



**Universiteit  
Leiden**

## Proposal Title

### Applicants

*Eligible proposals must have at least two applicants from Humanities, preferable from two different institutes.*

Supervisor Name	Institute
Prof. Dr. Nira Wickramasinghe	LIAS
Dr. Alicia Schrikker	History

### Project description

#### **'Being a slave' Indian ocean slavery in local context**

What did it mean to be enslaved in the Indian Ocean world in the 18th and 19th centuries? Over the last decades, historians have mined French, British, Portuguese and Dutch records for quantitative data on the European slave trade. This project focuses on the experience of being a slave and seeks qualitative data to recover ordinary lives and, crucially, to place this experience in its Asian local context. The emphasis is on the origin and afterlife of enslavement, rather than the trade in slaves itself. Slave occupations were diverse and varied according to location: from domestic service, to construction, food cultivation and animal herding; they worked as sailors and fishermen, or in artisanal occupations ranging from distilleries to saltpeter manufacturing. We know very little however on their lives outside of labour. How do experiences from the Indian Ocean world add to the debate over 'social death' (Patterson) observed in Atlantic slavery by some scholars? This project will strive to force the archive in order to extract traces of these subaltern lives from court records, petitions or private letters and to listen to local voices by prying unexplored primary sources such as oral histories and memories.

Project activities include an international interdisciplinary workshop in June 2017, a joint article and further grant applications. The project is funded by LGI and affiliated with the Leiden Slavery Studies Association (LSSA).

### Research Trainee Profile

We are looking for two students who can assist us in

1. Creating a bibliography of literature on slavery in Asia, in the fields of literature, anthropology and history.
2. Transcribing and translating primary source material from Dutch, French and English language archives
3. Help us with the organization of an international workshop in May.

4. The project would be ideal for good MA or Res MA students. They could consider combining the work with research related to a ResMA thesis on a similar topic. Excellent BA students (in their final year) could also apply.
5. The student should have an interest in the history of the Indian Ocean World. Prior knowledge of debates and issues in the field of slavery studies, diasporas or forced migration is appreciated. Language abilities: English and Dutch and/or French.

### **Collaboration**

The project is a cooperation between LIAS and History, it focuses on life-writing and searches for inspiration inter alia from works in the fields of social anthropology, literature and art that have contributed to filling the silences of the archive with creative renderings of the thoughts and feelings of enslaved people. The multi-disciplinary focus of LIAS that emphasizes scholarship that is both theorised, deeply source based and regionally specific will be enriched by the increasingly global and multi-scalar nature of scholarship produced in the Institute of History. Collaboration between the two applicants both historians, one global and the other located in South Asian studies, will further strengthen already existing ties and lead in the future to joint teaching or grant applications. The research trainees will act as a nodal point in this collaboration.

Research trainees will have the opportunity to carry out empirical research into historical archival sources from collections in the Hague, online resources as well as unique data collected in archives in London and Jakarta for instance by the applicants. Working with experienced researchers will give the research trainees a sound training in professional research. Through their work for the project, the trainees will familiarize themselves with research traditions in LIAS and in History. Through the creation of a multi-disciplinary bibliography, the organization of an international workshop and the writing of a workshop report the students will learn to work across traditional disciplinary divides and identify conceptual tools that transcend them.

### **Deliverables**

The students will contribute towards a co-authored paper and research proposal that the project organizers intend to write over the coming year.

The students will help organize an international workshop and write a report.

### **Planning**

#### **2017**

*January – February: develop Bibliography on slavery in Asia*

*February – May: research into primary source material*

*February – May: workshop organization*

*May-July: write conference report*

*August-December: do follow-up archival research*

### **Student Application**

Students who apply are asked to write a motivation letter informing us why they are interested in this particular project and what they hope to learn from it. In addition we ask students to submit a one page resume. Applications should be sent to:

Prof. Nira Wickramasinghe: [n.k.wickramasinghe@hum.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:n.k.wickramasinghe@hum.leidenuniv.nl)

Dr. Alicia Schrikker: [A.F.Schrikker@hum.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:A.F.Schrikker@hum.leidenuniv.nl)