

Early Ethnographers in the Long Nineteenth Century: Call for References

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Projet de recherche transnational et interdisciplinaire (mars 2024-décembre 2026) – coordonné par Han F. Vermeulen (Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology), Fabiana Dimpflmeier (Gabriele d'Annunzio University of Chieti-Pescara), et Maria Beatrice Di Brizio (Centro di ricerca Mobilità Diversità Inclusione sociale (MODI)-Università di Bologna) – soutenu par *History of Anthropology Review* (HAR), History of Anthropology Network (HOAN), et *Bérose - Encyclopédie internationale des histoires de l'anthropologie*

Project Statement

This project focuses on ethnographic accounts from the Long Nineteenth Century, either based on fieldwork or borrowing descriptive and comparative data on “peoples and nations” from first-hand reports by travellers and other in situ observers. Adopting a widely inclusive transnational perspective, this project explores European and extra-European intellectual traditions. It envisages early ethnographic studies as a fundamental part of the history of anthropology and ethnography.

Call for Bibliographical References: Early Ethnographers in the Long Nineteenth Century

In *Primitive Culture*, Edward B. Tylor recognized the crucial role of ethnographers, as they

provided the empirical basis for the generalizations and historical reconstructions produced by a “science of culture” and vouchsafed the credibility of its data. If *Primitive Culture* (1871) envisaged the “ethnographer’s business” as comparative and classificatory research work, mainly conducted in the study, other essays by Tylor paid tribute to in situ observers of modern populations (Tylor 1884). After Tylor, Alfred Cort Haddon credited missionaries, early explorers, travellers, and colonial officers for their fieldwork contributions to the growth of ethnography, “the foundation on which the science of ethnology has been and is being laboriously built” (Haddon, 2nd ed. 1934: 103).

Notwithstanding these early acknowledgments, however, ethnographic research, particularly before the twentieth century – whether field-based or performed in the library – has long been neglected by historians of anthropology. For example, the three editions of Haddon’s *History of Anthropology* (1910, 1934, 1949) focus on the theoretical development of the discipline, giving limited attention to collectors of ethnographic material. The same may be said of the majority of narratives on the history of anthropology, such as Marvin Harris, *The Rise of Anthropological Theory* (1968) or T. H. Eriksen and F. S. Nielsen, *A History of Anthropology* (2nd ed. 2013).

A significant departure from this historiographical posture was made by James Urry (1973) and George W. Stocking Jr., who worked on the history of fieldwork (Stocking 1983), on the ethnographic data of British nineteenth-century ethnology (Stocking 1987), on fieldwork-based anthropology before and after World War I (Stocking 1995), and on the very notion of *ethnography* (Stocking 1971, 1984). More recently, Efram Sera-Shriar (2011, 2013, 2015) and Han F. Vermeulen (2015) have drawn attention to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century ethnographies, while specialists exploring the history of colonial anthropology and the development of area studies have highlighted the relevance of pre-Malinowskian ethnographies based on fieldwork (Sibeud 2002; Gardner & Kenny 2016). Their significance for the disciplinary development of anthropology has been recognized by scholarly encyclopaedias and reviews, notably *BEROSE International Encyclopaedia of the Histories of Anthropology* and the *History of Anthropology Review* (see the dossiers on early ethnographers in the section “Anthropologists and Ethnographers” of *BEROSE* [<https://www.berose.fr/rubrique1.html>], and articles on the history of ethnography in *HAR* [<https://histanthro.org/?s=ethnography>]).

Building on this expanded historiographical sensitivity to ethnography, Frederico Delgado Rosa and Han F. Vermeulen (2022a–c) prepared a selective bibliography of 365 ethnographic accounts, dating from the period ca. 1870–ca. 1922 – that is, recorded during the fifty years preceding the publication of Bronislaw Malinowski’s *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922) and Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown’s *The Andaman Islanders* (1922). Produced by 220 authors belonging to various national research traditions and written in several languages, these were fieldwork-based monographs “on a single group or various groups within a relatively circumscribed cultural region” and “compilations of oral texts, or *corpora inscriptionum*” (Vermeulen and Rosa 2022: 476).

In order to complement and enlarge Rosa and Vermeulen's bibliography of the period 1870–1922, we propose to prepare a bibliography of ethnographic works written or published in the Long Nineteenth Century (1789–1914). While this period partly overlaps with that of Rosa and Vermeulen and adopts their transnational perspective, it significantly expands their timeframe. Accordingly, we will consider works written by English- and non-English-speaking authors, belonging to the most diverse national research traditions, and include works resulting from their authors' empirical research in the field, either at home or abroad, both overseas and in Europe. Moreover, since the history of the term *ethnography* reveals that equating ethnography with fieldwork leads to a marginalization of “other kinds of *Völker-Beschreibung* (description of peoples and nations), from statistical questionnaires to armchair compilations” (Vermeulen and Rosa 2022: 476), we also take into account library studies, whose descriptive and comparative data on “peoples and nations” were culled from first-hand reports by travellers and other categories of in situ observers.

Such a vast bibliographical endeavour, aiming at a comprehensive but inevitably selective inventory of the ethnographic archive, can best be realized as a collaborative project. We are therefore launching a call for references. We invite researchers to share references of ethnographic accounts recorded during the Long Nineteenth Century, either based on first-hand observation or compiled by so-called “armchair anthropologists” who derived their empirical data from published and/or manuscript sources. All contributions will be credited in the list of contributors associated with the final version of our bibliography. The underlying assumption of this collective and collaborative pursuit will be that early ethnographies, though long neglected and sidelined, are “a fundamental part of the history of ethnography and anthropology” (Vermeulen and Rosa 2022: 476).

Coordinated by Han F. Vermeulen, Fabiana Dimpfleier, and Maria Beatrice Di Brizio and supported by the History of Anthropology Network (HOAN), the *History of Anthropology Review* (HAR) and *BEROSE International Encyclopaedia of the Histories of Anthropology*, the research project “Early Ethnographers in the Long Nineteenth Century” will unfold over a 3-year period ending in 2026 and will result in the publication of a selected bibliography of ethnographic accounts and a special issue or an edited volume collecting the results.

Divided into four stages, the project is designed as follows:

- A Call for References will be issued in March 2024, followed by a Call for Papers in May 2024;
- A Conference will be held on 6 December 2024 to present and discuss case studies;
- A Workshop will be organized in September 2025 to present and discuss papers;
- The papers will be included in a special issue or an edited volume to be published in 2026.

The result will be a vital contribution to the history of anthropology and to studies of the ethnographic archive. As part of the first stage, we invite the international community of scholars to communicate bibliographical references from the ethnographic archive dating

back to the Long Nineteenth Century, providing perspectives on early ethnographers from European and extra-European traditions, abroad or at home.

Please submit your bibliographical entries to: early.ethnographers@gmail.com. The Call for References will be open until 31 December 2024.

Style samples of entries:

Book:

Haddon, Alfred Cort 1910. *History of Anthropology*. London: Watt's & Co.

Article in journal:

Tylor, Edward Burnett 1884. "How the Problems of American Anthropology Present Themselves to the English Mind." *Science*, vol. 4, pp. 545–551.

Article in book:

Stocking, George Ward, Jr. 1983. "The Ethnographer's Magic: Fieldwork in British Anthropology from Tylor to Malinowski." In George Ward Stocking, Jr. (ed.) *The Ethnographer's Magic: Essays on Ethnographic Fieldwork*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, pp. 70–120.

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Harris, Marvin. 1968. *The Rise of Anthropological Theory: A History of Theories of Culture*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Malinowski, Bronislaw Kaspar. 1922. *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea*. Preface by Sir James George Frazer. London: George Routledge & Sons.

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Rosa, Frederico Delgado and Han F. Vermeulen. 2022b. "Online Interactive Archive: Ethnographic Monographs before Argonauts of the Western Pacific (1870-1922)" in *History of Anthropology Review* 46 (2022), Online 21 November 2022: <https://histanthro.org/bibliography/ethnographic-monographs/> [introducing an expandable research bibliography of 365 monographs by 220 ethnographers working in the fifty years preceding the publication of Malinowski's classic monograph, 1870-1922.]

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Sera-Shriar, Efram. 2011. "Observing 'Man' *in situ*: Edward Burnett Tylor's Travels through Mexico." *History of Anthropology Newsletter*, vol. 38, no. 2, pp. 3-8.

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Stocking, George Ward, Jr. 1983. "The Ethnographer's Magic: Fieldwork in British Anthropology from Tylor to Malinowski." In George Ward Stocking Jr. (ed.) *The Ethnographer's Magic: Essays on Ethnographic Fieldwork*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, pp. 70-120.

Stocking, George Ward, Jr. 1984. "Qu'est-ce qui est en jeu dans un nom? ('What's in a Name?' II). La 'Société d'Ethnographie' et l'historiographie de l'anthropologie' en France." In: Britta Rupp-Eisenreich (ed.) *Histoires de l'Anthropologie (XVIe-XIXe siècles)*. Paris: Klincksieck, pp. 421-431.

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Vermeulen, Han F. and Frederico Delgado Rosa 2022. “Appendix. Selected Bibliography of Ethnographic Accounts, ca. 1870-1922.” In: Frederico Delgado Rosa and Han F. Vermeulen (eds.) *Ethnographers Before Malinowski: Pioneers of Anthropological Fieldwork, 1870-1922*. New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, pp. 474–501.