2026 International Conference of the Taiwan Association of Classical, Medieval and Renaissance Studies

November 6-7, 2026 // National Central University, Taiwan

Call For Paper

The Sea and The World

For centuries, the symbiosis between the sea and land has been a central theme in Western cultures and thoughts: while land provides resources, manpower, and technology to the sea, the sea opens channels for trade and communication. As civilizations grew, the conceptual boundary between sea and land was consistently redefined and reimagined. Maritime trading routes centered around the Mediterranean began to flourish from the 5th century onward, fostering economic, cultural, and religious exchanges and cosmopolitan unities across Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. In the 13th century, when the Venetian merchant Marco Polo ventured East, he not only revealed broader markets in Asia (for silk, spices, porcelain, etc.), but also prompted a surge of cultural interests in the East, real or imagined. At the same time, the Hanseatic League emerged along the Baltic shores starting in the late 12th century, linking coastal ports and cities in the name of commerce. Not only did the organization contribute to the success of commercial exchanges across Europe (such as raw materials, necessities, and luxury goods), but it also brought political stability in the regions.

Beyond the realm of commerce, the relationship between sea and land has been thematized in literary works for centuries. In Virgil's Aeneid, for instance, the Roman poet describes Aeneas' westward travels to Italy after the fall of Troy, tracing the transition between old and new empires (translatio imperii). Even some of the oldest works of English literature, including The Seafarer, projected contemporary theological questions onto an uncertain seascape as if to take advantage of this conceptual no-man's land to explore questions of religion and poetics side by side. In

the 15th century, English mystic writer Margery Kempe faced perilous seas while accompanying her daughter-in-law back to Danzig (now Gdańsk). While Kempe described the experience as soul crushing, she managed to retrieve inner strength and faith in the midst of it. Shakespeare himself, building on a by then established tradition, frequently used the motifs of shipwreck and piracy to explore the porosity between comedy and tragedy, as seen in The Merchant of Venice, Twelfth Night, and even Hamlet.

This conference calls for research from scholars working in classical, medieval, and Renaissance studies under the topic of The Sea and the World (in both English and Chinese). The 2026 international conference will include primarily in-person sessions with a limited number of hybrid sessions. For questions of accessibility, including remote presentation and/or special technological requirements, please email the organizers before submitting your abstract. We particularly encourage submissions from MA and PhD students in the humanities across the country. Conference participants may also form panels or roundtable topics among themselves before submission. Suggested topics include the following (but are not limited to):

Maritime histories, literatures, and cultures

Trading routes and the archeology of trade

mappa mundi and cartography

Piracy and shipwrecks

Old Norse literature

Human geography and islands studies

Ecocriticism

Emotion studies

Empire and colonialism

Subjectivity and alterity

State borders and boundaries

Sea voyage and immigration

The hero's journey and its adaptations

The conference will be held on November 6-7, 2026 at National Central University. Please submit your proposal (250 words for English; 500 words for Chinese) along with a one-page CV to tacmrs.ncu@gmail.com by **May 9, 2025**. There is no registration fee for the conference. Please note that presenters should be members of TACMRS if they reside in Taiwan. Membership application forms can be downloaded from the TACMRS website or upon request via email. For more information, please visit the TACMRS website at https://tacmrs.org.tw/.

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