make it easily available at any distance, in digitalized form, upon request.

In the mean time, a principle of exclusive digital conservation is now being set up. As far as Commissions and Task Forces are concerned, I.G.U. should plan on the *obligation*, at the head of their respective *Chairs*, to make sure that all scientific material produced be submitted to Home of Geography, which, in turn, will post it *on line* (which would not be in conflict with the existence of a *website* specific to the single Commissions). It would be necessary that I.G.U. sensitizes the single Commissions even more to convey scientific results obtained in their entirety, when still *in progress*.

History of Geographic Thought Multimedial Archives

Home of Geography also has in its possession, essentially thanks to Anne Buttimer's inestimable work, a series of taped and filmed interviews of several of the 20th century's most illustrious geographers.

Starting with the careful consideration that the history of geographic thought must be, by definition, solidly bound to the thought of geographers, Home of Geography would put a "live" Archive of data that is already available (as well as that which will be gradually collected) into operation. It being understood that the objective of making all data available directly *on line* at the Home of Geography internet site, by way of *streaming* technology, should suitable economic resources be lacking, all material would be digitalised and put at the public's disposal through free downloading from already existing systems such as You Tube or Google Video. This would make all information very practicable by way of the Home of Geography internet site and *links* equipped with in-depth analysis. Within the framework of a broader collaboration with Google, it would be possible to presuppose a section of one of these two portals dedicated exclusively to geography and geographers (a space that would act as a sort of virtual museum).

Planning Outline 2 - GEO-GATEWAY

Home of Geography should be a "service organisation" for geographers all over the world. Offering the community of geographers innovative services that can contribute to the creation of a geographic *network* instrumental to the progress of this discipline is one of Home of Geography's outstanding duties.

GEO-GATEWAY is a project that aims to put the research of geographers from all over the world "into a network" as well as "on the net", aiding the diffusion of results and scientific cooperation, by way of easy-to-consult, well known scientific publications. It would be set up as a *virtual merging point of information relative to scientific geographic production*: a reliable and specialised place – since it would be safeguarded by Home of Geography and I.G.U..

The way it works is rather simple, similar to that which has proven to be remarkably efficient in popular *information sharing* examples available on the internet (YouTube, Flickr, Facebook, Wikipedia etc). *GEO-GATEWAY* gathers *abstracts* of articles and book indexes, granting anybody an opportunity to carry out *full text* research by keywords, geographic terms of reference and other pertinent information from available material. The information to insert and share on line would be proposed by the interested individuals themselves. *GEO-GATEWAY* would therefore meet the direct interest that every researcher (as well as publishing houses, specialised magazines, university departments, etc) has for the maximum diffusion of his or her work, meeting the interests of every scholar to be kept informed and up to date on the publications of his or her sphere. Access to the material collected and shared is free and gratis.

Every document submitted to *GEO-GATEWAY* to be shared will be presented by the proponent in its original language as well as in English and/or French. If compared to what has already been made available by various publishers, *GEO-GATEWAY* holds the advantage of representing a unique and centralised "place" for geographic research. It is a matter of being a valuable feature for big

publishing houses (such as Blackwell, Elsevier, Kluwer, Sage , Taylor & Francis, etc) that often, because of their extremely vast and multi-disciplinary production, find it impossible to reach geographers directly through their websites.

Without going excessively into operational detail, it is useful, in any case, to briefly list some of the functioning elements:

- information can be inserted exclusively by authenticated and verified users;
- additional information (such as the historic period pertinent to the study and geographic area) can also be inserted, specifying author, title, precise bibliographic references);
- *GEO-GATEWAY* would allow Home of Geography to have a very wide and updated international directory available to them (updates are in the best interest of the users themselves);

Therefore, the *GEO-GATEWAY* system is a service of the *highest degree*, offered to the community of geographers and created by Home of Geography. Furthermore, it is a *self-sustaining system* and, potentially, capable of raising additional economic resources needed for functions Home of Geography carries out. In particular, these following points could be considered:

- payment of a small amount (a few Euro) for each single piece of loaded material;
- a kind of “subscription” allowing each author unlimited loading of *abstracts* or indexes of his or her own scientific production, within a given period of time (a feasible sum could be under one hundred Euros); a subscription of an obviously different nature could be undersigned by research centres, departments and publishers;

Finally, *GEO-GATEWAY* could host, for a fee, publicity *banners* commissioned by the specialised publishing houses or by coordinators of geographic conventions of international prominence.

Planning Outline 3 – Mediterranean Renaissance

Our location in Rome explains why one of goal is to develop and enhance geographic vision on the Mediterranean; in a framework that already sees numerous active specialised centres, it is important to pay close attention to the legitimacy of the proposal, avoiding generic programmes and putting forward a proposal that is based upon the singularities of geographic discipline (*place, territory, scale are the arguments which really matter*).

In order to do this, the project must put forth limited objectives that are ambitious at the same time, involving people and institutes based on their actual scientific value.

This proposal could be articulated on two, closely connected levels:

a) Specialised Seminars

4-5 seminars to be organised every six months, to be held at Home of Geography, planning the participation of 5-6 speakers chosen among illustrious experts on the theme and attended to by a member of the scientific committee.

It would be opportune to include the publication of a series of *instant-books* into these seminars.

The following is a possible proposal of topics (and already involved scholars):

- Representing and developing Mediterranean space (R. Cattedra, P. Giaccaria, C. Minca)
- Tourism and production of Mediterranean space (C. Minca)
- Flow of people, flow of communication: the Mediterranean of the nets (G. Bellezza, Ali Toumi)
- Contemporary urban dynamics in Mediterranean space (R. Cattedra)

- The society of Information in the Mediterranean Basin (A Kellerman, M. Paradiso)
- Impact of Climate Change (A. Douguedroit)

B) Research Programme

A restricted number of research programmes, closely related to seminar activities, should be established, in which researchers from both shores of the basin would participate. We envision three plausible basic themes:

1. A cosmopolitan city

The topic could be approached by interacting economic themes with cultural and social ones, an overview of the present and one of the past, breaking it down in the following manner:

- The cosmopolitan Mediterranean city as the cradle and the victim of modernity
- Migratory flow and cosmopolitanism in contemporary Mediterranean cities
- International investments, economic globalisation and new forms of cosmopolitanism

A work group dedicated to these themes could include:

Royal Holloway University (Bialasiewicz / Minca); Università di Torino (Giaccaria); Università di Palermo (Guarrasi); Università de Neuchâtel (Soderstrom); New York University (Fleming); Université de Montpellier (Chair) ; Université de Paris Dauphine (Yousfi) ; C.N.R.S. (Denis)

(members from the southern side of the Basin still need to be selected)

2. Travel Theory and Practice in the Mediterranean

For tourism, the Mediterranean Basin represents not only the “region” with the most consistent flow as well as the most typological and impact diversifications, but also a sort of laboratory space in which new and unusual forms of cultural “contact” and identity are incessantly negotiated. In fact, ideas, things, people, theories and practices voyage across the Mediterranean’s real and metaphoric space along with the tourist.

What we are proposing to realise with this project is the formation of an observatory dedicated to a “critical” analysis of tourism in the Mediterranean that would be capable of drawing on (and possibly creating a dialogue with) these two traditions of research. Home of Geography would appear to be the natural choice, in this sense, to carry out a project of this kind.

The project is initially divided into three key moments which should create the conditions to subsequently elaborate a research programme with a wide international scope that would be capable of presenting itself as an excellent arena for thoughtful consideration of the Mediterranean:

1. the creation of an international 1-day workshop (held at Home of Geography) with the title: “Critical Tourism Studies and the Mediterranean Lesson”, coordinated by professor Claudio Minca of the University of London, aiming to a debate between scholars of international fame from the Anglo-Saxon world and experts on the employed in other academic contexts;
2. the workshop would serve the purpose of mapping out the progress of the *critical tourism studies* and selecting contact points as well as a possible creative and analytical fusion of these with the so-called *Mediterranean studies*. Results of this observation would be transcribed in a ‘special issue’ hosted by an international geographic magazine and /or in a collective volume in English, to be published with an English publishing house;
3. the third phase is the one that must allow for an assessment of the results attained thanks to the workshop and publications, and decide the opportunity and conditions to launch an extensive project on “The Culture of Travel and Modernity in the Mediterranean”.

3. Mediterranean Knowledge

The goal is to rethink the competitiveness of the skills and know how embedded along the two coasts of the Basin in a context of increasing globalisation of value and merchandise chains, rethinking the relationship between handicraft, industry and territory.

The central hub resides in the singularities - actual and potential - that the relationships between the global scale and Mediterranean scale possess, in reference to rooting, competitiveness, reproduction and internationalisation of Euro-Mediterranean productive traditions. The question here is a double one:

1. What role could a re-defining of processes, practices and politics within the Euro-Mediterranean scale have to sustain the competitiveness of these productive traditions threatened by production and consumption globalisation?
2. What roles could local productive systems in the North and South of the basin have to aid the re-launch of the Euromediterranean Partnership?

Work on this project would take shape with the creation of a workshop held at Home of Geography in this case as well. The workshop would be coordinated by Professor P. Giaccaria of the Università di Torino.

Planning Outline 4 – Organisation

The director of Home of Geography should be joined by young researchers appointed by the “Celimontana Committee” (3-5) who would collaborate on all Home activities. They would offer their services free of charge, for the sole purpose of the opportunity to collaborate in an “atmosphere” that is very open to international perspective. These researchers would be given an honorary title within the structure of the Home (for example Research Officer, Scientific Officer, Senior Scientific Officer), which would be beneficial to their résumés.

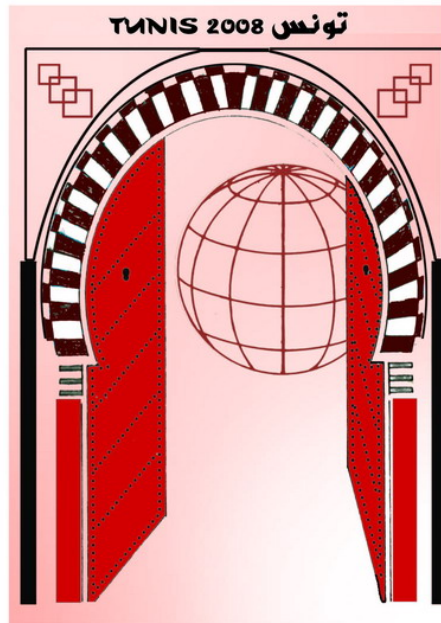
Specific assignments could be given to these co-workers, under the responsibility of the director. For example:

- systematic *fund-raising* activity through a constant look-out for opportunities on an international level, the presentation for funding of research projects of a geographic nature and land analysis to individuals (foundations, interest groups, etc) or institutes (European Union, Specialised agencies of the United Nations etc);
- the development and maintenance of contacts with geographers of specific geographic areas (continental or sub-continental), with the intention of aiding the broadening of the geographic *network* to the regions of the world that are currently less involved as well, along with the promotion of events of various levels (from local ones that could be given more prominence, to international ones to be held in occasion of I.G.U. conventions);
- support to managers of research programmes initiated by Home of Geography (such as those pertaining to Mediterranean Renaissance illustrated in Outline 3)

The creation of an integrated work group is very important in order to enhance the operative capacity of Home of Geography as well as to guarantee a certain degree of “resilience” of the organisation.



3) REPORT OF TUNIS INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS, 12-15 AUGUST 2008



Some weeks before the opening of the Congress organizers were worrisome, as the participants seemed to be not too many. But since 11th August the registration office was flooded with people asking for last minute enrolment, leading to a final attendance of 1200 participants.



José Luis Palacio Prieto speaks during the Opening Session

Acting President José Luis Palacio Prieto gave the opening address, which concluded with the award given to young students winners of the Geography Olympiad. As it happened in the last edition, Eastern Europe students won the equipe prize with Romania and had a very good results in the best qualified, But it has been a very young Japanese to get the first prize.



José Luis Palacio Prieto awards the winner of the Olympiad

During the General Assembly held on 13 and 14 August the new IGU Executive Committee was elected. 43 Countries expressed their votes, with the following results:

The new President, who obtained 37 votes, is Ron Abler (USA, who had been a Vice President for the preceeding 8 years.

For the position of Secretary General, there was only one candidate, Woo-ik Yu (Southern Korea, who was already serving as such since January 2007: he was elected with 41 votes.

There were 19th scholars candidate for the 8 Vice President positions, and the first eight elected by the Assembly have been:

Ruth Fincher (Australia), 30 votes
 Vladimir Kolossov (Russia), 28 votes
 Irasema Alcantara Ayala (Mexico), 24 votes
 Dietrich Soyeze (Germany), 24 votes
 Giuliano Bellezza (Italy), 22 votes
 Michael Meadows (South Africa), 22 votes
 Qin Dahe (China). 21 votes
 Aharon Kellerman (Israel), 20 votes

Hundreds of papers, lectures and posters were presented, during 4 days of morning to night full immersion in every field of Geography, until the last morning, when the new President Accomplish with his first official tasks.

The first has been the nomination of the scholars awarded with the Mattei-Dogan Laureat d'Honneur Prize, who were:

Prof. M.S. Abulezz , Egypt
Hartwig Haubrich, Germany
Prof. Gyorgy Enyedi, Hungary
Prof. Leszek Antoni Kosinski, Poland
Prof. Dr. Herman Th. Verstappen, The Netherlands
Vladimir Kotlyakov, Russia



IGU President Ron Abler speaks during the presentation of the newly awarded Laureat d'Honneur

After the closing address has been given, but the real closure was the delivery of the metaphoric relay baton (in fact an IGU flag) which the Tunisian Organizing Committee passed to the German organizers of the next Congress, in Köln 2012.



Adnane Hayder, President of the Tunisian Organizing Committee, delivers the IGU flag to the German Organizers, Frauke Kaas and Dietrich Soyez

4) NEXT REGIONAL CONFERENCE, TEL AVIV, 12-16 JULY 2010



All IGU commissions were asked to share with the conference organizers their plans, as far as the timing of their meetings is concerned (before, during or after the main conference). Commissions were further asked to make sure that they secured a local organizer in Israel. In addition, all those who intend to attend the conference were asked to fill out the intention form, available, jointly with the first circular, at the conference website: <http://www.igu2010.com>.

The second circular is planned for June 2009, and it will include, as usual, full registration and hotel information, as well as details on the special pre-conference graduate course on Mediterraneity, which will take place at the University of Haifa. A large variety of field trips will be offered to all conference attendees.

Best wishes,

Prof. Aharon Kellerman

Chair, Israeli National Geography Committee



5) REPORTS FROM CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS

5.1 –Marthandam Tamil Nadu), International Conference on Land use cover change, Biodiversity, Climate Change

The Conference has been organised by the Departments of Botany, Tourism and Physics of the Manmonian Sundaranar University Tirunelveli, in the Nesamony Memorial Christian College of Marthandam.

The small nice town, second of the Kanyakumari District, is located only 40 km from the Cape Comorin, southernmost tip of the Indian subcontinent, and the participants received a wonderful hospitality.



*Prof. Devakumar Samuel speaks during the Opening Ceremony
In the centre, Rev. G. Deva Kadasham, Bishop Kanyakumari District, Church of Southern India,*

During the Opening Ceremony all participants didn't receive some photocopies of the program, but a printed book containing full information about the various Sessions, with the name of the speakers and the abstracts of the papers to be presented; soon after the works went on smoothly, in a remarkable respect of time.

The Presiding Address of Bishop of Kanyakumari District, Rev. G. Deva Kadasham, was highly appreciated, being not limited to usual wishes for a good and fruitful work; he really wanted to enter in the Agenda, speaking with competence about the land use changes, not always done in a proper way, not respecting the conditions of soil and workers. but only aiming to the growth of the personal economic profit.

The Plenary Session followed, with lectures given by scholars of the National Association of Indian Geographers, of several Indian Universities as Delhi, Aligarh, Bhopal, of foreign Countries such as Indonesia, Bangladesh, Italy and Finland and members of the IGU Commissions on Land Use & Land Cover Change and on Biogeography & Biodiversity.

The scientific Sessions began in the afternoon, when in two different rooms (Auditorium and Seminar Hall) were hosted 4 Sessions, two dedicated to Land Use Change and the others to Biodiversity and to Climate Change. The following day 6 more Sessions were held, three of them dedicated to Land Use Change, one more to Climate Change and the last two to Tourism Development and to Land Use & Environmental Change, with Application of Remote Sensing and GIS.

There were 12-13 papers to be presented in each Session, and as it normally happens some person couldn't be present, while other were last minute presentation. In total, nearly 100 papers were

presented and discussed. The participation has been near to 15 persons, stressing the very important success of the Conference.

The hospitality was not limited only to the tea breaks and lunches, as a special mention should be paid to the wonderful Cultural Program offered the night of 6th October, with a show of traditional and modern dances, songs, music and cabaret numbers, all performed by students and graduates of the University, under the Direction of their teachers.



Traditional dances: left Guru Natya Vidushi, right students of the University

The Program was Cultural on a wide sense, because after the show a delicious dinner was served, offering many different dishes mainly of local cuisine.

The success of the Conference was exposed by the Reporters or the Chairs of every Session, who spoke in the opening of the Valedictorian Ceremony, before the closing addresses given by the Principal and Vice-Principal of the University, the Correspondent, the Co-conveners, the Organizing Secretary and two Foreign Participants.



Prof. R.B.Singh, General Secretary of the NAGI, speaks during the Valedictorian Ceremony

Post Conference Field Trip

A field trip followed the Conference, from 7 through 10 October, starting from Marthandam and entering in Kerala after few km. In some hours the coach followed the coastal highway

northbound, until the region of the Backwaters: a flat humid coastal plain between Alappuzha and Kochi. Many rivers end here their course in estuaries, subject to the sea tides: all the plain is rich of swamps of brackish water.



Life in the backwater

At lunch time the participants took a boat and started for a cruiser on one of the largest coastal lake. In the afternoon some particular islands were visited, where the paddy fields lie between 1 to 2 metres lower than the near water table, sheltered by well cared ridges all along the coast. At sunset the lake was crowded with canoes, with fishermen paddling to come back home with their catch, while other were in the same moment going out for their night activity.

The morning after we sailed back, encountering the reverted canoes traffic, then starting again from Alappuzha toward the Western Gaths: of course, the landscape here is the opposite of a coastal plains. We took a narrow winding road, well above 1200 metres, between tea plantations, eventually arriving to Tekkhady and the nearby Periyar Tiger Reserve (tigers are really reserved: as usually happens, it has been impossible to see but one).



Entrance to Periyar Reserve (left) – Beach near the Vely Park (right)

Since some years the capital of Kerala abandoned the western name of Trivandrum, to take again the old tamil one of Thiruvananthapuram. We arrive there rather late in the night, so the following day nobody blame as the day was dedicated to the Vely sea park, and in the afternoon after a visit

to the aquarium near Kowalam, we visited the crowded beach of this small town, considered as the best in the vicinity of Thiruvananthapuram, where the three-days field trip ended.



Fishermen pulling fisher net ashore (left) – Kowalam beach (right)

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Paper presented by G. Bellezza in the Plenary Session; , Geography, Geomatics, Culture

This paper is a follow up of the one I presented in Hyderabad, during the first International Congress of the National Association of Indian Geographers (it can be seen and downloaded from IGU-Home of Geography E-Newsletter #6, under the title “*Is it possible to see intangible culture in the land?*”). In that occasion I tried to answer to the question “*Does Culture appears in Satellite Images?*”, and commenting the image my answer was “*yes, it is*”. My positive answer can be seen in the comment to the photo #3 of the aforementioned paper. Briefly, in an imagine along the Canada-USA border (49° parallel N) was clearly seen not only that the territorial organization is different in the two States, but that this organization was influenced by the uses and habits of the French and British colonizers: the land properties were organized in the first case with long stripes, while squares were the only figure appearing in the second.

So I went on examining all the Canada-USA border, with the help of Google Earth, and I could make many new observations. Today the opening question of my paper is: “*Does Cultures influence land cover organization ?*”. I had to change my first, too simple, conclusion: it always happens when we observe the results of human action. Let’s see the first image, taken in the eastern part of the two States, where English and French colonization began.



Marysville ($42^{\circ}54'40''$ N and $82^{\circ}28'52''$ W) is a small town in Michigan (USA), in a square organized territory, totally different from the land organization on the opposite riverbank, (Ontario State, Canada). It is exactly what I expected to see, but things changed when I began moving westward, along the USA-Canada boundary, which runs for more than 2000 km following the 49° parallel N. In the second image the latitude is about 112° W, and what can be seen are Alberta (Canada) north of the border, Montana (USA) south of it.



The situation is nearly the opposite of which could be expected: long stripes in the USA, shorter and wider stripes in Canada, where is clearly detectable a tendency toward a square organization. As a general rule, what one can read in these geomatic images depends on the variety of known “alphabets”. The experts in geomatics can read many specialist alphabets unknown to geographers, but vice versa holds true also. Now we should look with geo-historical glasses. In the eastern part of the border the settlers were mainly of British or French origin, but the situation was changing when the European began moving more and more away from the Atlantic Ocean. In fact, soon after the Independence War, many US settlers, still loyal to the English Crown, moved to Canada, finding new earth in the central (and obviously southern) part of the enormous, wide but cold spaces, where very few French people were still arriving. Things were changing even in the US sector, where after the Civil War a significant percentage of immigrants were now coming from central and eastern Europe: in the plains all these people were more used to cultivate in long rectangular fields.

So I arrived to the third question: “*Does reciprocal cultures influence economy and land cover organization?*”. The right border to look for an answer starts from the second photo I showed in Hyderabad, and published in the IGU-Home e-Newsletter #6. A Landsat image of the early ‘70s showed that the “industrial” US, north of the border, were largely cultivated, while no vegetation appeared on the southern side, in the “agricultural” Mexico. The explanation was simple, more economical than cultural: on the southern edge of the border thousands of Mexican *braceros* (unemployed countrymen, searching works of any kind) were waiting the right moment to illegally cross the border, to find an irregular work in the fields; they were earning a pittance of pay, on US standards, but nevertheless this was much higher than the normal Mexican one. The bonanza couldn’t last more than some months, before being discovered and forcibly sent back to Mexico, but saving a good amount of money in the pocket. After some days it was time to go once more near the border, waiting for the good moment to cross it again.

Some dozens years passed by, and when, still thanks to Google Earth, I made a new “flight” on the border, once again I could read many things the geomaticians usually neglect. Important changes occurred in the time passed, due to the NEFTA Treatise, among USA and many States of Latin America and, even more, to the USA-Mexico agreement about the *Empresas maquiladoras*.

Going back in time, the first *agreement* to allow the Mexican *braceros* to enter in the USA as temporary workers had been signed during the ‘40s, due to some scarcity of unskilled workers in the US, where many people were requested in the Army all over the world. In the ‘50s the USA stopped this kind of migration, but it continued in illegal way, until a new agreement was signed. A *Maquiladora*. is a factory that imports materials and equipment on a favored basis for assembly or manufacturing a product, which must soon after be re-exported, usually back to the originating country.



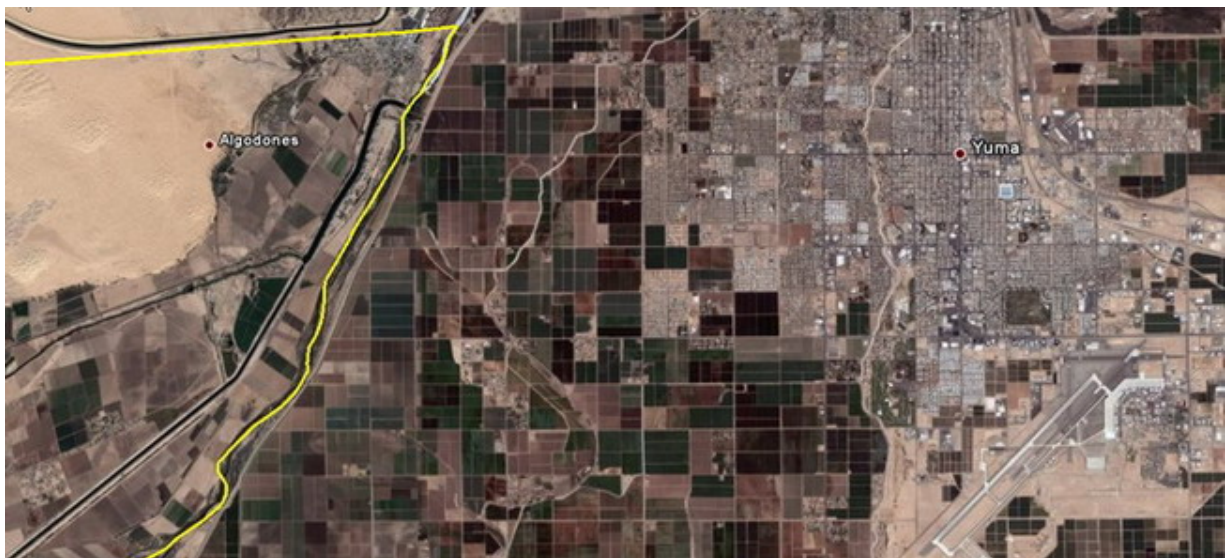
US firms were very rapid in understanding how many advantages they could take from the system. *Maquiladoras* headquarters were established near the border, exporting semi-manufactured products in Mexico with no custom fees, paying the assembly much less than it would have been in the US, re-importing the final product to sell it, possibly writing in the label “product in the US”. Soon, many firms of Japan, Germany and other Asiatic and European Companies established headquarters near the USA-Mexico borders, and this caused a rapid increase in the industrial activity on the Mexican side. Knowing this *alphabet*, and thanks to Google Earth. all this can easily be read.

In the early ‘80s Tecate (above) was a little village south of the border, some 45 km from the sea; in a few years it grew to an industrial town, while in the US part of the image we can see only vegetation, not much cultivated. This is one of the best examples of the land cover and organization changes along this border.



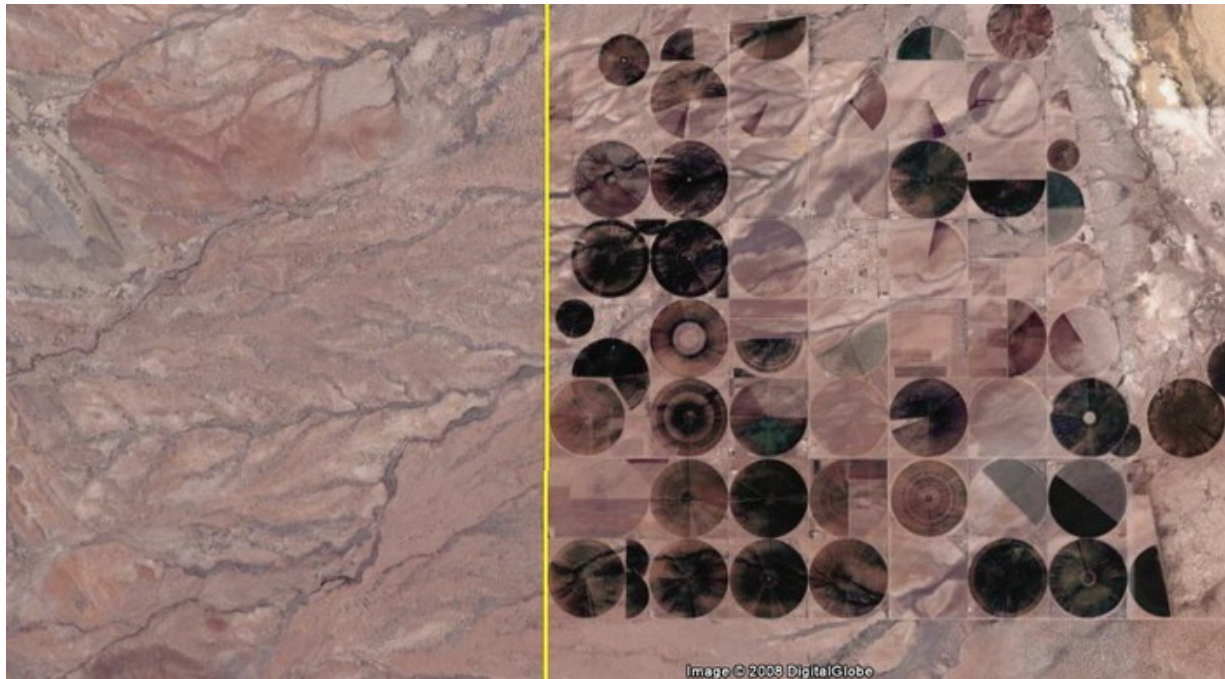
The figure above shows another kind of change. Here we are about 100 km more inland with respect to Tecate. The border is a few km south of the large irrigation scheme named Imperial Valley: a huge amount of water were heaped beyond the border, causing salinization of many square miles of Mexican land, causing never ending international dispute. The situation was strongly modified by the *maquiladoras*. Mexicali had about 250.000 inhabitants in the '70s, 500.000 in the '90s and nearly 900.000 today.

There are now some cultivation west of the city, but compare the order of the fields, always geometrically oriented in the grid system of the US, while in the Mexican side we see some geometrical tendency, but more influenced by fantasy. Here the land cover and use changes are very influenced by both economy and culture.



Yuma is a city about 220 km far off the Pacific coast. Here the USA-Mexico border changes abruptly, from E-SE/W-NW direction to N-NE/S-SW. Here it appears to have been no changes: totally cultivated the US side, largely barren arid land on the Mexican one.

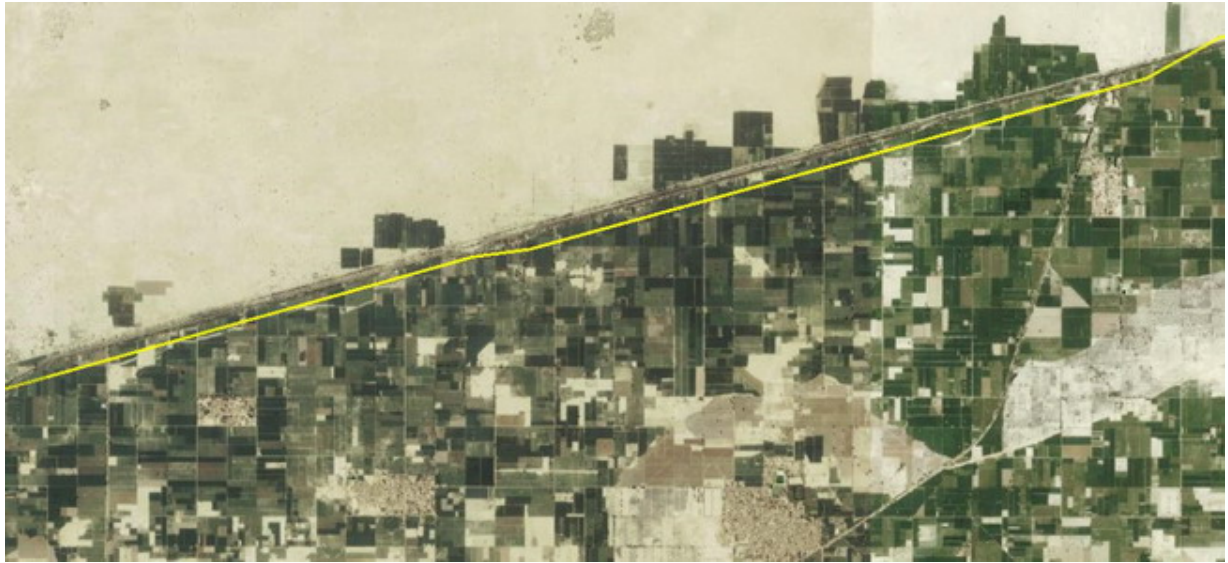
Until now the lecture of the images showed some changes, all of them rather easily explained by my *alphabet* knowledge; but in the next figure I found something unexpected. It is in an anonymous location, about 800 km from the Pacific coast, but only 460 from the Bay of Baja California.



The boundary is a thin vertical line, separating a barren desert land and richly cultivated fields, with large use of central pivot irrigating systems. The diameter of the circles is 1 km, and this appears strange, in a State where the length is still measured in terms of feet, yards and miles. In fact, the surprise increases when we discover that the barren land is in the US side, and the irrigated fields are in Mexico. There are two possibilities: a) some rich US citizen (or Japanese, Canadian or else), knowing about a very large underground water table, bought at low price a large property in Mexico and excavated the wells for the irrigation; b) the rich family is a Mexican one, and probably its richness is based on some *maquiladora* factory.

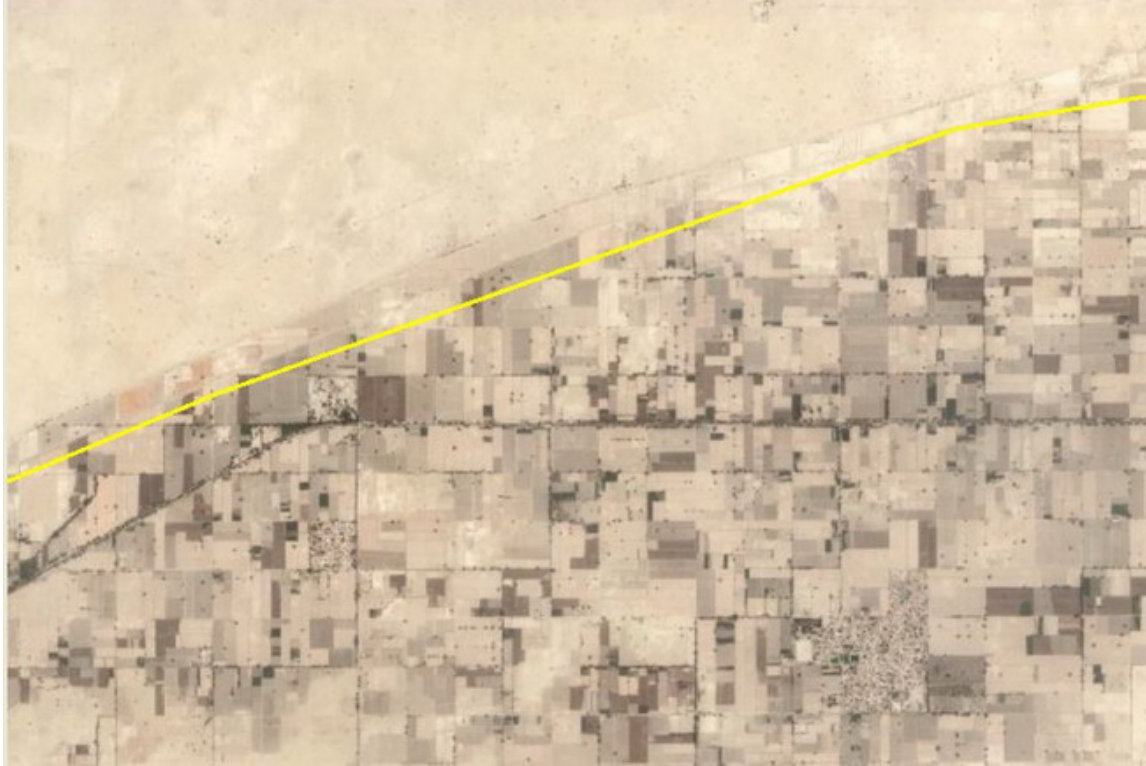
And here comes the most important lesson for a geographer. What we have seen is an as interesting as easy way to see the world and, based on the known *alphabets*, we can make intelligent observations and hypothesis. But we should be very aware of the risk to make trivial mistakes: we will never know what is going on in some territories unless we go there, and spend the due time seeing with our eyes and speaking with the people, trying to learn their culture, so to *read* with their interpretative *alphabets*.

Now look at the next figures: the time has arrived when the speaker should give space to the audience. You should use all of your attention, because you know the next local *alphabets* far better than I will ever do. All these images show territories along the boundary between India and Pakistan, and more precisely a part of the political border between the two Punjab.



Geographical references: Latitude about 30° N, Longitude between 73°37' and 73°45' E. One feature is easily read, as it is written in universal *alphabet*: the border is clearly indicated by the limit between the totally cultivated area in India, and the desert, with small cultivated spots in Pakistan. The yellow line appearing in the image parallel to the limit of cultivations, marked in Google Earth as political boundary, is *not at all* what it pretends to be. We can't blame Google Earth for this: when drawing maps of the whole earth mistakes of less than 140 metres are absolutely normal. In any case there is a lesson to learn: one should never forget that, notwithstanding the continuous advancement of technology, we are still far from perfection. On the other hand, remember that the possibility to see these images in a laptop is close to a miracle.

The second image between Punjabs (below) shows the same characteristics: land totally cultivated in India, plain desert in Pakistan, but the general aspect seems to be different between the two images. You probably know that in Google Earth it usually appears the date of the survey, which is updated when a new image is available. The first image was realized in 2003, when the fields were fully covered by the ripening crops; the second, distant some 18 km, was taken four months later, after the harvest (and here also the border is marked with an error of about 200 metres).



I am convinced that the human settlements are an issue of basic importance for the geographical researches, if not the key one. I want to drive your attention to the settlement in the bottom-right corner of the image: something so important, in my opinion. to show it enlarged in the next image.



I don't know the name of this village, but its plan appears different from all of the nearby ones. As far as I have seen in India, the majority of the rural villages have a nearly square plan, where small streets intersect with right angles. Here we see a very different plan, something that in western architecture will be called a *star plan*. My first thought went to Chandigar, the capital city of Punjab, whose plan was drawn by one of the main architects of the 20th Century, the Swiss-French Le Corbusier: as a matter of fact, a large part of Chandigar, east of the airport, has a star plan. But this is an enlargement of the city, not part of the first planning (which, on a larger scale, is similar to the one of the Indian rural villages), and I had to give up.

So, now I finish, leaving the floor to you, with a strong desire: I wish that some young Indian geographer, after a survey in Google Earth (or similar software), will go on the field, to see and speak to the people. I am longing to read the results of a field survey about the different land use and changes along the border of the two Punjab (and along all the India boundaries), with special attention to the human settlements. This is what geographers should do: practical surveys and, if necessary, give suggestions to modify the land use and cover, thus showing the wide possibility of the professional geographers in improving the men-environment relations.



7) PROFESSOR MIN-KO WOO AWARDED BY THE CANADIAN GEOGRAPHICAL UNION

Former Vice-chair of the Commission, Professor Emeritus Ming-ko (Hok) Woo is the 2008 recipient of the Canadian Geophysical Union's prestigious J. Tuzo Wilson Medal. Professor Woo is only the second hydrologist to win this award.

Hok has bridged three main areas of hydrology: the hydrology of cold regions, the hydrology of wetland ecosystems, and stochastic and statistical hydrology. In addition, he has made a significant contribution in applying hydrology and fluvial geomorphology in developing areas of the world such as Nigeria and China.

His research has focused on understanding the principles of catchment, hillslope and wetland hydrology as well as assessing changes in hydrological systems by environmental stressors such as climate variability and human modification to the landscape. Throughout his career, he has combined empirical, experimental and observational studies with both deterministic and stochastic modelling.

His research and leadership have inspired generations of geoscientists in various universities and governments in Canada.



Woo is known first and foremost for his contributions to cold region hydrology. Much of his research took place near Resolute, NWT where a river now officially bears the name McMaster River. More recently, he was the program leader of the MAGS project, which consisted of a Canadian team of more than 80 scientists and engineers in the fields of atmospheric, earth and hydrologic sciences who studied how climate change and variability affects ice and snow dynamics and water resources in the Mackenzie River Basin.

The Canadian Geophysical Union has also honoured him by creating an annual lecture series in hydrology and his alma mater, McMaster University, is honouring him by introducing the Woo Water Lecture Series from autumn 2008.

Professor Woo was Vice-chair of the IGU Commission C08-34: Water Sustainability (and of the preceding Study Group from 1998 to 2007). He remains a very active member of the Steering Committee. As Managing Editor of this e-Newsletter, I like to remind that he has also been one of the Editors of the Volume VII of the Home of Geography Publications Series, *Managing Water Resources in a changing Physical and Social Environment*.

For more accolades, see the McMaster Daily News entry at:

<http://dailynews.mcmaster.ca/story.cfm?id=5425>



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