CENTENNIAL CONFERENCE OF THE COMITE INTERNATIONAL DES SCIENCES HISTORIQUES

Water in History and Historiography

Programme Event

International Committee of Historical Sciences | 26–30 August 2026 | Leipzig, Germany

DATE	LOCATION
27 Aug 2026, 08:30 - 10:30	House 5 SR143
THEME	CONFERENCE
J - Connections, Entanglements, and Universal Perspectives on History	International Committee of Historical Sciences

Overview

Water has been central to human life and imagination in multiple ways. In contemporary times, with climate change and increasing disasters connected to water or its absence (take, for example, the huge forest fires that decimated many parts of the USA, or, at the other end of the scale, the massive destruction caused by floods in India, the earthquake and tsunami in Japan, and many other disasters varying only in scale of destruction), the centrality of water is greater than ever before. Historically, wars have been fought over water, claims to sovereignty have been made on it, it has been claimed as identity, as culture, as religion, as myth, as memory and much more. How do we understand the various ways in which water has been and continues to be studied?

Water, if one may speak in grammatical terms, is both verb and noun – and each of these has been represented and written about. It is this aspect of the historiography surrounding water that we propose to highlight. Mythology – whether Mesopotamian, Indian, or from any other part of the world – has often been rooted in the existence of water, both salt and sweet. The oceans, too, have been part of human history. Given the multitudes of ways in which water can be, and has been studied, we propose in this panel to bring together a mix of approaches – historical, primarily, but also through memory, landscapes, and performance. As features of a sacred landscape, water both is, and defines, a geographical, political, ritual and socio-economic space; as memory, whether living or constructed, it is an ever-present reality. But water is also part of performance, for in classical Indian dance, for instance, depictions of water or life in and around water have often been key to a dance recital. Erasure, in memory and/or maps (as for example of maps which do not show islands in a river, or do not mark the changes in water courses), is yet another aspect that needs to be highlighted.

The papers presented here therefore address the following themes:

- Water in Indian Ocean studies
- Water and sacred landscapes
- Water in and as performance
- Water in and as economy
- Water in and as memory
- Mapping water

Participants

Convenor

- Radhika Seshan (Savitribai Phule Pune University)
- Ryuto Shimada (The University of Tokyo)

Panelists

- Ryuto Shimada (The University of Tokyo)
- Tomoko Morikawa (The University of Tokyo)
- Durga Kale (University of Calgary)
- Nisha Seshan (Dancer and Teacher of French and English)
- Radhika Seshan (Savitribai Phule Pune University)
- Sushruti Santhanam

- Nayanika Shome (Manipal University)
- Chisa Mizobuchi (University of Tokyo)

Commentator

- Barry Rodrigue (Symbiosis International University, founder member of IAGHS)

Papers

Currents, Monsoons, and Maritime Traffic in Asia during the 17th and 18th Centuries: Shipping Operations of the Dutch East India Company

Ryuto Shimada (The University of Tokyo)

Sacred Waters of Iran: Continuities in Religious Symbolism from Zoroastrianism to Islam

Tomoko Morikawa (The University of Tokyo)

Looking in water: Explorations on Waterscape through the history of 17th-19th century writings on Konkan

Durga Kale (University of Calgary)

Classical dance: Water in and as Perceptions and Performance

Nisha Seshan (Dancer and Teacher of French and English)

Waterscapes and Landscapes: Contested Economies and Histories around water in the far south of India in the late 18th century

Radhika Seshan (Savitribai Phule Pune University)

The Making of Bugun History by Invoking Myth, Memory and Materiality of their Pam (Mountain) and their Kho (Water)

Sushruti Santhanam

Fluvial Provocations in Modern Cartography: Visualizing Citizenship in the Chars

Nayanika Shome (Manipal University)

Seasonal Calendars across the Haors and Hills: Hydrological Change, Rice Cropping, and Elephant Capture in Sylhet during the 1770s and 1780s

Chisa Mizobuchi (University of Tokyo)

Source: https://cish2026.recentglobe.org/events/water-in-history-and-historiography/
Generated: 23/08/2026 17:47