

River and Inland Water Archaeology: Exploring submerged and Watercourse-Linked Cultural Heritage

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Session Description

Beyond seas and maritime coastal fronts, the vast hydraulic network comprised of numerous navigable and unnavigable rivers crossing lands has played a crucial role since prehistoric times. Initially utilized for its natural resources, freshwater has been an inevitable point of attraction for humans, who then attempted to collect and control its flow for navigation or the use of its hydraulic power. Human occupations are plentiful in valleys, and many cities have developed in the immediate vicinity of rivers. The environment and landscapes of valley floors have been profoundly altered by human action, which has a direct impact on both the underwater cultural heritage and that of riverbanks, as well as its understanding. Non-navigable waterways are also spaces that bear witness to sometimes very ancient human activities. Part of this rich and varied heritage is known to us, whether through isolated objects from river dredging or discoveries from preventive and programmed excavations since the second half of the 20th century in many regions. Environmental changes also have numerous impacts on current landscapes, particularly valleys and watercourses, and thus affect the heritage of rivers, whether submerged or not. Underwater exploration also enables the study of ancient hydraulic networks or ancient quarries now submerged. This session proposes to explore and present the diversity of approaches concerning the study of submerged or underwater heritages or those linked to watercourses, as well as the cultural practices associated with rivers and the use of water in inland areas.

Keywords

River Archaeology, Inland Water Archaeology, Navigation, Socio-Economic Activities, Exploitation Of Water Resources, Man-Made Water Network