

**On the Way into the Unknown?  
Comparative Perspectives on the „Orient“  
in (Early) Modern Travelogues**

**Veranstalter:** Research project „Perceptions of the Other and the Orient in Modern Times: A Mixed-method Approach for the Analysis of Large-scale Travel Account Series“ (FWF/DFG, Institute for Habsburg and Balkan Studies of the Austrian Academy of Sciences); research project „The Mediality of Diplomatic Communication: Habsburg Envoys in Constantinople in the Mid-17th Century“ (FWF, University of Salzburg)

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**Bericht von:** Christoph Würflinger / Lisa Brunner, University of Salzburg; Martin Krickl, Austrian National Library, Vienna

ARNO STROHMEYER (Salzburg/Vienna) opened the conference by reflecting on fundamental ways to analyse the Orient as a subject of research. He showed that perceptions and related concepts varied diachronically as well as synchronically and that they related neither to clear geographical boundaries nor to a uniform cultural entity, but rather were united by a Eurocentric perspective. In the course of the conference, „Orient“ was pragmatically understood to be the Ottoman and Persian Empires, excluding therefore the Spanish „Orient“ and regions from India eastwards. Although the discourse on the Orient has always been heterogeneous, the Orient has been perceived as the „Other par excellence“, generating long-lasting stereotypes (topoi) that, in some cases, continue to flourish to the present day. In critically addressing these historical representations, they remain highly relevant to our understanding of cultural differences.

Opening the first panel, „Biographics“, ANDERS INGRAM (Galway) talked about travelogues as highly structured and intertextually related literary works, full of rhetorical figures, citations and topoi. He focused on English travelogues related to the Ottoman Empire, promoting discussion about „Turkish History“ in England, and addressed the socio-economic characteristics of travellers as well as aspects of education, financial independence and their (non-)objective observations.

DENIZ T. KILINÇOĞLU and JÖRG WETTLAUFLER (Göttingen) presented their project on Middle Eastern identities in the Age of Nationalism in the nineteenth century. Travelogues can provide relevant information about the „self“ and „other(s)“, as newly emerging „national“ identities overlap previous forms of self-identification. Kiliņçođlu and Wettlaufer use travel reports to investigate questions of identity and nationalism by applying analytical tools of the digital humanities (Named Entity Recognition, Topic Modelling). The project team is currently creating a corpus of French, English and German travelogues, which will be accessible in an open semantic search interface.

The second and third panels focused on perceptions of „Otherness“. DONNA LANDRY (Kent) presented a close reading of Early Modern Ottoman and British travelogues by examining the principles guiding their pursuit of knowledge of the Ottoman Empire. A common claim among travellers was that the Ottoman Empire had destroyed the Orient's beauty and civilisation. By suspending judgement as one guiding principle, authors showed a rather enthusiastic attitude in learning about and loving the „Other“. GERALD MACLEAN (Exeter) looked at representations of the Kurds in travelogues by seventeenth-century British travellers to the Ottoman and Safavid Empires which prove to be consistently misinformed, inaccurate, confused or the product of personal fantasy. MARIA ENDREVA (Sofia) talked about the construction of the „Foreign“ and the „Other“ in Felix Kanitz's travel notes on Bulgaria (1875). By presenting a four-fold schema for the hermeneutical processing of „Otherness“ (The Familiar, The Foreign, The Native and The Other), she underlined how negative images were attributed to the Orient in order to secure a European identity. Nineteenth-century Western travellers perceived the Balkans not perhaps as „The Foreign“ but still as „The Other“, only partially identifying with them, and Kanitz constructed and perpetuated several topoi of inferiority that still dominate today's perceptions of Balkan societies. BARBARA HAIDER-WILSON (Vienna) followed the routes of Anton Prokesch from his influen-

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tial acquaintance with Johann Wolfgang von Goethe to his 1829 *Reise in das heilige Land*. Prokesch spent over 25 years in the Orient, with a special interest in antique relics, and was an excellent observer and cultural bridge-builder. His rather diversely structured travelogue was highly influenced by pilgrimages and claimed to be a guide for an elite audience.

In the third panel, CHRISTINE KÄMPFER (Marburg) and STEFAN KNOST (Halle-Wittenberg) presented the travel diaries of German botanist Carl Haussknecht. They feature two journeys to the Eastern parts of the Ottoman Empire and Iran (1865 and 1866–68) and allow us to compare changing perceptions of „Otherness“. Kämpfer and Knost argued that those people Haussknecht perceived as foreign can be grouped into three types: Christians, local tribes and government officials. Hermann Burchardt (1857–1909) was at the centre of MICHAEL FISCH's (Jerusalem) presentation. Fisch emphasised that Burchardt was a man of independent means, who travelled for pleasure and without haste. The photographs he took on his journeys to southwestern Arabia are historical sources as well as artistic expressions and contain valuable information unique to their visual representation, which could not have been written down.

The fourth panel looked at gender perspectives. BETÜL İ. ARGIT (Istanbul) reflected on the changing perceptions of the harem and female slavery in Western travelogues. Reports oscillated between speculation and fascination because the male authors were not allowed access to the harem. Numerous stereotypes formed which slowly broke down in the course of the seventeenth century, when the sexualisation of the harem transformed into romanticisation. KONRAD PETROVSZKY (Vienna) used examples from the works of Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall to present female and effeminate environments, especially with regard to „Levantine femininity“. ANNA HUEMER (Salzburg) addressed the need for writing on the topic of „masculinities“, demonstrating the construction of masculinity in travelogues using the examples of Hans Ludwig von Kuefstein (1627–1629) and Johann Georg Metzger (1650). She discussed

different categories of masculinity in the reports, such as „upper class masculinity“, „religious masculinity“ and „masculinity of the warriors“.

Since the 1980s, travelogues have gained increasing interest as a source for the history of mentality, discourses and transnational history. In his keynote, MICHAEL HARB-SMEIER (Roskilde) stated a rather „paradoxical“ trend for micro-historical studies versus large-scale analysis. According to Harbsmeier, travelogues are reports that fulfil four basic characteristics: (1) Shamanism as a model for travelling (the Shaman goes somewhere else to report); (2) the interchange between static description and dynamic narration as the „basic grammar of travel accounts“; (3) alterity; and (4) allocentrism (the importance of spatial distance). He then applied the concept of temporalisation (Koselleck), i.e. understanding history as progress with some societies ahead and some behind, to the perception of other nations in travel accounts. In a third step, Harbsmeier reversed the perspective by focusing on accounts written by travellers from the East (China, Japan, Persia), and particularly on descriptions of the Western process of „modernisation“.

STEFANIJA DEMCHUK (Kyiv) opened the fifth panel by asking why we should, or should not, trust Pavel Levashov's travel accounts. Levashov, a Russian chargé d'affaires in Constantinople (1763–1771), based his accounts on medieval and Renaissance chronicles of European travellers and diplomats. He perpetuated the common *topoi* attributed to the Ottoman Empire, such as romantic love, a place of freedom and unnatural passion, by emphasising Russian superiority. SUSANNA BURGHARTZ (Basel) raised the question of the Orient as a blank space in the travel collection of the De Bry publishing house. She outlined the strategic design of De Bry's collection, showing a conscious decision to omit the Orient, rather than a simple lack of material. De Bry built up the collection on reports about more remote areas, whereas the Ottoman Empire – as Burghartz suggested – was too closely related to Eastern European history. JOHANNES GIESSAUF (Graz) gave insights into Western perceptions of the Crimean Tatars as „Others“ without civilised

manners. Contemptuous *topoi* were handed down over the course of time from early travel accounts such as Siegmund Herberstein's *Moscovia* or Marcin Broniewski's *Descriptio Tartariae*, bemoaning the destruction of Genghis Khan's cultural legacy. Many geographers relying on ancient sources travelled in search of the Scythian culture, only to be disappointed by finding the Tatars as the only representatives of barbarism.

„Intermateriality and Intermodality“ were the keywords for the sixth session, opened by GABRIELE LESCHKE (Berlin), who took a closer look at representations of the Tomb of Christ, which Otto Friedrich von der Gröben (1656–1728) reproduced as a personal icon. Leschke carefully sorted the representations in a handwritten report, a printed travelogue, four copper engravings and a tattoo on Gröben's own skin by implications of materiality. It transpired that Gröben copied François Chauveau's illustrations to Eugène Roger's *La Terre sainte* (1646). In her presentation of the digital humanities project „Perceptions of the Other and the Orient in Modern Times: A Mixed-method Approach for the Analysis of Large-scale Travel Account Series“, DORIS GRUBER (Vienna) gave insights into a quantitative approach to the understanding of travelogues. She explained how a corpus of more than 3,000 travelogues from the holdings of the Austrian National Library has been created, how it can be accessed, and what a first quantitative analysis tells us about the changing market for travelogues from 1500 onwards. She also outlined how the project will address intertextuality. IRINI APOSTOLOU (Athens) concluded the panel by looking at the construction of the Orient through costumes. She described how a market for pictures of costumes developed, and how the clothes depicted had often undergone decontextualisation.

In the seventh panel, the focus lay on the circulation of travelogues. MICHIEL VAN GROESEN (Leiden) compared two different versions of a travel report and thus uncovered two different views of the Orient. Specifically, he examined an Italian travelogue by Gasparo Balbi (1590) and a German and Latin translation or reinterpretation (1605/06) by the publisher Johan Theodore de Bry in Frankfurt.

De Bry adapted his versions for a different audience and added pictures to Balbi's report. MARCUS KELLER (Illinois) compared French, Italian and German travelogues and highlighted different reflections on the Ottoman Empire in Western countries. According to Keller, the texts, and indeed the pictures, of many French travelogues were adapted in other countries, and he referred to well-known travelogues by Pierre Belon (1553), André Thevet (1554) and Nicolas de Nicolay (1567). VOLKER BAUER (Wolfenbüttel) dealt with a series (1704–1718) from the German publishing house Renger that described the politics of various countries in a standardised manner, using travel reports as the main source of reference. Bauer explained how the Renger series drew knowledge from travel reports and how this knowledge was transformed to fit into the series' analytical framework.

The eighth panel focused on cultural practices in travelogues. FRÉDÉRIC TINGUELY (Geneva) examined the festival of Ashura, based on a body of nine travelogues by seventeenth-century authors. He provided a typology of early modern attitudes toward „Oriental difference“ containing incommensurability, demonisation, trickery etc. Tinguely argued that the mental world of early modern travellers would have helped them to understand the festival better than we might be able to today. DZENITA KARIC (London) analysed the depictions of the Hajj written by Bosnian Muslims in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, ranging from travelogues in prose and poetry, and itineraries to spiritual texts, written in Arabic, Ottoman Turkish and Bosnian. She focused on perceptions of the major cities along the route to Mecca (Istanbul, Damascus, Cairo) and argued that the narratives were embedded in a long tradition that connected educated Muslims from the Ottoman provinces with their counterparts across the Islamic world. GÜLLÜ YILDIZ (Istanbul) talked about depictions of the Ottomans' capital in nineteenth-century Persian travelogues. She analysed three travelogues written between 1863 and 1875 by pilgrims who chose the route via Istanbul for their journey. Their descriptions highlight the city's cosmopoli-

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tanism, flourishing economy, civilised nature, entertainment possibilities and westernisation.

In the last panel, the peripheral regions were, for once, at the centre of discussion. CHRISTINE NÖLLE-KARIMI (Vienna) examined Iranian diplomatic missions to the Central Asian Khanate of Khiva in the first half of the nineteenth century, whose purpose was to reclaim what was understood to be Iranian territory. Nevertheless, the envoys experienced alienation rather than a sense of homecoming. NIKITA KHRAPUNOV (Simferopol) talked about another peripheral region that became an important attraction after the Russian appropriation in 1783: the Crimea. Approximately 30 travelogues were published up to 1810, according to which the Crimea was culturally situated in Asia. European travellers ascribed traditional „oriental“ characteristics to the peninsula: natural „southern“ idleness, dirtiness and irregularity of settlements, exotic diseases and insects. The presentation uncovered parallels with other regions in Eastern and southeastern Europe and Asia.

The conference gave ample opportunity for fruitful discussion and its international and interdisciplinary nature proved especially rewarding. Three presentations highlighted the potential of digital humanities, which offers new possibilities for computer-aided analysis, thus enabling us to examine larger amounts of data. The discussions showed that travelogues still have much to offer as a subject of research.

#### **Conference overview:**

##### *Opening:*

Arno Strohmeier (Austrian Academy of Sciences, Institute for Habsburg and Balkan Studies, Vienna / University of Salzburg): Welcome and Introduction

##### *Panel I: Biographics*

Chair: Stephan Kurz (Austrian Academy of Sciences, Institute for Habsburg and Balkan Studies, Vienna)

Anders Ingram (National University of Ireland, Galway): History and Travelogues: The Discourse of „Turkish History“ and English Travellers' Accounts of the Ottoman World

Deniz T. Kilincoglu / Jörg Wettlaufer (Georg-August University, Göttingen): The Reshuffling of Middle Eastern Identities in the Age of Nationalism: Insights from 19th-Century Travelogues

##### *Panel II: Perceptions of Otherness (I)*

Chair: Elisabeth Lobenwein (University of Klagenfurt)

Donna Landry (University of Kent): Known and Unknown Others: Early Modern Ottoman and British Travellers in Comparative Perspective

Gerald MacLean (University of Exeter): Travels among the Kurds in the Seventeenth Century: British and Ottoman Accounts

Maria Endreva (Sofia University): Depictions of Foreignness and Otherness in Felix Kanitz' Travelogues about Bulgaria

Barbara Haider-Wilson (Austrian Academy of Sciences, Institute for Habsburg and Balkan Studies, Vienna): „Prokesch and Goethe teach travelling like nobody else.“ Anton Prokesch's travel account of the Holy Land (1831)

##### *Panel III: Perceptions of Otherness (II)*

Chair: Ilya Berkovich (Austrian Academy of Sciences, Institute for Habsburg and Balkan Studies, Vienna)

Christine Kämpfer (Philipps-University, Marburg) / Stefan Knost (Martin-Luther-University, Halle-Wittenberg): A Reluctant Observer Between two Empires: The Journeys of the Botanist Carl Haussknecht to the Ottoman Empire and Qajar Persia

Michael Fisch (Hebrew University of Jerusalem): „From the Yemen. Hermann Burchardt's Last Journey through Southern Arabia“. The German-Jewish Traveller Hermann Burchardt (1857–1909)

##### *Panel IV: Gender Perspectives*

Chair: Simon Edlmayr (Austrian Academy of Sciences, Institute for Habsburg and Balkan Studies, Vienna)

Betül İ. Arğıt (Marmara University, Istanbul): Female Slavery and Harems in the Ottoman World

Konrad Petrovsky (Austrian Academy of

Sciences, Institute for Habsburg and Balkan Studies, Vienna): Levantine Feminities in Hammer-Purgstalls Travel Accounts and Memories

Anna Huemer (University of Salzburg): Foreign Masculinities? The Construction of Gender in Travelogues to Constantinople (Mid 17th Cent.)

*Key-Note*

Chair: Arno Strohmeyer (Austrian Academy of Sciences, Institute for Habsburg and Balkan Studies, Vienna / University of Salzburg)

Michael Harbsmeier (Roskilde University): Travels from the Orient, Travels to the Orient: Does Comparison Make Sense?

*Panel V: Perceptions of Otherness (III)*

Chair: Marion Romberg (Austrian Academy of Sciences, Institute for Habsburg and Balkan Studies, Vienna)

Stefaniia Demchuk (Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv): Inherited or Witnessed? Constructs of Otherness in Letters and Memoirs of Pavel Levashov (ca. 1719–1820)

Susanna Burghartz (University of Basel): The Orient – a Blank Space in the Travel Collection of the De Bry?

Johannes Gießauf (University of Graz): The Mongol Heritage in the Ottoman Empire through the Eyes of European Travelers

*Panel VI: Intermateriality and Intermodality*

Chair: Lena Oetzel (University of Salzburg)

Gabriele Leschke (Freie Universität Berlin): Representations of the Tomb of Christ in Works Written, Designed and Commissioned by Otto Friedrich von der Gröben (1656–1728)

Doris Gruber (Austrian Academy of Sciences, Institute for Habsburg and Balkan Studies, Vienna): Intermediality and German Language Travelogues

Irini Apostolou (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens): Oriental Images of Otherness: Fashion Encounters in 19th Century French Travelogues

*Panel VII: Circulation*

Chair: Barbara Haider-Wilson (Austrian

Academy of Sciences, Institute for Habsburg and Balkan Studies, Vienna)

Michiel van Groesen (Leiden University): Gasparo Balbi and the De Bry Collection of Voyages: Two European Perspectives on the Orient around 1600

Marcus Keller (University of Illinois): Broken Mirror Effects: The Ottoman Empire in French, Italian, and German Sixteenth-Century Travelogues

Volker Bauer (Herzog August Library Wolfenbüttel): Travelogues as Raw Material of Political Knowledge: The Case of the „Oriental“ States in the Renger Series (1707–1716)

*Panel VIII: Cultural Practices*

Chair: Doris Gruber (Austrian Academy of Sciences, Institute for Habsburg and Balkan Studies, Vienna)

Frédéric Tinguely (Université de Genève): Radical Otherness? The Festival of Ashura According to European Travellers to Persia in the 17th Century

Dzenita Karic (University of London): Views from the Province: Bosnian Muslims on Hajj from 17th to 19th Century

Güllü Yildiz (Marmara University, Istanbul): „The West of the Orient“: The Depiction of Ottoman’s Capital in Persian Hajj Travelogues

*Panel IX: Peripheries*

Chair: Daniela Haarmann (Austrian Academy of Sciences, Institute for Habsburg and Balkan Studies, Vienna)

Christine Nölle-Karimi (Austrian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Iranian Studies, Vienna): Shifting Peripheries: Iranian Envoys in Khiva

Nikita Khrapunov (Vernadsky Crimean Federal University Simferopol): The Orient in Europe? The Crimea in Western Travelogues from 1783–1810

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