



Universiteit Leiden



Nationaal Archief
Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en
Wetenschap

Centrum Internationale Erfgoedactiviteiten
Centre for International Heritage Activities



Report Heritage Day India, The Hague 21 October 2011

Introduction

One of the aims of the 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 21 October 2011 the Heritage Day India was organized by the CIE, in cooperation with Leiden University and the Nationaal Archief (National Archives of the Netherlands), the latter also provided the venue for this Heritage Day. Heritage professionals working with and in 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 Day were given the possibility to present their project through the submission of posters, which were displayed in the main hall of the venue.

Program of the day

The day was chaired by mr. Robert Parthesius, Director of the CIE and ms. Anouk Fienieg, Deputy Director of the CIE. The day was opened by mr. Roelof Hol, Programme Director Mutual Cultural Heritage of the Nationaal Archief, who welcomed the audience on behalf of the National Archivist, mr Martin Berendse. During the other opening speeches the programme of the day was explained and there was an introduction to the Mutual Cultural Heritage Platform, www.culturalheritageconnections.org.

The day was divided in two parts, a part with lectures and a part for discussion. In the morning a presentation was given by mr. Jos Gommans about theoretical views on heritage as well as the proposed Heritage Studies at Leiden University. Mr Gommans did this in cooperation with mr. Benjamin Trias, who gave an introduction to his recent research on Mutual Cultural Heritage conducted in Kochi. He discussed some of his conclusions about how the diverse population of Kochi value and experience the heritage in their surroundings. Mr. Gregory Ashworth, professor at Groningen University asked the audience to think about the question 'Who owns the past?' In his presentation he posed and discussed some of the answers to this question from different perspectives and theoretical backgrounds. Mr. Benny Kuriakose, an Indian architect linked to this project as conservation consultant, gave a presentation on the aims and results of the Muziris Heritage Project. The project's focus is on conservation development and is being integrated with the rest of development plans for the area. Tourism is of secondary importance, with a focus on sustainability for the local community.

After the tea break, mr. Bauke van der Pol presented his book on the Dutch presence in India, *'De VOC in India, een reis langs Nederlands erfgoed in Gujarat, Malabar, Coromandel en Bengalen'*. He talked about his own experiences in India and how the book came to be. This book was presented by ms. Judith van Kranendonk, Director General Culture and Media at the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science to H.E. ms. Bhaswati Mukherjee, Ambassador of India.

Hereafter presentations followed by experts that have been working in the Indian heritage field. Ms. Jinna Smit, from the Nationaal Archief, talked about a project where VOC archives in India would be preserved by a joint effort of Dutch and Indian archivists. After having started the work at the Tamil Nadu Archives in Chennai, the Dutch archivists went back to the Netherlands, expecting that their Indian colleagues would continue the work. However, this was not always the case and ms. Smit discussed how the Nationaal Archief and the Tamil Nadu Archives, with the support of the Netherlands Embassy in India, finally managed to finish the project.

Ms. Saskia Konniger gave a presentation on her work in India for the Museum of Ethnology in Leiden. She talked about the importance of learning about jewellery production and selling, as well as the experience she had with working in India

Finally, mr. Joep Bor, professor Extra-European Performing Arts Studies at Leiden University and specialized in Indian Ethnomusicology, talked about the problems of preserving intangible heritage, such as music. This type of heritage is very difficult to preserve, experiences and traditional crafts are more difficult to pass on from one generation to another.

Discussion

For the second part of the Heritage Day, the attendants were divided into four groups. These groups were asked to discuss the following topics:

1. **Bilateral Cooperation**

To what extent has the bilateral agreement between the Netherlands and India in the field of mutual heritage influenced local heritage activities? How can the cooperation be improved? What challenges are encountered while cooperating with the Indian heritage field? What should or must be done to overcome these challenges?

2. **Commercialization**

Can heritage activities benefit from commercialization? What are the possible threats? How can it be properly commercialized?

3. **Approaches to Heritage**

Is there a difference between the Dutch and Indian approach to heritage, what can be learned (from each other) and what could possibly be improved?

4. **Multilateral and Interdisciplinary Cooperation**

How can interdisciplinary and multilateral cooperation be spurred? How can public awareness be increased? How can heritage projects be made sustainable?

Conclusions and recommendations

1) **Bilateral Cooperation:** *To what extent has the bilateral agreement between the Netherlands and India in the field of mutual heritage influenced local heritage activities? How can the cooperation be improved? What challenges are encountered while cooperating with the Indian heritage field? What should or must be done to overcome these challenges?*

- Cooperation with the local governments is crucial. At this moment only formal agreements on heritage cooperation between the Netherlands and the Federal Republic of India exists on national governmental level. There is a need for cooperation and agreements at state level and local level, because signing an agreement with the central government does not imply that things will work out with the local government.
- There is money available in India for heritage projects, however experiences by experts show that it is difficult to access this money. It is important to look for ways to access the available funds, for example by identifying interested governmental and non-governmental institutions.
- Cooperation between the different organizations working with heritage should be improved, the formation of www.culturalheritageconnections.org is a good first step, but more awareness for this platform should be created.
- There is not much cooperation between the different heritage organizations, although INTACH has done some efforts to improve this.
- The commitment of the management of partner organizations is important; one has to find 'allies' within the partner organization in order to cooperate successfully. Furthermore it may be worthwhile considering the inclusion of more organizations within one project.
- Personal contacts are considered very important in India
- One must also remember to involve the (legal) owners of the heritage.

2) **Commercialization:** *Can heritage activities benefit from commercialization? What are the possible threats? How can it be properly commercialized?*

- In order to spur responsible and successful commercialization, awareness about heritage should be created and the topic should be made relevant for entrepreneurs.
- Restoring built heritage may result in the rehabilitation of the surrounding area, but it may also have the effect that the local community loses access to the building. It is important to be aware of this.
- There are examples of heritage sites that have been preserved only because of commercialization, such as forts that have been turned into hotels. Redevelopment of sites and structures can be beneficial for conservation.
- In India there are numerous construction works going on. This could be a good opportunity to create better awareness about architectural heritage.
- From the Indian side, there is more need for the exchange of knowledge, than for financial aid.

3) **Approaches to Heritage** *Is there a difference between the Dutch and Indian approach to heritage, what can be learned (from each other) and what could possibly be improved?*

- The concept of Mutual Heritage is confusing, as something only becomes heritage when someone values it as such.
- The concept of 'Mutual Heritage' is not inclusive enough. This term leads to a lot of confusion and discussion about what should be included and what is excluded.
- In intercultural cooperation it is very important to be very cautious and realistic in what your objectives and motives are. Make sure you understand each other, do not take this for granted.
- There is a difference between 'western values' and 'non-western values' of heritage. It is important to discuss this when working with a counterpart because awareness of different perspectives can benefit the cooperation.
- India is changing very fast and heritage is becoming more important. The governments are becoming more aware of heritage and its potential. For example, experiences from ten years ago might be very different now.

4) **Multilateral and Interdisciplinary Cooperation** *How can interdisciplinary and multilateral cooperation be spurred? How can public awareness be increased? How can heritage projects be made sustainable?*

- Cooperation on mutual heritage with different countries should be considered; as not only the Netherlands has mutual heritage in India, but also the United Kingdom, Portugal and France.
- Connections can be made between India, the Netherlands and Suriname. This was also a topic that was discussed during the Heritage Day Suriname
- It is important to create awareness and to build capacity among the local communities. Sharing knowledge with them is also very important. For many Indians, the colonial heritage is all the same, they do not know or see differences in Portuguese, British or Dutch heritage. Mainly because in India the emphasis is more on intangible heritage (although not everyone agreed on this), and it does not share the same focus on built heritage like the 'common' Western view.
- Heritage education is very important, including Dutch language courses; hence archival records can be accessed more easily.
- There should be a focus on heritage education for children, as one of the participants stated: *"take them by the hand and show them the stories behind the heritage."*
- Heritage and accessibility to information concerning the heritage should not only be limited to Indian and/or foreign scholars, but also to the rest of the Indian population.
- There should be a focus on capacity building, so locally trained people can continue working on heritage sites and projects also after the Dutch have left or the Dutch funded project has finished.
- The heritage projects under this cooperation should be sustainable and economically viable. After the (Dutch) experts leave, care, use and management should continue; this is not always the case. Therefore, heritage projects should be integrated in wider local development plans.

Participants Working groups

Group 1

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Lingen, Jan	
Mustafa, Hudita	
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Pol, Bauker, van der	Researcher, author
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Group 2

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Group 3

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Group 4

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