

STATE OF AFFAIRS OF THE PROJECT  
'THE ATLANTIC WORLD AND THE DUTCH'  
AND FOLLOW-UP PROPOSAL

INTRODUCTION AND STATE OF AFFAIRS

The international conference of the project 'The Atlantic World and the Dutch' (AWAD), held at the Municipal Archive in Amsterdam from 28 until 30 November, represents an important step towards the preservation and dissemination of the shared cultural heritage in the Atlantic region. Fruitful discussions have led to original ideas, projects and proposals, with many participants remarking upon an important side effect of AWAD, namely the creation of a broad network of experts, organizations and projects. Through this network it is possible to facilitate the exchange of information and knowledge regarding our shared history in the Atlantic and to develop cooperation in the field of culture within this geographic area. In the past months all participants have had the opportunity to consider proposals made at the conference, in particular encouraging an engagement by all participants to secure funding and to establish an effective infrastructure to accomplish our common goals.

The outcome of the conference can be found in the resolutions (see Appendix 1), a series of recommendations which should be considered as guidelines for the follow-up of our shared heritage project. We have evaluated the feasibility of these recommendations within the AWAD framework. Based on this analysis a general time frame has been formulated.

Another major outcome of this conference and the local workshops is the further completion of the information overview in the AWAD website/database, which is a primary purpose of this initial stage, the identification mission. This phase is a pilot project and will be concluded by the end of June 2008. By that time a general survey of the existing archival collections relating to the history of the Dutch in the Atlantic region should be, as far as possible, completed. This objective was also one of the recommendations made at the end of the conference and should be shared by all participants. In this regard it also refers to extending the information in terms of condition, type, amount and location of the paper heritage. Besides this, by June 2008, we should have defined and selected project proposals to be carried out in the second phase of the AWAD project, the follow-up.

It should be noted that the KITLV/Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean studies and the ING/Institute of Netherlands History will cooperate within the ING Programme 'The Dutch and the Culture Overseas' (*Nederlanders en de cultuur buiten de grenzen*) in order to secure a more in-depth disclosure of relevant archival material on the cultural interaction between the Dutch and the inhabitants of both the Atlantic region and Asia. The part of the programme concerned with 'The Dutch and the

Dutch Culture in the Atlantic Region' will concentrate on the former Dutch colonies of Aruba, the Netherlands Antilles, Guyana and Suriname during the period 1670-1870. This selection is justified by the fact that countries such as Brazil (Projeto Resgate), Ghana (Ghana Gids) and the United States (New Netherlands Project) are already actively working on inventories and surveys of the sources related to their history.

#### WEBSITE/DATABASE

If we aim to use the AWAD website and the related online database as a significant means of international communication and cooperation, its future development will be of the utmost importance. Up until now, both the website and the database have been hosted by the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW), of which KITLV is a part, and it is the intention that this should continue. However, in the course of 2007 the KITLV website will be renewed, which seems a logical time to also make changes to the AWAD website, although the expansive nature of the project does not facilitate precise planning.

Due to close cooperation between KITLV and ING in the further disclosure of archival sources, access to the database will be guaranteed to ING for their data-entry. The manner in which this access will be made available is still a subject of discussion between ING and KITLV.

Two suggestions that arose during the conference have been widely discussed in search of a suitable solution for all partners:

- further expansion of the AWAD website through direct country input, a discussion forum and digital newsletter;
- identification of tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

Extending the current AWAD infrastructure to a platform and network will enhance international cooperation and maximize efforts to reach our common goals. In order to retain responsibility for the AWAD project it seems reasonable to manage the database centrally through a *webmaster*, resulting in all information concerning records and their creators, publications, projects, experts and organizations being sent to this central webmaster, who will be responsible for adding the data to the website or database. Information can already be added through the link on the AWAD website '[How to add and correct information](#)'. Through the links [organization](#), [specialist](#), [project](#) and [comments or suggestions](#) it is possible to send the relevant information. In future a content management system may be introduced, including a comprehensive digital form to be completed, which will facilitate internet publication. As this option requires more expense, infrastructure and time, we suggest that for now we rely upon the means already available to us.

However, as we think it will be vital for the future of the database and website to cooperate more closely with our partners and facilitate their own initiative, we suggest providing all countries engaged in this project (Suriname, the Netherlands Antilles, Aruba, Guyana, Ghana, Brazil and the United States) with their own webpage on the website, such as 'AWAD Suriname', 'AWAD Guyana', etc.

In doing so, we will join forces and become more efficient in reaching our common goal of providing a complete overview of the cultural heritage we share in the Atlantic world. The amount of data to be elaborated upon is vast and adding to this information will be an ongoing process.

We recommend that the core of the project – archival sources and network information – will remain in the Netherlands. Thus information will be submitted by the partners to the central *webmaster*. Through its webpage each country can add directly all information regarding its own tangible and intangible heritage, along with a local agenda containing news regarding projects, publications, events, etc. This entails that each country would have one person acting as the administrator and *webmaster*, who is thus responsible for adding, correcting and updating the information and content regarding tangible and intangible heritage published on the country webpage (see Appendix 2). This person should preferably be linked to a strong local cultural or educational institution, which is willing to commit to the project and provide the necessary infrastructure and funding for the work of the administrator.

He or she will gain access to the webpage through a password. Archaeology will form part of this responsibility, being a relevant part of tangible culture. The content of the local webpage may be decided upon solely by the administrator, or, where possible, together with a core group of experts representing a range of heritage fields.

In order to assist communication and facilitate the exchange of information between the AWAD partners, the creation of a discussion forum was proposed during the conference. It would be interesting to start such a forum on an experimental basis. Access could be gained using a password. All participants in the Atlantic network interested in taking part in the discussion forum would be welcome. After a year the forum would be evaluated to determine if it should continue. Should there be insufficient interest, alternative options will be considered, including the set-up of a newsgroup list and a newsletter.

To turn this proposal into reality your help and commitment is necessary. Therefore we would like to ask all partners to advance names of possible local administrators and their institutions by the end of April 2007.

#### FURTHER PLANS

Meanwhile the proposals made at the conference will be taken into further consideration for the following stage of the AWAD project, which we hope will continue after June 2008. These proposals will be selected on a priority basis. The search for financial means in order to accomplish the goals of the project will remain a primary task for the coming year, in the Netherlands, in Europe, as well as overseas.

Having agreed during the workshops and conference that we will be working together in order to preserve and develop our shared heritage, we should focus our efforts on achieving our common goals by realizing concrete projects which give priority to the following areas: identification and registration, knowledge exchange and know-how transfer, local commitment and awareness processes, language teaching and interdisciplinary work.

All suggestions, remarks and/or questions on this follow-up proposal will be more than welcome.

Thank you in advance,

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ATTACHMENTS:

APPENDIX 1 Resolutions AWAD conference

APPENDIX 2 Proposal of expansion of the AWAD website

## APPENDIX 1

### Resolutions, AWAD conference 26-30 November 2006

#### **We, the partners of AWAD,**

*Sharing* a deep concern for the preservation and further development of our shared cultural heritage,

*Agreeing* that preservation and further development is crucial both for inherent cultural and historical reasons and for the development of a balanced cultural heritage tourism,

*Convinced* that continuity in our endeavours is essential,

*Recommend the following:*

1. The identification of tangible and intangible cultural heritage.
2. The production of digital catalogues, condition surveys and information databases in order to provide the broadest possible knowledge of, and access to, archival resources.
3. The identification and stimulation of best practices in the recording and record management of intangible cultural heritage.
4. Joint research projects to meet these ends.
5. Further expansion of the AWAD website through:
  - direct country input;
  - a forum for discussing priorities regarding projects;
  - information sharing, for example through a digital newsletter.
6. That cultural heritage projects developed in the context of AWAD will be firmly grounded in the local communities, thus ensuring a strong outreach dimension.
7. That projects aim to link the material and intangible dimensions of cultural heritage.

8. The transfer of expertise (e.g., Dutch language training for the study of 16-18<sup>th</sup>-century archival records), taking into account that financial means, technology and expertise are unevenly distributed among the various national partners in AWAD.

9. That the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba will be considered full partners in the AWAD network.

*And conclude*

That to accomplish these recommendations, there is need for substantial and long-term funding from multiple sources in order for AWAD to develop as a truly international endeavour,

However, in this Dutch involvement should be evident and is certainly requisite.

## APPENDIX 2

### AWAD MEETING

Proposal: Group 2, Third Session, [Archives and Libraries Workshop] 29 November 2006

Presented by E. Hagan on 30 November 2006

The group proposes to create a platform to be used as a communication medium in order to disseminate knowledge and information about the shared heritage in the Atlantic. Each country will be responsible for the contents of this platform/database/website and will have to make a complete survey of its shared heritage. This survey will give information on aspects such as condition, type, amount and location of the heritage concerned. The AWAD infrastructure could be extended and provide this platform.

#### OUTCOMES:

- Create a platform that will be used as a means of communication to share information.
- Generate a complete survey of the shared heritage in each country (condition, type, amount and location).

#### SOURCES OF FUNDING:

- Through the commitment of one relevant local institution in each country, ensuring infrastructure and labour facilities. Funds will be locally searched in the public as well as in the private sector.
- Institutions and foundations in the Netherlands and in Europe.

#### STEP-BY-STEP PLAN:

Within six months:

- Each country will nominate a core group of experts, one for each specific heritage field (archives, museums, monuments, archaeology, intangible culture, research);
- This core group will nominate one person who will act as the administrator of the database/website for his/her own country;
- The administrator must be linked to an important institution which is willing to commit to the project and support it jurisdictionally and financially;
- A protocol/an agreement should be signed between all parties that commit to participate in, support and host this project;
- The administrator will be responsible for implementing the content for his/her own country with regard to the shared heritage in the Atlantic world;
- The administrator, together with the core group of his/her country, will decide what will be published on the database/website;
- Create a discussion forum.

Within one year:

- Have an overview/inventory of the condition, amount, type and location of our shared heritage;
- Set up priorities;
- Set up project to develop cooperation between the people involved.

Options:

- A. The administrator together with the core group of his/her country adds directly to the database;
- B. The administrator adds indirectly to the database by sending information to a central administrator (webmaster) using a content management system;

The administrator together with the core group in his/her country adds directly to the database with regard to tangible and intangible culture, content, experts, projects and agenda. Information related to archives will be added by the webmaster through a content management system.