

## **Imaginations of the Silk Road in Sven Hedin's Travel Writings: 1900-1936**

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**Abstract :** The Silk Road is a concept idiosyncratic in nature. Western scholars co-created and conceptualized in its early days, transliterated into the countries along the Silk Road, redefined, reimagined, and reconfigured by the public in the second half of the twentieth century. Therefore, the image is not only a mirror of the discursive interactions between East and West but Self and Other. The travel narrative of Sven Hedin, through which the Silk Road was enriched in meanings and popularized, is the focus of this study. This article examines how the Silk Road was imagined in three key texts of Sven Hedin: *The Silk Road*, *The Wandering Lake*, and *The Flight of "Big Horse"*. Three recurring themes are extracted and analyzed: the Silk Road, the land of enigmas, the virgin land, and the reconnecting road. Ideas about ethnotypes and images drawn from theorists such as Joep Leerssen have been deployed in the analysis. This research tracks how the images were configured, concentrating on China's ethnotypes, travel writing tropes, and the Silk Road discourse that preceded Sven Hedin. Hedin's role in his expedition, his geopolitical viewpoints, and the commercial considerations of his books are also discussed in relation to the intellectual construct of the Silk Road. It is discovered that the images of the Silk Road and the discursive traditions behind it are mobile rather than static, inclusive than antithetical. The paradoxical characters of the Silk Road reveal the complexity of the socio-historical background of Hedin's time, as well as the collision of discursive traditions and practical issues. While it is true that Hedin's discursive construction of the Silk Road image embodies the bias of Self-West against Other-East, its characteristics such as fluidity and openness could probably offer a hint at its resurgence in the postcolonial era.

**Keywords :** the silk road, Sven Hedin, imagology, ethnotype, travelogue

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