

New TANAP Scholarships for History Students in Asia

Report >
General

After the official Commemoration of the 400th Anniversary of the VOC a number of TANAP AMP students met the Dutch Crown Prince Willem-Alexander and his wife Máxima Zorreguieta. (20 March 2002).

Since its start in 2001 the historical research programme 'Towards A New Age of Partnership' has selected a total of twenty young historians from Asia and South Africa for the one-year training programme. At present, eleven students are participating in the Advanced Master's Program (AMP), mainly in intensive language classes and formulating PhD proposals. At its latest meeting on 10 April, the TANAP Programme Committee has decided to form another group of AMP students in 2003.

asked to quickly formulate pilot studies on attractive subjects. The most capable students will enter the PhD programme. At present the study of Java is well covered by several students, while other individuals research Taiwan, Japan, China, Vietnam (Tonkin), Thailand (Siam), South Africa, and Sri Lanka. Slowly the puzzle is becoming complete, but there are still some gaps.

A large portion of materials available, concern the history of coastal India: archives from Hugly, from Pulicat (Coromandel coast), the Fishery Coast, Malabar (Cochin), the Konkan and of course from the Mughal port of Surat and its hinterland, Gujarat. On the other side of the Arabian Sea, rich collections on important trading centres such as Bandar Abbas (Safavid Iran) and Mocha (Yemen) are still waiting until the right person with the right interest picks up the topic.

Another gap still to be filled concerns the Malay World, including Sumatra and the Malay peninsula. Collections from Malacca, Palembang, Jambi, Aceh, and Padang cover the history of these trading towns, but also treat their connections with for instance the sultanates of Johor, Perak, Kedah, and a range of smaller ports across the Straits of Malacca – including pre-colonial Singapore.

Students with an MA degree (preferably in history) who are willing to face the research challenge in the AMP are requested to submit their applications before 1 July 2002. The final selection will be made by the Programme Committee in September 2002. Five scholarships for the AMP 2003 are presently available, in particular for students from India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Malaysia, Iran, and Yemen. For application forms please e-mail Dr Niemeijer. <

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By Henk Niemeijer

The TANAP Advanced Master's Programme is crucial for the formation of a new international research group. Pilot studies in the enormous holdings of the former Dutch East India Company in the Netherlands National Archives constitute an important part of this programme. Apart from following the intensive language classes, students are also

Preserving 310 Metres of Dutch Records in Colombo Insects and Power Cuts

Report >
Sri Lanka

The National Archives of Sri Lanka keep 8,000 volumes (310 metres) of Dutch archives. A fact-finding mission by experts from the Netherlands National Archives in 1998 found a temperature of 32 degrees Celcius and 72 per cent humidity rate in the Colombo archive repository. In 5 per cent of the records living insects were found and the papers that were not slowly eaten away quickly deteriorated because of gall ink corrosion and moisture.

By Pieter Koenders

Since 1998 the economy of Sri Lanka experienced a further downturn. Meanwhile, the Sri Lankan National Archives is plagued by daily power cuts still today, making an air-conditioned building almost completely useless to keep records. As a result a number of texts cannot be consulted anymore.

Are these records important? Experts in Sri Lanka are convinced they are. Some records such as the Tombo's (land registration files even dating back to Portuguese times) are used to settle land disputes in court even still! Other collections deal with the Kandian kingdom in the interior of Sri Lanka, social relations and cast conflicts in the coastal areas, the Tamil populations in the north and on India's Fishery Coast, or Buddhist revivalism in the eighteenth century.

For good scientific reasons, in 2001 the Netherlands National Archives worked out a preservation plan with Dr K.D.G. Wimalaratne, the Director of the National Archives in Colombo. Whereas for 42 boxes of miscellany have been recently described through TANAP, the VOC records have

been well catalogued by Sri Lankan archivists. The complete, final inventory can therefore become quickly available on the internet (see address below). The further focus of cooperation is the training of conservators in preservation techniques. Last April two employees of the Netherlands National Archives went to Colombo to install leaf-casting units running on water-pumps. The system runs well now and with the speed of 200 folios a day, document repairing has started.

A full restoration of the complete collection, however, would still take decades. The archivists have therefore decided also to microfilm a large proportion of the records. In a joint Dutch-Sri Lankan effort, TANAP will produce 500 microfilms in 2002 and 2003. All the 8,000 volumes will be packed in acid free covers and placed in acid free boxes. This plan is warmly supported by the Dutch embassy in Colombo and the Central Cultural Fund (CCF). <

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Signing the MoU.
From left to right:
Dr P. Koenders,
Dr K.D.G.
Wimalaratne,
Prof. A.V. Suraweera,
Mr H.D.S.
Hettipathirana.

TANAP

website:
www.tanap.net

New TANAP PhD Research

In addition to the list of PhD studies in the last IIAS Newsletter (IIASN 27, March 2002, p. 54) there are two more PhD students under the auspices of TANAP and the CNWS that deserve mention:

Alicia Schrikker
Leiden University;
E-mail: A.Schrikker@let.leidenuniv.nl,
A Colonial Administration in Transition: Policy, Theory and Practice of Dutch and British Colonial Rule in Maritime Ceylon, c. 1780 – c. 1815.

Liu Yong
Xiamen University;
E-mail: L.Yong@let.leidenuniv.nl,
Struggling on a Competitive Market: A Study of the Dutch East India Company's Conduct of its Chinese Tea Trade, 1757-1795. <

Second TANAP Workshop to be held in Bangkok

Part of a series of workshops on 'Asia in the Age of Partnership', the upcoming TANAP workshop in Bangkok has as its special theme: 'Comparative Studies in War, Trade and Diplomacy in Asia and Africa 1600-1800'. Students from the AMP 2002 and TANAP PhD students shall present papers on which the international group of TANAP supervisors from Europe, South Africa, and Asia will be present commentary. With the support of the Royal Netherlands Embassy, a special seminar will be held on Dutch-Thai-Burmese-Cambodian diplomatic and trade relations 1604-1767. <

More info >

Organizers:
Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok
Research School for Asian, African and Amerindian Studies (CNWS), Leiden University
International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS), Leiden
Royal Netherlands Embassy, Bangkok
Netherlands UNESCO Commission, The Hague

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TANAP Diary: Students' 'Fact Sheets' on Asian History

What can TANAP add to our present historical knowledge of Asia? This has been a question bothering the minds of all the students in the programme. After the first intensive language classes we have entered the National Archives in March and April in order to find out whether our plans to study our national histories are still valid after being confronted with the massive collections of records. Most of us had never seen European manuscripts from the seventeenth century and in the beginning we really could not tell whether it was Arabic or Dutch. But after a couple months most of us can already make fairly reliable transcriptions.

By Sri Margana & Tuan Hoang Anh

Browsing through the lists of contents of the records of the Amsterdam VOC chamber was a time consuming but very rewarding exercise. All students have summarized their surveys of records in fact sheets. Sri Margana, for instance, found out that on eastern Java (the Oosthoek) there is a substantial collection of 474 untouched documents concerning the kingdom of Blambangan 1764-1775 which was at that time under the protection of the Balinese kingdom Mengwi. Used in concert with the collections of available *Babad Blambangan* (chronicles), it will become clear how this Javanese kingdom faced a severe crisis when the Dutch started military reappraisals against the kingdom that traded with the English.

Bondan Kanyomoyo's study of Cheribon and Priangan 1681-1730 on the basis of no less than 2,084 documents (13,325 folios) also progresses well. Only a fraction of these has been used in Mason C. Hoadly's study on West Java 1680-1800.

Another fact sheet was made by Tuan Hoang Anh from Vietnam who wants to study the trade relations of the northern Vietnamese kingdom of Tonkin

with the Europeans. From the establishment of Dutch-Tonkin trade relations in 1637 until the ultimate Dutch departure from the Red River banks in 1700, a constant flow of information on Tonkin went to Dutch Batavia. Letters, contracts and reports sent by the Dutch trading factory in Tonkin (present-day Pho Hien, close to Hanoi), and a good collection of 5,000 folios have thus far been found. The first documents already make apparent, that the Tonkin rulers were looking for military support to safeguard their silk trade from hostilities from the other Vietnamese kingdom of Quinam.

All these and other fact sheets will be used to select documents for the writing of a paper for the second TANAP workshop in Bangkok. <

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