

16<sup>th</sup> EASA biennial conference [New anthropological horizons in and beyond Europe](#)

EASA2020 – P001: **Ethnographers before Malinowski [History of Anthropology Network]** Convenors: Christine Laurière (CNRS) and Frederico Delgado Rosa (Universidade Nova de Lisboa-CRIA/FCSH). Discussant: Han F. Vermeulen (Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology). <https://easaonline.org/conferences/easa2020/panels#8416>

**Tuesday 21 July, 11:00-12:45 and 14:00-15:45 (Lisbon/London time)**

This panel invited case studies reassessing ethnographic works produced by observers of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Welcoming diversity within a history of anthropology framework, it stressed the possibility of pre-Malinowskian texts regaining importance in the eclectic futures of the discipline. The first session was introduced by the convenors. Christine Laurière recalled that disciplinary past may be subject to various forms of exclusion, while historians of anthropology are themselves confronted with the drama of drastic selections. Frederico Delgado Rosa added that the vast literature by ethnographers before Malinowski is sufficiently varied, rich and complex to deserve a case-by-case analysis of form and content, avoiding the hasty judgment that most of them were but miscellaneous, dry compilations of odds and ends.

The first paper, “Other Argonauts: Lost Chapters in the History of Anthropology,” by Frederico Delgado Rosa, addressed risks in the search for ethnographic forerunners, such as the risk of Anglocentrism, viewing the history of the discipline mostly from a British perspective. Rosa stressed the fact that the nineteenth-century label of data collectors was itself a conceptual construct that hid a myriad of different occurrences. In the second paper, “Westermarck and his Ethnography: A Reconsideration,” David Shankland (University College London; Royal Anthropological Institute, UK), underlined the fact that disciplinary amnesia also affects leading transitional figures in the history of British anthropology. According to Shankland, the lack of appreciation of Edward Westermarck’s work, including his Moroccan ethnography, goes back to the time when social anthropologists came to codify the discipline and regard themselves as being part of a revolution not only in the temporal but also in an intellectual sense. In a paper entitled “Out Amongst the Natives: Daisy Bates’ Ethnography and the Invention of Ethnographic Fieldwork,” Edward M. McDonald (Ethnoscience, Australia) and Bryn Coldrick (Ancestral Voices, Ireland) argued that much criticism of Daisy Bates and her work is and has been ‘presentist’ and that the failure to acknowledge her as an important figure in the history of Australian anthropology ignores its multi-stranded origins, its complex interconnections, and the fact that her work in various parts of Western and South Australia underpinned ethnographic orthodoxies. In “A Book of Good Faith? The Contradictory Nature of the Present in Henri-Alexandre Junod’s Novel *Zidji* (1911),” João de Pina-Cabral (University of Kent, UK) demonstrated the complexity of early 20th century fictional ethnographic genres, namely of Junod’s less-known novel which, on the one hand, bears as much empirical validity as his remaining work, and, on the other, resorts to the fictional format to better deal with the cultural and historical ambiguity of the colonial “present.” In the last paper of session 1, “Turn-of-the-century Ethnographies of South-East Europe between Political Engagement, Textual Experimentation and Humanitarian Activism,” Anne Müller-Delouis (Université d’Orléans, France) compared the Balkanese ethnographies of Guillaume Lejean, Eugène Pittard and Edith Durham to exemplify the merits and limits of earlier ethnographic practices. If earlier texts may seem superficial, biased or based on false premises, other elements remain of interest, such as giving visibility to local interlocutors and paying

careful attention to populations in humanitarian crisis or without recognition in the global political arena.

In the first paper in session 2, “Old Tropes, New Histories: An “Irish” Reading of Haddon’s Ethnographies,” Ciarán Walsh (Maynooth University, Ireland) unveiled anti-colonial dimensions in Alfred Haddon’s life and work. Resorting to visual and other archival materials, Walsh interpreted Haddon’s photo-ethnographic method as a platform for anti-racism activism, one that has its analogue in current projects of Indigenous activists to campaign against land grab, racial violence and genocide. In “Turning Fieldwork and Museum Research into Comparative Ethnographical Studies: Erland Nordenskiöld and the Gothenburg School,” Christer Lindberg (Lund University, Sweden) focused on Erland Nordenskiöld’s fieldwork and the use he made of ethnographical and archaeological collections. Lindberg called attention to a clear shift in Nordenskiöld’s fieldwork style as he moved from a large-scale expedition to making field studies on his own or with a single collaborator, and stressed the imaginative ways he used the ethnographic materials at home. In a paper entitled “Moisei Krol’s Return to the Jewish People via Ethnographic Research among the Buryats,” Sergei Kan (Dartmouth College, USA) focused on the transformative ethnographic experience of Moisei Krol while exiled in southern Siberia in the 1890s. Following his admiration for the Buryats and their values, Krol reconciled with his Jewish background and devoted himself to various Jewish causes. In the last paper of session 2, “Franz Boas as Ethnographer in the Field,” Herbert S. Lewis (University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA) focused on Boas’s ethnographic experience among the Inuit and the resulting monograph, *The Central Eskimo* (1888), as a way of counter weighting the critique of his work in the Northwest Coast of British Columbia. He recalled that Boas’s experience among the Inuit was constitutive of his position in methodological terms, as he “was never able to carry out a full year’s worth of fieldwork again and would never have the intense intimacy or involvement in hardships, movements, and daily life.” Lewis also put into question the claims that Boas did not focus on living cultures. All presentations were followed by questions and answers giving way to lively and informed discussions. Discussant Han F. Vermeulen identified intersections between the various papers, namely the fact that the historiographic reassessment of pre-Malinowskian ethnographers and ethnographies has to deal with still prevailing canons in anthropology and also with their genealogies. These do not go back necessarily to the Malinowskian “Revolution in Anthropology” from 1922, he added, but to later forms of theoretical consolidation and professionalization of British social anthropology. Vermeulen also called attention to the risks of compartmentalizing the period c. 1870-1922, as earlier ethnographies, namely of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth-century, should also be taken into account. The problems and case studies of P001 may rejoin other histories of anthropology written for more distant periods. One of the panel’s conclusions was that historians of anthropology avoid, as an open and complex subject, pinpointing the emergence locus of the ethnographic monograph. The papers contributed to reassess positive human dimensions underlying the ethnographic experiences and outputs of the age of empire, somehow avoiding the predicaments of radical post-colonial critique. The panelists, in dialog with the convenors, the discussant and the attendees who joined the stage, were fundamentally in agreement that the materials pre-Malinowskian ethnographers gathered and published, namely under the form of ethnographic monographs, deserve special attention as historical documents, but also for additional reasons that were brought forward by the case studies in the panel. About 50 people were in attendance.