Editorial Issue 1, 2019

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This first issue of *Water History* in 2019 has four papers on offer, with many angles, approaches and time periods respectively. In the first paper, Robert Gordon and Patrick Malone explore the running of a “perpetual power” system 1822 to 1858 in Boston, USA, based on the same principle of tidal mills (a technology close to the inception of this journal itself, as readers may remember!). The managers of the Boston system sold energy to industrial customers, turning a tidal technology that is usually perceived as small-scale and private to larger-scale and commercial. The short history of the system explains how it created opportunities in Boston, generated environmental issues and disappeared when growth of population and steam power created other preferences on how to use Boston’s coastal areas. In the second paper, Raphael Longoni and Oliver Wetter keep our attention focused on urban water. They discuss urban water systems in Central Europe between 1200 and 1700. In an attempt to expand our appreciation of this neglected era, the paper discusses motives for constructing urban water works plus their municipal management in select cities in Switzerland, Germany, and Austria. The authors make an attempt for a typology according to hydraulic functions and physical structures as well.

The attention to the deeper history of urban water continues in the article by Ruchira Ghosh and Arun Kansal, who introduce us to an anthropology of paradigms in urban water systems, focusing on people and urban water resources in Delhi from 1206 to the present. The authors explore the many challenges in Delhi—including demographic fluctuations, economic restructuring, and water scarcity—to argue why a paradigm shift on water–society relationships and areas of interventions has partially occurred, but may need to go much further. The fourth and final paper brings us to the dry zone of Sri Lanka, as Nuwan Abeywardana and colleagues introduce us to ancient chronicles and lithic inscriptions on ancient water harvesting and water management systems. Mobilizing 255 texts containing 837 different records on ancient irrigation, the group built a database for a 1500 year period (fifth century BCE–tenth century CE), paying attention to both the temporal and spatial distribution of records. Discussing possibilities and limitations of this specific case and approach, the authors show information on spatial, temporal and administrative developments of ancient water management in Sri Lanka can be made accessible and comprehensible.

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