

Conference of Latin Americanist Geographers

The 1997 Carl O. Sauer Distinguished Scholar Award



The Conference of Latin Americanist Geographers is pleased to pay tribute to **Dr. Karl W. Butzer**, Raymond C. Dickson Centennial Professor of Liberal Arts, Department of Geography, The University of Texas at Austin.

Karl Butzer's undergraduate studies in mathematics, master's training in meteorology and geography at McGill University in Montreal, and his doctorate in geography and ancient history at the University of Bonn in his native Germany, indicate the sinuous but interrelated path he has taken to achieve such prominence in the discipline of geography. Our regionally-focused organization is proud to recognize this scholar who is often identified with areas outside the Americas --Egypt and Nubia, Ethiopia and Kenya, South Africa and Namibia, and Spain. But, in fact, he wrote his dissertation under the tutelage of Carl Troll, a prominent Latin Americanist of Carl Sauer's generation and temperament. As a result, Karl Butzer was giving seminar presentations on tropical mountain geo-ecology in Latin America before ever setting off for Africa.

Dr. Butzer's awards span the gamut of the most prominent ones available to renowned scholars. He is an elected fellow of both the National Academy of Sciences, and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, a recipient of the Busk Medal of the Royal Geographical Society, and of the Stopes Medal of the Geologists' Association London, an awardee of the Fryxell Medal from the Society of American Archaeology, the bearer of the Pomerance Medal from the Archaeological Institute of America, and has received honors from both the Association of American Geographers, and its Geomorphology Specialty Group.

In addition to being formally recognized through numerous awards, Karl Butzer has been North American editor of the *Journal of Archaeological Sciences* since 1981, and as series editor of *Prehistoric Archaeology and Ecology* he was responsible for the appearance of 16 volumes. That linkage with archaeology underscores his interdisciplinary orientation and, in combining natural and social science questions and data, he works as both a cultural ecologist and a geoarchaeologist. A few of his more recent books include *Dimensions of Human Geography* (1978), *Archaeology as Human Ecology* (1982), and *The Americas before and after 1492* (1992), a special issue of the *Annals* of the Association of American Geographers that he edited. The latter tome commemorated the 500th anniversary of the finding of the Americas by Europeans. Two of his books and five of his numerous papers have been translated into Russian, Hungarian, Chinese, Catalan and, of course, Spanish.

His untiring spirit of inquiry and desire to make public the results of his research have not diminished during the past 40 years. Example of this is the publication of eleven journal articles and book chapters since 1994, several of which deal with the settlement, livestock management, and vegetation change in Mexico during the 16th-18th centuries. He readily acknowledges that Elisabeth Butzer, his wife and co-author on a number of articles, opened his eyes to the unique resources of archival manuscripts.

In joining the faculty at the University of Texas at Austin in 1984, Karl Butzer began to apply his long familiarity with Spain to related themes of Latin American geography. He has conducted extensive field research in eastern, central, and northern Mexico, often taking groups of students with him at his own expense. A number of his students have completed or are working on dissertations in Latin America, including three Mexican nationals. He played a major role developing the program and the field trips for our organization's 1989 meeting which was held in Querétaro, Mexico.

Our regional specialty has benefited greatly from Professor Butzer's eclectic training and experience in that he has helped us to understand valuable and unexplored ecological circumstances that concur to **[end p. 131]** explain the historic and current landscapes of Mexico. His lucid analysis of landscape modification builds on the traditions of ecology and archaeology, while maintaining a keen sense of place and giving proper attention to human impact on the earth's surface.

Viewing the significance of his academic contributions, especially those of the most recent third of his long and illustrious career, the Conference of Latin Americanist Geographers takes great pleasure in bestowing on Professor Karl W. Butzer, the 1997 Carl Ortwin Sauer Distinguished Scholar Award.

Joseph L. Scarpaci and William Doolittle[end p. 132]