



NETHERLANDS : ARCHIVES

NETHERLANDS : Archives

The main sources for Iran, the Persian Gulf and the [Dutch-Persian relations](#) are found in the Dutch National Archives (*Nationaal Archief*, NA [Website 1]). They were created in 1802, and until 2002, the NA were known as the General State Archives (*Algemeen Rijksarchief*, ARA). The central collection is today based in The Hague, while the regional NA branches, whose holdings focus on provincial and private documents, are located in the provincial capitals. Some interesting collections are kept in other institutions in Leiden and Rotterdam. The Notarial Archives (*Notarieel Archief*) of Amsterdam's Municipal Archives (*Gemeentearchief*) contains important documents about Iranian Armenians in the Netherlands (Bekius).

HOLDINGS UP TO 1800 IN THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

The most important source are the papers of the Dutch East Indies Company (*Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, V.O.C.). The about 15,000 items comprise documents drawn up by the six V.O.C. chambers in Amsterdam, Zeeland, Delft, Rotterdam, Hoorn and Enkhuizen, as well as documents received from the overseas establishments. They provide important and often unique information about commercial, political, economic, diplomatic, social, military, geographical, administrative, and other issues, covering the period between 1602 and 1811. Between 1905 and 1963, the V.O.C. documents were kept in the Colonial Archives (*Koloniaal Archief*, KA), and thus in the older literature V.O.C. papers were listed as ARA-KA documents. In 1963 a new



numbering system was introduced, and in the new inventory numbers KA was replaced by VOC so that V.O.C. papers were henceforth identified as ARA-VOC documents. In 1992, a detailed inventory with a full concordance between the old and new inventory numbers was published (Meilink-Roelofs and others). Today V.O.C. documents can also be located with the help of search engines on the internet. A particularly useful search tool is the provided by TANAP (Towards a New Age of Partnership: A Dutch/Asian/South-African Programme of Cooperation [Website 2]), since this international research project maintains a super inventory in which all components of a V.O.C. document are described in detail. The V.O.C. log-books can be searched in a database for Dutch-Asiatic Shipping 1595-1795 [Website 3]), which is maintained by the Institute of Netherlands History (*Instituut voor Nederlandse Geschiedenis*).

The V.O.C. documents include journals, resolutions by the council of the factory (that is, trading station) or by the High Government (*Hooge Regeering*) in Batavia (Jakarta), correspondence with the 17 members of the Board of Directors (that is, *Heeren XVII*) from the factories and Batavia, their deliberations, correspondence with individual chambers, correspondence between Batavia and the factories, correspondence between factories (e.g., Bandar-e 'Abbās with Surat) or between one factory and its branches (e.g., Bandar-e 'Abbās with Isfahan, Kermān, Bušehr, Basra), treaties, official requests, attestations, price lists, memoranda for successors, special reports, instructions to staff, correspondence with other Europeans, correspondence with government authorities and merchants in Iran and the Persian Gulf, papers dealing with judicial affairs, invoices, orders (Dutch *eis*) for future shipments, profit-loss statements, bills of lading, lists of gifts, lists of monthly expenditures, and many other specialized documents.

The NA collections of V.O.C. related documents for this period are organized as follows:

V.O.C. archives.

(1) The Board of Directors and the Chamber of Amsterdam.

1. The resolutions of the Board of Directors. The proceedings of the seventeen managing directors mainly deal with commercial matters.

2. The The Hague Deliberations (*Haagsche Besogne*). A few of the managing directors held meetings in the The Hague. Their proceedings illuminate the



decision making process regarding the V.O.C. activities in Asia because the committee members read all correspondence coming from Asia and drafted the replies. These proceedings are divided in sections on [Basra](#), Kharg (see [Kharg Island](#); *Karreek* in the Dutch sources), and Persien.

3. The letter-books of the Board of Directors. The copies of the outgoing letters to the Governor-General in Batavia deal with trade and policy issues. The letter-books have special sections for letters concerning, for example, [Bandar-e 'Abbās](#) (*Gamron* in the Dutch sources) and Kharg.

4. The letters and other documents from the V.O.C. factories in Asia and Batavia received in the Netherlands (*Overgekomen Brieven en Papieren*). This collection is particularly important for research on Iran and the Persian Gulf, and consists of four groups: (a) The detailed reports (*Generale Missieven*) of the governor-general and his council in Batavia, submitted to the Board of Directors. The reports contain extensive discussions of the practical management issues (e.g., pricing, market access) that the V.O.C. faced in Asia (for abstracts of the reports up to 1750, see [Coolhaas](#)). (b) Letters from [Bandar-e 'Abbās](#), [Basra](#), and [Isfahan](#). They were sent overland to the Board of Directors. (c) The registers of the document copies submitted by the High Government of Batavia. The High Government was obliged to send to the Netherlands a copy of all documents that it had received. The nature and quality of these documents vary from year to year. The files of one year may preserve the entire correspondence of [Bandar-e 'Abbās](#), including correspondence with the authorities and V.O.C. branch offices, but those for the next year might only contain the outgoing letters from the factory in [Bandar-e 'Abbās](#). (d) The correspondence between [Bandar-e 'Abbās](#) and the V.O.C. factories that supplied it with goods and information. But documents concerning the first Dutch contacts with Muscat are found in this collection, as well as in the Sri Lanka (Ceylon) related archive.

5. The letters and other documents, sent oversea by trading ships rounding the Cape of Good Hope. This collection includes important documents about [Bandar-e 'Abbās](#) for the years 1653-54.

6. The letter-books and the resolutions of the High Government in Batavia. These papers document the deliberations of the governor-general and his council about the state of affairs at the factories in Asia and their subsequent instructions sent.



(2) The Zeeland Chamber. This collection mostly contains letters and other documents, and generally provides the same information as the collected documents of the V.O.C. factories in Asia and Batavia (see above (1) 4.). Occasionally this collection may hold letters that are not preserved in the archives of the Amsterdam Chamber.

(3) The archives of Batavia. The original documents are today held in the Indonesian National Archives (*Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia*, ANRI [Website 4]) in Jakarta, but most documents are also available as copies in The Hague.

1. The High Government. The archive was created by the governor-general and the council at Batavia, and contains mostly repertories and indexes of important documents for the years 1602-1827. Of particular interest is a history of the V.O.C. and the European involvement in Iran and the Persian Gulf (NA, *Hooge Regeering* no. 877), which was written in 1756 and includes a proposal for further V.O.C. activities (NB. the author's Persian translation is awaiting publication). The official diaries of the years 1624-82 were published by the Dutch government between 1887 and 1931 (*Dagh-register*).

2. Accountant General (*Boekhouder-Generaal*). This collection comprises the V.O.C. account books for the years 1699-1801, and allows for studying the trade flows and their rates of return between Iran and the Persian Gulf.

Archives of the Dutch central government agencies.

(1) The States General (*Staten-Generaal*). In general, in the proceedings of the Dutch parliament for the years 1576-1796, there are few documents related to Iran and the Persian Gulf. A collection of papers about the Dutch-Iranian diplomatic relations includes the original letters of the Safavid shahs 'Abbās I (r. 1587-1629) and Şafi I (r. 1629-42), as well as documents about the problems with the Isfahan factory in 1714 (Bayāni, 1976; Floor, 1978). The correspondence with the Dutch ambassador in Istanbul contains information about Basra.

(2) The consular records of Turkey and of Izmir (*Legatiearchief Turkije* and *Legatiearchief Smirna*). The archives contain political, commercial and diplomatic correspondence with the consulates in Istanbul (van der Meiden) and in Aleppo, including some Ottoman documents about Basra and Kharg in the second half of the 18th century. The diaries of the Dutch embassies also



provide information concerning the Ottoman-Iranian relations (Bosscha Erdbrink).

(3) The Archive of the Office of the Secretary to the Stadtholder at The Hague (*Stadhouderlijke Secretarie*). This collection, which covers the years 1747-95, contains some documents of interest to Iran and the Persian Gulf, as well as a few Italian reports concerning Iran.

Private archives of V.O.C. officials.

(1) Wollebrand Geleynssen de Jongh (1594-1674). Between 1613 and 1648 he worked in the Near East, and eventually became the director of trade in Persia and extraordinary Counsel of the Indies. His papers provide important information about Iran and the Persian Gulf during the 1640s, and includes about 30 copies of Persian documents concerning the 1645 commercial conflict with the Safavid Empire and the first Dutch voyage to Basra (Floor and Faghfoory).

(2) The Radermacher family. They enjoyed particular influence over the Zeeland chamber of the V.O.C. The collection spans the years 1595-1800, and contains documents concerning Basra and Kharg.

(3) Other private papers. Personal documents with important information concerning Iran and the Persian Gulf are preserved for these V.O.C. functionaries: Govert Cnoll (1644-1710); Thomas Hope (1704-79); Johannes Hudde (1628-1704); S. C. Nederburgh (1762-1811); and the 17th-century directors Sweers, Specx, van Vliet, and Mannis.

Private papers of Dutch diplomats.

Of particular interest to historians of the Persian Gulf are the papers of Cornelis Calkoen (1697-1764), who was the Dutch ambassador in Istanbul (1727-44), and the papers of the Hochepped family, whose members served between 1657 and 1772 as Dutch consuls in Izmir (Smyrna).

Miscellaneous acquisitions (Aanwinsten).

The collection comprises both official and private documents, the most important of which are the 1756 description of the Persian Gulf by Tido von Kniphausen (Floor, 1979) and the oldest known original Arabic letter from Muscat.



The map department.

The collection contains original V.O.C. maps and drawings, as well as printed atlases, maps, and charts.

HOLDINGS AFTER 1800

The main NA collection is the archive of the consular records of Tehran (*Legatiearchief Teheran*), which include the far from complete archives of the Dutch Consulate-General in Tehran for the years 1892-1912. It also provides important information about the Tehran department store of the Dutch entrepreneur Albert Hotz (1855-1930; see Witkam; Floor, 2007). The archive contains a large variety of political and consular material, such as original Persian documents banning the export of wheat.

The archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were in the 1970s transferred to the NA, and they offer additional information. In the so-called A-dossiers, there are mainly political reports (1909-12) and copies of telegrams related to the [Constitutional Revolution](#). The B-dossiers include documents, some of which are written in French, related to the Dutch consulate in Bušehr (1868-88), as well as some papers from the short-lived Dutch consulate in [Ahvāz](#). These documents deal with diplomatic, commercial, and judicial matters (Floor, 1983; 1987). Information about Iran is also preserved in the papers of various Dutch embassies (e.g., to France, Russia, U.S.A.), the Ministries of Trade and Economic Affairs, and the Dutch colonies, as well as in the private papers of men such as Joseph, Falck, or van Lier.

The regional NA office in Amsterdam owns a collection of late-19th-century documents that are related to the efforts of Dutch insurance companies to sell their services to Iranian customers.

The important photographic collection of Albert Hotz (Witkam) and of Barend Leeuwenburgh are held in the library of Leiden University. The National Museum of Ethnography (Rijksmuseum Museum voor Volkenkunde) owns a large collection of photographs shot between 1880 and 1900, while a small collection of photographs is accessible in the Museum of Ethnography (*Museum voor Volkenkunde*) in Rotterdam.

A collection of clothes and other items from the Qajar period is kept in the Textile Research Center of the Museum of Ethnography (*Museum voor Volkenkunde*) in Leiden.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ḳ. Bayani (Bayāni), *Les relations de l'Iran avec l'Europe occidentale à l'époque safavide*, Paris, 1937.

Idem, "Rawābet-e Irān va Holland dar zamān-e Ṣafaviya," *Barrasihā-ye tāriḳi* 6/2, 1976, pp. 107-134, with facsimile reproductions.

R. A. Bekius, "The Armenian Colony in Amsterdam in the 17th and 18th Century: Armenian Merchants from Julfa before and after the Fall of the Safavid Empire," in *Iran and the World in the Safavid Age*, ed. W. Floor and E. Herzig, London, forthcoming.

G. R. Bosscha Erdbrink, *At The Threshold of Felicity: Ottoman-Dutch Relations during the Embassy of Cornelis Calkoen at the Sublime Porte, 1726-1744*, Amsterdam, 1977; orig., Ph.D. diss., University of Utrecht, 1975.

W. Philippus Coolhaas et al., *Generale Missiven van Gouverneurs-Generaal en Raden aan Heren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, 11 vols., 's-Gravenhage, 1960-88.

Dagh-register gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlandts-India anno..., 30 vols., 's-Gravenhage, 1887-1931.

W. Floor, *Awwalin sofarā-ye Irān va Holland*, Tehran, 1978.

Idem, "A Description of the Persian Gulf and its Inhabitants in 1756," *Persica* 8, 1979, pp. 163-85.

Idem, "Hotz versus Muḥammad Shafī': A Case Study in Commercial Litigation in Qājār Iran, 1888-1894," *IJMES* 15, 1983, pp. 185-209.

Idem, "Le droit d'entreposage en Iran qajar," *Stud. Ir.* 17/1, 1988, pp. 57-91.

Idem, "Dutch Wholesalers and Retailers in Qajar Persia: 1815-1914," *Stud. Ir.* 36/2, 2007, pp. 185-227.



W. Floor and M. Faghfoory, *The First Dutch-Iranian Commercial Conflict: The Attack on Qeshm Island, 1645*, Costa Mesa, Calif., 2004.

A. H. de Groot, "Source Materials for the History of the Middle East in the General State Archives (ARA) of the Netherlands at The Hague," *Manuscripts of the Middle East* 1, 1986, pp. 8-14.

G. W. van der Meiden, *Het legatiearchief Turkije tot 1813*, s'Gravenhage, 1978.

M. A. P. Meilink-Roelofs et al., *De archieven van de Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie (1602-1795)*, vols., 's-Gravenhage, 1992; Dutch and English.

G. Vogelsang-Eastwood, *Qajar Dress from Iran in the National Museum of Ethnology*, Rotterdam, 2001; available as PDF file, www.rmv.nl/publicaties/8Qajar/e/hotzuk.pdf [Website 5].

J. J. Witkam, "Albert Hotz and His Photographs of Iran: An Introduction to the Leiden Collection," in *Iran and Iranian Studies: Essays in Honor of Iraj Afshar*, ed. K. Eslami, Princeton, N.J., 1998, pp. 276-87.

Internet sources (accessed 18 July 2012).

Website 1. English website of the National Archives of the Netherlands, <http://www.en.nationaalarchief.nl/>.

Website 2. TANAP = Towards a New Age of Partnership: A Dutch/Asian/South-African Programme of Cooperation, <http://www.tanap.net/index.htm>.

Website 3: "The Dutch East India Company (VOC): Dutch-Asiatic Shipping 1595-1795", part of the website of the Institute of Netherlands History, <http://www.inghist.nl/Onderzoek/Projecten/DAS>.

Website 4. ANRI = Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, the Indonesian National Archives in Jakarta, <http://www.anri.go.id/index.php>.

Website 5. Rijksmuseum Museum voor Volkenkunde, Leiden, www.rmv.nl/.