

# TRAVELLING AFRICA & THE ARCHIVES

5 JUNE 2015

SOAS, University of London  
Room 116

**10:00-10:30 Registration and coffee/tea**

## **10:30 – 12:00 SESSION 1.**

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| Jenny SCHANK         | Travelling the Neighbour's Colony: Luxembourgish Students in pre-Independence Belgian Congo                        |
| Stephanie DE GOEIJEN | The Archive of Dreams: Malagasy Micropolitics in the Missionary Archive  |
| Hana SANDHU          | 'I may not be considered a competent witness': Women's Travel Writing, Orientalism and the Representation of Egypt |

*LUNCH at the October Gallery for 12:30*

## **2:00-3:30 SESSION 2.**

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| Elsbeth TOLLEMACHE | Re-capturing the International Gaze, Rwanda 1994-95: Stewart Wallis's Travels in Africa and the Power of the Visual Archive |
| Taaka ODERA        | The Ndere Dance Troupe  |
| Milo GOUGH         | Multi-Axial Travels in the Highlife Archive: An Audio/Textual Journey through a Music Genre                                 |

## **Closing & Reception – THE LAMB**

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| Kai EASTON | Vessels, Voyages and Visitors: HMS <i>Vanguard</i> and the Royal Tour of South Africa [1947] |
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## ABSTRACTS

Jenny SCHANK:

Travelling the Neighbour's Colony: Luxembourgish Students in pre-Independence Belgian Congo

From 1954 until 1959, the Compagnie Maritime Belge each year offered a free journey to the Belgian Congo to two Luxembourgish students, a report of which they had to hand in upon their return. An exploration of the correspondence between this Belgian shipping company and the Luxembourgish government, the students' application letters, and the final reports – all consulted during two visits to the Luxembourgish National Archives – gives interesting insights into the wider context of Luxembourg's ambiguous relationship with its neighbour and the marginalized, only recently discovered, history of the Grand-Duchy's colonials. A closer reading of Jean-Pierre Loos' "Notes de Voyage" poses questions of colonial language and mythical imagery; it investigates notions of genre and audience as the official report is viewed against the larger backdrop of travel writing traditions, and it complicates issues of authority and status in the writings of a white, European male. Loos' ambivalent position as an insider-outsider allows for interesting observations of race relations in the years leading up to Independence, and his experiences of various modes of transport make for some entertaining reading.

Stephanie DE GOEIJEN

The Archive of Dreams: Malagasy Micropolitics in the Missionary Archive

The London Missionary Archives provide an interesting perspective on the archival collusions between missionary work and imperialism, (English) language and education in the establishment of a Protestant mission in central Madagascar in the early nineteenth century. Hidden within these archives, the 'indigenous' voice of David Ratsarahomba illuminates far-reaching repercussions on how an archival reader might view indigeneity, missionary work (and the role of the indigenous missionary), as well as the interactions between oral and written vernacular culture in an Indian Ocean diasporic network of Malagasy in the nineteenth century. In his account of a journey to the west coast of Madagascar, during the reign of Queen Ranaivalona I (when practicing the Christian religion was banned in Madagascar), Ratsarahomba goes in search of Josiah Adrianilaina, a Christian Malagasy who does missionary work in Madagascar and has plans to construct an Arab dhow with which to circumnavigate the island of Madagascar and sail the network of the Malagasy diaspora. Ultimately, it is Adrianilaina, a silenced presence in the archive, and the retrospective performativity of his never-to-be (but almost-was) boat journey as well as his more subversive interpretation on what it means to be an indigenous missionary, which sheds light on what can and should be included in the multiply voiced modern archive of Madagascar.

Hana SANDHU

'I may not be considered a competent witness': Women's Travel Writing, Orientalism and the Representation of Egypt

Following Derek Gregory's conceptualisation of Egypt as a 'scripted' place, I have selected two nineteenth century written accounts by British women (one a travel journal and the other a travel guide primarily targeted at women) from the Foreign Commonwealth Office Archive (FCO) to explore the gendered representation of the Orient as well as the female traveller's negotiation of imperial power and authorship both at home and in the margins of Empire. A similar pattern of representation emerges in both these archival documents with recurring observations of the harem as a forbidden and voyeuristic space, the public spectacle of the female body in the slave market and finally, ruins and antiquities as a uniquely 'Western' landscape. I want to examine the representation and reproduction of this particular triumvirate of colonial and gendered space throughout these texts and how this relates to larger discourses of female authorship, the production of imperial knowledge and the representation of colonial space.

Elsbeth TOLLEMACHE

Re-capturing the International Gaze, Rwanda 1994-95: Stewart Wallis's Travels in Africa and the Power of the Visual Archive

A chance meeting on a train platform in rural Devon opened the door into the archive collection that is the focus of this paper. It was here that I met Stewart Wallis, Oxfam's International Director between 1992 and 2002. Another journey led me to his home and a personal archive of African travel photos stored in a cardboard box. These photos, and the conversation we had that day, provided a glimpse into two trips to Africa, in July 1994 and March 1995, and his responsibilities as an NGO director responding to a growing humanitarian crisis in the aftermath of the Rwanda genocide. Our conversation also revealed an official excursion from Rwanda via Paris to London, and a further 'off the map' visit to an Earls Court hotel, by the President of Rwanda in May 1995. Travel writing can take many forms, and this is reflected in the multi-media, multi-authored written commentaries on Stewart's African travels I found in the Oxfam Archives at the Bodleian Library. In the hushed atmosphere of the Sir Charles Mackerras reading room, I read Stewart's official Oxfam report on his trip to Rwanda and Goma in July 1995. It was evocative reading and raised many questions in my mind. As I followed in the footsteps of Stewart's travels in Africa, I also encountered other travellers, in particular General Dallaire, head of the UN peacekeeping force in Rwanda in 1994, and the UK Shadow Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, who embarked on his maiden voyage to Africa with Oxfam in 1995.

Taaka ODERA

The Ndere Dance Troupe

In this archive I discuss how maps can be created through the movement of dance, using the Ndere dance troupe of Uganda to help track this movement. I draw mainly from Peter Cooke's Uganda recording collection available in the British Library as archival source material to help explain this movement. Stemming from as far back as Hugh Tracy's early 20<sup>th</sup> century recordings of 'native' music and dance in Zimbabwe, dance and performative art has been documented in

Africa -- with various political and economic agendas behind it. In this essay I choose not to focus my gaze on the people responsible for the recordings, but instead on the dances themselves, and how once performed they create a map of tribal identities and personalities, recording the nuances and similarities amongst the various sub-cultures.

Milo GOUGH

Multi-Axial Travels in the Highlife Archive: An Audio/Textual Journey through a Music Genre

Within the London location of my research, the 'Highlife Archive' of the British Library Sounds website presents us with a form of the 'alternative'. The West African music genre of highlife, represented through a selection of seven songs recorded during the 1950s and early 1960s by Decca Records, provides a challenge to established notions of centre-periphery travel enshrined in London's imperial history. The metaphorical travels of genre and the physical travels of musicians woven into the texture of the archive form a decentred concept of 'multi-axial travels'. The reader/listener of this piece is part of this web of movement as s/he experiences an emotive form of travel through the archive. Through this interactive engagement with 'multi-axial travels', the nature of the London-based digital archive and the genre of highlife are interrogated in order to extricate the transnational and local processes that define the relationship between them.

Kai EASTON

Vessels, Voyages and Visitors: HMS *Vanguard* and the Royal Tour of South Africa [1947]

The Royal Archives at Windsor hold the official diary of the Royal Tour of South Africa in 1947. Written by King George VI's Press Secretary, Captain Sir Lewis Ritchie RN (formerly known as 'Ricci', before he anglicised his name, and better known by many readers as the author of sea stories by the pseudonym, Bartamaeus), the official diary records the three-month journey by King George VI and his family on their first trip to South Africa in 1947, from their departure in London to their arrival at Portsmouth for the 6,000-mile journey to Cape Town harbour on the HMS *Vanguard*. It is post-war, a time of austerity and snow in London.

The King is, of course, travelling with a host of others besides his own family: an entourage, as well as commanders and crew, being a necessity for any royal travel at sea. Aside from his Press Secretary, there is also the seasoned BBC war correspondent Frank Gillard, whose voice is captured on British Pathé and BBC videos of newsreels from the time, all now archived online. We do not easily have access to the full documentary that was shown on the BBC in the historically momentous month of June 1947 (for this is when Princess Elizabeth and Prince Philip announce their engagement; it is only weeks before Partition; and it is a year before the Nationalist Party come into power in South Africa), but we do have clips – both those chosen by the editors for viewing at the time, and now a select archival collection of cuts, of unused footage. Some clips are thus narrated, some are silent, and there are certainly significant gaps. The commentary too is not always geographically accurate.

With the extraordinary South African press coverage in archive collections such as the Royal Commonwealth Society and the Collections at the Royal Archives, to what extent are these filmic accounts representative of the physical journeys involved – on both sides – of the royal tour (on this point I am following Hilary Sapire who has described the 'epic' journeys over mountains and veld by so many Africans loyal to the monarchy and determined to actually see them).

However, though the royal family travel for some *three months*, what we see is mostly embarkations and arrivals, crowds waving, princesses playing on deck. On land, key sites on the itinerary organised by the King's South African hosts, pilgrimages to Rhodes's grave in the Matopos; later, en route back to England, Napoleon's burial place on the island of St Helena.

**But what other travels - by vessels and visitors – occur alongside the procession of the royal family itself?**

After the royal family's departure from Cape Town in February, five days after their arrival, the HMS *Vanguard* at first entertains locally, and then, as we learn from the *Naval Review* of 1947, it begins its cruise, following the route of the royal family to the extent that it can, on the coast – visiting Saldanha, East London, Port Elizabeth and Durban. As the *Review* notes, the itinerary of the ship includes 'various pre-arranged points of vantage, such as Mossel Bay, Knysna, Port Alfred and Hermanus, in order that as many people as possible might have an opportunity of seeing the ship', before it returns to Cape Town to collect the royal family for the homeward journey back to Portsmouth. In other words, the HMS *Vanguard* symbolises *at sea* the royal family who are now traversing the interior, travelling through the country on the White Train, a spectacle for the native inhabitants who come to view them. Then, thrillingly, in their respective aircraft, the King and Queen are given a chance to survey from above, flying further afield into Rhodesia and Botswana.

Exploring the ways in which the images and textual archives in the Royal Collection may or may not collaborate or coincide with the parallel story of the HMS *Vanguard* on its royal tour, this visual essay connects the individual and intersecting histories that we discover when we look beyond the centrality of the main procession of the royal tours, to the various travellers on the voyage with them.