

Erfenisskepping en navorsing

Die terrein van historiese navorsing bestaan uit die wetenskaplike ondersoek deur vakwetenskaplikes, maar toenemend ook uit die werk van 'n veskeidenheid erfeniskundiges. In Junie 2002 het die Suid-Afrikaanse Historiese Genootskap by die Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit, in samewerking met die Universiteit van Fort Hare, 'n konferensie van buitengewone belangrikheid aangebied oor die tema Erfenisskepping en navorsing: die herstrukturering van Historiese Studies in Suidelike Afrika. In hierdie uitgawe van *Historia* word van die referate in aertikelvorm gepubliseer. Daarin word veral op die wisselwerking tussen erfenis en Geskiedenis ingegaan. By uitstek word gewys op die verwantskap tussen Geskiedenis as dissipline en historiese bewussyn, soos wat dit gestalte vind in die optrede van mense, monumente en bewaringspraktyk van die nasionale biblioteek. Daar is ook bydraes wat die verhelderende perspektief van mondelinge bronne tot historiese navorsing uitlig, terwyl drie bydraes die fisiese natuurerfenis as wesenlike komponent van die dissipline van Geskiedenis onderstreep. Die oogmerk met die artikels is om die besinning oor die veelvuldige dimensies van Historiese Studies onder die aandag te bring van vakwetenskaplikes, sowel as erfenispraktisyns en om toekomstige navorsingsamewerking te bevorder.

Die konferensie het die volgende met betrekking tot Historiese Studies onderstreep:

'Reality', whether historical or in the present, is not static, but a dynamic, quality. History is not fixed in time, but changing within the present. Objects have not a single past but an unbroken sequence of past times leading backward from the present moment.¹

GRIETJIE VERHOEF RAU

Historici en die demokratiese reg op toegang tot inligting

Die wet op die bevordering van toegang tot inligting, Nr. 2 van 2000 is tans 'n buitengewone belangrike besprekingsonderwerp in die Suid-

1. F.F.J. SCHOUTEN, "Heritage as Historical Reality", in D.T. HERBERT, *Heritage, Tourism and Society*, (Mansell, Londen, 1995), p. 23.

Afrikaanse samelewing. Die Pretoriase hooggeregshof het pas die ouditeur-generaal opdrag gegee om aan 'n private onderneming, CCII Systems (Pty) Ltd, dokumentasie beskikbaar te stel wat op die staat se omstrede strategiese pakkette vir wapenaankope betrekking het.²

Die implikasie van hierdie uitspraak sal nog verreikende gevolge vir die Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing meebring. Dit is in baie opsigte een van die hoekstene van 'n vry en demokratiese bestel. Die feit dat inligting, veral inligting wat in die besit van de staat is, om verstaanbare en sinvolle redes oopgestel word, beteken dat inligting nie meer sonder meer in geslote kluse vir 'n onbeperkte tydperk opgegaan kan word nie. Dit kan ook dan sommer maklik gebeur dat die inligting 'verdwyn'.

In die artikel "Future of the past: access to public archives in southern Africa and challenges to historical research" doen Patrick Ngulube van die Universiteit van Natal, 'n beroep op historici om meer betrokke te raak by die werksaamhede van argiewe in soverre dit op die behoefte aan bewaring, ontsluiting en toegang tot dokumentêre gegewens betrekking het. Sy motivering is sinvol:

It is important to note that, although other researchers and academics use archives, historians and their students remain valuable clients of archives, for one major reason. Historical knowledge depends on documentary evidence.

Daar is 'n magdom terreine in die moderne argiefbedryf waarby historici 'n regstreekse belang het. Indien daar kommer oor die toedrag van sake bestaan, is dit ook van meer as net verbygaande aard. Behalwe die kwessie van dokumente wat vir 'n bepaalde tyd geslote is, kan historici met goeie reg bekommerd raak oor die feit dat in die jaar 2000 dokumentasie wat 8 877 liniêre meters beslaan, sonder enige vindmiddels op die rakke van Suid-Afrikaanse argiefbewaarplekke gestaan het.

Indien ons wil toesien dat die relevansie van geskiedenis en die kwalitatiewe bydrae van die dissipline tot die verbetering van die algemene toestand van die samelewing kan bydra, is dit die taak van die historikus om betrokke te raak en vas te stel op welke wyse 'n belangrike lewensaar van inligting omtrent die verlede vir ons ontsluit kan word.

2. ANON., "Information Act passes major test" *Business Day*, 2002.11.16 at <http://www.bday.co.za/bday/content/direct/1,3523,1226434-6078-0,00.html>

‘n Verdienstelike inisiatief

Aan die begin van Oktober 2002 het historici en verteenwoordigers van die departement onderwys die *South African History Project* se konferensie in die Wes-Kaap bygewoon. ‘n Verslag oor die konferensie verskyn in hierdie uitgawe van *Historia*. Die aanduidings is dat ons ’n daadwerklike stap in die rigting van ’n herlewing in die geskiedenisonderrig op skool te wagte kan word. Die regering het daarmee erns, en so ook ’n groot aantal leerkragte op alle vlakke in die onderwyssektor.³

Dit is duidelik dat herinnering, die vertelling van verhale, die ontsluiting van geheime, die verdramatisering van die verlede, musiek en die skilderkuns, maar net enkele van die hulpmiddels is wat gebruik gaan word om ‘n belangrike dissipline op ‘n dinamiese manier oor te dra. Nog belangriker is die ineensmelting van geskiedenis met argeologie en bepaalde natuurwetenskaplike dissiplines wat van waarde in die ontsluiting van die verlede kan wees.⁴ Die dinamiese navorsingsresultate in die eietydse geskiedenis het ook pas die lig gesien.⁵ Ofskoon hierdie materiaal grootliks op die terrein van kultuurstudies van toepassing is, kan historici baie baat daarby vind wanneer die geskiedenis van die hede geïnterpreteer word.

Daar is dus goeie rede om opgewonde oor die toekoms van geskiedenis te raak.

Wat nou behoort te gebeur is dat die lesinglokale aan universiteite met studente gevul word wat, as deel van hulle voorgraadse studies, formele opleiding in die bestudering van geskiedenis ontvang. Dit is eenvoudig onaanvaarbaar dat studente bloot op ‘n eerstejaarsvlak geskiedenis neem en dan later met die karige inligting van ‘n inleidende module in die dissipline geskiedenisonderwysers word.

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- 3 . Kyk MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, Report of the history & archaeology panel to the minister of education: update 2002 (Third edition, Ministry of Education, HSRC, Pretoria, 2002).
 - 4 . DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND THE HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL, *Facing facts: educators find ways to meet the challenges of our dynamic history*, Supplement HSRC publication, 2002.11.17, pp. 1-8.
 - 5 . A. ZEGEYE (Ed.), *Social identities in the new South Africa: After apartheid – Volume One* (Kwela Books and SA History Online, Cape Town, 2001); R. KRIGER AND A. ZEGEYE (Eds.), *Culture in the new South Africa: after apartheid – Volume two* (Kwela Books and SA History online, Cape Town, 2002).

Indien daar op dié weg voortgebou word, sal ons later ‘n dure les betaal – oppervlakkige kennis van belangrike historiese ontwikkelingstendense wat ons alledaagse lewe beïnvloed.

Daar rus by historici en leerfasiliteerders ook ‘n groot mate van verantwoordelikheid. Die dissipline moet so ontwikkel word dat dit in ‘n onderrig- en leesomgewing relevant en interessant is. Daaruit word ‘n voortgesette belangstelling in die dissipline reeds van ‘n vroeë ouderdom af by die leerder gekweek.

Vir die dissipline van geskiedenis is daar nou ‘n kans om weer eens op skool goeie vooruitgang te maak. Die vraag is: gaan ons die geleentheid aangryp en die beste daarvan maak, of gaan ons apaties daarteenoor staan? Ons hoop dat daar in die belang van die geskiedenis ‘n positiewe respons uit alle oorde op die nuwe inisiatief gaan kom.

Heritage creation and research

Historical research is conducted by scientists in History, but increasingly also by specialists in heritage. In June 2002 the South African Historical Association organised at the Rand Afrikaans University, in collaboration with the University of Fort Hare, a milestone conference on the theme of Heritage Creation and Research: the restructuring of Historical Studies in Southern Africa. In this edition of *Historia* a number of articles flowing from conference papers are presented. They have a bearing on the relationship between heritage and History. The focus is on the interplay between History as discipline and historical consciousness, as manifested in the behaviour of people, monuments and practices of preservation in the National Library. There are contributions emphasising the enlightening perspective of oral sources towards historical research. Others show the additional perspective of the natural heritage in heritage and historical research, contributions which are greatly appreciated in the discussions on heritage. The aim is to bring the multitude of dimensions of Historical Studies to the attention of scientific historians as well as heritage practitioners and to promote future research co-operation.

The conference underlined the following with respect to Historical Studies:

‘Reality’, whether historical or in the present, is not static, but a dynamic, quality. History is not fixed in time, but changing within the present. Objects have not a single past but an unbroken sequence of past times leading backward from the present moment.¹

GRIETJIE VERHOEF RAU

Historians and the democratic right of access to information

The law on the promotion of access to information, No. 2 of 2000 is currently an exceptionally important topic of discussion in South African society. The Pretoria Supreme court has just instructed the auditor general

1. F.F.J. SCHOUTEN, “Heritage as Historical Reality”, in D.T. HERBERT, *Heritage, Tourism and Society*, (Mansell, London, 1995), p. 23.

to give access to a private company, CCII Systems (Pty) Ltd, of the documentation in respect of the controversial strategic package for arms purchases of the state.²

The implication of this judgement that was handed down by the court is bound to have far reaching consequences for South African society. It forms, in effect, one of the corner stones of a free and democratic dispensation. The fact that information, especially in the possession of the state, is opened for practical and reasonable purposes, implies that information can no longer simply be shut down in locked in vaulted chambers for an unlimited period of time. One danger is that the information can simply ‘disappear’.

In the article, “Future of the past: access to public archives in southern Africa and challenges to historical research” Patrick Ngulube of the University of Natal, makes a call on historians to get more involved in the activities of archives in as much as it has a bearing on the conservation, opening up, and access to documentary information. His motivation makes sense:

It is important to note that, although other researchers and academics use archives, historians and their students remain valuable clients of archives, for one major reason. Historical knowledge depends on documentary evidence.

There are many areas in the modern archives industry where historians have a vested interest. If there is thus a concern over the prevailing state of affairs, it is of more than passing interest. Apart from the fact that information is closed for a specific period of time, historians have good reason to be worried about the fact that in the year 2000 documentation, covering 8 877 linear metres, on the shelves of South African archival repositories, had no basic access facilities.

If we want to see that the relevance of history increases and the qualitative contribution the discipline can make, can gain new heights towards the improvement of the general condition of society, it is the task of the historian to get involved and determine how important and vital source of information about the past can be accessed in the most effective manner.

2 . ANON., “Information Act passes major test” *Business Day*, 2002.11.16 at <http://www.bday.co.za/bday/content/direct/1,3523,1226434-6078-0,00.html>

A deserving initiative

At the start of October 2002 historians and representatives of the department of education participated in the proceedings of a conference of the *South African History Project* in the Western Cape. A report appears in this edition of *Historia*. Indications are that we are moving in the direction of a revival of history teaching at school. For the government it is a matter of priority, and also for a number of educators on all levels in the teaching profession.³

It is clear that memory, the telling of stories, disclosures on secrets, the dramatisation of the past, music and the art of painting, are only a few of the aids that will be used in presenting the important discipline of history in a dynamic manner to a potential audience. Even more important is the integration of history, archaeology and a number of natural sciences that can be valuable to opening up the past.⁴ The dynamic researches of contemporary historical inquiry have also recently been published.⁵ Although this information is basically in the field of cultural studies, historians can benefit from it in the process of interpreting the history of the present.

There is thus good reason to feel excited about the future of history.

What now needs to happen is that the lecture halls at universities must be filled with students who, as a part of the undergraduate studies, receive formal training in the study of history as a discipline. It is untenable to have a situation in which students only study history on the first year level, and then, equipped with a rudimentary knowledge of discipline, be placed in a position to teach history at school.

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3. See MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, Report of the history & archaeology panel to the minister of education: update 2002 (Third edition, Ministry of Education, HSRC, Pretoria, 2002).
 4. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND THE HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL, *Facing facts: educators find ways to meet the challenges of our dynamic history*, Supplement HSRC publication, 2002.11.17, pp. 1-8.
 5. A. ZEGEYE (Ed.), *Social identities in the new South Africa: After apartheid – Volume One* (Kwela Books and SA History Online, Cape Town, 2001); R. KRIGER and A. ZEGEYE (Eds.), *Culture in the new South Africa: after apartheid – Volume two* (Kwela Books and SA History online, Cape Town, 2002).

If we have to continue on this course, we're bound to pay a price – superficial knowledge of important historical trends that shape our everyday lives.

Historians and learning facilitators have a substantial responsibility. The discipline must be developed in such a manner that it becomes relevant and interesting in a teaching and reading environment. From that starting point a continued interest in the discipline should be nurtured with the learner.

For the discipline of history there is now a chance to once again make progress at school. The question is: are we going to make use of the opportunity and make the best of it, or are we going to be apathetic? We hope that in the interest of history there will be a positive response from all quarters.