

Duo-internship History & Biology – Ecological data in Monastery Archives

Until the middle of the previous century, many monastic orders left their mark on Dutch society. Not only through their charitable activities, such as running hospitals, schools and retirement homes, but also because they, as large landowners, decided on the layout and management of many hectares of land. In this research, we want to learn more about the **role of monasteries and monastic orders on the ecological layout and management of Dutch landscapes**. What land did the monasteries actually manage, what management measures did they apply and what were the consequences of this on the ecology of the areas?

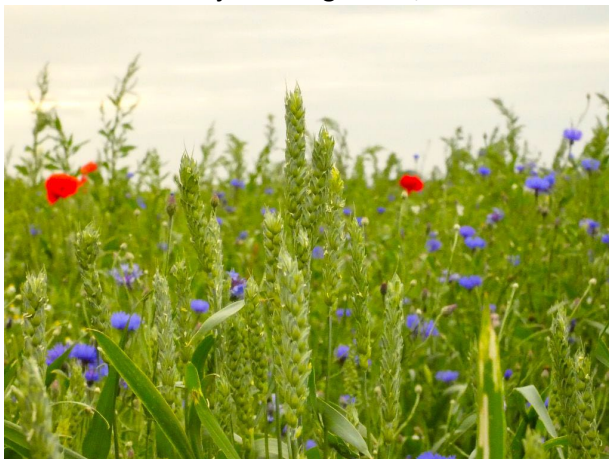


Left, the Soeterbeeck monastery in Ravenstein. Right, the garden of the St. Agatha monastery near Cuijk

As a Catholic university, the RU has always had close ties with various monasteries. For example, the [Soeterbeeck](#) monastery in Ravenstein was donated to the RU and the RU maintains close ties with the [St. Agatha](#), the oldest still inhabited monastery in the Netherlands. The [Erfgoedcentrum Kloosterleven](#) is located in St. Agatha, which manages >100 archives of old Dutch monastic orders. For this research, we are looking for a **History student and a Biology student, who want to delve into the archives together** in search of data on how the monastic orders dealt with their land and the effects thereof. Because many of the archives in St. Agatha have not yet been researched, the first step of the research is to compile an overview of which sources are present.

Then, using a case study, you will go into depth and answer the following question: what can monastery archives yield for more ecologically responsible management of agricultural landscapes? Consider matters such as: which crops were grown, what were the production levels, what management measures were there for ditches and fields, among other things? How exactly the research will be designed, will be done in consultation with the students and the supervisory team.

In addition to the joint assignment, there are also two sub-assignments that are more specifically



aimed at the study of Biology or History (only Biology shown here). For Biology, the sub-assignment can also be done as a separate desk study (see internship “Effects of ancient grain cultivation on biodiversity”). In the sub-assignment we want to investigate how initiatives that grow old crops, such as [Graangeluk](#), [Landschapsbeheer Zeeland](#), [Kerkhovense Molen](#) and [Doornik Natuurakkers](#), link the biology and history of old crops to the ecological consequences. Consider questions such as: did they use certain sources to set up

their initiatives, and if so, which ones? Which crops do they use, what were the reasons for choosing these crops and how did they obtain the seeds? Which cultivation and management measures do they take, such as sowing, water use, fertilization, do herbs grow in the field? And is there also an effect on biodiversity in these fields, for example on the amount of type of field weeds? And what could we learn from these production methods to make our conventional cereal production more nature-inclusive?

Requirements: Master student with affinity for social initiatives and with an interest in history and biodiversity of agricultural lands. As you will be diving into the monastery archives, a good command of Dutch is a prerequisite. German or French can be an advantage.

Start date: in consultation. Both students do not have to start at the same time, but there must be an overlap in the internship duration for the joint assignment (+/-10 ECTS).

Internship size: in consultation. For Biology students, either a normal internship (36 ECTS) or an internship in the free space (<36 ECTS) can be done. Depending on the interests of the student and the availability of a History internship student, this study can also be focussed on only the ancient grains sub-project. For more information, please see the info-sheet on the internship “Ecological data in Monastery Archives”. For history students, an extended internship (15-20 ECTS) is preferred.

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