

WORKSHOP ARCHIVES & LIBRARIES MINUTES 29 NOVEMBER 2006

VICTOR ENTHOVEN, MODERATOR / BARBARA CONSOLINI, SECRETARY

First session 9.30 – 11.30 [group 1 red]

Everybody introduces him/herself.

What is your relation with the Atlantic world?

Kofi Baku, history professor at Ghana Legon University, the Atlantic world represents many things, the world through which Ghana was introduced in the world, into the global system, integration of Ghana in the global system.

James Rose, teacher at Guyana University, the Atlantic is very important, it represents our contact with the other countries.

Alfonso Blijden, archives on St. Maarten, the Atlantic world compasses every country and nation boarding on the Atlantic.

Henk den Heijer, teaching history and maritime history at Leiden University, for him the Atlantic history teaches us about the relations between Europe and Africa and the Americas and the acculturation.

Pedro Puntoni, professor of History at the USP Sao Paolo, for him the Atlantic is a space built over centuries, which forged the domination system of the colonization system; There is also a hierarchy, time of domination brought and conducted to different formations, our society was built and was born in the middle of this Atlantic, a link we had but was broken and we have to rebuilt again.

Jean Ashton, of the library of New York National Society, from a library point of view and interpretation of the material we have, USA find itself as an exception, the Atlantic is a movement that has its origins in political changes and definitions, look at the broad networks that link the settlements, impact legacy of African slavery.

Roberto Palacios is connected with the archives and the ministry of foreign affairs in Venezuela; Venezuela is linked historically to the Netherlands Antilles and to the Netherlands, has also links with the USA, with Spain, has a policy of strengthening the links with the countries in Africa because of the heritage in common, Venezuela is also part of the Atlantic world and wants to take a more active part in this, especially what concerns archives.

Diederick Kortlang, of the National Archives in The Hague, in 1991 his task was to be responsible for the archives of the West India Company, so he became a specialist of the West India Archive, in some years he will be the only responsible for the colonial archives, WIC and VOC; if we look at South Africa for example, even if it is part of the Atlantic world it was territory of the East India Company according to the charter of the Companies.

Luc Alofs of the historical museum of Aruba, for Aruba's history and culture the Atlantic is an open sphere and space, there is interaction, from a multifocal perspective, it is involved in this interaction, it is an open sphere with very closed relations between the parties.

Suzanne Nielsen from Saba, she works as a journalist and at the museum on the island, culturally speaking not enough have been done on Saba, what is going to happen when Saba will become a municipality of the Netherlands? She wrote many articles on newspapers on political history, on the WIC, before there was not anything on the WIC in museums. She sees that we are now opening up, we should give a new sense of the Caribbean, create new links, the Netherlands must be more aware of the meaning of the Caribbean.

Jerome Egger, from Suriname, professor at the University, there is a course on Atlantic history and civilization, it is not easy to find topics to define the Atlantic world, the Atlantic revolution is an important issue, the struggle to define the Atlantic world.

Victor quotes the words E. Bayle of the Harvard University, for him a simple concept of the Atlantic world is that it is a movement of people, goods and ideas. Networks also, revolutions, as revolution is the movement of ideas, people of different places, not specific only for the Atlantic, but it is geographically defined, but connected in a way, the connectedness gives us information to define and especially understand things.

Can you understand Suriname without the African and European component? No. What is specific of the Atlantic world that makes it different with the Mediterranean, for example? Defining the concept of the region and not what is the Atlantic. Bilateral connections do not say much on what is happening in the Atlantic

What about Mutuality?

Egger, from Suriname: it is obvious because we have also a mutual language, the links are very strong even if we are independent. Mutual cultural heritage in terms of culture, many cultural programmes, strong influence from the Netherlands, mutual look of people, exchange is in some way easier with the Netherlands than with Guyana for example. A lot is mutual with the Netherlands, the way people see cultural heritage in Suriname. Bilateral relations? Yes, only.

Palacios: I am here because of the Embassy, the Netherlands and the Dutch world has a long impact on the history of Venezuela, if you look at the resources, at the salt production, after the Dutch went on to Curacao, where they import and had control on trade and on the psychology and social structure there, influence on the ideology, boarders were not there, so high mixture of different people, groups, there was born the idea of independence, leaders of the independence were Dutch, so the Dutch are playing an important role during very many centuries and years. Curacao became a centre for the Venezuelan civil war. Then came the period of the Dutch petrol industry, until the USA set them out. Again a Dutch impact on the Venezuelan history. We need further studies and projects on this subject.

Rose: Guyana was settled by the Dutch, the native population survived because the Dutch were settling in the beginning. Evolution of the plantation system, started with Dutch expertise, Dutch laws will lead our system until 1966. We share a lot that is Dutch, within the region itself there are similarities, with Suriname, with the Antilles, sharing an historical experience, cultural experience in which we recognise mutuality.

Puntoni: long common space with the Dutch, they control the sugar commerce in Brazil, important because there is a popular culture that identify the Dutch period as the golden age of Brazil. A myth. Now we have to think that the mutual heritage is a project of the future, we need to understand our common cultural past. This is very important because we have many connections with the other regions and we have to understand our past.

Victor says it would be interesting to remark the mutual heritage between Brazil and Ghana for example.

Palacios: he wishes a closer relation between the Netherlands and Venezuela.

Ashton: I come from a region from where the Dutch came, the intangible inherency, see New York city, character can be brought back to the mercantile period of the Netherlands, connections with the ideas of the Dutch, there is an intangible continuity more than we think.

According to Enthoven for the USA the idea of the Atlantic is even more important, but Ashton remarks the geographical place.

Baku: for Ghana the Dutch were the earliest that came to the Gold coast and were the longest contact with Ghana after the English, the documented aspect of this connection is all in Dutch and in the Dutch archives, hardly nothing in the archives in Ghana. Some intangible aspects are there, but this is a problem because of the lack of documentation. Another problem is the language issues. Few people speak the language [Dutch], how to reconstruct the common heritage?

Den Heijer: for Ghana it is very important to train historians to learn the Dutch language. In the Netherlands we have to do training in Dutch for historian, learn about our sources and archives, now we are doing a research about slavery on the coast, but who is doing something about the interior, we should join the expertise together from Dutch and Ghana experts.

Is there any notion in Ghana that the Dutch sources are important for the Ghana history?

Baku says that to have a broader understanding you should use also the Dutch sources, like the asafu people, to make the picture more complete. There is a lot available outside Ghana that would be useful for them.

See the link between Brazil and the other countries; see the Resgate Project, how important is the Dutch documentation for Brazil?

Puntoni: Lisbon and the documentation in Portugal is the most important for the history of Brazil. What concerns the Dutch sources the general problem is the language.

Palacios: remarks this that also historians should be trained to learn and read the Dutch language, many documents were translated but with a lot of mistakes, it is important to train historian

Kortlang: another question is old Dutch, the problem of the palaeography, learning how to read the handwriting; a second problem is the language of the 17th century Dutch, a lot of German influence, mix of languages, and then the understanding, translating is not the solution. Reading a lot to get a feeling of the document, you have to put yourself in the world of that period to understand. Idea could be to join the Encompass project, now only for student from Asia, but to open the project also to students coming from the Atlantic world.

Den Heijer: language barrier is one thing, but very important is to create a network of expertise from the different countries, there are many words we can not understand, because they are typical of a certain region, culture.

Nielsen: what if the documents were translated to a common language, like English for other people, translations with critics, doing this we could reach a wider audience because of the common language.

Bring the people of this level of expertise [like to read Dutch documents] together last years and years.

Enthoven: translating into English can be very difficult because sometimes it is not so accurate, so many things are not understood.

Ashton: suggestion of publishing sources in two languages, the original language and another language, bilingual publication of sources.

Palacios: retranslate is a terrible problem; you always lose something in the translation.

Kortlang: translating everything is impossible, because it is too much, so you must make a selection.

Enthoven: see Guyana, meters and meters of archives are there but nobody can handle with this material.

Ashton: ongoing workshop could be organized to train people to learn the language, and the palaeography, establishing fellowships, so that scholars can visit for a period of time and go to different countries and identify key-documents.

Nielsen: another idea is to put an expertise group online, problem is that there are no inventories of the documents in the archives, the selection is not right, do what you can, just with small actions, because thinking too big can bring many problems and frustrations.

Palacios: we should index first the material we have.

Enthoven: but you always need someone to read and understand the documentation in the archives.

Kortlang: Guyana and Suriname should work together.

Where can mutual heritage be found, because the situation in the different countries is so specific, if we talk about archives and libraries?

For Guyana archives and libraries was on the fourth place, more has happened on oral history.

Suriname has focused on a pilot.

Alofs says the difference between us is in finance, it can be difficult because we don't have inventories, common problem we may have, where is the material, lack of preservation techniques and of structure, not sufficient laws and legislation to protect the material paper and not enough historian.

Egger: started a project on the municipalities archives, easier and with less bureaucracy.

Ashton: you can digitalise when you have inventories! Survey is very important, send to the countries a delegation of few people prepared to define the documents of interest.

Is there a possibility to work together on the subject of archives? What kind of project of field? Conservation of the archives for whom?

Start to make inventories

Kortlang has been to Indonesia to train people to read Dutch and the documents and to make inventories of the archives.

Conservation of the material is also an important issue, as is training of the archival staff on a professional level

More inventories should be made about the repositories.

Language issues is more important for some countries, less for others like Suriname and the Antilles.

If we talk about Conservation: do you think there should be a Dutch responsibility about that?

Kortlang: we can see each other as a heritage partner, but from where starts the importance, there are always problems of responsibility.

There is still a difference between the countries.

Would it be useful to make a common catalogue?

The guides of sources made by UNESCO can be an important reference and starting point to identify what still is missing.

For Den Heijer it is important to identify the archives and the documentation and to make an inventory in Dutch and in English so that people can read.

Palacios: make an index in Venezuela, mutual resources.

Ashton: survey on everything, also what concerns conservation matters, deterioration problem too, condition of the documents, of the archives as a building, the facilities. Archives are also a political issue, what is important and what is not is sometimes chosen by politics.

Kortlang: we could shift the perspective from the Tanap project to the Atlantic world, it would not be difficult. This kind of training is visible also in the Atlantic world.

Victor thinks it is different.

Nielsen: experts could make a quick scan in every country, how to keep this everything in a good state, how to implement, and to preserve what has been done until now.

Is there enough representation in AWAD to cover the archives field?

Not for Saba for example, but yes for other countries.

Recommendations [outcome of this first session]

1. To create a network between the archives pertaining Dutch Documents
2. Training of the archival staff on a professional level [Dutch palaeography language course for the countries, except Suriname and the Dutch Antilles]
3. Make a survey of where the material is, the amount and kind of material existing and the state of this material
4. Conservation of the material

- Session section 11.30 -14.30 [group 3 green] -

Presentation by Victor Enthoven and Barbara Consolini

The recommendations of the first session are red.

Task of this second session:

Think about the most successful and the most disastrous mutual heritage project ever

Hulsman: thanks to the Resgate project many documents in Brazil and abroad have been rescued, they have invested money to rescue all the Brazilian documents in Europe. They copied the documents and made inventories. Now today we have research instruments, research guides of the material in the Netherlands. The project was started in Portugal in Portuguese, created instruments and started now to digitalise the material in the archives. Important project, also because there are documents of relevance for the history of indigenous people or for other themes.

Kandasammy, National trust of Guyana, talks about Fort Zeelandia which is now in a terrible state of neglect, the project was to restore the building to make a Dutch heritage museum inside, a restoration project that wanted to involve the people in the project, because of a damaged church on the island church back in the building, interest of the community was big, and could be involved in the maintain of the church. Fort Zeelandia would benefit of that. On the island in Guyana there is also an old Dutch cemetery, it is a project of the national trust of Guyana and has been financed locally, to involve the local community, also in labour under the supervision of architects and engineers, craftsmanship more involvement.

At that moment there was no attempt for partnership in the Netherlands.

Ter Welle: years ago 400.000 guilders were made available by BUZA through the HGIS fund for Guyana, for Fort Zeelandia in particular, but the project became a disaster because of the arrogance one person that imposed himself to the Guyana people. Lack of diplomacy was the problem in this case. Ben ter Welle is a tropical agronomic engineer, works for GTZ in Guyana in protected areas. He reminded that the foundation Menno van Coehoorn, with Duke Rose and another person helped in the conservation and to create more awareness in Guyana about the cultural heritage. They feel as they have lost a golden opportunity because of one person. For this kind of project we should rely more on private networks, less bureaucratically.

Venema: bureaucracy can be a big problem sometimes and a private network can be a solution.

Enthoven explains to everyone what the Menno van Coehoorn foundation does.

Gilmore: he has no contact with Menno van Coehoorn as the case of Ghana. Of the 40 fortresses built there there are still 20.

Ter Welle: it would be an idea if Menno van Coehoorn worked together with National Trust of Guyana.

Franken-Ruiz: a major project of the European development fund for Aruba started 15 years ago, with a delegation of the EU that visited the museum, set up with Leiden University. You need a new venue! The project took longer because of local policies and politics, and it is a fact that when you are doing a project sometimes you have a lot of money but don't have the infrastructure of the right ideas to be realized; we had more from the local authorities, sometimes the most successful project can be the more disastrous at the beginning, the process can be very important. Research excavations are done by funds of Holland, Cuba, other countries, small and successful, based on a national level; we have a very good relation with Leiden university archaeology and history, we should encourage that.

Hofman: if we talk about the Indian archaeology in the Dutch Caribbean, in general, we are trying to get money from private funds to help the Caribbean, at the highest levels of the university they have been accepted. We hope it is going to be successful, working with the local museum, supporting the work they are already doing. What concerns colonial and Indian historical archaeology there is cooperation between archives and archaeology, we try to find the link between the two sectors. Specifically focused on the Dutch Antilles, there are many endangered sites, threat of vandalism on the buildings, on the larger islands, on many levels we have to intervene to protect the heritage that is endangered. Trying to buy a building for the museum of archaeology.

Gilmore: local archives and museum have been to Curacao to do training, but there is a lack of material and infrastructure to do things in general.

In Willemstad, Curacao, the monuments Trust helped to build up the maritime museum which is a success. Local network is very important.

Franken-Ruiz: yes it is a beautiful museum, but nobody ask if the people need it, that is very important, you need the commitment of the people, before you do a mutual heritage project. The point is you need commitment.

Doortmont: in Ghana for example, there has been assistance of the Danish archives, Danish documents were microfilmed to help Ghana, now they have been occasionally used in the last 15 years and are in a very bad state, everything should be microfilmed again, this is not what we want, what we want is technical assistance for a long period. Success is very personal, national museum has other museums, a lot of private museums, in terms of mutual heritage there is a private that owns the Java Elmina Museum, it is a private house converted by the family because of the relations of the African soldiers sent to the East Indies by the Dutch, Java island in Elmina is a living part of that society, they just had a house, they put together a lot of documentation, they put together a very nice exhibition. Not only military relations but also for African groups, future possibility to enlarge the museum to other groups, African groups.

13.30 – 14.30

The group is divided into smaller groups. Each group must formulate one most important recommendation and evidence the differences between public or private funding.

A group: Venema, Ter Welle, Doortmont, Franken-Ruiz, Gonsalves;

B group: Menke, Victorina, Antoin, Hofman;

C group: Gilmore, Kandasammy, Galindo, Hulsman, Ivor;

In the A group they talk about the question of conscience and not of money, sustainable development is far more important than money, it is important to assure a snowball effect with smaller projects, making things accessible that is what the New Netherlands Projects does, more involvement.

More accessibility raises more public interest; need to create awareness, cooperation, deal with the limitations of the country where you are, the approach is also very important. The limited success and the delay in Ghana can also be a factor of success, a lack of success immediately can bring success on a longer-term period.

There is often a problem of diplomatic representation. Approach is very important.

C groep: in the case of Brazil, Galindo affirms that he prefers private funding to public or governmental one.

What concerns the conditions and infrastructures there are already organisations that deal with this like the work of Blue Shields, policies for endangered heritage, or disasters, tragedies of memory: environment, see temperature, humidity and inaccuracy of the personnel who is working in the archives, main threat for the heritage is the inaccuracy of management, programme of education and training. You should control first the storage facilities and the management quality before you start to do a project!

A good building and a good programme of education and training before start doing preservation.

Digitalize can be the solution, preservation can also be done.

The medium is just changing. One of the problems is also the technique that is getting outdated!

Share instruments for preservation and access [European commission has international pattern for preservation, policy that can be suggested, specialists who are working, connections, interaction and interoperation, same vocabulary and technology]. All these are important matters that should be discussed and shared.

It is important to have a uniform and international pattern of description in all the countries. Adopt the standard that is already developed and make standardization.

Unesco has already these standards, we should only use them and strengthen this.

Second session group 3

Recommandations:

A group: a good project should have more or several beneficiaries: sustainability is an important characteristic, it must be beneficial for the community, beneficial to counterparts, be institutionally based, but at the same time it needs a good personal relationship, think big but start with small projects in order to be able to build on success, learn from your failures, raise friends groups.

B group: creation of a basic support with possibilities to expand more important aspects, when you have a project you need to have a local support, it does not matter if public or private funding, local people support is essential. Local people can benefit they most see that there is an aspect of opportunity, see fort Zeelandia in Guyana.

C group: good to maintain the international standards about information so that everybody can share the same information. What about the language? Not English. First step should be a proper facility to stuff material and educational and training programmes for the people who are going to maintain and work with this documentation.

Translation is a tool, not more than that, it is an interpretation, it should also be put in a context, in a time, type of document.

Doortmont adds: African source material, knowledge of Africa what is available. See the relevance of a publication before you go to make the translation, or microfilming action. What is relevant, for some countries it is important to have some sources of reference.

Galindo: it is important to have a kind of translation for Brazil, but before everything you need to have an index. Already some Brazilian scholars have learned Dutch in 3 years.

Third session 14.30 – 16.30 [Group 2 blue]

Taks: Think about an ideal mutual heritage project

We are informed that there has been already a discussion on the denomination of heritage. There has been a vote between shared, mutual and common. Shared has won.

Do international shared projects fit into your national heritage programme?

Monteiro: in Brazil yes, many initiatives has been funded by international institutions, this with regard to material culture, heritage, archives, etc. in the case of Dutch Brazil.

Dubisette: fit an international programme to fit in the national agenda of Guyana

Cumberbatch: in Suriname database projects has been realized with surnames of people who came from different countries in the world to Suriname; there was this initiative to make a database of the people coming from this countries, now they want to do that for other countries. They want to broaden this database for other countries like Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, etc. An international programme but a lot of national work has to be done. Bidesia Project concerning East Indian Diaspora, collecting all the heritage material and intangible heritage, is one example of these projects.

Gehring: in New York they think New Netherlands was the part of the WIC interest, beyond that we are also interested in South Africa so in the East India company. Very interested in the material culture in a comparative perspective, expanding into an international sphere.

Hagan: In Ghana the Danish domination left a lot of heritage so how far is it shared? Just the Dutch or other countries?

Enthoven: the Atlantic and Dutch that is the meaning of the AWAD project, not bilateral relations between Elmina and the Netherlands, but Elmina and the Atlantic world, so not bilateral but multilateral, the Atlantic world is broader then just the relation between a country and another. See the case of the Danish island where you had a Dutch and an African influence and where they spoke a Creole language, multilateral and not bilateral is the meaning of AWAD.

Janga: is there a programme?

Enthoven: HGIS, the Dutch cultural fund, is open for applications regarding shared heritage, it's a fund in which there is cooperation of the ministry of foreign affairs and the ministry of culture, education and science.

Scriwanek: when the islands [of the Dutch Antilles] will be municipalities what is going to happen?

In fact the relations between the islands will be share when it comes to heritage, it is impossible to divide what is obviously in common.

Scriwanek: local platform will be on the national programme to discuss about these matters between the islands.

Janga: the cooperation on cultural heritage is for the islands of a primary importance, many islands do not have even the infrastructure to house an archive or to preserve their cultural heritage.

Enthoven: The situation and realities are so different, how do you approach that?

Janga: Shared information and technology can help who is further than others.

Enthoven: Make a survey of the condition, kind, amount, location of the archives. It is important to share that information that helps the cooperation. Come together and have a kind of programme that offers an overview of what there is of interesting material for all those countries, see for example archives in London, Public records, on Suriname, Guyana, West Indian islands.

Is it possible to use AWAD to register or to do that? YES AWAD can be a platform.

Monteiro: bring us together, that is the AWAD platform, in order to know and to share the information. To bring together information by communication because the historiography has developed apart, that is the problem.

Tang: the Atlantic world is expanding.

Gehring: we should look at the priorities also for digitalization.

Scriwanek: idea could be to use a kind of messenger between the Antilles to communicate over these matters.

Oscar: that is something that could be expand to all the AWAD network.

Cumberbatch: Suriname has also many persons with East Indian origins so we should look not only in the Atlantic but also at the Asian part, that is very important to understand.

Hagan will be the representative of the group and will present the outcome of the last discussion of session third tomorrow during the conference.

Task:

First we have to come up with a shared cultural heritage project, in which we all different countries, all different sectors are coming together, formulate a step by step plan how to reach the goals you have in mind. Find also the means to realize that. See also the language issue, how far is that important or not, not every country has the same problem.

Tang: course on palaeography, Open University has a long-distance course of Dutch.

Course of Dutch palaeography, maybe a course of Dutch course combined with palaeography could be a good solution. It would be possible to sign an agreement with institutions that do long-distance courses.

Monteiro: suggests proposition of something more ambitious, something multilingual, internet site that offers direct information on the Dutch Atlantic, to incorporate local knowledge, to produce this general site in one referential language as English, and then later translate into the other local languages. Delegation will be given to the local counterparts to implement the website. Local administrator will host the website, it should be financed locally.

Would that be visible for Ghana?

Yes they could, Gehring can also do that because they have already the infrastructure. So collaboration could be possible. New Netherlands project could be a kind of project to whom we can refer to.

Is it possible to extend that to other Dutch activities in the USA?

Yes, there is an unlimited possibility.

Tang: KB is now working on the sailing letters project, original letters with the translation and with the annotations. They went to the archive in London to extend the project. This is expansible also to other countries.

Local counterpart/institution should fill the database.

We could make a specific workshop or small workshops locally to train the people that will be involved with the database.

Concerning the language, it can be bilingual.

Small local groups with different specializations and an editor/administrator that will fill the database in the way they need there. Responsibility would be local but about the funding we should find a solution together. Matching funds.

Step by step approach: goal is the website with material and information.

In this regard it would be a logical step for the extension of the AWAD website, we have to point the institutions and the administrators that will take the responsibility for each country, and next thing to do is to put a line communication between the local administrators and the central administrator, make a link, connection, to get the information to the others.

When we have the names this group of people will make the protocol/agreement to realize that.

A year should be enough to appoint a local responsible/administrator, have a meeting for the website, the organization, a structure, we have to find fund to make this meeting possible.

Janga wants to know how much it will cost to participate to the project, and what about the person who will be concerned with the server and will be filling the database/website with the content.

Just doing the work and create the space and contribute to the development of the website. There are costs involved to continue and develop the website together. HGIS will be nicely convinced that the project on this level is working well. Find new funds to do that.

Tang: we should make a good inventory of what there is already.

Cumberbatch: inventories of the material have to be made, at the CITRA meeting, they talked about an agreement on standard archival descriptions.

Archival material is that a common bond between the participants?

John wants to have a system for us to connect and work together.

What is the commonness between you?

John says it is to create a platform, a network.

The important thing is to decide how far you want to go with the website and want you want from it.

Inventory on archival material is that the common point of the group? Is that a statement?

Platform to publish recent finds, discoveries, then a note will be make to all the subscribers of the website, work in progress.

In 12 months we have to know what is on the Internet, a complete inventory for the AWAD website.

We should check it.

Set up local groups and nominate the local administrators as a responsible, involved, if you do that you have a commitment.

E. Hagan will present tomorrow the project proposal of this group.