

GEOGRAPHICAL FIELD NOTE

A DIGITAL GEOGRAPHY OF INDIGENOUS MEXICO: PROTOTYPE FOR THE AMERICAN GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY'S BOWMAN EXPEDITIONS

PETER H. HERLIHY, JEROME E. DOBSON, MIGUEL AGUILAR ROBLEDO,
DEREK A. SMITH, JOHN H. KELLY, and AIDA RAMOS VIERA

As geographers recently abroad, we have come to the sad realization that the United States is increasingly perceived as a mighty global power crippled by ignorance of its vast global sphere of influence. To address this problem, the American Geographical Society (AGS) is sponsoring expeditions, named in honor of former AGS Director Isaiah Bowman, who served as geographer for Presidents Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt. Informing the public and the U.S. government about world geography has long been a mission of the AGS, and now the Society renews this commitment.

The AGS Bowman Expeditions prototype began in Mexico in 2005 (LJWorld.com 2006; Herlihy and others 2007); other expeditions have begun to the Antilles, Colombia, and Jordan. These initial expeditions are funded by the U.S. Department of Defense through the Foreign Military Studies Office (FMSO). Simply stated, the AGS sends a team of geographers to a selected foreign region, where, in order to increase U.S. and international understanding of that region, it gathers cultural and physical GIS data, conducts original research on a geographical topic chosen by the lead investigator, builds collaborative relationships with foreign scholars and institutions, and reports findings in scholarly journals and popular media. Most fundamentally, the concept of the AGS Bowman Expeditions is based on the belief that geographical understanding is essential for maintaining peace, resolving conflicts, and providing humanitarian assistance worldwide.

Troubled by intelligence failures, uninformed public debate, and related conflicts around the globe, AGS President Jerome Dobson “deplored the cost of geo-

* We thank Kansas State University doctoral candidate Vicki Tinnon Brock and University of Kansas doctoral recipient Mauricio Herrera for their work during the summer of 2005. Anthropologists Anuschka van't Hooft and Miguel Nicolás Caretta of the Coordinación de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades helped administer the Universidad Autónoma de San Luis Potosí students and worked in training workshops. Judith Corpus and Luis Olvera provided computer support services, and Coordinación de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades administrator Daniel Rodríguez made management of the multinational and multibudgeted project as smooth as possible, as did the University of Kansas staff.

✪ DR. HERLIHY is an associate professor of geography at the University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas 66045, where Dr. Dobson is a professor of geography. DR. SMITH is an assistant professor of geography at Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1S 5B6. DR. AGUILAR ROBLEDO is a professor of geography at the Universidad Autónoma de San Luis Potosí, San Luis Potosí, Mexico. MR. KELLY is a doctoral candidate at the University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas 66045, where Ms. RAMOS VIERA is a doctoral student.