Connecting Places In World Historical Gazetteer

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The World Historical Gazetteer project (WHG; https://whgazetteer.org), initially launched in mid-2020, aggregates information about historical places contributed by researchers working in numerous fields within the humanities and social sciences. The WHG web software platform is intended to become an essential and permanent component of global Digital Humanities infrastructure. At this writing the system holds nearly 2 million attestation records for over 1.6 million distinct places. Of these, roughly 60,000 are temporally scoped. The remainder are drawn from modern sources, forming a core that will develop increasing temporal depth as new dataset contributions are received. Many additional contributions are now in queue at various stages of accessioning. The WHG provides reconciliation services useful in the creation and enhancement of specialist gazetteers, and serves as a publication venue for smaller projects wishing to provide dynamic access to their place data.

The Collection feature in WHG allows registered users to create and publish sets of place records that are connected in some way. At this writing, named *Dataset Collections* are built by linking multiple contributed datasets, bringing together all of their place records in a unified presentation for search, mapping, and export for use in for example georeferencing of historical source material. The connection between places in a Dataset Collection might simply be their lying within a contiguous historical region--or as in the existing Dutch History collection of six datasets, belonging to a colonial empire. Several similar collections are in an early stage of development, including for "the historical Middle East," and "colonial era Latin America."

This poster/demo will also report on the use cases and functionality of a significant extension released in Spring 2022, the *Place Collection*. These typically are motivated by a explicating an historical theme or concept and can be assembled not only from entire datasets, but can include subsets of one or more records drawn from one or several datasets. Early exemplars include a collection of places relevant to Hernan Cortes' Conquest of the Aztec Empire, and another for the travels of Olaudah Equiano, a freed slave, sailor, and abolitionist. Importantly, some or all of the places in a Place Collection can be annotated with basic information about why they are included, such as relevant dates, and the nature of the relationship, e.g. waypoint, battle site, port, and so on. A Place Collection can also include a short explanatory essay, links to external web resources, and images. The creation of such authored Place Collections can be an effective teaching exercise at secondary and college levels and will also provide a venue for enhanced data publication, for historical scholars from any number of disciplines.