

Académie de l'Eau



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Organisation  
des Nations Unies  
pour l'éducation,  
la science et la culture



International  
Hydrological  
Programme

Programme  
Hydrologique  
International

## **A day on Water and Culture 9 December 2010**

### ***Considering cultural dimensions of water and groundwater management: the qanats as an example***

**UNESCO House (Room XI)  
7 Place de Fontenoy, 75007 – Paris**

***Considering cultural dimensions  
of water and groundwater management:  
the qanats as an example***

**INTRODUCTION**

From its creation, the French Water Academy has been working jointly with UNESCO for the cultural dimension of water management to be considered, notably within the framework of the World Water Forum (WW Forum), held every three years:

- At the 2<sup>nd</sup> WW Forum in The Hague in 2000, we presented the Water Social Chart.
- At the 3<sup>rd</sup> WW Forum in Kyoto in 2003, we co-organized, along with UNESCO, a two-day symposium on water and cultural diversity. This event was illustrated by an exhibition jointly organized with the National Museum of Ethnology of Osaka and the Alliance Française.
- In 2006, at the 4<sup>th</sup> WW Forum in Mexico, the French Water Academy and the International Secretariat for Water organized the First International “Water and Film” Event which was accompanied by several debates and a roundtable conference on the occasion of the World Water Day “Water and culture” (<http://www.unesco.org/water/wwd2006/>).
- At the 5<sup>th</sup> WW Forum in Istanbul in 2009, we held a high-level international roundtable titled “Water Mediators” at the World Water Council Pavilion, and launched our thematic interactive website about interactions between water and cultural diversity [www.eauidiversiteculturelle.org](http://www.eauidiversiteculturelle.org).

Meanwhile, amongst other activities, the French Water Academy has studied the ways and means to develop cooperation in the field of transboundary water resources, starting by shared water basins. At the request of the French Development Agency, we have just achieved, jointly with UNESCO, BRGM and the International Office for Water, a methodological guidebook entitled “Towards a Concerted Management of Transboundary Aquifer Systems”, officially presented at UNESCO’s international conference held on 6, 7 and 8 December 2010.

The «Day on Water and Culture» on 9 December 2010, dealing with the consideration of the cultural dimension in water and groundwater management, is at the crossroads of these two important processes that the French Water Academy has lead for the last ten years in collaboration with UNESCO.

Increasingly recognized on the global level as freshwater sources of vital importance, aquifer systems stretch over all three dimensions of the underground and are closely linked to territories and their inhabitants. As for surface water, the ways of exploiting and preserving groundwater are always a meaningful reflexion of the culture of the related populations, sometimes also strengthening the attachment to the territory.

It is important to highlight the cultural interactions of a society with groundwater. They can be expressed, *inter alia*, in customary rights that rule the water sharing of a given community; in ancient techniques to protect the resource from overexploitation, as well as in the various cultural values that ensure water respect.

Omitting or neglecting these vital connections, as well as the invisible consequences in case of groundwater overexploitation, has led to a number of unsustainable practices and situations. It can help to alleviate crucial supply problems and foster local development to rehabilitate and adapt some traditional practices of groundwater exploitation, such as the *qanats* or *foggara*.

This conference-debate on 9 December 2010 at the UNESCO House opens a series of encounters for mutual exchange, dialogue, knowledge and sharing of experience, which the French Water Academy proposes to organize at least once a year on a different issue, illustrating the close and mutual interconnections between water and cultural diversity.

This series of encounters falls within the preparation of the 6<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum that will be held in Marseille, France, in March 2012, and the Earth Summit 2012 (RIO+20) scheduled a few months later.

## PROGRAMME

**9.30 -11.30 am** *French Water Academy General Assembly*

Only for members

**11.30 – 5.30 pm** *Conference – Debate « Water and Culture »* bilingual  
French/English

Moderators: Jean-Louis OLIVER – General Secretary of the French  
Water Academy

Alexander OTTE – UNESCO Consultant

11.30 – 11.45 : Reception and Opening by Madam Gretchen KALONJI, Assistant Director-General for Natural Sciences of UNESCO,

11.45 – 12.00 : Cultural dimensions of water in the activities of the French Water Academy by Pr. Marc GENTILINI, President of the French Water Academy,

12.00 – 12.20 : Water Fears and Pleasures by Pierre-Alain ROCHE, President of ASTEE<sup>1</sup>, and Bernard BARRAQUÉ, President of the French National Committee of the International Hydrological Programme of UNESCO, both members of the French Water Academy

12.20 – 12.30 : Questions and Answers

**12.30 – 14.00** **Lunch Break**

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<sup>1</sup> Scientific and Technical Association for Water and Environment.

- 14.00 – 14.20 : **Qanats, Veins of the Desert: An Integrated Approach** by Ali A. SEMSAR YAZDI, Director of the International Centre of Qanats & Historic Hydraulic Structures, Yazd (Iran)
- 14.20 – 14.40 : **Qanats, a Cultural Heritage of Vital Importance** by Fekri HASSAN, Centre for the documentation of Cultural and Natural Heritage, Gizeh (Egypt)
- 14.40 – 15.00 : **New Groundwater Culture in Southern Morocco** by Thierry RUF, “Social Management of Water” Team - IRD Montpellier (France)
- 15.00 – 15.20 : **Sahara Groundwater** by Abderrazak KHADRAOUI, Director of the Sahara Hydrographical Basin Agency (Algeria)
- 15.20 – 15.40 : **Qanats Rehabilitation and Community Development, an Audiovisual Approach** by Joshka WESSELS, Sapiens Productions – Maastricht (The Netherlands)
- 15.40 – 15.55 : Question and Answer session
- 15.55 – 16.15 Coffee Break**
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- 16.15 – 16.35 : **Water and a Culture of Tolerance in Mali** by Claudine BRELET, anthropologist, UNESCO consultant, member of the French Water Academy
- 16.35 – 16.55 : **Concretely Considering the Cultural Dimension of Water Management in the Seine Saint-Denis Département** by Julia BÖHLER, in charge of the Urban Hydrology Observatory in the Seine Saint-Denis Département
- 16.55 – 17.10 : Questions and Answers
- 17h10 -17h30 : **Water and Culture at the 6<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum in Marseille in March 2012** by Alberto TEJADA GUIBERT, Secretary of the International Hydrological Programme and the Director a.i. of the Division of Water Sciences of UNESCO
- 17h30 : Conclusion of the Day**



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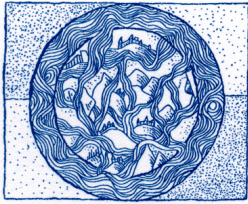
## **THE INTERNATIONAL HYDROLOGICAL PROGRAMME**

Launched during the International Hydrological Decade (IHD, 1964-1975), the International Hydrological programme (IHP) is UNESCO's intergovernmental scientific cooperative programme in water research. It is a tool for member states to deepen their knowledge about the water cycle, and thus to improve water resources development and management.

The IHP aims to improve scientific and technological basis from which rational and eco-friendly water resource management methods can be established.

Evolving throughout different stages, the IHP has undergone a deep transformation: while it had started as a single discipline, it has turned into a multidisciplinary programme.

Recently, by the growing importance of its social science component, the IHP can be regarded as a truly multidisciplinary programme, based on the evidence that solutions to world water issues are not only to be sought in technical achievements.



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## **THE FRENCH WATER ACADEMY**

The French Water Academy, an association ruled by the 1901 law, was created in 1993 by Professor Jean DAUSSET, Nobel Prize in Medicine, on the initiative of the Ministry of the Environment and the six French Basin Committees. It works as a multidisciplinary, cross-sector and prospective think tank on various aspects of water management and uses, in France and abroad. It is a platform for information sharing and technology intelligence in order to improve the integration of water-related issues, land use planning and quality of life in a sustainable development framework.

Gathering more than 150 members, individuals and institutions, the French Water Academy has become a main consultative body, regularly called upon by public institutions. The Academy's rich and original cross-cutting studies lean on a great multidisciplinary network of qualified volunteers, which allows the Academy to integrate the various aspects of the issues under consideration.

As a driving force for proposition, recommendation and public debate animation on water-related issues, the French Water Academy brings direct support to action and plays a key-role in the international network of water actors.



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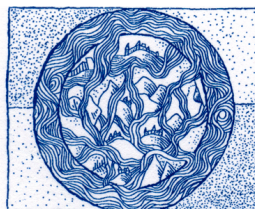
**International Hydrological Programme**  
Division of Water Sciences

1 rue Miollis  
75015 – Paris

Phone: + 33 (0)1 45 68 40 01 – Fax: + 33 (0)1 45 68 58 11

E-mail: [ihp@unesco.org](mailto:ihp@unesco.org)

Website: [www.unesco.org/water/ihp](http://www.unesco.org/water/ihp)



**Académie de l'Eau**

**Académie de l'Eau**  
51 rue Salvador Allende  
92027 - Nanterre

Phone: +33 (0) 141 201 856 – Fax: +33 (0) 141 201 609

E-mail: [academie@academie-eau.org](mailto:academie@academie-eau.org)

Websites: [www.academie-eau.org](http://www.academie-eau.org) – [www.eauidiversiteculturelle.org](http://www.eauidiversiteculturelle.org)

**PRACTICAL INFORMATION**

**Venue:** Paris, UNESCO House – Room XI, 7 Place de Fontenoy, 75007 – Metro Ségur or Cambronne; Bus 28, stop Fontenoy – UNESCO ; Bus 87, stop Duquesne-Lowendal.

**Registration:** Participating to the conference-debate is free, but you do need to register. The enclosed registration form must be returned to Johanna TROGNON – 51 rue Salvador Allende, 92027 Nanterre, by fax: +33 (0)1 41 20 16 09 or by e-mail: [trognon.johanna@aesn.fr](mailto:trognon.johanna@aesn.fr). You can download this form on the website: [www.academie-eau.org](http://www.academie-eau.org), news section.

**Lunch:** Lunch is on your own. If you wish, you can use the UNESCO House Cafeteria.