

Call for papers

International Conference

Asian Languages in the History of Lexicography

Montpellier, 23-25 March 2026

Asia is the cradle of important linguistic traditions and lexicography, in particular, has had a significant history in different Asian countries. Various forms of lexicographic works, such as wordlists, character primers and thesauri, were compiled in the Chinese and Indian linguistic traditions over 2,000 years ago (Hanks, 2013; Bottéro, 2019). These traditions are an essential part of the history of linguistics and world lexicography, and have only recently been recognized as such in the global histories of linguistics (see Considine, 2019). These lexicographical traditions have specific genres, patterns and characteristics. Nevertheless, there have been many influences between the lexicographical traditions of different Asian countries. Examples include Chinese lexicographic genres adopted in Japanese and Korean lexicography or Manchu dictionaries and primers in Chinese (Söderblom Saarela, 2019) ; Malay wordlists written in Chinese characters (Van Hal, 2019).

Another important aspect of the lexicographical legacy is the rich production of lexicographic tools combining European languages with Asian languages (see Bussotti & Lachaud 2023), which were initially compiled by missionaries in countries such as China, Japan and the Philippines (Zwartjes 2019; Klöter & Döhla 2023), and later by translators and diplomats, and academics across Europe. Although critical editions of dictionaries and critical studies of these works have increased in recent years, they remain relatively rare and the field is still understudied (Zwartjes, 2024).

These works are important linguistic and historical sources, containing valuable information on historical phonology, historical lexicology and historical sociolinguistics. Moreover, numerous entries, introductions and appendices contain important information on the production of linguistic knowledge about Asian languages in Asia and in Europe (Aussant & Simon 2025) as well as on the circulation of knowledge in various fields and on cultural exchanges (Bussotti & Lachaud 2023).

This conference will focus on the history of lexicography, particularly lexicographical dictionaries dealing with Asian languages. This includes both monolingual and multilingual dictionaries involving Asian and European languages. However, contributions on the history of lexicography and linguistics from other parts of the world are also welcome, as are contributions on critical editions of linguistic manuscripts and the contribution of digital humanities to these studies.

Themes could include (but are not limited to):

- History of lexicography
- European dictionaries of Asian languages

- Asian dictionaries of European languages
- Historical linguistics
- Critical editions of manuscripts
- Digital humanities and the history of linguistics

Abstracts of approximately 300 words, in English or in French, must be submitted online by 15 October 2025: <https://chedil-alhl.sciencesconf.org/>

The conference will be hosted at the Université de Montpellier Paul Valéry (Montpellier, France), March 23-25, 2026. This conference is organized in the framework of the ChEDiL Project (ANR-23-CE27-0008) in collaboration with the ReSO research group of Montpellier University Paul Valéry.

References

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Keynote speakers

Henning Klöter (Humboldt University of Berlin)

Nicola McLelland (University of Nottingham)

Toon Van Hal (KU Leuven University)

Otto Zwartjes (HTL, Paris Cité University)

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