



Report Indian-Dutch Heritage Symposium & Field Visit 12-13 April 2012, Kochi, India

Introduction

One of the aims of CIE - Centre for International Heritage Activities is to make international collaboration open to the public, the heritage field and governments, and to stimulate further cooperation and professionalism. One of the tools to do this, is the organization of Heritage Days for the eight priority countries defined under the Netherlands Mutual Heritage Policy. On 12 and 13 April 2012 the Indian-Dutch Heritage Symposium was organized by CIE, in cooperation with David Hall Gallery, Leiden University and the Nationaal Archief (National Archives of the Netherlands), as a follow up to the Heritage Day India that has been organized in The Hague on 21 October 2011.

Heritage professionals working in and with India gathered to exchange experiences and knowledge on projects and activities in the field of Indian-Dutch mutual cultural heritage. Experts who could not attend the Heritage Symposium were given the possibility to present their project through the submission of posters, which were displayed in the main hall of the venue.

April 12 Indian-Dutch Heritage Symposium David Hall, Fort Cochin

The day was officially opened by Robert Parthesius (CIE - Centre for International Heritage Activities) and Robert Zimmerman (Netherlands Embassy New Delhi), whose speeches were followed by a keynote speech on various aspects of Mutual Cultural Heritage by mr. Parthesius.

The day started with the theme *Shared Cultural Heritage and Community Engagement*. Shwetal Patel and Vikas Dilawari (Kochi Muziris Biennale) discussed the aims and objectives of the Biennale, which will be the first to take place in India. Also the relation between the Biennale and the cultural heritage of Kerala was presented. Their presentation was followed by that of Xavier Benedict (AARDE Foundation), who explained about community engagement at his project in Pulicat, Tamil Nadu. After the tea break, Benny Kuriakose (Muziris Heritage Project) gave an introduction on the project and its efforts to let the local communities benefit from the activities. Biley Menon, consultant to UNESCO India, discussed UNESCO – New Delhi's recent project on urban conservation in Fort Cochin and Mattancherry. Benjamin Trias (Leiden University) finished the session with a presentation on his research on the perception of colonial heritage in Fort Cochin. During the discussion, questions were raised about why the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) kept aloof from the Muziris project. On reply Benny Kuriakose said that, the project is carried out by an independent organization, it has got help from Kerala Council



for Historical Research (KCHR) and also added that without the prior permission of ASI, no one can undertake such an excavation. Criticism was also raised on the lack of experts involved with the project. It was replied by pointing out eminent persons in the excavation mission. During the discussion the need for legislation against altering heritages sites was pointed out, Xavier Benedict commented that it is our (the people's) responsibility to protect the heritage sites.

The theme *Reconstructing the Collective Memory of Kochi*, was chaired by professor Seema Alavi (Delhi University). Jinna Smit (Nationaal Archief) pointed out the dangers of the lack of proper treatment of Dutch records. After communal efforts by the Nationaal Archief in The Hague and the Tamil Nadu Archives in Chennai, considerable efforts have been made to conserve and protect these records in Chennai. Smit addressed the wish to improve accessibility of these records, as well as the problems of language and script. Lennart Bes (Nationaal Archief) illustrated that the records of the Dutch East India Company do not only deal with the trading activities of the Dutch in India, but also with local Indian matters. These massive and largely unexplored Dutch archives are among the most important sources for the history of 17th- and 18th-century India.¹ Finally, professor Jos Gommans (Leiden University) showed in his presentation the Indian-Dutch relation through historical maps. In the following discussion, Seema Alavi stressed the need of reconstructing Indian history and South Asian history by providing more attention to European records. The historiography of early modern India can benefit from using sources like Dutch and other European records apart from traditional Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit records. The use of oral and folk traditions, which are being passed over from generation to generation in historical and archaeological research emerged as well as the greater necessity to make use of a collaborative approach while considering the Dutch records. While commenting on maps, students involved with the Kottappuram excavation also shared their experiences and problems, such as interpretation and language issues.

The last session on *Underwater Archaeology in an Indian context* was chaired by mr. Nambirajan (ASI). Ms. Jenee Peter (Union Christian College) highlighted in her presentation several studies and research on underwater archaeology, carried out in the Kochi region in specific and in the state of Kerala in general. She presented various valuable findings and shared future expectations in this field. Robert Parthesius concluded the session, focussing on India-Dutch marine relationships, underwater excavation and stressed on strong academic support for this venture.

In the open discussion the use of archaeology for finding missing links in history was brought up. Professor M.G.S Narayanan pointed out several references regarding Indian-

¹ The presentations of Jinna Smit and Lennart Bes can be accessed at:

http://en.nationaalarchief.nl/sites/default/files/docs/nieuws/presentation_indian_dutch_heritage_symposium_kochi_2012_jinnasmit.pdf

http://en.nationaalarchief.nl/sites/default/files/docs/nieuws/presentation_indian_dutch_heritage_symposium_kochi_2012_lennartbes.pdf



Dutch relationship from indigenous art and literature and the need to use it for further reconstruction of history.

At the end of the day, Carolien Stolte (Leiden University) presented her book “Philip Angel’s Deex-Autaers Vaishnava Methology from Manuscript to Book Market in the Context of the Dutch-East India Company, C.1600 -1672, (2012)”, followed by comments and remarks from professor Seema Alavi and professor Jos Gommans. Robert Parthesius concluded the symposium with final remarks.

Outcome of the Questionnaires

For the symposium in Kochi, questionnaires were introduced, which were filled in by the participants (see Appendix II). The questions related to mutual heritage topics and Indian-Dutch heritage cooperation. The questionnaires were anonymous, but unfortunately not returned by all the participants. However, it did assist us in gathering information on the needs and views from the Indian side on heritage topics, in addition to the information that had been gathered from the discussion during the day.

Mutual Heritage

How would you define “mutual heritage”?

All the respondents answered this question quite different, however, most stress the connection with colonial history. In general it can be said that mutual heritage is perceived as heritage created by foreign agencies, with or without the help of local agencies, and requires valuation by both countries and peoples.

Do you consider Portuguese/Dutch/British heritage in India, Indian Heritage? Please explain.

This heritage is mostly considered Indian heritage, because, as most people stress, the remains from the colonial period in India to which this heritage is relating, has been created in response to local needs and activities, as well as local artisans, apart from the fact that it is located in India. ‘Most of the colonial buildings are designed by the European architects and executed by the Indian artisans. Architecturally they are a mosaic of art styles.’

Do you think there is a difference between the Indian and European perception of heritage? If so, please specify.

This question received mixed answers. Some do not think there are any differences in terms of perspective; ‘I do not think there is any difference’ and ‘Heritage of past people are the same throughout the world’. Others state that there is a difference; ‘Yes, I think South Asians tend to classify stuff as heritage only if it can be incorporated into the local version of ‘culture’ and ‘religion’ whereas European perception tends to be more objective and inclusive’ and ‘Cultural differences between those places suggest changing perceptions. Heritage is loosely defined in India; Western terms do not suit Indian conditions.’



Bilateral Cooperation

What do you consider important (potential) topics in heritage cooperation between India and the Netherlands?

The most important topics for future cooperation, according to the attendants of the symposium are: conservation and preservation of sites and archives, language training and studies, exchange of scholars and students, exploitation and economics of heritage.

How can the heritage cooperation between India and the Netherlands be improved?

It was stressed mostly that the cooperation could be improved by exchange and gatherings of scholars, students, as well as artists, in order to exchange ideas and experiences. Furthermore, creating more awareness about mutual heritage is considered essential. Organising more workshops and public events highlighting this heritage could be beneficial.

Community Engagement and Access to Heritage

Do you consider community engagement in the heritage field important?

All the respondents consider community engagement an important aspect of heritage management. It is stated that without community engagement of local societies, preservation and conservation of heritage will be difficult, for instance: 'restoration without future upkeep is close to useless.'

What do you consider successful examples of creating public awareness/community engagement?

Apart from Pulicat Day (in Pulicat, Tamil Nadu) and Angkor Wat (Cambodia), no specific projects were mentioned. However, it was stressed that projects and initiatives where experts, students and public can meet and discuss heritage issues, as well as easily accessible information is desirable.

To what extent do you think heritage should be used for tourist or commercial activities?

The potential of tourism and commercial activities is being acknowledged, but also the potential dangers as well. Preserved heritage sites have the potential of attracting tourists, both local and international, which can boost the local economies, as well as benefit the preservation of the sites. However, great care should be exercised as well, and attention should be paid to the conditions of the individual sites and structures.



What improvements could be made with regard to accessing Dutch (historical/ archival) sources in India?

Once again, the language issue is an important aspect, as there is a wish for an increase in Dutch language training, and the translation of Dutch archival/historical sources into English. Furthermore, exchanging knowledge in the field of museums and presentation is desirable. Therefore it is again suggested to stimulate exchange of knowledge, experts, students and professionals in these fields.

April 13 Field Visit Muziris Heritage Project

The subsequent day a field visit to the Muziris Heritage Project Zone was organized. This provided a good opportunity to experience the rich multi layered cultural heritage in this region of Kerala first hand after talking about and discussing it during the first day. The programme for this day was developed in cooperation with Benny Kuriakose of the Muziris Heritage Project. Due to time restrictions, not all sites that were on the programme could be visited (see Appendix I), however the Paravur Synagogue, Paliam Palace and the excavations at Pattanam and Kottappuram could be visited. This gave a good impression of what kind heritage can be found around Kochi as well as of the activities conducted by the Muziris Heritage Project.

More information

The platform 'Cultural Heritage Connections' aims to give an overview of the mutual heritage cooperation between the Netherlands and India. We encourage you, as experts and professionals in the Indian heritage field, to get actively involved with Cultural Heritage Connections. Become a contributor today at our platform:

www.culturalheritageconnections.org.

In addition, you can join our LinkedIn community 'Cultural Heritage Connections' through www.linkedin.com.

Posters from the event in Kochi, as well as those from earlier events can be found online at: <http://www.heritage-activities.nl/themes/mutual-cultural-heritage/resource-centre/india/poster-presentations-india-heritage-day>



Appendix I Programme April 12-13 2012

Programme 12th of April David Hall

08.45 – 09.15 Registration

09.15 – 09.45 Opening

09.45 – 10.10 Keynote speech 'Shared Cultural Heritage'

Shared Cultural Heritage and Community Engagement

Chair: Prof. M.G.S. Narayanan (Centre for Heritage Studies)

10.10 – 10.30 Shwetal Patel/Vikas Dilawari, Kochi Muziris Biennale

10.30 – 10.50 Xavier Benedict, AARDE Foundation

10.50 – 11.10 Tea break

11.10 – 11.30 Benny Kuriakose, Muziris Heritage Project

11.30 – 11.50 Biley Menon, Consultant to UNESCO India

11.50 – 12.20 Benjamin Trias, Leiden University

12.20 – 12.50 Discussion

12.50 – 13.30 Lunch

Reconstructing the Collective Memory of Kochi

Chair: Prof. Seema Alavi, (Delhi University)

13.30 – 13.50 Jinna Smit, Archival Sources

13.50 – 14.10 Lennart Bes, Dutch Gaze through Texts

14.10 – 14.30 Jos Gommans, Dutch Gaze through Maps

14.30 – 15.00 Discussion



15.00 – 15.30 Tea break

Cultural Heritage Connections – the possibilities and use of the online Mutual Heritage Platform, Arnout van Rhijn, CIE
Collection of questionnaires

Underwater Archaeology in an Indian context

Chair: Dr. Nambirajan (ASI)

15.30 – 15.50 Jenee Peter, Union Christian College

15.50 - 16.30 Robert Parthesius, CIE

16.30 – 17.00 Discussion

17.00 – 17.30 Book Presentation by Carolien Stolte. Comment by Prof. Seema Alavi

17.30 – 18.00 Final Remarks; Discussion results questionnaire

Programme 13th of April Field Visit

08.30 Departure Kochi

10.00 Pallippuram Fort

11.00 Kottappuram

12.00 Leaving Kottappuram Fort for Kottappuram Market

12.30 Lunch

14.00 Paliam Palace

15.00 Paliam to Pattanam Excavation Site by road

16.30 Leaving Pattanam Excavation Site for Paravur Synagogue by Road

17.30 Leaving Synagogue for Kochi by Road

19:00 Reaching Kochi



Appendix II Questionnaire

Mutual Heritage

How would you define “mutual heritage”?

Do you consider Portuguese/Dutch/British heritage in India, Indian Heritage? Please explain.

Do you think there is a difference between the Indian and European perception of heritage? If so, please specify.

Bilateral Cooperation

What do you consider important (potential) topics in heritage cooperation between India and the Netherlands?

How can the heritage cooperation between India and the Netherlands be improved?

Community engagement and access to heritage sources

Do you consider community engagement in the heritage field important? If so, why?

What do you consider successful examples of creating public awareness/ community engagement with relation to heritage?

To what extent do you think heritage should be used for tourist or commercial activities? Why?



What improvements could be made with regard to accessing Dutch (historical/ archival) sources in India?



Appendix III Participants Indian- Dutch Heritage Symposium

Afzal, Muhammed	Netherlands Embassy Delhi
Alavi, Seema	University of Delhi
Anjaria, Dhara	Historian
Anu, P.V.	Union Christian College
Basnoros, M	
Beerass, Rubeena	Union Christian College
Benedict, Xavier	AARDE Foundation
Bes, Lennart	Nationaal Archief
Cleetus, Joseph	David Hall, Kochi
Cleetus, Shibra	
Dilawari, Vikas,	Kochi Muziris Biennale
George, Jo	Union Christian College
George, Jo Augustine	Union Christian College
Gommans, Jos	Leiden University
Hakkeem, Abdul	Department of Archaeology
Hemachandran	Muziris Heritage Project
Hol, Roelof	National Archives the Hague
Jai Krishnan, Padmini	David Hall, Kochi
Jeychandran, Neelima	University of California, Los Angeles
Jose, Arun Geo	Union Christian College
Jose, Vimal	Union Christian College
Kalavathy, V.	Tamil Nadu Archives, Chennai
Kumar, Sri A.S Kishore	Kerala State Archives Department
Kuriakose, Benny	Muziris Heritage Project
Koops, Egbert	Leiden Univeristy
Kumaran, C.	
Lijith, V.K.	Union Christian College
Madhavan, Reema	Muziris Heritage Project
Mathew, Anisu	Union Christian College
Menezes, Dale Luis	Student Pune University
Menon, Biley,	Architect, consultant
Nambirajan, M.	ASI Thrisur Circle
Narayanan, M.G.S.	Centre for Heritage Studies
Narayanan, P.	
Noohu, Mushina	Union Christian College
Parthesius, Robert	CIE
Patel, Shwetal	Kochi Muziris Biennale
Peter, Jenee	Union Christian College
Rajappa,Alegasan	Tamil Nadu Archives, Chennai
Rhijn, Arnout van	CIE
Sankar, B.	
Sebastian, Lijo	Union Christian College



Shimla, K.B.
Smit, Jinna
Sohan, K.J.
Stolte, Carolien
Surya, P.S.
Trias Benjamin
Vasudev, E.V.
Walton, C.E.
Zimmerman, Robert

Trivandrum University
National Archives, The Hague
INTACH Kerala
Leiden University
Union Christian College
Leiden University
Regional Archives Ernakulam
Walton's Homestay
Netherlands Embassy Delhi