



THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE HISTORY AND THEORY OF HISTORIOGRAPHY

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WELCOME ADDRESS



By
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Vice President of the ICHTH

PUSHING THE LIMITS OF HISTORY

There has not been a shortage of attempts to define history since 1961 when E.H. Carr published *What is History?* Then, he articulated the focus of the discipline and clarified the task of the historian. In 1988, Juliet Gardiner edited an anthology titled *What is History Today?* In that book, clusters of scholars presented definitions for different branches of history. In 2002, David Cannadine edited yet another collection titled *What is History Now?* Contributors to that collection discussed various types of history with ample illustrations from Britain and other European nations. Again in 2022 (I wonder why these interventions come every two decades), another collection of essays was published, edited by Helen Carr (great granddaughter of E.H. Carr) and Susannah Lipscomb titled *What is History Now?*

One of the chapters in this 2022 attempt to push forward the frontiers of history caught my attention. It was written by Alex von Tunzelmann, a historian and screenwriter, and titled “Why History Deserves to be at the Movies”. There she points out the need for the public to regularly encounter history through popular culture. The academic study of history as promoted by E.H. Carr and several other historians before and after him took place in the ivory towers. Most of these history books end up in our institutional libraries, personal bookshelves, and in public libraries where very few people actually read them. Taking history to the movies sounds interesting. But does that not amount to pushing the limits of the discipline? This is about the dissemination of the knowledge produced by the historian. Historical films are very popular whether as TV shows or full-length movies. While historical documentaries strive for factual presentation of their subjects, the same cannot be said of historical films. The scriptwriters or playwrights deploy their poetic license and creative genius to present a compelling storyline to make a blockbuster out of an historical event. To the critical historian, these are fabrications, deliberate manipulations of sensitive and critical facts. Tunzelmann cited several of such cases in her chapter. She rightly notes that some historical films could be very controversial. And not all controversies are harmless. What is the impact of this on certain misrepresented and vulnerable sections of the society? What is the responsibility of the historian in all this.

This brings us back to the question of responsible history raised by Marnie Hughes-Warrington in her Welcome Address in ICHTH Newsletter No. 2 <https://www.ichth.net/news/18.pdf> (October 2023).

But here, I want to explore the issue from a slightly different perspective. A historian has reconstructed the past and published his findings in a conventional academic platform or through digital media. A

playwright turns it into a dramatic genre while a screenwriter in turn adapts it as a historical movie but with a lot of fictionalization, some of which could be counter-productive. In cases like this, should the historian look the other way and continue his research on other issues? Is there a meeting point for historians and film makers to repair the harm done by certain historical films on the public psyche? Or should we as historians rather maintain our lanes while filmmakers continue with their make-believe world?

Let me illustrate this scenario with an example from southwest Nigeria, the home of Yoruba-speaking people in Africa. Iyalode Efunsetan Aniwura, a very wealthy and powerful female chief in 19th-century Ibadan was the subject of various controversial films. Samuel Johnson in his magisterial book *The History of the Yorubas* (1897, 1921) presented her in a positive light as a typical product of her slave-owning age. I.B. Akinyele in his *Iwe Itan Ibadan* [A History of Ibadan] (1911) painted her as a wicked woman who oppressed the powerless. Both Johnson and Akinyele were non-academic historians. Akinwumi Isola, a playwright, adopted the trope of Akinyele and published in 1970 a Yoruba play titled *Efunsetan Aniwura: Iyalode of Ibadan*, where he further painted her as a terrible woman. This play became prescribed reading in primary and secondary schools for almost two decades in southwestern Nigeria. In the minds of several generations of schoolchildren, Efunsetan Aniwura became synonymous with unpleasant female leadership. From 1970 till around 1981, Isola Ogunsola, a theatre artist further popularized the play through stage performances in various parts of Yorubaland. In 1981 a film on Efunsetan Aniwura was made by Bankole Bello. English translations of the play by Akinwumi Isola were made by Niyi Oladeji (1992) and Pamela Olubunmi Smith (2005), both published outside the continent. All these portrayed Efunsetan Aniwura in a negative light.

By the beginning of the 21st century, the descendants of

Efunsetan had become stigmatized and had suffered a lot of discrimination – social, political, economic – due to the negative media image of their matriarch. In 1991, the Efunsetan family produced their own version of the history of their matriarch, “Authentic History of Efunsetan Aniwura” but their voice was not loud enough. It was at this point that a few academic historians came in to lend their weight to correct the negative media image of Efunsetan Aniwura. Bolanle Awe, a professor of history at the University of Ibadan published a rebuttal in 1991; Laray Denzer also did the same in 1998. Several other feminist scholars rose up thereafter to challenge the harmful misrepresentation of Efunsetan Aniwura. At the end of the day, Akinwumi Isola, now a professor of Yoruba studies, met with the Efunsetan family and finally rewrote the script and produced another film in 2005 on Efunsetan Aniwura. This new film was more sympathetic and presented the heroine in a positive light that approximated her life history.

The academic historians in the above example amplified the feeble voice of the Efunsetan family through their trenchant criticisms not only of Akinwumi Ishola's play but also of the stage productions and 1981 film derived from it. Echoing Tunzelmann, I ask, should history still go to the movies? Yes, I believe it should. But when poetic license becomes injurious to vulnerable sections of the population, historians should not look the other way. Responsible history does not end on the bookshelf and online portals. It continues to engage society at all levels. Are we pushing the limits of history with this prescription?

COMMISSION NEWS



OBITUARY
Estevão de Rezende Martins
 (1947-2025)

It is with a heavy heart that we announce the death of Estevão de Rezende Martins who passed away on Jan 14, 2025. He was a pillar of our commission for decades. He was a multi-tasking humanist whose thoughts and activities stretched across philosophy, history, pedagogy and international relations. His main focus, however, was on philosophy and theory of history, a field in which he decisively helped shape and institutionalize the Brazilian academic landscape. He was the founding president of the Brazilian Society for Theory and History of Historiography (SBTHH) and served as a bureau member of the International Commission for History and Theory of History (ICHTH) from 2010-2022.

Born in Rio de Janeiro in 1947, Estevão Chaves de Rezende Martins attended a Jesuit school in his hometown before leaving for São Paulo to study philosophy at a small catholic college. Between 1971 and 1973 he studied theology and canon law at the University

of Innsbruck, Austria, and then moved to the University of Munich, where he obtained a doctoral thesis on the notion of freedom in Kant's 'pre-critical' texts, which he completed in 1976, under the supervision of the eminent historian of philosophy Wolfgang Rod.

Estevão returned to Brazil in 1977 and joined the University of Brasilia where he taught for more than 40 years. In 2018 he was honored with the rare title of Professor Emeritus. In the meantime, he supervised more than 70 master's and doctoral students, served on dozens of hiring committees throughout the country, reviewed hundreds of grants and scholarship applications to various funding bodies, directed the University of Brasilia's Institute of Human Sciences, worked as a legislative consultant to the Brazilian Federal Senate, and much more.

Estevão built up an extensive and interdisciplinary list of publications. From the 1980s he gradually added to the skills of a historian of philosophy those of a philosopher of history. One of the main inspirations for this move from the history of philosophy to the philosophy of history was certainly Hans-Michael Baumgartner, who, after ending his career as a top-class football player, had managed to become perhaps the greatest Kantian philosopher of history of the second half of the 20th century. Also very important were further academic contacts in West Germany which Estevão was able to consolidate particularly during his stay as a Humboldt fellow in 1982-83. It is impossible not to mention another esteemed ICHTH member in this context, namely Jörn Rüsen.

Estevão's thoughts on history and historiography were developed out of profound conversations with Rüsen. If the latter's texts are so widely read today by Brazilian scholars in historical theory and history education, this is to a large extent due to Estevão's mediating influence. He translated key texts by his German friend into Portuguese and accompanied him during visits to numerous

Brazilian universities. On these occasions, Estevão's sensational simultaneous translations of the lectures were almost as impressive as the lectures themselves.

There is much more to say about his reflections on historical knowledge, not to mention his texts on other topics such as human rights, social democracy, the European integration process, the constitution of Mercosur, Brazilian parliamentary history, the concept of revolution, Nicholas of Cusa, or Jean-Paul Sartre.

Estevão will be missed by his wife, son, grandsons, and brothers. He is also survived by numerous friends, colleagues, and former students who were deeply touched by his sudden passing. May his soul rest in peace. [This is an abridged version of a tribute submitted by Arthur Alfaix Assis, University of Brasilia]

- **Storia della Storiografia**

The journal *Storia della Storiografia* republished in its nos. 83–84 (2023) the very first article of its journal, “Pour une histoire de l'historiographie,” written in 1982 by Charles-Olivier Carbonell (first ICHTH President in 1980–1990), in an English translation: “For a History of Historiography.” It has a “Foreword,” written by ICHTH member and Editorial Board member of *Storia*, Guido Abbattista, and a reflection entitled “The (Un)faithful Mirror of the ICHTH: The Scholarly Journal *Storia della Storiografia* and the Developments in the History and Theory of Historical Writing” by former ICHTH Secretary General and Editorial Board member of *Storia*, Edoardo Tortarolo. The latter is the written version of his contribution to an ICHTH panel at the International Congress of Historical Sciences held in Poznań in 2022.

The four articles can be downloaded [here](#).

In the same issue of *Storia*, there is an obituary of Natalie Zemon Davies, a former honorary member of the ICHTH, downloadable via the same link.

- **Wikipedia**

Our Commission now has Wikipedia pages in [English](#),

[Portuguese](#), [Romanian](#), and [Spanish](#). With warm thanks to Arthur Assis (Brazil); Daniel Catoi and Sorin Antohi (Romania); Francisco Miguel Ortiz Delgado (Mexico); and Ruben Zeeman (USA). ICHTH eagerly hopes that some of you may want to launch a Wikipedia page in your language. If you want some advice on this, please contact info@ichth.org. This is also an urgent appeal to all ICHTH members to add a link to the [Commission](#) (including its full name and acronym) to your personal websites and webpages (and please let us know at the same email address).

- **ICHS/CISH Updates**

On 25 October 2024, the ICHTH President attended the General Assembly (GA) of the [International Committee of Historical Sciences](#) (ICHS/CISH) in Tokyo as the representative of ICHTH. Some forty delegates (out of seventy members originating from national history societies and commissions such as ours) were present, which was a reasonable number. One important item referred to the next International Congress of Historical Sciences (also known as “the World Congress”), planned in Jerusalem: Initially scheduled for 2026, it was already postponed early this year until 2028. ICHTH's position is that under the present circumstances, the ICHTH will not attend a World Congress in Jerusalem, as stated in our [letter](#) of 16 January 2024, itself based on a [memo](#)). The main organizing institution, the Historical Society of Israel, announced in Tokyo that it would re-evaluate the situation in Israel in January 2026 in order to take a go/no go decision for a World Congress in Jerusalem in 2028. Meanwhile, the ICHS/CISH informed the GA that it would hold a Centennial Conference in Leipzig in 2026 (more information [here](#)).

With this new information – and with information coming from elsewhere in our field – it becomes possible to sketch the contours for an ICHTH work plan for the coming two years, albeit with gaps:

- *Jan. 2025*: Meeting of the Executive Committee of the ICHTH Board
- *Feb. 2025*: Meeting of the ICHTH Board

- *Feb. 2025*: Start of preparations for the next ICHTH–INTH prizes for books published in 2024–2025
- 26 to 29 March 2025, the European Social Science History Conference takes place in Leiden, the Netherlands. Nine panels are dedicated to Theory and Historiography, several of them organized by ICHTH members: 1848/49, the history of liberty and social science history (organized by Norbert Fabian, Stefan Berger, Anne Heyer); Engaged Audiences of Historical Practices (organized by Jakub Muchowski); Historiographic Activism: Historical Narration as Societal Engagement (organized by Robbert-Jan Adriaansen); Narrative and memory (organized by Victoria Fareld); Theorizing History (organized by Victoria Fareld, Kenan Van De Mieroop); Unity and Diversity in Historical Thinking (organized by Kenan Van De Mieroop); National histories (organized by Stefan Berger); Linguistic Activists: The Politics of Artificial Languages in the Twentieth Century (organized by Pascale Siegrist, Valeska Huber, Lisa Hellman); New Antifascism Studies: Recovering Memory in an Age of Crisis (organized by Zoltán Kékesi). For more information, please visit <https://event.esshc2025.exordo.com/discover/sessions?q=THE->
- *Spring 2025*: Send proposal to ICHS/CISH for one ICHTH panel at the Centennial Conference in Leipzig, Germany
- *Summer 2025*: Send proposals for several ICHTH panels at the 6th Conference of the International Network for Theory of History (INTH) in Tallin, Estonia
- *Dec. 2025*: Deadline for submissions for ICHTH–INTH prizes for books published in 2024–2025
- *May 2026*: 6th INTH Conference in Tallin, with ICHTH panel(s) and announcement of ICHTH–INTH book prize awards
- *Jul. 2026*: Online ICHS/CISH General Assembly
- *26–30 Aug. 2026*: ICHS/CISH Centennial Conference “The Past, the Present, and the Future of History” in Leipzig, with an ICHS/CISH General Assembly, and one ICHTH panel.

MEMBERS’ ANNOUNCEMENTS NEW PUBLICATIONS

A. Antoon De Baets, University of Groningen, the Netherlands

- “[Historians Resisting Tyranny: A Preliminary Evaluation](#),” *Hungarian Historical Review*, 13, no. 1 (2024), 39–58.
- [Historia, derechos humanos y democracia](#) (São Paulo: Sororoca Livros, 2024), 168 pages.
- “[Open Letters in Closed Societies: The Values of Historians under Attack](#),” *History and Theory*, 63 no. 4 (December 2024), 152–175.
- “[Academic Freedom between History and Human Rights in a Global Context](#),” in Joseph Zajda, ed., *Fourth International Handbook of Globalisation, Education and Policy Research* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2024), 101–122.
- [A Human Rights View of the Past](#) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024 [online] –2025 [hardback/paperback]), 71 pages.
- “[A New Human Rights-Based Theory of Historians](#)

[Responsibilities \(in a Nutshell\),” EuroClio](#) (19 June 2024)[column].

B. Susanne Popp, University of Augsburg, Germany.

- Susanne Popp/Philipp Bernhard: From the National to the Planetary Level. History Education in the Anthropocene. In: *International Journal of Research on History Didactics, History Education, and History Culture*. Yearbook of the International Society for History Didactics 44 (2023). 21-40. To open access enter: https://wochenschau-verlag.de/wp-content/uploads/sites/23/2024/04/issue_2023.pdf#page=22.
- Susanne Popp/Philipp Bernhard: Das Anthropozän als Herausforderung für die Konstruktion welt- und globalgeschichtlicher Perspektiven im Geschichtsunterricht [The Anthropocene as a Challenge for Constructing World and Global Historical Perspectives in History Education]. In: *Zeitschrift für Geschichtsdidaktik* 23 (2024), pp. 12-27.

C. Gunnar Schumann, Fern Universität in Hagen.

- *Historical Explanation: An Anti-Causal Approach*, New York: Routledge 2024.

D. Edward Wang, Rowan University USA.

- “Truthful Is Moral: Practicing Ethical Responsibility in Chinese Historiography,” *History and Theory*, 63:4 (Dec. 2024), 85-105.
- *What is the History of Emotions?* (in Chinese; Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publisher, 2024), 271 p.

The Rise of Modern Historical Consciousness in China: From Reorganizing National Heritages to Recreating Civilization (in Chinese; Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publisher, 2024), 470 p.

CONFERENCE REPORTS

A. Norbert Fabian, Ruhr-University Bochum /Institute for Social Movements.

- Demokratie und Revolution - 1848/49 als Aufbruch zur Freiheit - Lecture and Colloquium, Gegen Vergessen - für Demokratie, Duisburg VHS/public university, 31 March 2024
- “Responsible History” Zur Internationale Konferenz Zur Geschichtstheorie In Lissabon 2024. <https://www.hsozkult.de/searching/id/fdkn-150538?title=responsible-history&recno=1&q=fabian+lissabon&sort=newestPublished&fq=&total=27>
- Panel: 1848/49, The History of Liberty and Social Science History/ paper: Comparative History and Learning from the European Revolution of 1848/1849- European Social Science History Conference (ESSHC) Leiden NL, 26-29 March 2024, Network Theory and Historiography.
- Demokratie und Revolution- 1848/49 als Aufbruch Zur Freiheit- Lecture and Colloquium, Gegen Vergessen Fur Demokratie, Duisburg VHS/Public University, 31March 2024.
- 2024, Koselleck Guest Professorship: Ewa Domańska (Poznań/Stanford) October 18-19, 2024, Exploring Postsecularism in Contemporary Historical and Political Theory | Workshop - Organized by Agnes Piekacz - During the workshop, we explored the limitations inherent in the secular approach to historical knowledge, as well as potential reconfigurations within the field prompted by the post-secular turn and its manifestations. Our interests span concepts, methods,

theories, and structures of historical thought. This issue was examined not merely in terms of the “turns” and “shifts” occurring in contemporary humanities, but also through the analysis of the past of historical reflection, which, after centuries of prolonged tensions, ultimately introduced the secular “science” of history into the academic world.

B. Lisa Regazzoni, Centre for Theories in Historical Research, Bielefeld University

- November 7, 2024: Introducing TOOL: Theory-Oriented Object Laboratory | Mini-Workshop. - Organized by Lara Keuck and Lisa Regazzoni (Focus area: Materiality Between Past and Future). - What can we learn about theories, in particular theories of history and theories of medical knowledge, when studying objects? TOOL, the Theory Oriented Object Laboratory is a new venue and collaborative project to address this question from various historiographical and theoretical perspectives and through a diversity of material objects and collections.

C. Eros Vilmos, University of Debrecen, Institute for History

- III International Conference in Historiography, University of Debrecen, 21-23 November, 2024.

PERSONAL NEWS AND HONOURS

A. Trudy Huskamp Peterson

- Iowa State University (US) awarded Trudy Huskamp Peterson its Alumni Humanitarian Award in Ceremonies held in November 2024.

B. Ewa Domanska, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznan

- Ewa Domanska celebrates two of her PhD students:

a) Tomasz Wisniewski from the Faculty of History at Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, was awarded the first prize for the best PhD thesis in the 2024 Marcelli Handelsman Doctoral Thesis Competition (Poland) for his dissertation, "Post-Secular History: Knowledge of the Past between Science, Politics, and Religion" (supervisor: Ewa Domańska)

b) Taynna Marino, PhD student, School of Humanities, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań (advisers: Ewa Domańska and Berber Bevernage), published an article: “How should historians empathize?” *History and Theory* (vol. 63, no. 4, 2024, DOI: 10.1111/hith.12361).

- Ewa Domańska and Lisa Regazzoni organized a workshop “Exploring Postsecularism in Contemporary Historical and Political Theory” at Bielefeld University on October 10, 2024.

C. Sanjay Seth, University of St. Andrews

- Sanjay Seth recently moved from Goldsmiths, having been appointed Professor of Postcolonial Theory and Political Thought at the University of St. Andrews, United Kingdom.

UPCOMING EVENTS

A. Andrey Oleynikov, Bielefeld University

- The workshop at Bielefeld University on February 12, 2025: "Uncertain Historicity: To What Extent does the Distinction Between The Past and The Present Still Navigate The Historical Experience?" Organized by Andrey Oleynikov (Bielefeld University). Speakers: Berber Bevernage (Ghent University), Achim Landwehr (University of Konstanz), Chris Lorenz (Ruhr University Bochum), Walderez Ramalho (The University of the State of Santa Catarina), Sina Steglich (Ludwig Maximilian University).

B. Lisa Regazzoni, Centre for Theories in Historical Research, Bielefeld University.

- April 16, 2025, 6:00-8:00 PM: The Koselleck Lecture will take place as the Faculty Opening Colloquium: Marian Füssel (Göttingen): The Historian on the Battlefield. Reflections on the Historical Epistemology of the Event before and after Reinhart Koselleck | Koselleck Lecture

- June 5, 2025, 4:00-6:00 PM: Shahzad Bashir (London) and Lisa Regazzoni (Bielefeld): The Episteme of the Gallic Past. French Historical Research in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries |Domino Talk

- July 10, 2025, 4.00-6.00 pm: Stefan Haas (Göttingen), “After Narrativity: Why a Unique Theory of Argumentation is Essential for Historical Science”. Centre for Theories in Historical Research, Bielefeld University.

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ICHTH Members are requested to pay their annual fees. For more information about annual fees, write to info@ichth.net

ICHTH Newsletter No. 6 is scheduled for October 2025. A call for submission of news items shall be made in July 2025.

ICHTH Newsletters Nos.1, 2, 3 and 4 can be read at:

NO.1 – [<https://www.ichth.net/news/9.pdf>]

No.2– [<https://www.ichth.net/news/18.pdf>]

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