

## International Association of Geomorphologists

*Association Internationale des Géomorphologues*

**IAG/AIG Newsletter No. 28 (1/2012)**

### From the Editor's Desk

Dear Geomorphologists

I thank you all for your kind help and co-operation in enabling me to publish the newsletter on time. I request that you continue this co-operation in order that future issues of the newsletter continue to be published on time.

**Sunil Kumar De**

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### 1. Obituaries

#### a. *Dr Mohammed Umer Mohammed (1959–2011)*



Mohammed Umer Mohammed (1959-2011) was an Associate Professor at the Department of Earth Sciences, Addis Ababa University, for 19 years. He was also the founder in 2009, and leader of the "Paleo-environment and Paleoanthropology Program Unit" at Addis Ababa University until his untimely death, during fieldwork in the Afar on 27 November 2011. Mohammed served as a member of the PAGES Scientific Steering Committee, as leader of the PAGES Africa 2k Working Group, and of PAGES Science Focus 4 (Past Human-Climate-Ecosystem Interactions). The untimely death of Dr Mohammed Umer Mohammed is a grievous loss to his numerous colleagues and friends in the international community of palaeoenvironmental research. He was a dedicated and internationally recognized researcher and an ambassador for African science and for PAGES, and a much-valued friend to his many students and colleagues.

Mohammed was born on 22 June 1959 in Arsi Robe, a small town on the southeastern Ethiopian Highlands. He graduated from Addis Ababa University with a BSc degree in Geology in 1981, and taught at Asmara University, Eritrea, for five years, before beginning research at the University of Aix-Marseille III. His PhD, on the vegetation history of the eastern Ethiopian highlands, was completed in 1992. His subsequent research which focused largely on the environmental history of Ethiopia made significant contributions to the understanding of the environmental history of the country. In addition to his teaching and research duties at Addis Ababa University, Mohammed has also served in various academic administration positions including as Associate Dean of the Faculty of Science during 2005-2007 and was recently elected as a member of the University Council.

Mohammed was a founding member of the East African Quaternary Research Association, and was elected its President in February 2011. He was a member of the executive committee of the International Association of Geomorphologists, and of the steering committee of the Hominid Sites and Paleolakes Drilling Project, supported by the International Continental Scientific Drilling Program. He was a key partner in the current Ethiopian Lakes Palaeoenvironmental Reconstruction Project, led from Cologne University. Mohammed, as a member of the Organizing Committee and co-host of the 2011 Regional Conference of the International Association of Geomorphologists held in Addis Ababa on February 18-22 2011, played a key role for the successful completion of the Conference.

**Asfawossen Asrat, Ethiopia**

#### b. *Prof. Hanna Bremer (1928-2012)*

Hanna Bremer was one of the most influential geomorphologists of her generation. Her influence was both national and international and reached across linguistic barriers between German, English and French. Her education at the University of Göttingen in Geography, Geology and Physics served her profoundly well as an intellectual, a field scientist and a critic of popular trends in her discipline of Geomorphology. All the questions and the answers in Geomorphology were to be found (for Hanna) in the field, in the laboratory and in theory (and in that order). Her doctorate in fluvial geomorphology from Göttingen (1958), followed by her habilitation on central Australian geomorphology in 1966 from Heidelberg to the core of her life's work directed from her Chair at the University of Köln (1972-93) on tropical geomorphology and soils represent a major contribution to our science.



Hanna conducted field work in Australia, Nigeria, Amazonia, Mali, Kenya, India and Sri Lanka and together with her close collaborators Achim Schnütgen and the late Heinz Späth she wrote the definitive “Morphogenesis in the Wet Tropics” with an emphasis on weathering and relief development in Sri Lanka. Her single authored books on “The Tropics”, “Relief and Soils” and “Inselbergs” stand as monuments to her originality and massive field experience. I got to know Hanna on a first name basis during the field meeting of the IGU Commission on Field Experiments in Geomorphology held in the Ukraine in the summer of 1976. As the only German participant on that field trip, it fell to her to protest vigorously and seemingly continuously at the overemphasis on stopping at war memorials to the apparent neglect of field geomorphology! I learned at that time

to respect her fierce independence of mind and dedication to her discipline. The premature death of Heinz Späth in 1989 had serious consequences for Hanna’s last two decades of writing and research. It had been Hanna’s intention that Heinz would take over her laboratory after her retirement. The depth of Hanna’s mourning reflected not only their close working relationship but also her anticipation of the eventual demise of her laboratory in the absence of an obvious successor.

In the 1980s, Hanna played a seminal role in the planning and conceptualizing of the International Association of Geomorphologists (IAG). The First International Conference on Geomorphology was held in Manchester in 1985 and the formal initiation of the IAG followed in Frankfurt in 1989 at the Second International Conference on Geomorphology. In 1993, Hanna Bremer was named to an Honorary Senior Fellowship of the IAG in recognition not only of her scholarship but also of the way in which she had been instrumental (together with Ian Douglas, Denys Brunson and Dietrich Barsch) in bringing the British and German geomorphological research groups together with a single objective of fostering international geomorphology.

Hanna’s role as Editor of *Zeitschrift für Geomorphologie* (1973-1992) and her active support for the Supplementary Volume Series represents another singular and important contribution to her discipline. Hanna received many honours and continued to write until the last few years of her life. A year or so ago, at her home in Wilhelmsfeld, I last saw her painstakingly cataloguing her vast collection of tropical soil micromorphology slides and requesting assistance with English terminology.

It was a privilege to know Hanna the scientist and Hanna the friend. She overcame enormous prejudice against women scientists in the geomorphological establishment and succeeded by outperforming most and outlasting many of her strident critics. Her legacy will speak in her favour. She was a genuinely global geomorphologist who thought deeply at the “landschaftgürtel” scale and relied heavily on microscale evidence from the laboratory. We will miss your commanding and humane presence, Hanna. With thanks for each memory.

**Olav Slaymaker**, Professor Emeritus, Geography, The University of British Columbia.

*(Courtesy: Zeitschrift für Geomorphologie 56,1, II-III, March 2012)*

## 2. Conference Reports

### a. The First Conference of Danxia Geomorphology Working Group of IAG and The Second International Symposium on Danxia Landform

The Danxia Geomorphology Working Group was established during the 7<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Geomorphology in Melbourne in 2009, with the main objective to encourage further research of landscapes developed on clastic deposits, particularly in red bed basins, but also to disseminate research achievements of Chinese scholars who have been investigated such landscapes, known in China as Danxia, for more than 80 years. Shortly after, six Danxia sites in south China, selected on the basis of their outstanding scenic and geoscientific value, have been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List as the serial property China Danxia.

On 28-31 October 2011 the first meeting of the working group was held in Shaoguan, Guangdong, close to the mountains of Danxiashan – the type locality for the red bed landscape in China. It was jointly organized by the Sun-Yat Sen University, Guangzhou, China and the Administrative Committee of Danxiashan World Natural Heritage and Global Geopark, with the key support of local government of Shaoguan. The conference was attended by 95 participants, including 15 from overseas (Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, Poland, United States), among them the IAG President, Michael Crozier, and Executive members Mauro Soldati and Xiaoping Yang. Most members of the working group were present.

The conference was divided into sessions and field trips. There were 30 presentations, some focused explicitly on Danxia landscapes in China or their morphological equivalents elsewhere, whereas others addressed broader issues of geoheritage, hazard management at protected sites, and outreach activities in Earth Science. Field trips were organized to see red cliffs and sandstone mesas of Danxiashan and to the adjacent Nanxiong Basin, where red beds give rise to a rather subdued landscape, occasionally turned into badlands. Important sites of discovery of dinosaur eggs and tracks were visited. During two business meetings of the working group

further activities were discussed and agreed, among them publication plans. In addition, the need of international comparative research on Danxia and related landscapes was highlighted.

An important moment was signing the agreement between the Working Group and the Administrative Committee of Danxiashan World Natural Heritage and Global Geopark, with the latter offering a research base to conduct further scientific activities focused on Danxia landscapes. During the closing ceremony a declaration on the promotion of the global research on Danxia landform agreed by the working group members was presented and unanimously approved by the participants.

A further acknowledgement of IAG's support for Danxia landscapes was the active part given to the Association in the award ceremony, where officials from each of the six sites within the World Heritage property were presented with a plaque acknowledging their success.

The conference was an exciting event that strengthened the role of IAG in researching red bed landscapes and provided support to many Chinese scholars who have chosen fascinating Danxia landscapes as their subject of study. The conference was very well organized and it is my great pleasure to express sincere thanks and praise to Professor Peng Hua, co-chair of the group, whose dedication to Danxia has made the conference possible and to his collaborators, particularly to Becky and Rachel for their invaluable assistance.

**Piotr Migoń**, *Danxia Geomorphology Working Group, Co-chair*

#### **b. International Conference on Landscape Conservation, Taipei, Taiwan, 3-5 October 2011**

For nearly a decade by now, Taiwan has been developing its policy towards conservation of Earth heritage, protection of the most valuable sites, promotion of its geomorphological landscapes, and the development of geotourism. The International Association of Geomorphologists, fulfilling its statutory aims, assists to achieve these goals and has a record of offering expertise and advice. In October 2011 a conference on landscape conservation was organized by Professor Jiun-Chuan Lin, National Taiwan University, with the intention to provide a forum to share experience in conservation of geosites and wider landscapes, management of tourist flows at important natural sites, communication and interpretation. It was attended by more than 300 delegates, mainly domestic, coming from both academia and management and regional planning. Participants from more than 10 foreign countries attended and the IAG was represented by Michael Crozier, the President, Piotr Migoń, Vice-President, and Emmanuel Reynard, chair of the IAG Working Group on Geomorphosites. The conference was also an occasion to officially launch the national network of geoparks, which currently consists of six areas, including four on the main island and two on the islands in the Taiwan Strait. The event was accompanied by pre- and post-conference field trips. Before the conference we had an opportunity to visit the Penghu Archipelago and its geopark, to examine the volcanic heritage and the range of coastal and inland sites showing the relationships between surface relief and structure of basalt flows. The itinerary of the post-conference excursion followed the eastern coast of Taiwan and included the North Coast geopark, the gorge of Taroko, the Lichi Badlands geopark, and a number of other sites illustrating various issues in coastal, fluvial and tectonic geomorphology. Heavy rain and strong wind during some field days allowed us to really appreciate the geomorphological dynamics of the area and we were very fortunate leaving the Taroko Gorge at right time, a few hours prior to a large rockslide that blocked the road in the gorge for several days! The conference and the field trips were expertly organized by Professor Jiun-Chuan Lin who is warmly congratulated, also for his long-standing efforts to bring and apply the concept of geoconservation to Taiwan.

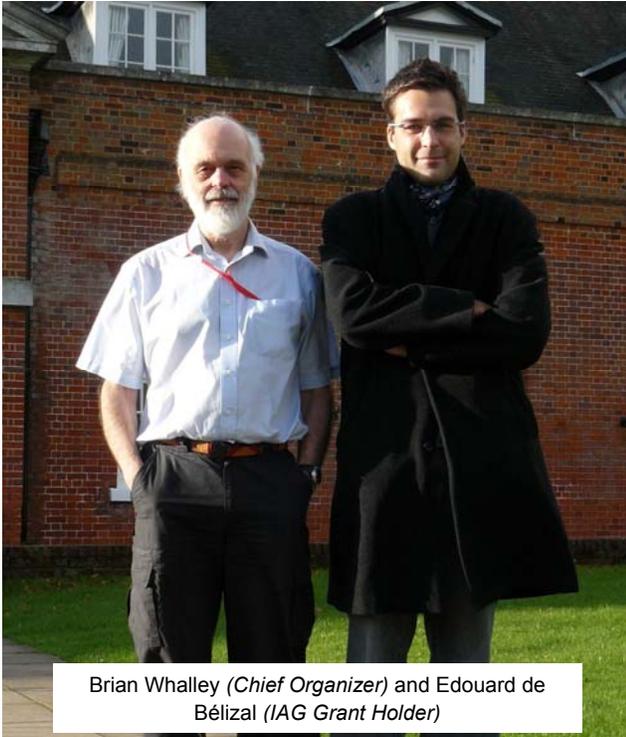
**Piotr Migoń**, *IAG/AIG Vice President*

### **3. Young Geomorphologists Section**

#### **a. Report on the BSG Postgraduate Training Workshop, Windsor, UK, 12 -15 December 2011.**

##### **How to make a PhD? (“How do I know that I know”...)-3 days in Cumberland Lodge (Windsor)**

I arrived in the middle of a sunny winter afternoon in Cumberland Lodge, where the BSG Postgraduate workshop took place. I was immediately amazed by this wonderful old house, lost in the middle of the Great Park of Windsor, where I felt almost at home. Was it that cozy room with this warm fireplace? Was it the other attendees with whom I started talking and sharing some stories during the welcome tea? Was it the friendly and efficient facilitators? I must say that it was all these elements together which made me have a real great time during the 2011 BSG workshop. During 3 days, the meeting, led by Brian Whalley, Tom Coulthard, Paul Farres, Tony Parsons and David Favis-Mortlock enlightened many aspects of what should be a PhD. Indeed, such a work must not be seen as a dissertation, but also as a personal involvement in a scientific project. The frame of the workshop has been clearly focused on the intellectual posture of the young researcher, who has to learn to ask himself the right questions at the most appropriate time. In addition to these very valuable points, we discussed about models in geomorphology through the experience of our facilitators, and made exercises by groups.



Brian Whalley (*Chief Organizer*) and Edouard de Bélizal (*IAG Grant Holder*)

This workshop is clearly built for PhD beginners, as were many of the attendees, but more advanced PhD candidates will also find very interesting topics, and should not hesitate to apply. While beginners learn to build their project, the more advanced students have the opportunity to make a meaningful retrospective consideration about the evolution of their own thesis. Before writing the dissertation, they must put together the various pieces they gathered from their fieldwork, from their models and analyses. Like a gigantic puzzle, the general picture only appears when all the pieces (properly selected and sorted) are combined together. Moreover, advanced PhD candidates can also share some experience with the beginners. I told the other students of the group how some unexpected event might change some parts of a PhD project, as it happened to me at the beginning of my second year, when a volcanic eruption of great intensity forced me to rethink certain aspects of my work.

These 3 days have been very interesting, providing key questions about research and how to lead a long-term project. I could meet very friendly PhD colleagues, mainly from the UK, with whom I will stay in touch. To conclude, I would like once again to thank the IAG and BSG committees who gave me the opportunity to attend

this workshop by awarding me the 2011 grant.

**Edouard de Bélizal**, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, France

#### 4. Recognition

The members of IAG/AIG Executive Committee congratulate Prof. Eric Fouache to receive the award of "Professor Honoris Causa" by the University of Bucharest (Romania) on 27<sup>th</sup> January, 2012.

#### 5. 8<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Geomorphology (8<sup>th</sup> ICG)

The 8th IAG/AIG International Conference on Geomorphology will be held in Paris (France) during August 27-31, 2013. Abstract submission is open. The first circular is available on IAG/AIG website: [www.geomorph.org](http://www.geomorph.org)

#### 6. Upcoming Seminars/Conferences/Workshops/Training Programmes

##### i. USA

ISEG - The XII International Symposium on Environmental Geo-technology, Energy and Global Sustainable Development. Los Angeles, California, USA, June 27-29, 2012. For more details please visit: <http://www.isegnet.org/2012/>

##### ii. Australia

34th International Geological Congress (IGC) in Brisbane, Australia, August 5-10, 2012. For more details please visit the Congress website at: <http://www.34igc.org/>

##### iii. Italy

5th International Workshop on Ice Caves, 16-23 September 2012, Barzio and Milano - Italy. For more details please visit: <http://users.unimi.it/icecaves/IWIC-V/>

##### iv. Brazil

46th Brazilian Geological Congress (46 CBG), Mendes Convention Center, Santos, São Paulo State, Brazil, September 30 - October 5, 2012 on "Managing Natural Resources to Generate Social Resources" organized by the São Paulo Chapter of the Brazilian Geology Society. For more details please visit : <http://www.46cbg.com.br/en/the-46o-cbg>

**v. Italy**

IAG/AIG International Workshop on Objective Geomorphological Representation Models: Breaking through a New Geomorphological Mapping Frontier, Salerno, Italy, October 15-19, 2012, Italy. 5 Grants available for Young Geomorphologists. For more details please visit: [www.geomorph.org](http://www.geomorph.org)

**Editor's Note**

The success of the IAG/AIG Newsletter depends upon the contributions that we receive. On behalf of IAG/AIG, I would request you to assist us by supplying information related to the forthcoming activities and innovations in geomorphology in your respective countries (commentaries, reviews of regional or national meetings and field trips, summaries of issues pertinent to geomorphology and announcements of future meetings and workshops. Your contributions should be forwarded to the IAG/AIG Publications Officer.

*Published by*

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