

Historians and archivists: two disciplines working with the same papers

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“Everybody knows of the problems between a man and a woman, between a pianist and the musician or singer who has to be accompanied. Most of you (...) will agree that a similar conflict exists between the archivist and the historian”.¹ Dutch Historian Piet de Rooy used this quote from the archivist Van der Meiden, in an article in which he open-heartedly revealed his experiences as a historian with the research into the records, to express the love-hate relationship between the archivist and the historian. Their love has certainly not become stronger in the past years; it can even be said that archival science and science history have become estranged. This morning I would like to talk to you about this: the relationship between archival science and science history. I will roughly sketch how the relationship between both disciplines has grown before demonstrating that neither domain can do without the other and that archivistics can make considerable contributions to the more responsible use of historical information.

From munimenta to monumenta

In order to understand the relationship which has grown between archivists and historians we have to go back to the early days of the modern society. I will start with an example in The Netherlands, my home country. Until 1795 the Netherlands were a decentralized country, with almost independent cities and provinces. This changed dramatically in 1795, when the French armies marched in. For the first time in history, the Netherlands became a unified, central state. The new constitution of 1798 had near enough demolished the old state building down to the last stone, and the administration, in the words of the Dutch historian H. Brugmans was decentralised “to an absurd degree”.² The old “archives and state papers” no longer had much meaning for the continuity of the administration. The old archives from before the turnaround then became a collection of historical sources in the first place. The *munimenta*, or the legal proofs of the old days, were downgraded to *monumenta* or memory aids as the first Dutch professor in archivistics J.L. van der Gouw, calls them.³ And they have retained that status since then. That downgrading formed at the same time, however, the starting point of a development which, a century later, was to lead to a professionalized and institutionalised scientific historic enterprise.⁴

The basic material for the scientific historical research was provided by the historical sources. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the German historian Leopold von Ranke gave a significant impulse to the professionalisation and scientisation of historical studies. He rejected every form of historiography which was not based on primary sources.⁵ The sources had to show “how it

¹ Piet de Rooij, ‘Sirenezangen uit het archief’, *De Gids* 152 (1989) 49-56, aldaar 49. Het citaat is vertaald uit het Engels en werd door Van der Meiden in 1980 als openingszin in zijn bijdrage gebruikt tijdens een congres over de Vrede van Nijmegen.

² H. Brugmans, *Van Republiek tot Koninkrijk. Geschiedenis van Nederland van 1795-1815* (Amsterdam z.j.) 90-91.

³ J.L. van der Gouw, ‘Monumenta et munimenta, afscheidsrede’, *Nederlands Archievenblad* 84 (1980) 497-514.

⁴ Zie Leen Dorsman, ‘De nieuwe eruditie. Het ontstaan van een historisch bedrijf’ in: Jo Tollebeek, Tom Verschaffel en Leonard H.M. Wessels eds., *De palimpsest. Geschiedschrijving in de Nederlanden 1500-2000* (Hilversum 2002) 159-176.

⁵ Georg G. Iggers, *Historiography in the twentieth century. From scientific objectivity to the postmodern challenge* (Middletown 1997) 24-25.

had really been”, as he wrote at the age of 29 in the foreword to his first book.⁶ He wanted to observe the past from inside.⁷ And that was, in essence, what was new in the treatment of history. The narrative chronicle gave way to the reconstructed past on the basis of archive material.⁸

The objective was to reconstruct the full truth. The conviction that critical analysis of the sources would guarantee the objectivity of the history, grew in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries into the standard vision in historical science. In this scientific view, organisations such as museums, libraries and archives were given an important role as universal knowledge-collecting institutes which, by means of classification and organisation, made the “objective facts” accessible.⁹ This standard view has led a tenacious existence in spite of the many attacks made upon it. According to most of the historical philosophers it is, however, high time to bid a definite farewell to this view.¹⁰ I will return later to the meaning which this definite farewell has for the use of archives and in particular for the relationship between the historical and archival science.

Archivists and historians: a happy duality

I would first like to outline roughly how the relationship between archivists and historians has changed in the course of time. The nineteenth century historians and archivists were obsessed by what the Dutch historian Robert Fruin in 1894 in his farewell speech called the tendency to scrutinize. The historian’s visit to an archive had become a ‘rite of passage’, which actively made the historian into “a historian”.¹¹ Through this diligence in the scrutiny of documents, collecting facts and assessing these critically, there was hardly time to write history in strong cohesion by the historians.¹² History was seen as a chronological series of facts. In order to make this scrutiny and collection as simple as possible, the documentary evidence of history was described by archivists in so-called chronological registers. This meant that archivalistics leaned entirely on the epistemological basic assumptions of historical study.¹³ Not the content of the archives but the content of the documents was the centre point of the archivists work. Historians and archivists were totally in agreement with each other. The sources were *the* access to the past. “L’histoire se fait avec des documents” (history is made by documents) was the significant opening sentence of the standard work for historians published in 1897 *Introduction aux études historiques* by the French authors Ch. Seignobos and Ch.V. Langlois. A few pages further along they added a bit extra with “pas de documents, pas d’histoire” (no

⁶ Afkomstig uit L. von Ranke, ‘Vorrede zur ersten Ausgabe’ *Geschichten der romanischen Völker von 1494 bis 1514* (1824).

⁷ P. Geyl, ‘Ranke in het licht van de catastrofe’ in: *Historicus in de Tijd* (Utrecht 1954) 9-22, aldaar 12 en 14.

⁸ Georg G. Iggers and James M. Powell (eds), *Leopold von Ranke and the shaping of the historical discipline* (New York 1990).

⁹ Thomas Richards, *The imperial archive. Knowledge and the fantasy of empire* (London/New York 1993) 6-7.

¹⁰ Chris Lorenz, *De constructie van het verleden. Een inleiding in de theorie van de geschiedenis* (Amsterdam/Meppel 1994, vierde druk) 282-283.

¹¹ Jo Tollebeek, “‘Turn’d to dust and tears’ revisiting the archive’ *History and Theory* 43 (2004) 237-248.

¹² H.J. Smit en W.J. Wieringa eds., *Correspondentie van Robert Fruin, 1845-1899* (Groningen-Djakarta 1957) VIII. Zie ook de kritiek van G.W. Kernkamp in zijn oratie aan de Universiteit van Utrecht ‘Van Wagenaar tot Fruin’ uit 1903. Hij schrijft: “De zaak is, dat onze historici merendeels noeste werkers en vlijtige uitgevers van ongedrukte stukken, maar trage en slechte schrijvers zijn”. Hij spoort hen aan tot het schrijven van leesbare monografieën en samenhangende verhalen. G.W. Kernkamp, ‘Van Wagenaar tot Fruin’ in: J.A.L. Lancée ed., *Mythe & Werkelijkheid. Drie eeuwen vaderlandse geschiedbeoefening (1600-1900)* (Utrecht 1979) 121-145.

¹³ Zie bijv. Theo H.P.M. Thomassen, ‘Paradigmatische veranderingen in de archiefwetenschap’ in: P.J. Horsman, F.C.J. Ketelaar en T.H.P.M. Thomassen eds., *Paradigma. Naar een nieuw paradigma in de archivaliek* (Bergen op Zoom 1999) 69-79.

documents, no history).¹⁴ In the positivistic scientific climate of the nineteenth century, the critical sources, that is to say, those published in accordance with the science of history rules, formed the building blocks for the professional historians.¹⁵ The science of history, wrote the Dutch historian P.J. Blok, endeavours to trace the truth. That was only possible with the aid of the sources which were kept in the archives.¹⁶ The work of the historian and the archivist was directed toward the same goal.

Estrangement

That intimate relationship between archivist and historian has drastically changed in the past hundred years. The first hairline cracks were already visible at the end of the nineteenth century, when Dutch historians such as P.J. Blok and later also H. Brugmans were critical of abandoning the chronological method of archive organisation. They soon let it be known that they did not have a very high opinion of the systematic organisation which took its place and which was presented by the new generation of archivists as a scientific method.¹⁷

The estrangement of archivists and historians had begun. The debates which arose over the differences in insight often had a high emotional and relational content. The advocates of this new method of organisation and description were not well served with too much criticism, which elicited this pronouncement from a Dutch historian: “a sacred house which cannot be touched is a dangerous house!”¹⁸

The new generation of archivists were engaged in freeing themselves from the historians and the science of history, or perhaps better, they were engaged in a struggle for emancipation.¹⁹ One of the important advocates of the new method of organisation and description, the archivist Robert Fruin (not to be confused with his historian namesake) announced in 1904 that archivists have for some years put “the principle at the forefront, that archival science (...) must become emancipated from history. (...) What we are opposed to is the teaching (...) that archival science is nothing more than an auxiliary science of history. In opposition to this, we put it that archival science is an independent science (...).”²⁰ The archivists wanted to free themselves from the status of woodchoppers and water carriers for the historians.²¹

Ossified ‘science’

With the *Manual for the arrangement and description of archives* brought out in 1898 by the Dutch archivists Muller, Feith and Fruin, the archive world had made a clear and positivistic choice for opening up the archives from the perspective of the archives creator. Section 19 of the *Manual* clearly formulates that “when organising an archive (...) the interests of historical

¹⁴ Ch.V. Langlois et Ch. Seignobos, *Introduction aux études historiques* (Paris 1905, 3^e druk), 1 en 13. Dit werk werd door R. Fawtier in *The English Historical Review* XLV (1930) 90 omschreven als “a classic if not the classic of our trade”.

¹⁵ E. Jonker, ‘Van Bouwsteen tot ornament?’ in: S.C. Derks ed., *Nederland in de wereld. Opstellen bij honderd jaar Rijks Geschiedkundige Publicatiën* (Den Haag/Amsterdam 2002) 17-39, aldaar 19.

¹⁶ P.J. Blok, ‘Onze archieven’ *De Gids* 55 (1891) 159-181, aldaar 180.

¹⁷ P.J. Blok, ‘Levensbericht van Mr. Hendrik Octavius Feith’ in: *Levensberichten der afgestorven medeleden van de maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde te Leiden. Bijlage tot de Handelingen van 1895-1896* (Leiden 1896) 51-73, aldaar 59.

¹⁸ P.J. Blok, ‘Aan het heilige huisje geraakt’ *Nederlandsch Archievenblad* (1896-1897) 81-83.

¹⁹ Zie bijvoorbeeld: ‘Polemiek over de opleiding tot het archivarisambt’ *Nederlandsch Archievenblad* (1903-1904) 223-240 en H. Brugmans, ‘De opleiding der archivarissen’ *Nederlandsch Archievenblad* (1905-1906) 75-80.

²⁰ R. Fruin, ‘De opleiding tot het archivarisambt’ *Nederlandsche Spectator* 23 (1902). Ook afgedrukt in ‘Polemiek over de opleiding tot het archivarisambt’ *Nederlandsch Archievenblad* (1903-1904) 223-240.

²¹ W.K. Lamb maakte deze vergelijking gebaseerd op Jozua 9:21 in ‘The Archivist and the Historian’ *The American Historical Review* 68 (1963) 385.

research (should) only be considered in the second place”.²² It is difficult to over-estimate the influence of the *Manual* on the archive world. The 100 rules of Muller, Feith and Fruin soon applied as the canon of archival science. Since then archivists had occupied themselves with the organisation and description of the archives in accordance with these rules and this provided generations of historians with an instrument giving access to historical information sources. An archive was considered in the *Manual* as an organic whole, that had, so to speak, an own personality and individuality. The classification of the archives, according to one of the most important rules, had to be founded on the original organisation of the archives, which should conform as far as possible with the organisation of the administration from which it originated.²³ The *Manual* gave the traditional archivist something to hold on to in his battle to control the paper mass. In recent historiography concerning the development of archival science, the administrative approach, which has its theoretical base from the *Manual*, is characterised as a revolutionary paradigm shift within the archival science.²⁴ The normative line of approach, however, made it difficult to speak of a scientific approach. Back in 1954 the American archive theorist Schellenberg called the *Manual* “a Bible for modern archivists”.²⁵ Within the world of archives tampering with the rules of the *Manual* regarding organising and describing archives was not tolerated. This strongly normative character of the *Manual* blocked the development of the archival theory.²⁶ Historians considered archival science at best as an instrumental auxiliary subject. There was very little noticeable scientific interest in this subject among historians. Dutch historian Van Deursen pointed out that the scientific journal which is published by archivists, can be read in the history reading room of the university library, but it is one of the few magazines which is never stolen.²⁷

Instrumental approach

In the 1990's two developments led to important changes for the archival science. Because of the explosive growth of records production since about 1945, which was the result of increasing bureaucracy, a new method was developed for the appraisal, selection and destruction of archive material in order to cope with the avalanche of paper. This new method provoked strong reactions from the historians. They were afraid that valuable historical source material would be destroyed because, in their view, archivists allowed themselves to be led too much by the interests of the government administration. This clash led to a break of confidence between archivists and historians.²⁸

In addition to this, the switch from paper and ink to *bits and bites* caused important conceptual shifts within the archival science. These shifts are so large that they are spoken of

²² S. Muller Fz, J.A. Feith en R. Fruin Th. Az., *Handleiding voor het ordenen en beschrijven van archieven* (Groningen 1920²) 40.

²³ Muller, Feith en Fruin, *Handleiding*, paragrafen 2 en 16, 5 en 30. Archives were defined as “The whole of written, drafted or printed documents, ex officio received or created by any agency or one of its civil servants, as far as these documents are destined to remain under that agency”.

²⁴ Thomassen, ‘Paradigmatische veranderingen’, 73.

²⁵ Op cit. Terry Cook, ‘What is past is prologue: a history of archival ideas since 1898, and the future paradigm shift’ *Archivaria* 43 (1996) 17-63, aldaar 22.

²⁶ Zie ook Eric Ketelaar, ‘Archival theory and the Dutch Manual’ *Archivaria* 41 (1996) 31-40.

²⁷ A.Th. van Deursen, ‘Archief en geschiedwetenschap’ in: P. Brood ed., *Voor Burger en Bestuur. Twintig jaar Nederlands Archiefwezen, 1968-1988* (Hilversum 1988) 110-120, aldaar 111.

²⁸ W.D. Küller, *Van vernietiging van archiefbescheiden naar selectie van handelingen. Een methode voor de vervaardiging van een archiefselectieinstrument uitgaande van het handelen van de overheid* (Den Haag 1992) en Nederlands Historisch Genootschap, *Selectie en vernietiging van archiefmateriaal. Een discussie tussen archivariissen en historici* (Den Haag 1993) 736. Het jaarboek van de Stichting Archiefpublicaties 2004 is in zijn geheel gewijd aan het thema van selectie. Noor Schreuder schetst in haar bijdrage ‘Historisch of administratief? De selectie van archieven gewogen’ de geschiedenis van de selectie van archieven, in: P Brood e.a eds., *Selectie. Waardering, selectie en acquisitie van archieven* (’s-Gravenhage 2005) 108-129.

as a new paradigm. Archive scientists wonder whether old conceptions such as archive document, original and authentic, still have a meaning in the new digital world.²⁹ In the eyes of many historians, however, through these developments archivists have become mainly government information managers who only touch upon the science of history because they determine which remembrances and impressions will be allowed into the domain of history. A few years ago the Canadian archivist-historian Brien Brothman invoked strong criticism when he wrote that archivists, for reasons of esteem and the prospect of further professional development but also for fear of marginalisation, were encouraged to leave the historical track in exchange for the world of information specialism.³⁰ The distance between archival science and the science of history is greater than ever before. The fields of study which were once so allied to each other have become estranged. Anyway, this paradigm shift within archivism is considered by archive scientists to be the final piece of their struggle for emancipation with respect to the science of history; a struggle for emancipation which has, in all, lasted for at least a century. Or, as a Dutch archivist, Theo Thomassen writes: “For the first time in its development, archival science is becoming a real science. In its pre-paradigmatic phase it was not yet a science, in its classical phase it was no more than an auxiliary science to history, but now, in its post-modernist phase, it is obtaining the status of a real science, as autonomous as the other information sciences and as autonomous as the science of history”.³¹ By linking this qualification of real science to post-modernism this conclusion can be played down somewhat, but it is characteristic of the almost obsessive need to be recognised as an autonomous science.

Back to the roots

Having got this far, I now come to my second point, which is the question of what happens next with the relationship between archivists and historians? I am aware that I am now skating on thin ice, when I see how mercilessly some authors are shot down in flames when they are still endeavouring to lay the foundation of archival science in the science of history.³² Now I am certainly not planning to do this, but I do want to pose the question of how the relationship between the autonomous archival science and the science of history can be determined. With the emancipation of archival science, the relationship between the archivists and historians should no longer have to be dominated by the sometimes rather forced need to prove that archival science is an independent discipline. It is to be expected that this will create more space for the debate as regards content between both disciplines. I belong to the group of archivists who believe that it is in the interest both of the science of history and archival science that at least a number of strong bridges are built to bridge the gap which has been created between both areas of specialism. According to Michael Moss, professor of archive

²⁹ Zie bijvoorbeeld Luciana Duranti, ‘Diplomatics: new uses for an old science’, *Archivaria* 28 (1989) 7-27; Hugh Taylor, ‘Transformation in the archives: technological adjustment or paradigm shift?’ *Archivaria* 25 (1987-1988) 12-28; Terry Cook, ‘Electronic records, paper minds: the revolution in information management and archives in the post-custodial and post-modernist era’ *Archives and Manuscripts* 22 (1995) 300-328; Terry Cook, ‘What is past is prologue: a history of archival ideas since 1898, and the future paradigm shift’ *Archivaria* 43 (1996) 17-63; In 1999 bracht de Stichting Archief Publicaties een jaarboek uit dat in zijn geheel gewijd was aan deze paradigmaverandering: : P.J. Horsman, F.C.J. Ketelaar en T.H.P.M. Thomassen eds., *Naar een nieuw paradigma in de archivistiek* (Bergen op Zoom 1999).

³⁰ Brien Brothman, ‘Orders of Value: Probing the Theoretical Terms of Archival Practice’, *Archivaria* 32 (1991) 78-100, aldaar 89.

³¹ Theo Thomassen, ‘Paradigmatische veranderingen’, 77.

³² Zie bijvoorbeeld de wijze waarop Terry Eastwood reageert op het artikel van Brien Brothman ‘Orders of Value: probing the theoretical terms of archival practice’ dat verscheen in *Archivaria* 32(1991) 78-100. Zie T. Eastwood, ‘Nailing a little jelly to the wall of archival studies’ *Archivaria* 35 (1993) 232-252. Zie ook de kritiek op het artikel van George Bolotenko, ‘Archivists and Historians: Keepers of the Well’ *Archivaria* 16 (1983) 5-23 in *Archivaria* 17 en 18.

studies at the University of Glasgow, historians and archivists should return to the scientific principles of their areas of specialism. Documents were to the study of humanities what natural phenomena were for the exact sciences. And just like natural phenomena they were open for various interpretations; but their central position in the science of history was axiomatic. Historians had to master skills before they could even approach the sources scientifically, let alone analyse them. The same applied to natural scientists who had to master the methods for experiments before they could throw themselves into the field work.³³ What do historians and archivists have to offer each other in this domain?

If we return to the early days of the historical science, we inevitably end up at the book mentioned earlier *Introduction aux études historiques* by Charles Victor Langlois and Charles Seignobos. This book is particularly interesting because the two writers combined archival science, history and methodology. Over the years, however, this book has come into disrepute. Due to the first sentence *l'histoire se fait avec des documents* it has been dragged through the mud more than once. The authors were unjustly accused of document fetishism as if history was nothing more than simply swallowing and spitting out again prefabricated historical knowledge,³⁴ or as Collingwood contemptuously called it: the history of scissors and the glue pot.³⁵ But for those who take the trouble to read on further than the first sneering sentence, the book still proves to be an intelligent introduction for the archivist and the methodologist.³⁶ The authors ask important questions which concern the recognizability of the historical reality. The relationship between fact, perception and interpretation is an important theme in their book. Their approach to this subject matter was not yet fragmented. They had not yet drawn a line between the historical scientific and archival approach. Research into the manner in which reality was reproduced in the documents, accessing the archives and the methods used by historians to make use of these documents were considered as parts of the same discipline. In contrast to what in the later perceptions had assumed a life of its own, they did not accept without question that the documents spoke for themselves. "They are dead letters", wrote Seignobos, "if one does not know how to interpret them."³⁷ In the course of time archivists and historians have specialised more and more in parts, or as the Dutch archivist Fruin called it "There is now division of labour."³⁸

The content of documents

With their line of approach both writers reach the heart of the issue with which the historian, who works with historical sources, has dealings with again and again, but for which there has never been much interest from the side of the emancipated archival science: the appreciation of the content of the documents or, to put it in another way: the value of the observation data which we encounter in the documents. If ever it were possible to build a bridge between the two disciplines, then it would be here in this area. History is, for lack of anything better, mainly made with documents, or as Felipe Fernández-Armesto recently concluded "the sources (form) the only part of the past (...), that is directly accessible to our senses. Our facts are not those of the past in general, but from the sources in particular: we can only know what

³³ Michael Moss, 'Archives, the Historian and the Future' in: Michael Bentley ed., *Companion to historiography* (London/New York 1997) 960-973, aldaar 960 en 971.

³⁴ Henri-Irénée Marrou, *De la Connaissance Historique* (Paris 1954) 54.

³⁵ R.G. Collingwood, *The idea of History* (Oxford 1946) 257; 246.

³⁶ Pim den Boer, *Geschiedenis als beroep. De professionalisering van de geschiedbeoefening in Frankrijk (1818-1914)* (Nijmegen 1987) 375.

³⁷ Seignobos, 'L'enseignement de l'histoire dans les universités allemandes' *Revue Internationale de l'enseignement* 1 (1881) 587.

³⁸ R. Fruin, 'Historici en Archivarissen' *Nederlandsch Archievenblad* 27 (1918-1919) 129-131.

the sources tell us.”³⁹ Historians are constantly wrestling with the question whether the content of the records forms a true reflection of reality and to what extent the sources are suitable for what, for the sake of convenience, I will call truth finding. Is it not strange that it is almost exclusively the methodologically-interested historians who concern themselves with this question? Archivists scarcely joined in this discussion in the twentieth century. If we look at how the historians have determined their attitude with respect to the archives, we can ascertain that it is not so much the importance of the documents themselves as building blocks for the science of history that has come under pressure, but the contact of the historian with these sources.

In the nineteen sixties, in his authoritative book *What is History?* Edward Carr was rather contemptuous regarding the nineteenth century historiography. The things which were found in the documents, formed at that time the objective truth for the historians. But what do all those different documents tell us, Carr wondered. From an analysis of the paper legacy of the German minister Gustav Stresemann, who during his time as a minister had hundreds of conversations with the Soviet Ambassador in Berlin, Carr illustrated that those documents absolutely did not show what had happened, but what Stresemann thought had happened, or what he wanted others to think about what had happened or perhaps what Stresemann himself wanted to think had happened. The process of selection does not begin with the archivist or the historian, but with the people who write down these things.⁴⁰

This convincingly shifted the attention from the document itself to the creator of the document. And yet Seignobos and Langlois had also already indicated the link with the maker of the document. They established that the document is the point of departure for the historian and the fact of what happened is the point of arrival. Between this point of departure and the point of arrival a complex rationale has to be made. In order to create the relationship between the document and the fact, it is necessary to describe the whole chain of actions which were carried out by the author of the document from the moment of the event to which he was a witness, up to the document that we can still hold in our hands.⁴¹ Considering that the creator of a document does not usually give details of the actions leading to the document, it is necessary for the historian to make a reconstruction of all the successive actions which led up to the document. He should begin with the moment at which the author has observed the fact and end with the movement of his hand which led to letters on the document.⁴² The analysis of this process contains at the very least the embryo of that which the Dutch archivist Eric Ketelaar coined with the term ‘archivalisation’, which concerns the valuable but extremely difficult to capture part of the process that precedes the writing down.⁴³ He referred here in particular to the social and cultural factors and the values and standards in a society which determine the archives creation .

The role of the historian

Apart from the documents, the maker of the documents and the values and standards of the society which are influential in whether something is registered or not, the historian himself plays a part which must not be underestimated in the process of fathoming the historical reality. Seignobos and Langlois wrote that the facts represented by the historian are certainly

³⁹ Felipe Fernández-Armesto, ‘Epilogue: What is History now?’ in: David Cannadine ed., *What is history now?* (Hampshire 2002) 148-161, 155.

⁴⁰ E.H. Carr, *What is History?* (London 1975) 19-20.

⁴¹ Seignobos en Langlois, *Introduction*, 44-46 en Ch. Seignobos, *Revue Philosophique* (1887).

⁴² Seignobos en Langlois, *Introduction*, 118-121. “tous les actes successifs qui ont produit le document, depuis le moment où l’auteur a vu le fait qui est l’objet du document jusqu’au mouvement de sa main qui a tracé les lettres du document; ou plutôt il faudrait remonter en sens inverse, échelon par échelon, depuis le mouvement de la main jusqu’à l’observations”.

⁴³ F.C.J. Ketelaar, *Archivalisering en archivering* (Alphen aan den Rijn 1998) 10.

subjective, but subjective is not the same as unrealistic. While Ranke saw it as the greatest duty of the historian to rid himself of his own prejudices by identifying with his object in order to bring the original meaning of a text out into the open, Seignobos and Langlois put the emphasis on the continuity in human actions. If human nature from the past does not resemble human nature in this time, people will not understand anything of the documents.⁴⁴ That conclusion is not unimportant, because the historian constructs and reconstructs with the aid of the concept framework that he has at his disposal. General theories, suppositions and concepts determine how we see reality and therefore also historical reality. “Study the historian before you begin to study the facts”, emphasized Carr, which indicates how important the role of the historian is in the interaction with the documents, and he compared the concepts used by the historian to the nets of a fisherman. Just as the fishing net determines the type of fish that is caught, the concept framework of the historian determines the type of facts that he digs up.⁴⁵ Or, as the Dutch historian and philosopher Ankersmit put it: “The historian does not enter the archives naked, but clothed in all sorts of theories, concepts and suppositions. This theoretical clothing determines what the historian sees as the truth (...).”⁴⁶ Although the history philosophers penetrated into the domain of the archivist with such analyses, the archivists remained aloof from this discussion.

Postmodernist doubt

The question of the value and the power of expression of documents, of historical facts, has come even more into the limelight under the influence of postmodernist doubt. The criticism of the postmodernist scientists, in its simplest form, can be reflected as follows: we can never be absolutely sure of something because the language we use can never transmit or comprise a stable meaning. Since language is essential to knowing, balanced stable knowledge is impossible.⁴⁷ That is why most of the information is suspected of being a contribution to the manipulative image creation from those who are in power. The postmodernist attitude is accordingly one of mistrust that is sometimes near to paranoia, like the conspiracy literature of Thomas Pynchon and Don DeLillo and in the Oliver Stone films.⁴⁸ The concept of archives was also stripped of its positivistic certainty through the agency of philosophers like Foucault en Derrida, followed in their footsteps by archive theorists like the South African Verne Harris. They are chiefly interested in the philosophic question of what is an archive. The archive does not simply record the past. It constitutes the past and in the light of the future it achieves retrospectively or retroactively the so-called ultimate truth.⁴⁹ Or, as the Canadian archivist Terry Cook formulates it in more understandable language: it is necessary that the archives are seen as the dynamic technologies of power which create the history and social reality that they seemingly only appear to describe.⁵⁰

The postmodernist criticism made not only the historians but also the archivists more than ever aware that the standard view, originating from the 19th century, which assumed that the objectivity of the science of history was guaranteed by the objectivity of the sources had definitely come to an end. What does this all mean for the archives, the archivistics and the use of the archives?

⁴⁴ Seignobos en Langlois, *Introduction*, 189.

⁴⁵ Carr, *What is history?* 26. Zie ook Lorenz, *Constructie van het verleden*, 32.

⁴⁶ F.R. Ankersmit, *Denken over geschiedenis* (Groningen 1984) 100-101.

⁴⁷ Michael S. Roth, ‘Classic postmodernism’ *History and Theory* 43 (2004) 372-378.

⁴⁸ Christopher Butler, *Postmodernism. A very short Introduction* (Oxford-New York 2002) 3.

⁴⁹ ‘Archive Fever. A seminar by Jacques Derrida, University of Witwatersrand, August 1998’ in: C. Hamilton e.a. eds., *Refiguring the Archive* (Dordrecht/Boston/London) 38-80, aldaar 40-42.

⁵⁰ Joan M. Schwartz en T. Cook, ‘Archives, Records and Power: The Making of Modern Memory’ *Archival Science* 2 (2002), 1-19, aldaar 6.

New roads

Perhaps the postmodernist earthquake was needed as a wake-up call for archivistics and to put it on the track of a non-instrumental approach. Because, in spite of the strong criticism which is possibly on the fuzziness of the postmodernist terminology and the postmodernist use of words, this approach to the archives did lead to exploring a number of new roads. Archive scientists became interested in aspects of archives creation which until then had remained in the background or which were considered as belonging to the field of the historian. The realisation grew that archives are the result of a series of decisions, choices and negotiations. If we do not know these, the value of the content of these archives can be said to be at the very least doubtful. I am very impressed by the South African project *Refiguring the Archive* carried out by the University of Witwatersrand, together with four archive organisations in that country. Against the backdrop of the recent history of South Africa concerning apartheid and the transition to a democratic society, some aspects of archives creation, which under normal circumstances would be much less clearly visible, now appear, greatly enlarged, in the foreground. The Truth and Reconciliation Committee which was set up in 1995 by parliament, was given the task “to uncover as complete a picture as possible of the nature, causes and extent of gross violations of human rights” during the apartheid regime of the past 35 years.⁵¹ The establishment of this parliamentary committee gave the impression that the past would be recognised once and for all. In this sense the work of the committee was “self-referential”. They built up a collection of evidence which they needed to support the history that they had constructed. By archiving these items of proof, the archive guaranteed the credibility of the history which it produced.⁵² However, we must not forget that the committee was set up with a special, preformulated assignment and this steered the collection of information and so also the archive creation. According to the establishment law, this committee was namely not only formed to expose the violations of human rights in the recent past, but also to build a historic bridge between the past of a deeply-divided society, characterised by struggle, conflict, silent suffering and injustice, and a future based on the recognition of human rights, democracy and peaceful co-existence for all South Africans. The assignment also established that the committee must investigate *serious*, so not all violations of human rights. This limited the scope of the investigation which implied that the archive creation by this committee was steered.⁵³ In the Netherlands we can cite a similar example. Dutch UN soldiers were involved in a peace keeping operation in former Yugoslavia, but they failed to protect the inhabitants in Srebrenica. Thousands of men from Srebrenica were killed. The *Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie* [Netherlands Institute for War Documentation] was charged with investigating the events before, during and after the fall of Srebrenica and was requested to make an inventory of relevant factual material and to arrange this, on the basis of which insight could be obtained into the causes and events which led to the fall of Srebrenica and to the dramatic developments which followed: the killing of thousands of men.⁵⁴ With this objective the group of investigators set up a work archive roughly 45 meters long, which included documents from this former war zone. Documents which were once formed in a special context, but not with the object of providing insight into the causes which led to the fall of Srebrenica. In the course of 2003 this archive was processed by the *Centrale Archiefsselectie Dienst* [Central Archive Selection Agency] in

⁵¹ *Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act*, no. 34 of 1995, 3(1)(a), op. cit. Brent Harris, ‘The Archive, Public History and the essential truth: the TRC Reading the Past’ in: *Refiguring the Archive*, 160-177, aldaar 163.

⁵² Brent Harris, ‘The Archive, Public History and the essential truth: the TRC Reading the Past’ in: *Refiguring the Archive*, 160-177, aldaar 164.

⁵³ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁴ Tweede Kamer, vergaderjaar 1996-1997, 25 069, nr.1, Onderzoeksopdracht aan het Rijksinstituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie.

Winschoten.⁵⁵ This archive will be valuable for future historical research. However, it applies here also that historians who make use of this archive material must be aware of the large number of filters that it passed before the archive that they find on the NIOD, was created. Both examples show to what extent the ultimate archives creation is the result of many processes which over and again work as a filter with respect to the past.⁵⁶ The filters determine what information subsequently gets into the archives. This means that the archive opens just a crack into the historical reality. Verne Harris introduced a beautiful metaphor 'the sliver of a window' for this phenomenon, with which he indicates how limited and broken the view is that the archives give of history.⁵⁷ This because a window not only lets light through but also reflects light. Archives do this in just the same way. Historians who make use of archives without knowing this mechanism, are not able to determine what they are observing via the sources. It can give rise to surprise at the very least that for a long time archivists left this discussion over to historians, with the result that the influence of archive creation on the recognizability of the historical reality has remained underexposed. The postmodernist approach has changed this.

Historical archivistics: redefinition of a relationship

This brings me to a point in my plea to build a bridge between archival science and historical science. I would like to give this bridge a name with the term historical archivistics.⁵⁸ Seen from the purely scientific archivistic approach, archives are not historical sources.⁵⁹ Archives are just not created with the object of serving historical research as source material. The objective of archival science is therefore not to fathom the historical reality, but to understand archive creation. The historian can of course take advantage of this; even stronger, he must take advantage of this if he wants to give meaning to the content of the documents. Archival science was described by the Canadian archive theorist Terry Eastwood as follows "archival theory and archival practice are linked together by archival methodology. The three together constitute archival science."⁶⁰

I would consider historical archivistics as an extension of Eastwood's way of thinking, whereby I would not define the methodology only as the way in which archive material must be treated, but also as the way in which archive material can be used. It is precisely because archives are not created with the object of serving as historical source, that it is important to investigate methods to enable the research value of the archive material to be determined. The historians' struggle with the source material indicates that there is enough need from that quarter to give sufficient cause for this. A need which will only increase now that the energetic cutting and pasting, to which the enormous databank named Internet evermore invites us, brings with it a danger that our attitude with respect to the use of information is fundamentally changing. The ease with which prospective historians have learned to Google,

⁵⁵ *Jaarverslag NIOD over 2003* (Amsterdam 2004).

⁵⁶ Brent Harris, een van de auteurs in *Refiguring the Past*, schrijft: "The Past with a capital 'P' refers to a pre-narrative and pre-textual reality, and differs from the past as contained in the archive and in historical narratives". Zie Brent Harris, 'The archive, Public History and the Essential Truth: the TCR Reading the Past' in: *Refiguring the Archive*, 161-177, aldaar 161.

⁵⁷ Verne Harris, 'The archival sliver: a perspective on the construction of social memory in archives and the transition from apartheid to democracy' in: *Refiguring the Archive*, 135-136.

⁵⁸ Van der Gouw maakte in zijn oratie ook onderscheid tussen de theoretische archiefwetenschap en de historische archiefwetenschap. Ik geef aan het begrip historische archivistiek echter een andere betekenis dan Van der Gouw deed. Van der Gouw: "De theoretische archiefwetenschap, waarin de verschijnselen in een systeem van begrippen worden gebracht, werkt generaliserend. De historische archiefwetenschap maakt van dat begrippenstelsel gebruik om individualiserend te werk te gaan".

⁵⁹ Zie ook bijv. Terry Eastwood, 'Nailing a little jelly to the wall of archival studies' *Archivaria* 35 (1993) 232-252, aldaar 236.

⁶⁰ Terry Eastwood, *Archivaria* 35(1993) 232-252.

and to use a modern variation of scissors and glue pot,⁶¹ shows how important it is to be able to appreciate the information found in data collections and archives.

When I was being trained as an archivist at the Rijksarchiefschool (School for Archival Studies), much emphasis was placed on history of institutions. We learned the tasks of numerous state institutions by heart and understood that these institutions had created archives as a continuation of their duties. Knowledge which is not only vital to an archivist, but also for a historian working with archives. And yet, it is not enough to understand the people and the organisations that created and used the archives. We seldom know exactly why certain texts were written, for whom they were intended, when and how often they have been processed. In many cases we also do not know what procedures and agreements were made regarding the registration and consequently the creation of the archive. The context of the archive creation is an almost endless concept.⁶² It's all about learning to look behind the archive creation, as it were, and finding out how the recorded information came about.⁶³ Eric Ketelaar has already pointed out that understanding the context reaches out much further than the archivist context models which are directed towards the origin and structuring of the archives and the request for information. He has meanwhile devoted several publications to the role of the social and cultural context in the creation of archives, but research into this is still at an early stage.⁶⁴ The historical archivist which I support is, to stay with Verne Harris' metaphor, directed towards making the slight crack towards the historical reality as clear as possible. It is necessary, therefore, to show which mechanisms restrict or cloud the view.

Sorting things out

To conclude I would like to illustrate this by means of that very important phenomenon to historians and archivists: classification. Classification systems intrude on our lives in many ways. Their most important objective is to reduce complex reality to a manageable size. To do this, the government tries, via the establishment of numerous official categories, to get a hold on society and on the grounds of similar divisions to steer via legislation. The official categories therefore influence not only the everyday thoughts and behaviour patterns, but also science, which depends for its knowledge to a very large extent on official sources.⁶⁵ French historian Marc Bloch has already indicated the treacherousness of classification for the work of the historian. Bloodthirsty beasts during revolutions could also be excellent family fathers at the same time, because do not many people live their lives at three or four totally different levels which they wish to keep separate?⁶⁶ Bloch spoke in particular about classification which is locked up in words and texts. We can, however, also look at classification at the level of archive creation. What is actually recorded in notices of intended marriage registers⁶⁷,

⁶¹ NRC, 10 maart 2005, 'Verwarring over nut van geschiedenis; historicus Piet de Rooy over historische canon, politiek en patriotisme'. Piet de Rooy schrijft: "Twee zaken vallen op bij eerstejaars studenten. Ze hebben minder chronologisch besef dan voorheen (...) En ze stellen resultaat boven originaliteit; knippen en plakken van andermans gedachten vinden ze normaal. Dat komt door het studiehuis, waar 'googelen' heilig is verklaard'.

⁶² Verne Harris, 'Of fragments, fictions and powers: resisting neat theorising about "The Record"'. (2001) 11-18.

⁶³ Zie ook bijv. Tom Nesmith, 'Archives from bottom Up: Social History and Archival Scholarship' *Archivaria* 14 (1982) 5-26, aldaar 16-17.

⁶⁴ Eric Ketelaar, 'De culturele context van archieven' in: P.J. Horsman, F.C.J. Ketelaar en T.H.P.M. Thomassen eds., *Context. Interpretatiekaders in de archivalieken* (Den Haag 2000) 83-109.

⁶⁵ Paul Starr, 'Social Categories and Claims in the Liberal State' in: Mary Douglass and David Hull eds., *How Classification Works. Nelson Goodman among the Social Sciences* (Edinburgh 1992) 154-179, aldaar 154-155.

⁶⁶ Marc Bloch, *Pleidooi voor de geschiedenis, of Geschiedenis als Ambacht* (Nijmegen 1989) 150.

⁶⁷ Een recent voorbeeld van een analyse van dergelijke bronnen is te vinden in het proefschrift van Erika Kuijpers, *Migrantenstad. Immigratie en sociale verhoudingen in 17^e eeuw Amsterdam* (Hilversum 2005). Zij schrijft op pagina 11-12: "Gezien de enorme bevolkingstoename kan het niet anders of steeds meer mensen bewogen zich in Amsterdam buiten het geïnstitutionaliseerde circuit. Hoeveel nieuwkomers werden burgers van

official police reports, statistics and other official reports? At first glance, the answer usually seems simple, but we must realise that the information which we find in the documents hides classification systems which are tied to time, place and culture. For example, some time ago, the Central Bureau of Statistics introduced a new definition of “allochtonen” [immigrant newcomers]. This includes a division between western and non-western immigrants. The category non-western includes immigrants from Turkey, Africa, Latin America and Asia. An exception is made only for Indonesia and Japan: on the grounds of their social-economic and cultural position, all immigrants from these two countries are counted as western immigrants.⁶⁸ This division works as a filter and influences the meaning of the information which we find in the statistics and the conclusions that we can draw from this. We can also go back further into the past. It is known that the colonial powers tried to classify the indigenous population, their customs and suchlike into categories with the object of placing the strange, the intangible within a reference framework which was familiar to them.⁶⁹ This way of looking, wrote Rudolf Mrázek about the Dutch perception of the Indonesian reality, “turned out to be a hall of mirrors, a maze of flat reflections of themselves”.⁷⁰ Classification also conceals an important part of historical reality due to this filter.

The research which I support within historic archivistics, will be directed towards getting to the bottom of classification schemes which were used in the past and to making the conceptual frameworks of the organisational schemes visible. If we wish to understand the architecture of operational schemes, we must look at the tracks of their own history. And that is not always simple, because that which is closest to us is usually the most invisible. Everyday categories are often no longer recognised as such in the classification infrastructure.⁷¹ For example, the headword ‘man’ does not appear in the Universal Decimal Classification, although ‘woman’ can be found in sections such as cultural anthropology, morals and customs and folklore. The system, which was set up from a male approach, reserved a special place for woman, while the man was omnipotent but at the same time invisible.⁷² The *International Classification of Diseases*, a classification system which since 1890 has appeared every ten years and is applied worldwide in an effort to coordinate the information with respect to sickness and mortality figures, can actually only be understood when the motives are known which led to the classification. Until recently, the archives of the negotiations which eventually led to the classification system were destroyed.⁷³ This made it virtually impossible to make the information infrastructure, which determines the way in which the historical “reality” trickles down into the statistics and other documents, the object of historical research. Research into the development and rationale behind this “iron cage of bureaucracy” is, in the words of Max Weber, essential to be able to trace the dark spots in the classification system. If we know the way in which observations were translated into a bureaucratic format, it can help to establish the research value of the archives formed.

de stad, lid van een gilde, lidmaat van een kerk. (...)Veel van wat we weten over de sociale geschiedenis van zeventiende eeuwse steden komt uit de archieven van deze instellingen: resolutieboeken, registers, notulen, correspondentie en boekhouding. Wat betekent het voor ons geschiedbeeld als slechts een deel van de stedelijke bevolking hierin figureert?” Vervolgens analyseert ze in hoofdstuk 2 twee bronnen: ondertrouwakten en lidmaatregisters van de Lutherse Kerk.

⁶⁸ NIDI, *Bevolkingsatlas van Nederland. Demografische ontwikkelingen van 1850 tot heden* (Den Haag 2003) 149.

⁶⁹ B.S. Cohn, ‘The Census, social structure and objectification in South Asia’ in: B.S. Cohn ed., *An Anthropologist Among the Historians and other Essays* (New Delhi 1990).

⁷⁰ Rudolf Mrázek, *Engineers of the happy land. Technology and Nationalism in a Colony* (Princeton 2002) 121.

⁷¹ Geoffrey C. Bowker and Susan Leigh Star, *Sorting things out. Classification and its consequences* (Cambridge 1999) 319.

⁷² Zie *De Volkskrant*, 22 augustus 1998, ‘Vrouweninformatie voor de hele wereld’, en Beth Stafford, ‘Freeing access to women’s information: an overview’ <http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla66/papers/086-151e.htm>

⁷³ Bowker, *Sorting things out*, 111.

Because what is the meaning of statistics on unemployment figures, if we don't know that in the Netherlands for a long time, people who were looking for a job with less than 20 hours a week, were not admitted to the category of registered job seekers?

The recording of observations is, certainly in formal organisations, often expressed in rules and instructions or progresses even more imperatively via pre-printed questionnaires and forms. The secretary of the Utrechtse Armenraad [Utrecht Council for the Poor] at the beginning of the last century was pleased to have pre-printed forms with which researchers had to collect information about the poor. After all “a form of this kind forces us to stay in one line and not miss anything that could later prove to be important. A form forces us to be accurate; we are forced to record our experiences in writing and not to be content with some incoherent notes.”⁷⁴ But classification can also be strongly linked to the specific needs of professional practice. The way in which doctors depict their patients via medical records,⁷⁵ or the manner in which colonial civil servants depict the indigenous population in their reporting,⁷⁶ underlies effective classification principles for the various professional groups, within the context of time and place. Research into training programmes for various professional groups can shed more light on the manner in which members of those groups have classified and represented reality.⁷⁷ It is all about finding the keys to the classification infrastructure, through which the archives can actually be sources for historical research. That means, by the way, that the products of organising and describing by our archivist predecessors, must be also made the object of research, because making an inventory of archives is also a form of classification. Or, as a Dutch archivist Heeringa wrote back in the 1930's: the classification in the inventory “depends less on the facts than on our weakness, our need to draw lines here and there.”⁷⁸ Education and research within historical archivistics aims to make visible and analyse the large number of filters along which the information flows. By studying the filters we can try to understand better the residue of history, that stays behind in the documents and on the basis of which history is made.

This is the area in which archivists and historians should work together. I would like to conclude with some remarks on what all this means for studying the archives that were created in colonial times.

Archives created in colonial times

Since the writing of Foucault and Derrida the complex relations between reality and representation and between archives and society have been in the spotlight. After all, archives don't simply record the past. It was the Canadian archivist Terry Cook who, in his general article “What is past is prologue: a history of archival ideas since 1898, and the future paradigm shift” makes a number of important remarks about the changing perceptions archivists are confronted with. One of the new concepts he is referring to is the archive as a

⁷⁴ J.H. Adriani, *Voorlezingen over Armenzorg en Maatschappelijk Werk* (Utrecht 1923) 143.

⁷⁵ Geoffrey Bowker, ‘The multiple bodies of the medical record: towards a Sociology of an Artifact’ (1996) <http://repositories.cdlib.org/ucsdcomm/bowker>

⁷⁶ Zie bijvoorbeeld Ann Laura Stoler, “In cold blood”: Hierarchies of Credibility and the Politics of Colonial Narratives’ *Representations* 37 (1992) 151-189, aldaar 182. Stoler typeert de koloniale rapporten als volgt: “They are relatively dry, formulaic documents –administrative epistles, resolutions, and internal reports- of colonial bureaucrats eager to be read in a favourable light by their superiors, careful to deflect attention from their own inadequacies while affirming their loyalties to continued rule”.

⁷⁷ Zie bijvoorbeeld Veronique Dimier, ‘For a new Start. Resettling French Colonial Administrators in the Prefectoral Corps’ *Itinerario* 1(2004) 49-66, aldaar 49-51. Zie ook het artikel van F. Baudet, ‘Srebrenica, een ‘veilig’ gebied. Het laatste woord over de val van een *safe area*’ *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 116 (2002) 195-211, aldaar 205.

⁷⁸ Heeringa, bespreking van de “Inventaris van de Archieven van de Staten van Holland en de hen opgevolgde gewestelijke besturen. Eerste deel. Archieven van de Staten van Holland voor 1572’ door P.A. Meilink (Den Haag 1929) *Nederlandsch Archievenblad* 37 (1929-1930) 162-172.

house of memory. According to this concept, archivists set the inspiring goal for themselves to build “a living memory for the history of our present”. Cook points out that “all acts of societal remembering (...) are culturally bound and have momentous implications”. But whose memory is concerned? “And how have archivists reflected these changing societal realities and power struggles as they built their ‘houses of memory’? How have archival assumptions, concepts and strategies reflected the dominant structures and societal ethos of their own time? Upon what basis, reflecting what shifting values, have archivists decided who should be admitted into their houses of memory and who excluded?”⁷⁹ These questions are extremely relevant when it concerns increasing the awareness of archivists when they are building their archive collection. But besides this, I would like to stress here again, that they should be far more occupied with these questions from the point of view of archives creating. Archivists should be obliged to give insight into the relationships existing between the forming of archives and the underlying values, concepts, patterns and power structures. These questions and conceptions are important if we focus our attention on the objectives of the Encompass-program. Much work has been done in the past years to maintain the VOC [Dutch East India Company] archives and make them more accessible. As we all know, the history of the 400 years of Dutch presence in Asia has left many kilometres of archives behind. Material which is of great importance to the study of the relationships between the Netherlands and Asia, but at the same time is invaluable to the autonomous historiography of these countries. As professor Leonard Blussé, the initiator of the Encompass-program pointed out, the many kilometres of documents are waiting to be examined by Asian historians and scientists. He makes one thing crystal clear: the aim of Encompass is not to engage in study or teaching of Dutch colonial history, but in the training of Asian researchers to study their own history with the help of these sources.⁸⁰ The research and training is labelled as ‘mutual heritage history’.

‘Mutual heritage history’ on the basis of sources which have a mutual past is possible. On condition, however, that the sources and particularly the creation, in other words the context in which they were created, are well known to us. Here lies an important task for archivists who are possibly going to be educated within the Encompass programme.

Within this framework, the manner of approach to the archives taken by Ann Laura Stoler, Professor of Anthropology, History and Women’s Studies at the University of Michigan, is very interesting. She wrote an interesting essay about the colonial order of things as seen through its archival production.⁸¹ The main question in her article was what insights about the colonial order might be gained from attending not only to the archival content, but also to its particular and sometimes peculiar form. Her focus was on archiving as a process rather than to archives as things. From that point of view it is in her words “important to turn back to the documentation itself, what and who was being educated in the bureaucratic shuffle of rote formulas, generic plots and prescriptive asides that make up the bulk of a colonial archive”. It is obvious, she continues, that colonial archives are products of state machines. But it were also legal repositories of knowledge and official repositories of policy. Systems of written accountability were the products of the institutions but paper trails (weekly reports, summaries, recommendations etc.) called for an elaborate coding system by which they could be tracked. Colonial statecraft was built on the foundations of statistics and surveys but also

79 Terry Cook, What is Past is Prologue: a history of archival ideas since 1898, and the future paradigm shift’ in *Archivaria* 43 (1196) 17-63.

80 Encompass. Encountering a common past in Asia. Report of the discussion meeting on mutual heritage, higher education and scientific research, held at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in The Hague, 8 September 2004. Speech by prof.dr. Leonard Blussé (Leiden 2004) 6-10

81 Ann Laura Stoler, ‘Colonial Archives and the arts of governance: on the content in the form’ in: C. Hamilton, V. Harris et al (eds) *Refiguring the archive* (Dordrecht/Boston/London) 82-101

out of the administrative apparatus which produced that information. She concludes that if one were to characterise what has informed a critical approach to colonial archives over the last 15 years, it would be a commitment to the notion of reading the colonial archives 'against their grain'. This kind of reading would reveal the language of rule and the biases inherent in statist perceptions. In her essay she poses some interesting questions about the understanding of archives. How can students of colonialism so quickly and confidently turn to readings 'against the grain', without a prior sense of their texture and granularity? How can we compare colonialisms without knowing the realms of knowledge production in which they operated?

In an earlier essay from her hand, "In Cold Blood: Hierarchies of credibility and the politics of colonial narratives", Ann Stoler draws on the dense corpus of correspondence and official letters about the Luhmann family murder that circulated between 1876 and 1877 between Frans Carl Valck, Assistant-Resident on Sumatra's east Coast, military commanders, high officials in Batavia and in The Hague. She takes these documents as an entry point to explore the kinds of stories people told about violence, the sort of cultural knowledge on which these stories were based. In fact Stoler's analysis of this corpus of correspondence raises some basic questions about how we ethnographically read colonial texts and how deeply we excavate the layers of our sources.⁸²

We are continuously revising our knowledge of the past with respect to today's new developments. When we become a member of a new social world, we re-tell our history, usually in new terminology. These revisions also mean the introduction of voices as yet unnoticed. Depending on the manner of arrangement, of classification of the historical reality, the voices are audible or not. No single form of classification organises reality for everyone.⁸³ We must be well aware that archive building was also a form of organisation (of classification) of parts of the reality of that period. We must also realise that the later archive inventories, made by archivists, are also products of an organising and classification system.

Conclusions

On the basis of what I previously said, I want to draw a number of conclusions which I would like to incorporate into the setting up of a research and educational programme within Encompass. The basic assumption is the concept of mutual heritage history. The most important question we must ask ourselves is what is needed to facilitate historical research of this kind. On one side we have the archivist, who as manager of the archives provides the historian with the means whereby he can conduct research into the archives. On the other side we have the historian who is concentrating particularly on the answers to questions he is posing to the past. In a research and educational programme we can thus differentiate between a programme directed towards historians who are doing research into the past and archivists who are geared to archives creation and archives administration. Both parts are, however, inextricably bound to each other. The raw materials for the pursuit of 'mutual heritage history' are the sources which were created in the past and have remained intact until this day. And because much of our history is inscribed in documents, the archives play a special role not only as institutions but also as the traces that survived the past. The educational programme for historians should be directed towards giving the students tools to do research in systems of administration and classification which were developed in the past. Researchers must be aware of the fact that these systems originated with the objective of representing 'the truth' in a certain manner. Knowledge of the context in which such administration and

82 Ann Laura Stoler, "'In cold blood': Hierarchies of credibility and the politics of colonial narratives' in *Representations* 37 (1992) 151-189, 183

83 Geoffrey C. Bowker and Susan Leigh Star, *Sorting things out. Classification and its consequences*, 40

classification systems and the products of these systems (the archives) originated, is vital to pursuing mutual history in a good manner. Only with sound and expert knowledge of facts from the sources can these sources be read from another perspective, or as Ann Stoler puts it: only then can the archives be read along and against the grain. This knowledge will, however, have to be imparted to them by archivists.

The objective of the training programme for archivists within Encompass is to teach students responsible management of the archives and give them know-how into the skills with which inventories and other finding-aids are made which provide the historians with a set of instruments to do research in the archives. In addition to this, much attention is given to the development of knowledge and skills to expose the context in which the archives have been created and the systems which form the basis of this. That means, for example, that the newly-trained archivists know how to expose the relationships between the power structures within a society in a certain period, the standards and values which have originated from these, the institutions which have originated from within these frameworks and the archives which are created as reflection of the actions of people and organisations within this context. Eventually this should provide a more extensive and in particular a more sophisticated set of instruments for the historian with which he can approach the sources. I am convinced that an approach of this will result in a tight cooperation between archivists and historians.