



## Mapping the Ocean: Georeferencing Maritime History

### Applicants

Supervisor Name	Institute
Michiel van Groesen Professor of Maritime History	Institute for History
Martijn Storms Curator of Maps and Atlases, Special Collections	University Library <sup>1</sup>

### Project description (299 words)

Maps play a crucial role in our view of the past, yet few historians are sufficiently skilled in cartography to genuinely integrate maps into their research. This project breaks down the long-standing barriers between history and cartography by inviting emerging scholars (ResMA) to reflect on maps as an intricate part of historical research, and shape the future of two interrelated fields of scholarship. The focus will be on maritime maps of the Indian Ocean world and Atlantic world made in the early modern Low Countries (1550-1800), as it is precisely this intersection of research that still suffers from a combination of traditional national agendas eulogizing the cartographic achievements of the VOC and WIC, and an exclusive, somewhat technical methodology inaccessible for the non-cartographically trained.

This project's main objective is to trace the extent of foreign and indigenous influences on 'Dutch' cartographic knowledge in Asia and the Americas. This will be achieved by using georeferencing to analyse the accuracy of maritime maps. Georeferencing is a digital humanities-methodology, which allows for a scientific comparison of different maps of the same geographical area. Only recently it has been applied to historical maps, with good results.<sup>2</sup> Being able to assess and compare the accuracy of different maps helps to make the accomplishments of 21st-century cartographic scholarship more meaningful to a broader audience of historians. Research trainees will be required to compare maps in the archives of the VOC and WIC (Nationaal Archief, The Hague & digital databases incl. Atlas of Mutual Heritage) to maps from other European and indigenous cartographic traditions in the collections of the University Library and, if necessary, elsewhere. The aim of this methodology is to deconstruct the (still) generally accepted discourse of 'national' schools of cartography in the early modern world, as well as in maritime and cartographic scholarship.

### Research Trainee Profile

Given the interdisciplinary nature of the task, the potentially wide variety of sources, and the fact that there is no program in the history of cartography in Leiden, the research trainees have to be ResMA students in History or a related subject in the humanities. They need to have affinity, and preferably prior experience, with maps as primary sources. Candidates need to state their preference for either **Project 1**, which studies maps of the Indian Ocean world, or **Project 2**, which focuses on maps of the Atlantic world.

### Collaboration (255 words)

The Institute for History's long tradition in the field of Colonial and Global History (including Maritime History), and the University Library's extensive and world-renowned cartographic collections have huge potential for interaction and cross-pollination. Since few historians (in Leiden and elsewhere) have focused on maps as primary sources for research, this project will break down the methodological walls between two disciplines that have traditionally been interested in the same chapters of the past. A new perspective

<sup>1</sup> Confirmed as an eligible interdisciplinary partner for this proposal by Jasmijn Mioch, email dd. 22 Sept 2016.

<sup>2</sup> For a YouTube instruction of georeferencing, see <http://blogs.library.leiden.edu/mapsinthecrowd/instructions/>

on Maritime History, proposed by the main applicant in his recent inaugural lecture, emphasizes the significance of representations as well as realities of human interaction with the sea, urging for a more inclusive view on the subject of transoceanic shipping. From this perspective, maps, as the ultimate representation of maritime knowledge, deserve to be integrated in historical research.

A coherent and balanced approach to supervision from both applicants is required to achieve methodological innovation - as one school of thought should not prevail over another if the interdisciplinary ambitions are to be realized. The two applicants have together organized a BA-seminar (2015-16) and MA Research Seminar (2016-17; ongoing) about maritime maps in the early modern Low Countries, and have previously collaborated for the Special Collections' successful georeferencing project 'Maps in the Crowd' (<http://blogs.library.leiden.edu/mapsinthecrowd>), which focused first on maps of the Van Keulen firm (first half of the 18th century), and subsequently on the substantial KITLV heritage collection. The research trainees will seek to collaborate with the Nationaal Archief in The Hague, which has just started its own georeferencing initiative: <http://www.gahetna.nl/actueel/nieuws/2016/help-mee-voc-kaarten-plek-wereldkaart-te-geven>

### **Deliverables** (198 words)

The research trainees have two options, depending on their personal preference. They can choose to write a **scholarly article**, to be submitted to a historical journal (for example *Itinerario*), which emphasizes the added value of studying maps for historians of colonial and global history. They can also opt to write a **research proposal** which can be submitted in the NWO competition PhD's in the Humanities ('Promoties in de Geesteswetenschappen') in 2018 or 2019 - depending on whether they are first- or second-year ResMA-students.<sup>3</sup>

Together with the two applicants, who will thematize the benefits of cross-pollination for their respective fields, the research trainees will also organize a small **workshop on maritime cartography** to be hosted by the newly established Asian Library in late November 2017, as part of the 'Leiden Asia Year'. The workshop will aim to place the project's findings not only in the context of the University Library's rich cartographic collection, but also in the emerging historiography of Dutch 'global' trade which breaks down the institutionalized boundaries between the Indian Ocean and Atlantic worlds. The generated output will ultimately be used in an ERC Consolidator-proposal on new approaches to maritime cartography - to be submitted in 2019/2020.

### **Planning** (150 words)

Both research trainees will be appointed on 1 February 2017, and will be employed (0,15 fte) for a full year. They will follow the same phases of research as they work with Indian Ocean/Atlantic world maps:

- Feb-Mar 2017: - Reading secondary literature on maritime history and the history of cartography
  - Selection of primary sources (in close cooperation with the applicants)
  - Introduction to georeferencing (2x2 hours)
- Apr-July: - Research at the Special Collections Reading Room, Leiden, and the Nationaal Archief in The Hague (with regular supervision from both applicants)
- Aug-Oct: - Writing research proposal, to be submitted to the Institute for History's internal PhD-selection committee (deadline Nov 2017)
- Nov 2017: - Workshop on maritime cartography at the Asian Library
- Dec-Jan 2018: - Finalizing research and writing a draft of a scholarly article to be submitted to a historical journal (*Itinerario*)/second draft of research proposal.

### **Student Application**

Applications should be sent to: [m.van.groesen@hum.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:m.van.groesen@hum.leidenuniv.nl), and should include a cv and a motivation letter (max. 1.000 words) reflecting on the potential relevance of maps for historical research. Applicants should state their preference for Project 1 (Indian Ocean world) or 2 (Atlantic world)

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<sup>3</sup> In case one or both research trainee(s) is/are still in her/his first ResMA year, and therefore not eligible for the NWO PhD's in the Humanities-application of 2018, priority will be given to a draft article.