

**REPORT BY THE PRESIDENT OF ICHTH – EWA DOMAŃSKA
(2015-2020/2022)**

During the 22nd Congress of Historical Sciences in Jinan in 2015, I was elected to the position of the President of the International Commission for the History and Theory of Historiography. I was the first woman and the first scholar from Eastern and Central Europe to lead the Commission. Thus, I treated this role as an honor but also a great responsibility. At that time I was not aware that because of the pandemic COVID-19 I would be holding this position not for five years (which is a regular term) but for seven (2015-2022).

1. Conferences organized or co-organized by ICHTH and Bureau meetings:

From 2015 to 2022 ICHTH co/organized three conferences/workshops and six Bureau meetings:

- 1) Ouro Preto (Brazil) – conference “The Practical Past: On the Advantages and Disadvantages of History for Life”, 23-26 August 2016 [2nd INTH conference] - Bureau meeting on August 26th
[Mission: “Such questions have long interested historians and philosophers of history. They were central to Friedrich Nietzsche's famous critique of the excess of history that had, according to him, intellectually paralyzed his contemporaries. Yet, despite its longevity, the multifaceted discussion on the 'advantages and disadvantages of history for life' seems to acquire a new relevance and urgency today. Hayden White is one of an increasingly large number of scholars who have proclaimed the continuing need for a more practical relation to the past as a guide for action or a source of meaning in life. Scholars from far and near have been invited to weigh in on this debate, reflect on the usefulness and tenability of the distinction between the practical and historical past and explore its potential as an analytical device.” Over 250 people participated in the conference, where they could attend 160 lectures given by delegates as well as numerous keynote lectures given by leading scholars in the field, such as Hans Ruin, Sanjay Seth, Chris Lorenz, Christophe Bouton, François Doss, Guillermo Zermeño, Jeanne Marie Gagnebin and Jerome de Groot.]

- 2) Athens (Greece) – conference “Theorising Historical Culture”, 1-2 December 2017 [org. Antonis Liakos] – Bureau meeting on 2nd December.
[Mission: “The notion of historical culture has been deployed with a view to examining the social circulation of history writing and the multiple relationship of the present with the past, the complex network of discourses and emotions through which a society relates to the past. The idea of theorising historical culture thus engages with the polemics of bridging the gap between historical theory and the broader framework of social representations of the past, including public history and the various articulations of memory.”]

- 3) Tallinn (Estonia) – workshop “What Are Historians Doing: Practice and Pragmatics of History Writing”, 24–25 August 2018 [org. Marek Tamm] - Bureau meeting on August 25th.
[Mission: The workshop invites to think about history as a certain socially constituted set of scholarly practices based on the mutual agreement of certain people – historians and their readers. This specific set of practices is built up with the help of rules and conventions known to and followed by the participants in practice. Seen from this kind of pragmatic or pragmatist angle, history writing consists primarily of producing speech acts with which the historian tries to do something. This means that one of the key questions in philosophy of history is what historians are doing when they assert or claim something? In other words, philosophy of history shouldn't be studying only what historians *say* and how it relates to past reality, but rather what they are *doing* while they say it – that is, the intention, function and illocutionary force of what they say.]

- 4) Bureau meeting – ZOOM – 4 March 2021 [org. Ewa Domańska]
- 5) Bureau meeting – ZOOM – 13 May 2021 [org. Ewa Domańska]
- 6) Bureau meeting – ZOOM – 30 June 2022 [org. Ewa Domańska]

The main discussions at the Bureau meetings circulated around the following issues: finalization of the text of the ICHTH Constitution, problems with opening a bank account, the level of membership fees, issues related to the Book and Dissertation Prizes, session proposals for the 23rd Congress of Historical Sciences in Poznań (2020/2022), recommendations for new ICHTH and Bureau members, as well as organization of ICHTH conferences and Bureau meetings.

2. Commission and Bureau members

When I started my Presidency in 2015, the Commission had 66 members although 25 members had not paid their fees for the previous four years. Therefore, the Commission in fact consisted of 41 “active” members (30 men and 11 women). Thus, one of my main tasks was to attract scholars from all over the world to join the Commission, and to make the Bureau more international by inviting scholars from regions hitherto underrepresented (especially Africa, but also Australia and Canada). I partially succeeded. Based on individual recommendations by the Bureau members (including honorary members), I sent over one hundred invitations which resulted in a doubling of the membership list by the time of writing. We recruited for the Commission 38 new members (27 men and 11 women), while the dominance of Western European members has been neutralized by a substantial increase in representation of scholars from Asia (China and Korea) and Latin America (Argentina, Brazil and Mexico), as well as of scholars from the Baltic states, the Balkans and Eastern Europe. However, the Commission is still lacking members from Africa, Canada, Australia and India.

There have been shifts over the last seven years in the Bureau members: in 2016 (Ouro Preto) Marek Tamm joined the Bureau as Treasurer, in 2017 (Athens) Edoardo Tortarolo replaced Stefan Berger in the position of Secretary General, and Chen Qineng resigned from the Bureau, while in 2020 we lost Eiji Takemura; to keep the Bureau operational, in 2021 Q. Edward Wang replaced Edoardo as Secretary General, and later this year (2021) Antoon de Baets and Effi Gazi were appointed Bureau members. Additionally, in 2016 the Bureau agreed to appoint Aurimas Svedas (Lithuania) to become a fellow at the Bureau to assist me with managing the ICHTH website and other organizational matters.

Currently we have thirteen Bureau members (plus ex-President ex-officio), eleven men and three women – seven from Western Europe, two from East-Central Europe and Baltic, two from Latin America, one from China, and two from India (based in the USA).

3. ICHTH Constitution

The second major task has been the ICHTH Constitution that was drafted by Antonis Liakos and presented to the Bureau at the meeting in Jinan (August 29, 2015). The Bureau was working hard over the next two years to develop with the final version of the document that was finally voted on and approved during the Bureau meeting in Athens on December 2nd, 2017 (the text of the Constitution can be found [here](#)).

4. ICHTH Book and Dissertation Prize for the History and Theory of Historiography

The ICHTH Prize was established in 2011 during Antonis Liakos’ presidency (the Bureau meeting in Sofia, Bulgaria) and the first book prize was conferred in 2013 to Berber Bevernage (who later became a Bureau member) for the book *History, Memory, and State-Sponsored Violence*.

The ICHTH Selection Committee of the ICHTH Dissertation Prize for the History and Theory of Historiography consisted of Chris Lorenz (chair), Edoardo Tortarolo and Estevão de Rezende Martins (for 2016 prize), Chris Lorenz (chair), Estevão de Rezende Martins. Q, Edward Wang (2018 dissertation prize), and Berber Bevernage (chair), Antonis Liakos and Edoardo Tortarolo (for 2022 book prize).

The Jury selected the following winners:

- 2016 - International book prize for 2015 was awarded to Jouni Matti Kuukkanen for his book *Postnarrativist Philosophy of Historiography* (Palgrave 2015);
- 2018 - ICHTH Dissertation Prize went to Ritwik Bhattacharyya for his work on *Homo Ahistoricus: Disavowal of History in Colonial South Asian Writing*;

- 2022 – the ICHTH and INTH book prize for books published between 2016-2020 was awarded *ex-aequo* to Hans Ruin’s *Being with the Dead. Burial, Ancestral Politics, and the Roots of Historical Consciousness* (Stanford University Press, 2019) and Zoltán Boldizsár Simon’s *History in Times of Unprecedented Change: A Theory for the 21st Century* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020).

The winners received a diploma as well as \$500 from funds donated by Hayden White. It is important to note that for the last book prize, ICHTH and INTH joined forces.

5. ICHTH finances

Opening a bank account was (and still is) a major challenge for the Commission. Due to recurring problems with communicating with CISH’s treasurer and with the transfer of money, we did not pay a fee to CISH for 4 years (2011-2015). Neither the extraordinary efforts and time of the ex-treasurer – Q. Edward Wang, or the new Treasurer elected in 2016 – Marek Tamm, was able to open an ICHTH bank account. Thus, the membership fees (35 USD / 25 EUR per year) were not collected for the last five years (except from Bureau members during the ICHTH conferences). After months of hard effort, we were also able to receive from CISH a document that confirms our legal status as one of the CISH’s commissions (and thus as a non-profit organization). This document was supposed to help with opening a bank account (but in fact, it did not). Thanks to the mediation of Edoardo Tortarolo, and with a great help from Sacha Zala, in 2017 a temporary ICHTH account as a CISH subaccount was established. This allows us to keep the funds in a secure place and pay the CISH annual fee. A positive outcome is that the Commission is not in debt and we were able to pay CISH fee for 2022.

6. ICHTH representation at the 23rd International Congress of Historical Sciences in Poznań

One of the obligations of the Bureau is to gather and select proposals for the main themes and sessions for the international congresses of historical sciences. Due to the pandemic, the 23rd International Congress of Historical Sciences planned for 2020, was postponed to 2022, posing many organizational challenges. This situation also affected the program, which was altered due to changing session organizers and the withdrawal of participants from the sessions. This challenge was well managed by the Bureau and the participants have been successfully replaced, with session titles reformulated accordingly where necessary.

Originally it was CISH’s suggestion to focus in Poznań on spheres of historical research that may have been marginalized and/or underrepresented during previous congresses. Medieval studies and the theory of history were mentioned as future priorities. This situation gave our Commission a unique opportunity to promote specific fields of study and make our presence felt in Poznań. Since the Bureau meeting in Ouro Preto in 2016, we have been working collectively (with Guido Abbattista, Marcelo Abreu, Valdeci Lopes de Araujo, Berber Bevernage, Christophe Bouton, María Inés La Greca, Ethan Kleinberg, Jouni-Matti Kuukkanen, Chris Lorenz, and Kalle Pihlainen), on the proposal for a main theme related to the methodology of history entitled “Reassessing the Historical Methodology”. However, over time CISH’s priorities have changed and despite the incredible efforts of the Bureau members and all cooperating colleagues, and even following the resubmission of a revised proposal, ICHTH’s proposal to organize one of the main themes was not accepted. Ultimately, it has been transformed into roundtable no. 17: “[Reassessing Historical Methodology](#): the Value of Experience in Historical Knowledge” (org. Veronica Tozzi and Kalle Pihlainen). However, ICHTH still has strong representation at the Congress in the following sessions:

Sunday, August 21 / opening ceremony

Debate: *Quo vadis historiae?* Introduction: Catherine Horel President of ICHS with papers by Olufunke A. Adeboye, Dipesh Chakrabarty and Ewa Domańska. It is worth noting that never before in the ICHTH’s history have two Bureau members (plus a nominated member) given welcoming lectures for the international Congress)

Monday, August 22

- 1) (ST07): [Historical Futures](#): Apprehensions of the Past and Anticipated Futures in the Contemporary World (org. Marek Tamm; Zoltán Boldizsár Simon)
- 2) (RT08) [Innovative Approaches to Holocaust & Genocide Studies](#): Theoretical Perspectives and Prospectives (org. Kate E. Temoney; Ewa Domańska)
- 3) (JS11) [Sources of Historiographical Methodology](#) in East Asia and Europe (org. Edward Wang; Edoardo Tortarolo)

Tuesday, August 23

- 4) (RT17) [Reassessing Historical Methodology](#): the Value of Experience in Historical Knowledge (org. Veronica Tozzi; Kalle Pihlainen)

Wednesday, August 24

- 5) (RT11) [Limits to Free Expression about the Past](#) (org. Antoon de Baets)

Thursday, August 25

- 6) (IAO09) [Between Georg Iggers and Hayden White](#): Forty Years of the International Commission for the History and Theory of Historiography (org. Q. Edward Wang)

7. Maintaining and promoting relations with journals and networks

The Commission maintains close links with journals (such as *History and Theory*, *Journal of the Philosophy of History*, *Rethinking History*, *Historein*, *Storia della Storiografia*, and *Historyka. Studia Metodologiczne*) as well as with academic institutions and networks (especially with the International Network for Theory of History), specializing in historiography, theory of history, intellectual history, and other related fields. The members of the Commission and Bureau are strongly promoting knowledge of the past which is interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary and complementary, linking not only the humanities and social sciences but also natural sciences as well as various forms of indigenous knowledges.

8. Cultivating intergenerational exchange and memory of deceased members

ICHTH also cultivates inter-generational relationships. The Bureau has decided to accept as ICHTH members fresh PhD, post-docs and young researchers (which caused a long and heated debate between the Bureau members; some of them preferred to keep the membership for distinguished scholars). The Bureau also involves in its activities senior members of academia, including established honorary membership for senior and distinguished members of the Bureau (such as Frank Ankersmit, Jörn Rüsen and Masayuki Sato), and cultivates memory of deceased ICHTH members. The ICHTH website contains individual sites “in memoriam” of [Georg G. Iggers](#) (1926-2017, co-founder of ICHTH; President 1995-2000), [Fernando Sánchez Marcos](#) (1943-2020; a treasurer of ICHTH – 1990-1999), [Eiji Takemura](#) (1962-2020; Bureau member - 2015-2020); [Richard T. Vann](#) (1932-2022; ICHTH President 2000-2005) and [Hayden White](#) (1928-2018; Bureau member 2005-2015). We lost these six irreplaceable, founding Bureau members and excellent scholars during last seven years. ICHTH cultivates their memory by organizing sessions, publishing special issues of journals (for example: Ewa Domańska and Maria Ines La Greca edited a theme section on “Globalizing Hayden White” in *Rethinking History*, vol. 23, 2019; *Storia della Storiografia*, vol. 61, 2012, published a special issue devoted to Georg Iggers), and various texts in memoriam. One of the ICHTH sessions at the Poznań Congress, organized by Q. Edward Wang (IAO09), is entitled “[Between Georg Iggers and Hayden White](#): Forty Years of the International Commission for the History and Theory of Historiography”.

9. ICHTH website and letterhead

I have manage to move an [ICHTH website](#) to Adam Mickiewicz University’s server and re-build it in 2016 and add several side sites. We have also designed a new ICHTH letter head, ICHTH membership form, a letter of invitation and membership confirmation letter, as well as a diploma for the book and

dissertation prize during the past seven years. We also established ICHTH's email account on gmail (2015.ichth@gmail.com).

Conclusion

In July 2014 I have received an email message from our ex- Bureau member, dear colleague and friend – Hayden White, who wrote: “I had had a dream in which, looking over my life as I approach the end, I had the feeling that only one question really mattered to me: ‘Did I give enough?’ I am more and more of the conviction that we fail more by what we do not do than by what we do. Sins of omission rather than commission.” When looking at my years of ICHTH Presidency I asked myself the same question: “did I give enough”? As we all know, there is never enough and we always can “do better” (or “try harder” as Hayden used to say), but I am convinced that I did my best given the circumstances. Sometimes I even overestimated my possibilities and executive power. This situation at some point created tension in the Bureau because of my demands and task-oriented management.

Overall, however, the Commission is in a good condition and has advanced since 2015: the number of members is raising, we have more members from outside Western Europe; we have become more democratic and more inclusive. We have a constitution, a website, we have established a strong cooperation with INTH, we award international book and dissertation prizes, and we have managed to have a strong representation at the 23rd International Congress in Poznań. However, the pandemic disrupted our work. In 2020, ICHTH was supposed to celebrate its 40th anniversary. Because of COVID-19 no decision was made about honoring this event. Perhaps we might plan to mark the 45th anniversary of ICHTH in 2025.

Let me end the report with expressions of gratitude. I'm grateful for the dedication of all the Bureau members – past, current and honorary. My deepest gratitude go to the ex-Presidents – Antonis Liakos and Masayuki Sato, as well as to Edoardo Tortarolo, Q. Edward Wang, Chris Lorenz, Marek Tamm, Berber Bevernage, Estevão de Rezende Martins and Veronica Tozzi. Your consistent commitment, despite the heavy responsibilities of your regular jobs, to devote time and energy to serving as Bureau members is very much appreciated.

Thank you all.

It was a gift to meet you and a pleasure as well as a great life lesson to work with you.

Ewa Domańska
Poznań, August 14, 2022