

The Hakluyt Society

Publisher since 1846 of Historical Voyages and Travels



The Futures of Travel Editing

Hakluyt Society-Linschoten Vereeniging Workshop

Friday 4 July 2025, 9.30-18.00

Royal Asiatic Society, London

The Hakluyt Society (1846) and Linschoten-Vereeniging (1908) have long spearheaded the editing and publication of historical accounts of travel, in line with their respective missions first formulated well over a century ago. Since the late twentieth century, academic and lay interest in historical travel has both reflected and responded to political and social transformations, inviting critical scrutiny of traditional narratives and increasing calls for alternative perspectives. This changing context raises urgent questions about the future(s) of travel editing.

The one-day “Futures of Travel Editing” workshop aims to foster a broad discussion on the challenges, possibilities, and new directions in editing and publishing travelogues, in line with the core mission of the Hakluyt and Linschoten societies. It will be advertised to members of both societies as well as opened to the public. Sessions focus on new sources and methods, the specifics of editing accounts of non-Western travel, and attracting a more global and diverse set of proposals.

Programme

09.30-10:00: Coffee and welcome

10.00-11:15: **Keynote Address:** Siobhan Lambert-Hurley, University of Sheffield
Reorienting the canon: editing Muslim women's accounts of global travel over three centuries

11:15-11:30: Break

11:30-13:00: **Panel 1: Sources**

Ladan Niayesh, Université Paris Cité

Editing Travel Writing Dialogically: The Example of Thomas Herbert's Persian Glossary (1634-1677)

Mingqing Yuan, Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen

Writers, Reporters and Travellers: Chinese Travelogues about Africa in the 1960s

Carl Thompson, University of Surrey

Title TBA

13:00-14:00: Lunch

14:00-15:30: **Panel 2: Methods**

Gabór Gelléri, Aberystwyth University

Beyond the printed travelogue. Sources for a decentred history of travel

Manjusha Kuruppath, Huygens Institute, Amsterdam

Travelling Others: The GLOBALISE project and Seeking Out Non-European Travel in the Dutch East India Company Archives

Tristan Mostert, Leiden University/Linschoten-Vereeniging

Digitizing colonial texts and images: promises and pitfalls

15:30-16:00: Coffee/tea

16:00-18:00 **Roundtable: Institutional Challenges & New Directions**

Katie Parker (Royal Geographical Society); Carolien Stolte (Linschoten Society); Alison Ohta (Royal Asiatic Society); Zoltán Biedermann (Hakluyt Society)

Abstracts

Keynote: Reorienting the canon: editing Muslim women's accounts of global travel

Siobhan Lambert-Hurley, University of Sheffield

When imagining intrepid global travellers from past centuries, Muslim women rarely top the list. And yet the roster of queens and captives, pilgrims and provocateurs, who travelled the world before the mid-twentieth century was surprisingly broad and diverse. Some elites and a few others also wrote about their experiences in multiple languages and forms as they criss-crossed between Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas. Editing these unfamiliar women authors into a canon of travel writing expands our archive, while also inspiring a theoretical rethink: In what ways are our understandings of *travel*, *traveller* and *travel writing* embedded in specific cultural contexts? Are there specific geographies influencing our perceptions of travel and travel writing? How does narration and recording vary across cultures and time? And what restrictions and possibilities have determined how a subject writes their stories within their own life-worlds?

Editing Travel Writing Dialogically: The Example of Thomas Herbert's Persian Glossary (1634-1677)

Ladan Niayesh, Université Paris Cité

Travel editing is among the areas which in recent years have been most subjected to calls to decolonize the canon. Encouraging the editing of non-Western material has been part of efforts to reach more diversity in the field. Yet, obstacles to this desired opening have included the scarcity of surviving material, their marginalization in the records, or their invisibilisation in past editions, forcing us to think also of alternative methods for re-editing existing archives. This paper attempts one such experiment to restore audibility to local interpreters and mediators by editing dialogically a glossary in a 17th-century male-authored European account of a travel to Persia. As a double-voiced text putting side by side two languages and two world views going with them, a glossary is an ideal testing ground for a dialogic method in the Bakhtinian sense of the term. Mine would involve an English-speaking and a Persian-speaking editor shedding light together on the experience of a contact across languages, rather than having one linguistic pole reducing the other to the status of a curiosity viewed from outside, which is what happens in the currently existing editions of this travel account by monologic English-speaking editors.

Writers, Reporters and Travellers: Chinese Travelogues about Africa in the 1960s

Mingqing Yuan, FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg

Even though China's direct contacts with Africa could be traced back to the early 15th century during Zhenghe's voyages (1405-1433), Chinese travel writings about Africa in the modern era mainly appeared in the 1950s. These travels, mostly as part of the cultural diplomacy of the

newly independent People's Republic of China, were carried out by writers/journalists/editors who have multiple identities and got educated both in the Chinese literati tradition and western higher education system. Their travel writings about Africa combine the traditional Chinese travel writing "youji", especially its prose or poetry style, with the socialist aesthetics and morality of reportage. By first giving a general overview of Chinese travelogues during that era and then zooming in onto Gao Liang and Wang Ye's Records of Tanzania (坦桑尼亚散记, 1965), this presentation focuses on the writing and publishing mechanism of Chinese travelogues about Africa and its lasting impacts on the current Chinese writings. It reads both texts and photos in the travelogue together with related (auto)biographies and historical archives to show how Chinese travelogue produces geographical and socio-political knowledge about Africa from a Chinese perspective that reflects China's self-positioning and ideological world-mapping in the 1960s.

Title TBA

Carl Thompson, University of Surrey

Beyond the printed travelogue. Sources for a decentred history of travel

Gabor Gelléri, Department of Modern Languages, Aberystwyth University

Travelogues, especially printed travelogues, have often been the sole focus in travel studies; however, they represent a one-sided vision of travel, centred on the traveller. This case study investigates other sources to possibly complement, or even replace travelogues, to offer a more balanced, decentred approach of travel phenomena. In 1924, colonial lobby groups sent elite French students to various parts of the Empire, to witness the results of the mission civilisatrice and the joys of colonial tourism, and to 'evangelise' for the colonizing oeuvre. However, none of the participants penned travelogues or reports. Even archival traces are limited: only one of the four missions, to Indochina, has an extensive folder in the French Overseas Archives. In the absence of travelogues, one of the paths was to turn towards private memories. The families of the participants kindly shared numerous materials: texts circulated within and between the families, photographs, objects, as well as family lore transmitted orally.

Even this wealth of material remains limited in its scope – it represents only the metropolitan, 'Hexagonal' vision of the trip. Decentring our perspective requires including those who were travelled upon, Mary Louise Pratt's "travellees". A systematic survey of French and colonial press revealed that the colony is very active in reacting to, and shaping, the travellers' experience: both French settlers and the colonized leverage the student group's arrival to fashion their "travellee identity", sketch expectation horizons for the travellers, and express agendas beyond the trip itself.

Travelling Others: The GLOBALISE project and Seeking Out Non-European Travel in the Dutch East India Company Archives

Manjusha Kuruppath, Post-Doctoral Team Lead – Historical Contextualization, Huygens Institute, Amsterdam

To say that travel was the life blood of the Dutch East India Company's enterprise is stating the obvious. The Dutch East India Company (the VOC) created an empire, an administration and trading zone that spanned three continents in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This politico-economic enterprise was without doubt forged, facilitated and sustained by the movement of people. Crucially, the VOC's administrative archives records the movement not just of Company personnel, but also its subjects, and commoners, sailors, traders and armies who did not bear necessarily strong associations with the Company. Yet, the size and structure of the archive, and the nature of its archival inventories and document descriptions have meant that only select stories of travel have often come to the fore. Furthermore, it is the narratives of European led VOC embassies to royal Asian courts, tales of shipwrecks and journeys undertaken by Europeans that have been celebrated and memorialized in print. This paper will introduce the GLOBALISE, an infrastructural project based at the Huygens Institute and its agenda to revamp how the Company archives are accessed, read and researched. It will describe the project's aims to a) machine transcribe five million pages of written archives; b) apply natural language processing methods to this corpus and c) contextualize entities like persons and places in the archives. It will reflect on how the project can challenge the hegemony of tales of European travel by opening up the archive and enhancing its searchability, and detail how users can bypass archival aids and negotiate the enormity of the archive. This paper will then probe how these efforts can help us reconceptualize travel, and identify innumerable travel narratives that positively complicate our understanding of who travelled and for what purpose in the early modern world.

Digitizing colonial texts and images: promises and pitfalls

Tristan Mostert, Leiden University/Linschoten Society

Digitizing images and texts relating to early modern colonialism offers the promise of unlocking these sources for wider audiences, yet it also presents its own particular challenges. This talk dives into two case studies: the online database Atlas of Mutual Heritage, which unlocks visual material relating to early modern Dutch colonialism from various institutions, and the works of the Linschoten-Vereeniging – published on paper since 1908, but now also being prepared for online publication. This talk will go into the tremendous potential of making these sources publicly available online, but will also explore its hurdles and risks – technical and financial issues, publishing and copyright regulations, as well as complexities of interpretation and the risk of reproducing outdated colonial perspectives.