

International Conference

ENTANGLED SEASCAPES:

MORE-THAN-HUMAN HISTORIES ACROSS OCEANIC WORLDS

Academia Belgica, Rome

22-23 January 2026

This conference seeks to bring together scholars working on pre-modern and early modern oceanic worlds: from the Indian Ocean, South China Sea, and the Pacific to the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. Framed within the emerging field of blue humanities and building on posthumanist and decolonial perspectives, the conference explores the sea not as a passive space between empires or cultures, but as an active, more-than-human agent, one that shapes and is shaped by human and nonhuman actors. By focusing on more-than-human histories and material entanglements, we aim to challenge dominant land-based narratives of civilisation, encounters, and sovereignties.

Key themes

- Oceanic materialities: boats, corals, shells, and sea-assemblages
- Sea deities, spirits, and cosmologies in art, architecture, and ritual
- Oral and literary traditions: the sea as danger, promise, or divine force
- Archaeologies of marginal maritime communities (fisherfolk, pirates, boatbuilders, islanders, sea-nomads)
- Indigenous, subaltern, and local knowledge systems connected to seafaring and/or oceanic life
- More-than-human entanglements in past seascapes: marine animals, currents, winds, tides, and reefs

Research questions

- How have seascapes shaped and been shaped by human and nonhuman actors in pre-modern and early modern worlds?
- By shifting the focus from terrestrial centres to oceanic edges, what alternative historical narratives emerge, particularly those informed by non-elite perspectives and lived experiences of the sea?
- How can oceanic entanglements prompt a rethinking of material culture, human–environment relations, and historical agency by exploring not only the practical uses

of the sea but also the cognitive and affective dimensions of maritime experience in the past?

An optional field visit to a museum relevant to the themes of the conference will be organised on Saturday, 24 January 2026. Further details will be announced in due course.

Abstracts

The conference is intended to be multidisciplinary, and we welcome contributions from historians, archaeologists, anthropologists, human geographers and any scholars interested in seascapes, more-than-human thinking and related theoretical approaches.

Participants will be given a 45-minute slot, with 30 minutes for their paper, followed by 15 minutes for Q&As.

In order to be considered, please submit a proposed paper title along with a short abstract (approximately 350 words) no later than 15 September 2025 to Matthew Cobb m.cobb@uwtsd.ac.uk and Daniela De Simone daniela.desimone@ugent.be. Notifications of acceptance will be sent by 15 October 2025.

To support the organisation of the conference, a fee of €80 will be kindly requested from the accepted participants.

Publication plans

Selected participants will be asked to submit an extended abstract (1,500–2,000 words) by 5 January 2026. This should detail your theoretical framework and include five key references. The extended abstracts will be circulated among conference participants in advance to facilitate informed discussion. Beyond the conference event itself, our intention is for revised versions of these papers to be submitted for a journal special issue.

Keynote

The keynote lecture will be delivered by Professor Serpil Oppermann, Director of the Environmental Humanities Center at Cappadocia University, and author of *Blue Humanities: Storied Waterscapes in the Anthropocene* (Cambridge University Press, 2023).

Entangled Seascapes is intended not only as a forum for presenting original research, but also as a collaborative space for scholarly exchange and long-term network-building among researchers working on oceanic and more-than-human histories from across the worlds.

Convenors:

Matthew Cobb, University of Wales Trinity Saint David

Daniela De Simone, Ghent University

Organising Committee:

Academia Belgica

Annalisa Bocchetti, "L'Orientale," University of Naples

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