



Universiteit
Leiden

Bank-Courant te Batavia: The First Modern Bank (1746-1814)

Applicants

Eligible proposals must have at least two applicants from Humanities, preferably with an interdisciplinary approach.

Supervisor Name	Discipline
Dr. Noelle Richardson	Colonial/ Global History
Prof. Cátia Antunes	Social and Economic/Public History

Project description (300 words)

In the academic and public debate, the Dutch empire is overwhelmingly perceived as a national enterprise, whereby the Dutch state and trading companies are seen as engines of colonial/imperial exploitation. However, as emerging research demonstrates, this premise is partially flawed (see Antunes VICI project *Exploiting the Empire of Others*). Private Dutch firms invested heavily in, and directly exploited, the empires of other European states -and vice versa- resulting in an entangled culture of European Colonial Exploitation. The mechanisms firms employed and the institutions that they generated in exploiting the empire of others are still unknown. Whilst research has started to shed light on these processes for the early modern Atlantic world, little is known for premodern Asia.

This project fills this lacuna by nuancing existing narratives that have privileged the dominance of 'official' VOC activities, side-lining almost entirely the activities and impact of Dutch **firms** (rather than networks or partnerships) active under the flag of the VOC, but exploiting the empire of others. The latter were active as early as the 17th century and by the 18th century, large amounts of capital had been accumulated in VOC outposts and in Batavia itself. Evidence shows that most of these financial resources could not, and were not, remitted to Europe as Company rules forbade transcontinental transferences and illegal transfers grew increasingly risky.

Three key questions arise:

- 1) How and where did Dutch firms and their Asian partners house the capital they earned and accumulated in Asia under the purview of the VOC?
- 2) How did the need to house this accumulated capital lead to the emergence of the first institutionally chartered (modern) bank in Asia (and probably in the world!), the *Bank Courant en Bank van Lening* in Batavia?
- 3) How did the *Bank Courant* subsequently undergird Asian and European entrepreneurial interests in Asia, in imperial contexts beyond the Dutch and European dominated areas?

For the impact on the sub/inter-disciplinary debates see Section 3 *Collaboration*.

Research Trainee Profile

The research trainee(s) will be included in an established research team (VICI Antunes) and be able to partake, in terms of intellectual contributions and organizational tasks, to the following activities:

- 1) Team meetings (every 3 weeks) – this includes presentation of own work-in-progress and draft of deliverables.
- 2) Workshop organized in Leiden.
- 3) Participation in the ENIUGH Conference (The Hague, June 2023).
- 4) Presentation of the final results/findings to the general public through the activities of the *Stichting Gedeelde Verdelen, Gezamenlijk Toekomst* (joint with Municipality of Rotterdam), the preferred societal partner of VICI Antunes.

In terms of research proper for this project, the trainee(s) is expected to:

- 1) Read on context literature (c. 3 weeks).
- 2) Survey and gather primary archival sources available in Dutch archives (c. 2 weeks).
- 3) Survey and gather primary archival sources available in the national archive of Indonesia (Jakarta) (c. 3 weeks).
- 4) Collate and compile a database for these archival sources.
- 5) Draft (in joint and/or single authorship) two articles for peer review in specialized journals.

The preferred trainee(s) will have previous general knowledge of Global History, the debate regarding *The Rise of the West* and *The Great Divergence*, Social Network Theory, the history of the VOC in Asia and of New Economic Institutionalism. He/she/they will have some experience with Dutch archival resources, including knowledge of Dutch palaeography. Since the tasks include a stay abroad for archival research, trainee(s) that are planning to develop a PhD proposal regarding the Dutch presence in Asia will be preferred, as this project will allocate time and financial resources for a survey of sources for a future PhD dissertation (particularly regarding sources kept at the National Archive of Indonesia in Jakarta).

Trainee(s) will also be challenged into sharing results with the general public by transforming research results into public history to be jointly developed and publicized with *Stichting Gedeelde Verdelen, Gezamenlijk Toekomst*.

In short, training in the following skills will be emphasized:

- 1) Research skills and experience in national and foreign archives.
- 2) Translation of archival research into scientific outputs (articles) in joint and single authorship.
- 3) Presentation of results and setting up of research agenda (participation in workshop and conference).
- 4) Organization of academic events (team meetings and workshop).
- 5) Translation of scientific knowledge into public history (in joint partnership with a societal partner).

In view of the tasks and the opportunities offered in this proposal, this position will be opened for (RES)MA or excellent MA students with ambition and potential to grow into a position as PhD candidate(s).

N.B. – financial resources for travelling to Jakarta for archival research have been secured. Financing is thus guaranteed for travelling, visa (if needed) and hotel costs.

Collaboration (300 words)

The very scope and inter-disciplinary nature of the project and the questions it seeks to address touch upon three key sub-disciplines in the field of colonial and global history, social and economic history, and the *Great Divergence* debate.

The project seeks to provide crucial contributions to the following key historiographical debates:

- 1) Colonial expansion as a trans-national, trans-imperial enterprise that occurred across and between European colonial and imperial contexts. This will not only further challenge the nation-centric dominated perspective in the emergence and consolidation of European imperialism, but it will also serve as a model to test the hypothesis of a European Model of Colonial Exploitation.
- 2) One key feature of a European Model of Colonial Exploitation is the capacity of (Dutch) firms in Asia, whose trading activities hinged on their reliance and partnerships with (other) European and local Asian commercial actors, to combine and slowly move from trading/commercial activities into financial services. These trans-imperial financial services channelled European gains of empire in Asia into Asian and Creole societies, thus accelerating the scope, scale and intensity of capitalist institutions and behaviours that were paramount in the transition from a colonial into a wholly encompassing imperial system of exploitation that was typical of European dominance in the 19th century.
- 3) The social fabric behind institutional innovations like the *Bank Courant* provide a window to understand the contribution of Europeans and non-Europeans to the overall institutional capitalization of Asia at a local, regional, and global level. The *Bank Courant* was an autochthonous Asian-European financial institution that merged pre-existing financial networks and mechanisms into a modern chartered formal banking institution, and it was as much a novelty in Asia as elsewhere in the world.
- 4) The database of the project will also contribute to the field of digital humanities as it is intended that this will be made open access to establish the infrastructure and means of collaboration for future scientific research.

Deliverables (200 words)

- 1) One single authored paper for conference/workshop (per trainee) to be transformed in article for peer review.
- 2) One joint paper for conference/workshop (trainee(s)) and applicants to be transformed in article for peer review.
- 3) Public presentation of results jointly with societal partner
- 4) Personal supervision/support for development of one's own PhD proposal (including primary sources survey).

Planning

Period	Task	Location
February 2023	Context Literature	Leiden
Mid-February 2023	Archival Sources The Hague	The Hague
Late-February-March 2023	Archival Sources Indonesia (including survey for trainee's own PhD proposal/research)	Jakarta
April-June 2023	Processing information and drafting presentation conference	Leiden/The Hague
July 2023	Finalizing scientific article	Leiden
July 2023	Article version for public engagement	Leiden/Rotterdam
August 2023	Development draft of own PhD proposal	Leiden

Student Application

The job advertisement will be based on a general text and a specific task description. Teamwork and link/connection to the general public will be underlined. Attention will be vested in structuring the text and allowing for deadlines where **inclusion** stands central.

Materials that will be required are:

- 1) Application Letter
- 2) *Curriculum Vitae*
- 3) Sample of Writing (MA/RES paper, chapter of a current MA thesis)
- 4) Statement of Purpose (how does this project may help formulate/develop a PhD proposal)

Applications should be sent to: n.n.richardson@hum.leidenuniv.nl

(Please note: Selection will be made by a committee of three people (the applicants Dr. Noelle Richardson, Prof. Cátia Antunes and one student assistant from the History Department)