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The Marketplaces of Global Historiography

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Now that the final issue of this year is in press, I am leaving the journal in the hands of Anne-Isabelle Richard and Cátia Antunes. Over the course of the fourteen years in which I was involved with *Itinerario*, the journal moved from being produced locally in Leiden to its current home with Cambridge University Press. It moved from a very modest online presence onto all the indexes and metrics we now consider an integral part of the journal landscape, and went from being a subscriber-based bound journal to one that is primarily consumed online and carries more open access content with each passing issue.

In terms of the geographical spread of *Itinerario*'s authors, readers, and editors, this process has been transformational. The editorial office remains with the Leiden Institute for History, but the fourteen members that form the core editorial team now hail from ten different institutions in six countries on four continents. There is always room for improvement, but it is good to see the journal's reputation of deep archival research in different source languages reflected in an editorial board whose members command a vast array of research languages and, by and large, do not have English as their first language. I believe this to be important not just for a certain amount of compassion with authors from non-Anglophone academic spaces, but also for a broad awareness of other historiographies. It is a contemporary continuation of the journal's tradition of publishing overviews of new works in other languages, or write-ups of important conferences, in its early years.¹

The gains are obvious and the rewards of "going global" need not be restated here. But the imperatives of the local deserve some consideration too. I joined the journal during a time that, come publication day, whoever was at the department lent a hand in sealing each issue into an envelope, fighting a printer that preferred eating labels to spitting them out, and seeing the copies off to destinations near and far. Being made to volunteer in this way had its rewards, especially if you did not have a paid subscription, because at the end of the day there were always copies left over. In this sense, these "invisible" subscribers to the journal actually existed in closest proximity to it. It was not a perfect system – once, an entire print run was accidentally recycled by the postmaster instead of moved to outgoing mail – but it did create a sense of community. Looking back, it is that community, which lost some of its clear contours through the developments described above – that is deserving of a little reflection in terms of writing the global from a single, fixed location.

I am not the first to share my thoughts on the journal's early days. Occasionally, the journal's editors - myself included, have mined old issues for what they reveal about developments in global history over time.² Instead, with this valedictory editorial I want to record for posterity the vagaries of producing a journal with virtually no funds, but with a truly enormous amount of goodwill from a scholarly community. As a story, it is likely familiar to most independent journals. But given that the current journal landscape is justifiably under pressure from multiple sides, not least for the ever-increasing review demands the system needs from increasingly precariously employed academics, it is a story that carries lessons for the current marketplace of global historiography.

Making a Journal

Itinerario was founded in 1977 as a quarterly "Bulletin of the Leyden Centre for the History of European Expansion." The first *Itinerario* replaced the Centre's earlier Newsletter, a multi-lingual affair which had somewhat unsatisfactorily attempted to simultaneously reach out to historians of imperial and colonial history abroad, while also trying to find a place in the Dutch academic world. As the editors announced in the first-ever *Itinerario*: "We have reasoned that since Dutchman [sic] speak English as a second language ... we can save half our space by employing that tongue alone." The articles in the first issue fitted this reorientation. Heather Sutherland provided her thoughts on the development of major Southeast Asia programs in the USA and Australia.³ She was quite explicit about the aims and funding streams of Area Studies programs, but also hoped that specialized training in "techniques developed in, for instance, African history, could prevent the repetition of old mistakes or the faulty use of good material." In a similar vein, she hoped that the "established Dutch tradition of Indonesian scholarship" would benefit from new scholarly orientations. M.P. Roessingh evaluated the Guide to the Sources for the History of the Nations, a joint initiative by UNESCO and the ICA (International Council on Archives) to make accessible the documentary sources for the history of Latin America, Africa, Asia and Oceania.⁴ Gerard Telkamp wrote up a brief selection of bibliographies relating to imperial and colonial history, an overview which would soon become a regular feature of the journal.⁵ From the vantage point of today, these three articles combined – whether intentionally or accidentally – represent the major streams in the global historiography of the mid-1970s. The Cold War-era anxieties underpinning Area Studies in the Anglophone world, early international efforts at collective epistemic decolonization, and evolving approaches to collections created by and located in former colonial powers.

It is also telling that these first articles were a form of service to the field as much as they were the product of research. Indeed, the founding editors had wished to create something that would fill "the vast space between the disposable newsletter and the existing, somewhat staid, academic journals."⁶ It is also telling that the journal never sought a formal home, not "bothering about trifling details such as how we would finance the journal or

whether we needed the formal approval of the Faculty's executive board."⁷ And indeed, when the first anthology of *Itinerario* interviews was published upon the journal's twentieth anniversary, that same board of the Faculty of Humanities appeared in the acknowledgments, because they had "over the years put up with and suffered the existence of a journal which in their eyes probably is an underground publication making use of the loopholes in Leiden University's facilities."⁸ From where the journal stands today, I am personally more inclined to call it an "investment" on the Faculty's part.

Itinerario's self-conscious status as a journal serving an audience of aficionados⁹ as well as professional historians, was cemented by long-form interviews with the field's most prominent members. It was equally evident in regular features on archival collections, which ranged from sharing inventories, to sources "out of place" in collections one might not expect, to critical editions of short texts, accompanied by transliteration and translation. Both the interviews and the "From the Archives" sections are beloved by readers (and the editors!) but ill-suited to the metrics that govern most of our authors' institutional homes, and indeed our authors' careers, today. Cambridge University Press, however, has been steadfast in its support of the idiosyncrasies of the journal, despite the publishing market's incentives to the contrary. So as long as there are authors willing to write for these features of the journal, *Itinerario* happily clings to its founding principles of offering content that is proudly mismatched with administrative logic.

"Marketing" Global History

What's in a name? *Itinerario* has always been *Itinerario*, and indeed it won't be long now before the journal celebrates its first half-century under that title. The journal's subtitle has, over the years, reflected turns in the historiographic tide. From 1977 onwards, *Itinerario*'s subtitle was "Leyden Centre for the History of European Expansion." This made sense, since one of the primary aims of the journal was to publicize the research of Leiden-based historians and the wider international collaborations in which they took part. Some variations in the phrasing notwithstanding, this remained the case for a decade or so, until the journal went without a subtitle entirely in the late 1980s. In 1990, *Itinerario* re-emerged with a subtitle as the "European Journal of Overseas History," which was the Center's director Henk Wesseling's preferred term.¹⁰ Somewhat counter-intuitively, the journal continued to appear under that title through 2003, after which it became the "International Journal on the History of European Expansion and Global Interaction." That change, too, passed silently. But taking place in the mid-2000s, it referred back to the origins of the original Center rather than look toward new trends in global historiography. It did bring the name in line with FEEGI (then Forum on European Expansion and Global Interaction) as the journal's affiliated professional organization, but at the expense of many an editor's unease with the eurocentricity of the title and the discursive separation of Europe from the global. This unease was further fed by the fact that the journal's content marched further and further out of step with the title on its cover.

The most recent change of the journal's subtitle, then, went by less silently than its predecessors – helped, in part, by the journal's global online presence. It was a few years in the making, but it was not until 2019 that the editors learned that FEEGI was considering a name change as well. Now the Forum on Early-modern Empires and Global Interactions – the organization kept its acronym – there was no way to keep the names of the organization and the journal aligned, as *Itinerario* has no temporal restrictions. Or, I should qualify that: until the name change, the journal still had a suggested timeframe of 1500 to 1950. Though never strictly enforced, the majority of articles did fall within that scope. Upon the name change to *Journal of Imperial and Global Interactions*, the editors decided to dispense with a suggested timeframe entirely, acknowledging that the Boxerian “seaborne” empires are *a* strength, rather than *the* strength, of the journal, and that the aftermath of empire continues to the present day. The journal's mission reads: “Published for the Leiden University Institute for History and mindful of the University's entangled history with empire and colonialism, we encourage authors to take a global perspective. We aim to publish contributions which critically evaluate histories of empires, institutions, ideas, and networks across the globe, and the ways in which their legacies continue to shape the contemporary world.”¹¹

In a way, these recent changes have brought the journal full circle. As the Institute for History at Leiden is in the process of re-examining the role that colonial networks played in the University's own institutional history and many forms of knowledge production, the journal is once more able to act as the occasional vehicle for research by Leiden-based scholars and their international collaborators. One recent example is the *Indian Ocean of Law* special issue, in which multiple articles critically examine the role that Orientalists played in the production of legal codes and case law in governing Muslim subjects.¹² It is likewise wonderful to see that the extended timeframe enables the inclusion of new work, particularly with regard to Iberian decolonization in the second half of the twentieth century. Another recent special issue, on violence, migration, and gender in the Portuguese and Spanish-Speaking world, includes articles that speak to contemporary echoes of empire. In “The Presence of the Colonial Past,” Yolanda Aixelà-Cabré examines the lives of Equatoguinean women in Spain and the forms of everyday exclusion they face.¹³

Again: the gains of the global marketplace – epistemic and otherwise – are obvious. But the rewards for acknowledging the journal's own history and its roots in a small and close-knit community of professional historians and independent scholars, are equally apparent. In an increasingly crowded journal landscape, *Itinerario* remains – I hope – easily recognisable. The number of people who feel some form of attachment to the journal can no longer be measured in subscription numbers, but can be gleaned somewhat by the group of people who say yes when the next review request rolls around. That too is not without problems. And as noted above, the frustrations of the review cycle stem in part from unreasonable demands on scholars' time. On the other hand, the sense of attachment to a journal is different when the volume's spines are staring at you from the nearest book case, or indeed when you have physically stuffed its issues into envelopes. Changes in production and dissemination possibilities have consequences beyond

getting more content to more readers, faster. All aspects of making a journal are intricately tied to community. In that context, inclusion in the global marketplace is inevitably accompanied by an element of loss at the local level. Similarly, the possibility of downloading single articles is accompanied by the reduced significance of an “issue” as carefully compiled, placed in the most attractive order, and introduced by editors. Scholarly journals are made and remade continuously. It was a privilege to see the journal through that process for so many years, and I look forward to seeing what transformations are next.

Notes

- 1 For instance, “Some Recently Published Works in German on Imperialism.” *Itinerario* 1:2 (1977); “Histoire et sous-développement: deuxième colloque historique franco-néerlandais.” *Itinerario* 3:1 (1979).
- 2 Carolien Stolte and Alicia Schrikker. “Facing World History: Inspirations, Institutions, Networks.” In *World History - a Genealogy*, edited by Carolien Stolte and Alicia Schrikker, 11–34. Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2017.
- 3 Heather Sutherland. “Indonesian Studies and the Social Sciences.” *Itinerario* 1:1 (1977): 27–31.
- 4 M.P. Roessingh. “Guide to the Sources for the History of the Nations.” *Itinerario* 1:1 (1977): 31–36.
- 5 G.J. Telkamp, “Bibliographies of Relevance to European (Dutch) Expansion History.” *Itinerario* 1:1 (1977): 36–38.
- 6 Leonard Blussé. “Preface.” In *Pilgrims to the Past: Private Conversations with Historians of European Expansion*, edited by Leonard Blussé, Frans-Paul van der Putten, and Hans Vogel, 2. Leiden: CNWS Publications, 1995.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 “Acknowledgements.” In *Pilgrims to the Past*, 1.
- 9 Blussé, “Preface,” 2.
- 10 With thanks to Leonard Blussé for sharing his memories.
- 11 <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/itinerario/information>.
- 12 For instance, Mahmood Kooria. “The Dutch *Mogharaer*, Arabic *Muḥarrar*, and Javanese Law Books: A VOC Experiment with Muslim Law in Java, 1747–1767.” *Itinerario* 42:2 (2018): 202–219.
- 13 Yolanda Aixelà-Cabré. “The Presence of the Colonial Past: Equatorial Guinean Women in Spain.” *Itinerario* 44:1 (2020): 140–158.