

Exploring the Atlantic and Asian Dutch Empire and its Archives: actor-centered and gender approaches (17th-19th Century)

Workshop Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies & International Institute of Social History Amsterdam

Dates: 20-21 June 2024

Place: Conference room, Niebuhrstr. 5, 53113 Bonn

Organizers: Eva Marie Lehner (BCDSS) and Hanna te Velde (IISH)

In the past years, the lives of colonized people have been studied increasingly. Individual stories of enslaved, freed and other marginalized men and women were documented in colonial archives, often because they stepped out of line at a certain moment. How to find a more balanced approach when trying to unearth the lives of colonized people, while being at the mercy of colonial archives? How to best account for the manifold differences between men and women living in colonial establishments, based among others on gender, race, class, religion, age and social position? This workshop wants to provide a platform for Ph.D. candidates and postdoctoral researchers to address the above challenges, showcase their individual research projects, obtain comments from experts in gender history, slavery studies, and Dutch colonial history, and stimulate exchanges and discussions.

In this workshop, professor Claudia Jarzebowski (early modern history and dependency studies, BCDSS), and professor Sarah Zimmermann (colonialism and gender, Western Washington University) together with Dutch and German Ph.D. and postdoctoral researchers will explore the Atlantic and Asian Dutch Empire and its archives (17th-19th century) from different levels and from various perspectives. First, we aim to encourage a dialogue between researchers who take a global approach to the Dutch Empire, using, for example, sources of the Dutch trading companies, and researchers who use a case-centered approach, concentrating on specific colonial outposts and situations, individual actors and including different types of archives and sources. Second, we want to explore different approaches to studying previously underexposed historical actors, such as European women, enslaved individuals, indigenous women, or children and offspring of mixed marriages and relationships. Consequently, our goal is to develop a comparative framework rooted in a focus on historical actors and gender perspectives rather than top-down abstract entities like colonies or colonial archives. This approach is particularly beneficial for slavery and dependency studies, because it encompasses a wide spectrum of power dynamics and dependencies, instead of emphasizing binaries like colonizers and colonized, free and unfree.

Provisional programme

We will start at circa 1.30 pm on Tuesday June 20, and the workshop will be finished Friday June 21 around 15.00 pm.

Assignments and assessment

By exploring the above topics from an actor-/bottom-up approach and gender perspective, the workshop will address the following questions:

1. How were men and women treated differently in the Dutch early modern empire, and what was the role of socio-economic aspects (for example religion, race, status, age, background, marital status, free/unfree status) in the making of these differences?
2. To what extent were various women and other marginalized actors able to have an impact on their direct environments and the broader colonial societies they were a part of?
3. How were differences between the Atlantic and Indian Ocean Worlds reflected in the lives of the people living in Dutch colonial establishments?
4. What can we learn from a global perspective that compares the Dutch Empire with other Empires?
5. How can colonial sources be used to study women, marginalized or so-called “invisible” actors from a bottom-up perspective?

All workshop participants are asked to hand in short **papers (3000-5000 words)**, based on their ongoing research, addressing one or more of the above questions before **1 June 2024**. Participants are required to read the papers of all fellow participants. Short presentations at the workshop and comments prepared by experts in gender history, slavery studies and the Dutch colonial empire will facilitate in-depth feedback for each participant and discussions that bridge the different topics, approaches, and results.

Application

Please register before **March 23** by contacting Hanna te Velde (hanna.te.velde@iisg.nl) and Eva Marie Lehner (elehner@uni-bonn.de), and include a short abstract of your paper (100-500 words). Do not hesitate to reach out in case of further questions.