

Asia's Past Secured

Ten years ago UNESCO launched the Memory of the World Register 'to guard against collective amnesia calling upon the preservation of the valuable archive holdings and library collections all over the world ensuring their wide dissemination.' At the end of August, UNESCO selected the documentary collections of 20 countries to be included in the Register, among which are the VOC archives worldwide. The enormous size and global spread of these archives make the listing of the kilometres of VOC archives worldwide rather unique.

For the TANAP programme, this is a landmark indeed, rewarding the hard work of J. van Albada en Pieter Koenders over the last years. It is hoped that this UNESCO recognition will stimulate preservation of records, particular those in India, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia, which are often in a deplorable condition. Politicians often still think that such Western collections are not needed to research their own national history, let alone Asian history in general. Rather than remnants of a despised colonial past, such collections can and have been put to use in modern studies. ◀

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