

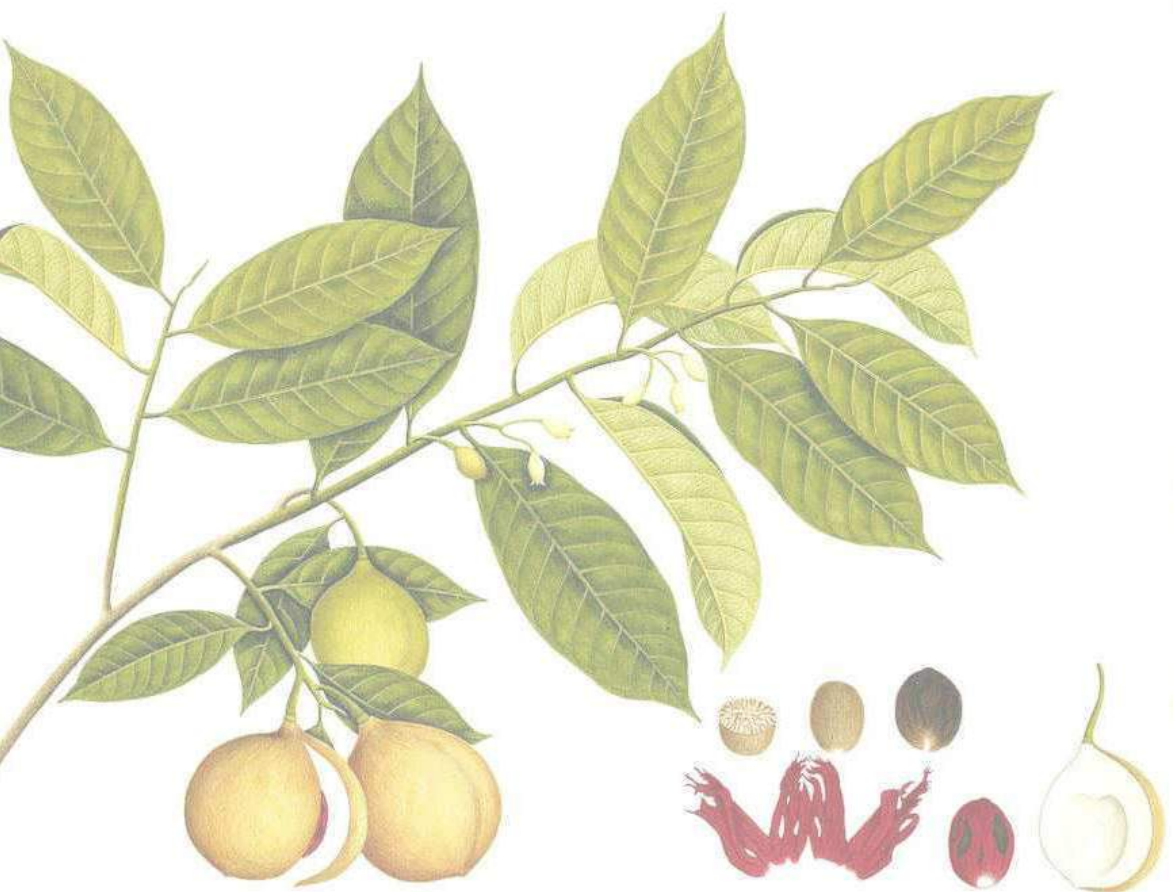


## Scanning Dutch-Asian Maritime Heritage

Preserving and publishing the original archives of the Dutch United East India Company (VOC, 1602 – 1799) in Indonesia



A Project by The Corts Foundation and  
The National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia



## Colophon

Scanning The Dutch-Asian Maritime Heritage  
Preserving and publishing the original VOC archives in Indonesia

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# Scanning the VOC Archives

In 2011 The Corts Foundation (TCF) in the Netherlands and the National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia (ANRI) started a joint rescue operation to digitally preserve the unique and original archives of the Dutch United East India Company (VOC, 1602 – 1799) in Indonesia.

Despite their current good archival storage conditions, much of these archives are too fragile to handle. Scanning and online publishing is the best way to ensure that the information in these archives is preserved in their current state. Digitization will also ensure that these archives are available for online access by the general public. This is a costly operation. Financial support is needed to help TCF and ANRI to achieve the ultimate goal to digitize the entire VOC archives.

**TEN million pages of the 17th and 18th century constitute the largest single document collection on Asian history anywhere in the world. It needs to be saved.**

## Status:

The surviving VOC archives at ANRI, Jakarta, Indonesia, were added to the UNESCO Memory of the World International Register in 2003.

The current archive is approximately 30% left of its original size.



## Archive condition:

The paper is in a critical condition and slowly but seriously deteriorating. Thousands of pages are already falling apart. At least 60% is damaged beyond repair because of the cumulative effects of centuries of storage in humid tropical conditions. Today, the archives are safely secured in cool and dry archive depots, but the process of decay can no longer be reversed.

## Solution:

Paper restauration is possible, but only for a few key documents as the process is too costly and time consuming. The only feasible solution is rapid mass digitization. This process was started three years ago, using two high resolution Zeutschel scanners. Today, scanning is done with a speed of about 1.000 scans a day, roughly 250.000 scans per year.

# Support the scanning

**and help to save these unique historical records!**

The project is on course now and we have invested in training people in the use of the Zeutschel scanners and other equipment. We have developed a web based publication system. But the cost of scanning, maintenance and resources will be very high, if we are to scan the entire VOC archives.

**To accomplish our mission, we need your support!**

Please 'adopt' one or more archive sections financially, so that we can scan their folios with the original handwriting.

Each section is unique and has a different number of pages, varying from a few hundred to even a thousand or more.

By supporting the scanning you will contribute to the safeguarding and publication of this world heritage.

To contact The Corts Foundation see page 11.





# The VOC Castle in the Port City of Batavia 1619-1800

**was the VOC's business headquarters in Asia**

During the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century the Dutch United East India Company (VOC) was the biggest European trading company in Asia. With dozens of trading posts, known as 'factories' and territories accross Asia, the VOC was one of the World's first multinational companies, which was active in most of the main ports in Maritime Asia.

The VOC had thousands of employees, a sophisticated system of logistics, effective lines of communication, and tough managers. Dutch investors and traders developed economic, social and political contacts in a wide range of countries: Japan, China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Iran, Yemen, Oman, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius and South Africa.

From 1619-1810, a large castle complex in the port of Batavia (Jakarta) functioned as the principal headquarters of the VOC in Asia. Batavia Castle was the nerve centre of European-Asian shipping, trade and diplomacy.

Thousands of Dutch and German migrants arrived on ships from Holland with their cargoes and crews. It was also visited by vessels from other European countres involved in Asian maritime trade, including England, France, Denmark, Spain, Portugal and – after its independence in 1786 - the United States of America.

Many sailors and soldiers were sent to other Asian destinations, like the famous Spice Islands of the Moluccas (Maluku), to buy the fine spices: pepper, cloves, nutmeg and mace. But there were also tens of thousands of Indonesian vessels hailing from the Java Sea region, as well as Arab and



**Batavia was a busy European trade centre and at the same time also a bustling Asian port**

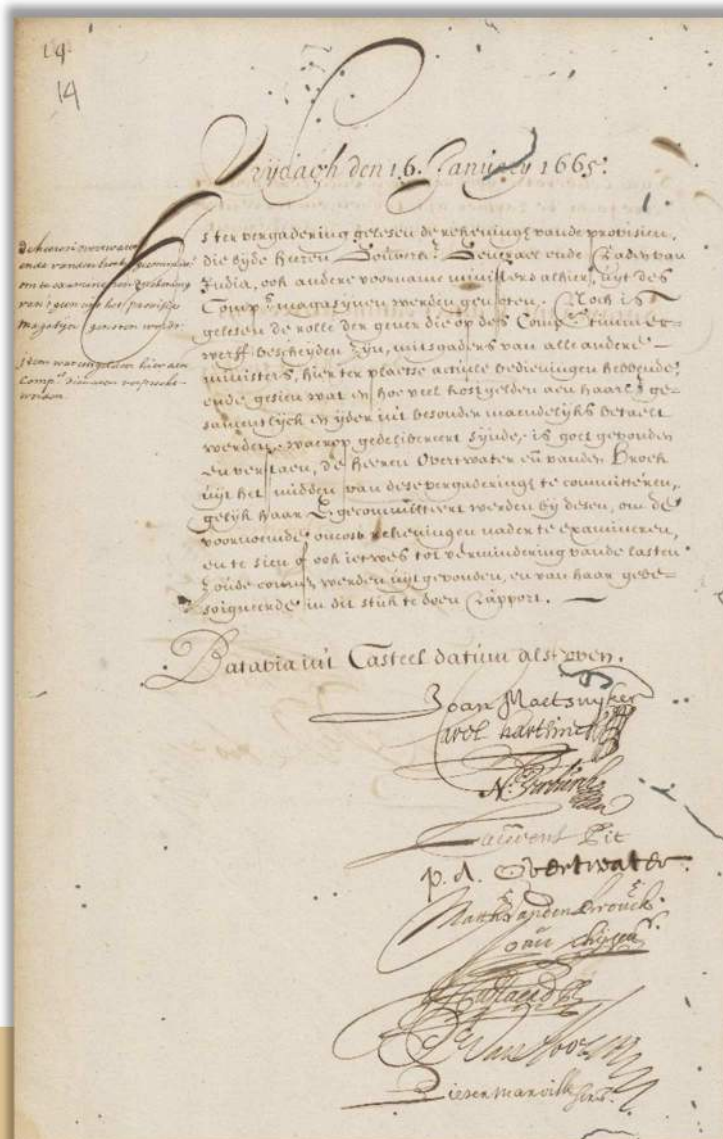
Persian ships, known as 'gurab' or galleys. Hundreds of Chinese junks full of porcelain, silk and tea, and Indian traders with costly cargoes of textiles and opium made Batavia – known as 'The Queen of the East' - one of the world's great maritime trade entrepôts.

In every VOC trading post in Asia, the Company's traders and governors recorded their daily commercial activities. Thousands of detailed reports and letters reached the Governors-General in Batavia Castle every year and dozens of clerks were tasked with their receipt and administration. An impressive, kilometres long, archive was created, part of which is still extant today.

The Batavia Castle Archives contain tens of thousands of detailed reports, most of which are still unknown to historians. The administration of incoming and outgoing ships is impressive in its scope, detailing thousands of cargoes and detailed calculations of prices and profits. These archival riches still lie hidden in this remarkable administrative record. Cargo lists, trading reports, contracts, diplomatic letters, and innumerable small requests from VOC servants, from the simplest sailor to the most senior trader, all await publication.

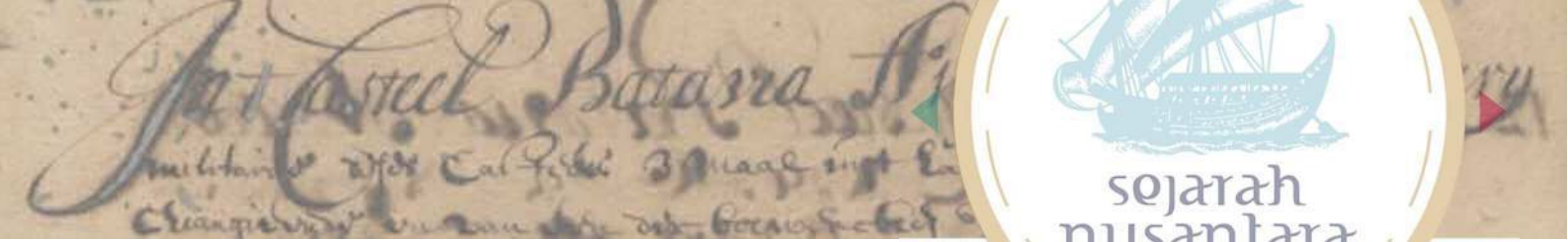
Besides trade and commerce, those interested in family history will eventually find access especially useful to the hundreds of meters of documents from Batavian notaries and the Widow and Orphan Chamber (*Weeskamer*). Many contain documents with detailing personal events.

Today, the Batavia Castle Archives are preserved by ANRI, which is explicitly tasked with rescuing,



**The Corts Foundation has committed herself to digitalize the paper legacy of Batavia Castle**





preserving and presenting the content of a considerable quantity of heavily damaged documents. It rarely happens that an archive of such impressive proportion is made available to the general public. When researched properly, the reconstruction of what historians call “the first Global Age of European-Asian Trade 1500-1800” will become a reality. A sailing report from Chinese skippers; illuminated letters from a Siamese (Thai) monarch; a request from an Indian textile trader; the deliberations of a Javanese regent (*bupati*), all show Asian history in all its multifaceted complexity. It encourages historical research if these are all online accessible to scholars worldwide.

Indonesian historians in particular will discover that it is possible to reconstruct the history of the archipelago before the advent of formal state colonialism in the nineteenth century. They will be able to reconstruct the history of previously independent kingdoms and sultanates from these folios. The fascinating world of the pre-colonial Nusantara will be found in these archives.

The archives of ‘Kota Tua’, the old city of Batavia, are also extremely interesting and contain a glimpse of the everyday lives of the citizens. Although in name a ‘colonial city’, in reality ninety percent of its population was Asian, including a majority of Indonesian people. Consequently, the history of Batavia City includes part of the history of the Asian people.

Many Javanese ships frequented the old port of Sunda Kelapa. Javanese fishermen sold their catch on the local fish market. The Chinese were active as shopkeepers and investors in the sugar culture. The Balinese and Makassarese worked in the paddy fields. Free Indians (“Mardijkers”) made a living as landowners. Over time a special group of people emerged: the “Orang Betawi”, the Batavian people.

Batavia was a multi-ethnic, multi-religious international trading port. With mosks, churches and Chinese

## Batavia City was a multi-ethnic and a multi-religious Asian society





temples. This cosmopolitan city connected Indonesia to the wider world. In the 17th and 18th century, the Sultan of Banten bought newspapers, books, a globe, spectacles and other European luxury goods in Batavia. He entered the city ‘incognito’ as a Pangeran or Prince.

This and thousands of other little stories, glimpses of social life, lists of personal belongings and property survived in the City Archives of Batavia. Hundreds of metres of notarial documents include testaments, small contracts, testimonies, transactions and other such documents. The Board of Aldermen left its minutes and interrogations, as a crime fighting institution. The European Orphan Chamber registered the capital of minor orphans, as did the Chinese or “Oriental” Orphan Chamber.

All of the Batavia City Archives have seldom been investigated by international and national historians. Digitalization and online publication are necessary instruments to bring this once bustling cosmopolitan city to life again.





# German Traces in Asia

**“Gewiß ist es, daß unter der Miliz kaum zehen Holländer, sondern eitel Fremde, Polacken, Schweitzer, Westphälinger, sind’.**

This observation on Batavia’s defence militia was made by Johann Gottlieb Worms (1688-1735) in his *Ost-Indian- und Persianische Reisen* (1745). Between sixty and forty percent of the soldiers and sailors on VOC-ships were Germans. Many German soldiers ended up defending the VOC’s fortresses everywhere in Asia. Several studies have shown that the percentage of Germans working for the VOC was always high.

## Military and Sailors

The percentage of military and sailors who were enlisted for a voyage to Asia from other northern European countries varied. But in the eighteenth century their number only increased. The VOC-chambers of Hoorn and Enkhuizen attracted many men from Baltic ports. Some left a diary, like Georg Naporra from East Prussia (1731-1793). His adventures are brilliantly narrated by Roelof van Gelder.

Overall one might say that between forty and sixty percent of the VOC’s personnel (a total of one million) were from northern European countries outside the Dutch Republic. The vast majority of them were German.

## Officers and Governors

Many Germans climbed quickly up the ranks of the VOC. Most well known was Baron Gustaaf Willem van

Imhoff born in Leer in Lower Saxony, who became Governor of Ceylon (1736-1740) and crowned his career as Governor-General (1743-1750). The East Frisian-born Baron Tido von Inn- und Kniphausen, the first VOC agent in Basra (Persia), built Fort Mosselstein (1753-1766) on the island of Khark in the Persian Gulf to sell Javanese sugar and Indian textiles. The one-



eyed battle-scarred captain-engineer Balthazar Friedrich Wilhelm Baron Von Lützow (1757-1822) from Perlin, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, was in charge of the defence of Fort Oranje on Ternate in the late 18th century. He renovated the fort and fought a series of naval engagements against Prince Nuku and the British frigates using native praus in the 1780s and 1790 until the VOC's capitulation in June 1801. These are just a few of the Germans who sought and found their fortunes in Asia at the end of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) period (1602-1799).

## Arts and Sciences

German scientists, linguists and artists also made their mark on Asian history. The linguist Georg Heinrich Werndly (born in Beesten [Emsland] in 1693 - died in Batavia 1744) published a Malay-language instruction in Amsterdam in 1736. In his capacity of pastor he translated the Psalms into Malay. He was responsible for the final realization of the translation of the Bible into Malay (1730). After his return to Europe in 1737 he became "außordenlicher Professor für oriëntalische Sprachen und Prediger in Lingen" (professor extraordinary in Oriental languages and Preacher in Lingen).

Johan Maurits Mohr (1716-1775) from Eppingen specialized in meteorology, vulcanology and astronomy. He build a large observatory in Batavia in 1760 for his research into astronomy. Born in 1720, in Copenhagen, Denmark, the artist Johannes Rach made a remarkable career as artillery major and personal painter/artist to Governor-General Petrus van der Parra (in office, 1761-1775). He produced hundreds of topographic drawings of city views, fortresses, and landscapes. The biggest collection of remaining materials of Rach's drawings are held in the National Library of Indonesia.

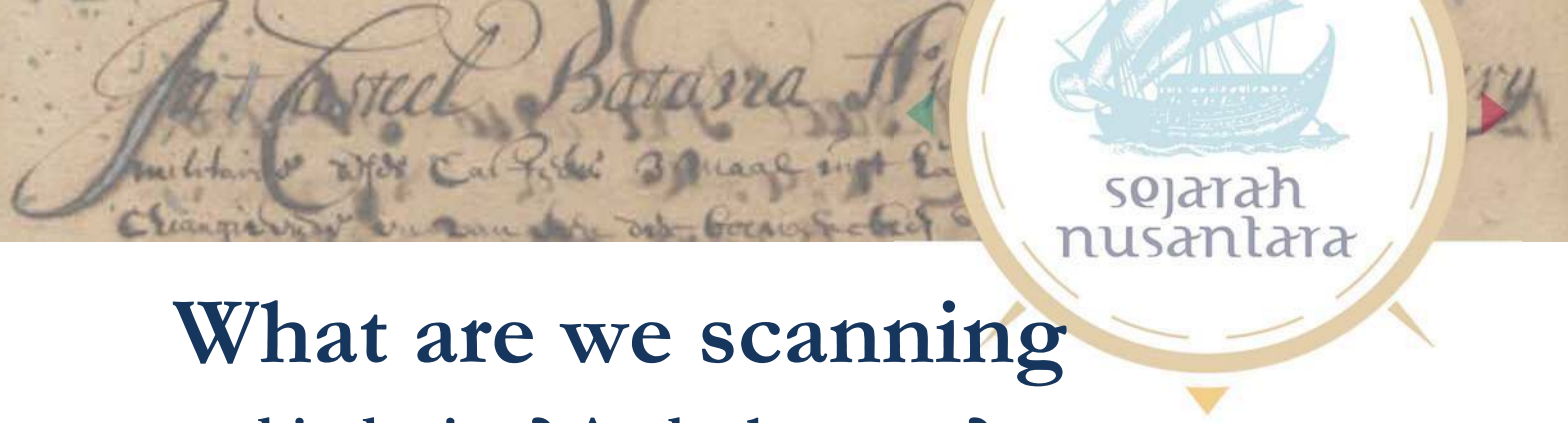
## "Die Entzauberung Asians": German scientists, travelers and artists made Asia familiar in Europe



## The German-Asian Encounter

Digitalization and online publication of thousands of unknown documents will make it possible to collect data on the lives of men and women from Germany which provided much of the manpower for the VOC between 1602 and 1799. They formed an essential part of the European-Asian encounter during the early modern period (1600-1800) and deserve special attention.

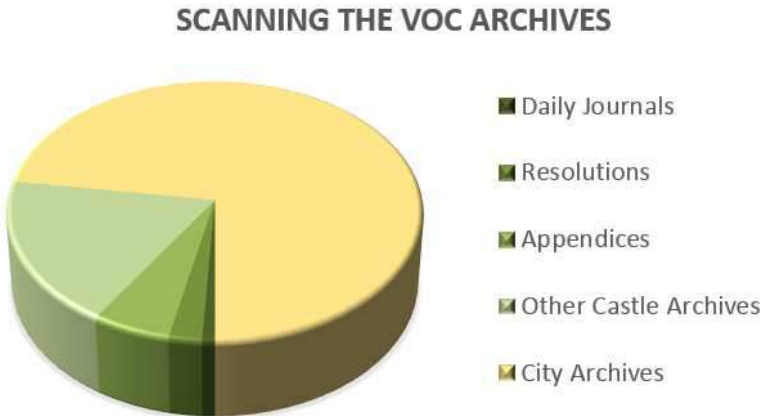




# What are we scanning and indexing? And what next?

Because of the sheer size of the archives, we select and plan carefully to be able to use all our limited resources effectively. The total volume of scans available online is constantly increasing. The publication of scans and data of our first archive series are already online and we are confident that we have enough experience and tools to continue for the coming years.

Our first scanned and published series that went online in 2014 are the **Daily Journals of Batavia Castle**. Comprising 84.620 scans these constitute the largest daily chronicle ever created by a European trading company in Asia. This source can be searched with a database of 95.536 entries. Now that this initial task has been successfully completed, we have continued with the archive series of the **Resolutions of Batavia Castle**, a larger series of 232.888 scans. This series will be published online by mid-2015.



In 2014 we also started to scan the **Appendices to the Resolutions of Batavia Castle**. This is a voluminous series of about 555.000 pages. It includes approximately 25.000 unique and unknown documents. To scan and publish this series will take until 2017. But scanning is not enough. Who wants to just browse through thousands of scans looking for particular information? In the project professional archivists and historians are creating detailed databases with additional digitized data that give access to individual pages and documents.

TCF creates also large history databases to improve access to the volume of scans

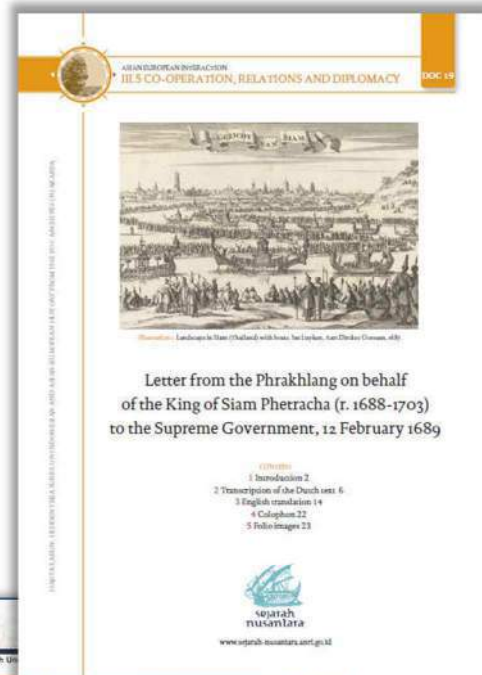
Creating these databases lead to real discoveries. The database for the Daily Journals of Batavia turned out to contain more than 4.300 unknown diplomatic letters from more then 600 Asian kings, rulers and dignitaries. An archival treasure with new scientific research opportunities!

# Our online publications

are a contribution to Digital World Heritage

We have the objective to preserve and publish these unique archives and to provide unlimited online access to historians and the general public world wide.

To achieve this we have decided not only to scan the archives, but also to create large history databases and special search facilities. The website that we launched in 2013 on an international archive conference in Bandung not only presents the digital results of our project, but also provides background information and serves a platform for scientists to publish articles on special archive documents from the archives. We transcribe documents and translate them from the Old Dutch into Indonesian and English. Altogether this makes it an advanced Digital Humanities Project for professionals in Asian-European and World History.

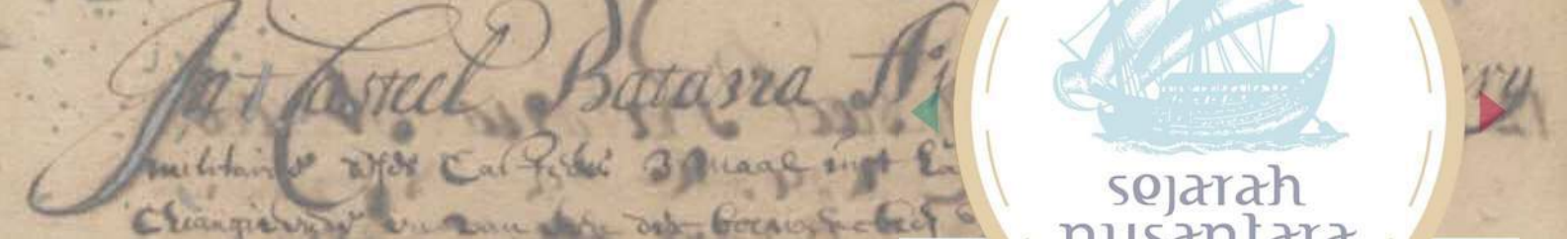


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to explore the archive, the articles, the scans and inventories





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