

## **A Brief Reflection on the International Geographical Union Regional Conference, Santiago, Chile, November 14-18 2011**

The International Geographical Union (IGU) Regional Conference was held in Santiago, Chile on November 14-18, 2011. The conference theme was “United and Integrated with the World” and it attracted geographers from all over the world, particularly Latin America.

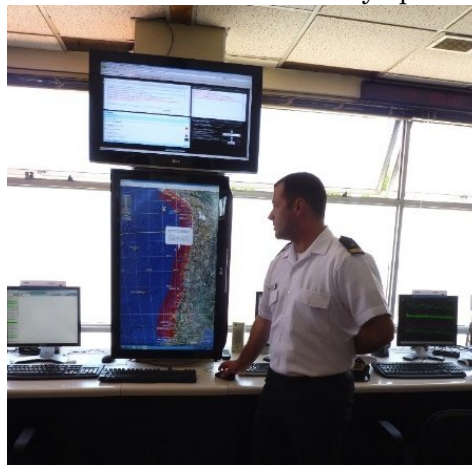
With the kind support of the Professor Akihiro Iwashita and the Slavic Research Center of Hokkaido University, Japan, I had the opportunity to take part in this conference. It was my first time attending a Geography conference and also my first visit to Latin America. As a young scholar from the International Relations discipline, I was very curious at how Geographers study natural and human complexities, and have often wondered how my own research could benefit from this discipline.

Under the Political Geography category, I submitted my conference proposal to present on China’s Evolving Self-Identity, focusing on the Sino-Japanese dispute over the East China Sea. Knowingly or not, the organizers placed me in the same panel with colleagues I had arranged to meet at this conference, namely Associate Professor Alexander Bukh, Associate Professor Mikhail Alexseev and Professor Iwashita. It could be because we were all presenting on territorial issues in Northeast Asia.

As a result, our panel was very special since none of us were Geographers and that made us excited about how our presentations would be received. In the end, our panel was a great success judging from the interesting and enthusiastic responses from our audience.

I also had the opportunity to attend the other Political Geography panels and enjoyed listening to the other presenters. They stimulated my thinking on my own research. Outside the conference, I also had the opportunity to learn about the geography of Chile, as well as the country’s political, social and economic history.

Another highlight of this trip was the technical visit to the Hydrographic and Oceanographic Service of the Chilean Navy (SHOA) in Valparaíso. I learnt about SHOA’s role in creating nautical charts, as well as its responsibilities in monitoring tides, seaquakes, ocean currents and astronomy. I also enjoyed the briefing on SHOA’s history and was very impressed with its modern facilities and the state-of-art software they operate.



Chile is a member of APEC and a member of the Trans Pacific Partnership. I am glad that I had the opportunity to visit and learn about the country firsthand because I am sure that Chile’s engagement with East Asia is set to grow in the future.

Finally, I would like to thank Professor Iwashita for this initiative.

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