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## Danish Tranquebar projects part of 2006-2007 Galathea 3 expedition

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**Web site:** <http://www.galathea3.dk/uk/Menu/The+expedition+2006-2007>

150 years after the first Danish maritime research expedition to the Far East, the so called Galathea 1 expedition (1845-47), Danish researchers in many fields participated in a similar round-the-world expedition, Galathea 3, that roughly followed the same sea route as its predecessor in the 1840s and the much publicised Galathea 2 expedition, carried out during the years 1950-52.

On Friday 11 August 2006, the 3rd Galathea Expedition was en route (after more than six years of intensive planning), when the expedition ship VÆDDEREN, an offshore patrol frigate temporary refitted as an expeditionary vessel, departed Copenhagen harbour. The course initially took the ship to the North Atlantic, with stops in the Faeroe Islands and Greenland. Then the route turned south along the west coast of Afrika with a stop-over in Ghana, to Cape Town (*photo below from the arrival to Cape Town on 15 October 2006*).

From South Africa the ship then travelled eastwards across the Indian Ocean to Australia, Solomon Islands and New Zealand, before crossing also the Pacific Ocean with the destination Chile.

The expedition then continued northwards along the west coast of South America to the Galapagos Islands, through the Panama Canal to the Caribbean and the US, and concluded its circumnavigation of the globe with a voyage across the Atlantic, whereupon it arrived back in Copenhagen ultimo April 2007.



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## Strengthening Danish research

The idea of sending out a third Galathea expedition was put forward from several quarters in Denmark, not least when the new millennium, and thus the 50th anniversary of the departure of the second Galathea expedition, was approaching. However, it was the newspaper Morgenavisen Jyllands-Posten that picked up



the baton and developed the idea into the concept that has since developed into a broad national event and a poster project for Danish research.

The aim of Galathea 3 is to strengthen Danish research, not only by virtue of the implementation of specific research projects onboard, but also in relation to the international research network of which Denmark is a part. At the same time, Galathea 3 is intended to provide a boost for the recruitment of new scientists in the future. The ship is fully equipped with modern communication systems enabling it to transmit news of natural science direct to classrooms back in Denmark, as well as a number of students will be on board to make their own studies. [Galathea 3 Expedition web page](#).

The Galathea 3 expedition was planned and implemented by the so-called Danish Expedition Foundation, a commercially operating foundation established by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation. The Danish Expedition Foundation has at the same time been entrusted with the task of raising funds to secure the financing of the project, partly through government grants and partly through donations from private foundations and enterprises. The Danish Expedition Foundation bears the same name as the foundation behind Galathea 2 (1950-52) and a number of other expeditions.

On behalf of the Danish Expedition Foundation's board of trustees, the Danish Research Agency (since 1 May 2006 part of the [Danish Agency for Science, Technology and Innovation](#)) in 2004 invited proposals and ideas for destinations and projects to be included in the Galathea 3 expedition. The invitation was implemented as a public preliminary survey, for which scientists and research institutions were invited to submit proposals for destinations and possible projects to be included in the expedition.

On 29 November 2005, the Danish Expedition Foundation issued an announcement of the total of 71 projects that had been selected to participate in the expedition, several of them connected to the Indian Ocean, the Nicobar Islands and Tranquebar in India.

### Strong connection to Nicobar Islands, Tranquebar and Serampore

When Galathea 1 (1845-47) departed from Copenhagen on 14 May 1845, the Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters had received a letter from King Christian VIII, who was known for, among other things, his great interest in natural history. This was the beginning of the first Galathea expedition. The letter included, among others, the following passage: "We have decided to send the Corvette Galathea to the East Indian Islands and particularly the Nicobar Islands, over which We hold Sovereignty and Trade, in order to perform scientific Survey of the natural Products of this Group of Islands and their use for Cultivation and Trade."

In his instructions, the king furthermore requested the academy to appoint "persons learned in the study of Nature and aides to assist them". The purpose of the expedition was, besides the exploration of the Nicobar Islands, to hand over the Danish colonies of Tranquebar in South India and Frederiksnagore (present-day Serampore) in Bengal to the British East India Company, the expansion of the trade with China, and negotiation and conclusion of new trading contracts.

The second Galathea expedition (1950-52) visited several of the destinations that also Galathea 1 had visited more than 100 years earlier. One of these destinations was again the not particularly well-known former Danish colony, the Nicobar Island in the Bay of Bengal. The research scientists on Galathea 2 followed up on the findings from the first Galathea expedition in order to document the development over the intervening period.

The 2006-07 Galathea 3 expedition did not make any stop-overs in India, not even in the Nicobar Islands – extremely hit by the tsunami disaster in 2004. Researchers on board were however supposed to make several scientific studies related to the Indian Ocean. For example, Dr. Torkel Gissel Nielsen from the Dept. of Marine Ecology, [National Environmental Research Institute](#) in Roskilde, would do a study of "Plankton dynamics in the Andaman Sea", funded by the Danish Research Council for Nature and Universe.

### Tranquebar Initiative of the National Museum of Denmark

Still around 20 research projects connected to Tranquebar were supposed to be carried out within the framework of the Galathea 3 expedition, and also a couple of projects dealing with the Nicobar Islands and Serampore (Frederiksnagore).

[The Tranquebar Initiative of the National Museum of Denmark](#), with several projects in different fields being coordinated by the National Museum of Denmark. The museum has rich collections from the 1845 expedition, when the corvette Galathea visited the then Danish colony of Tranquebar (in present-day Tamil Nadu). On that occasion Captain Steen Bille at an official ceremony lowered the Danish flag Dannebrog from the flagpole of the Fort Dansborg, since the visit took place in connection with the transfer of



the Danish colonial properties in India to England. During the visit, the expedition members travelled inland, registering daily life in the villages on the former Danish territory and collecting objects for The Ethnographical Museum in Copenhagen, which is now a part of the National Museum of Denmark.

On the modern Galathea3, the Tranquebar projects were given a land-based platform, from where they were transmitted to the ship about various forms of activities. The goal of the Tranquebar Initiative has been to strengthen the ongoing Indo-Danish efforts to preserve the intercultural heritage and to explore the colonial Indo-Danish cultural encounters. Also restoration of building structures from the Danish period (1620-1845) is taking place as well as investigations related to the social and cultural processes of transformation taking place in modern Tranquebar within almost all sectors.

The Tranquebar Initiative of the National Museum of Denmark is an interdisciplinary endeavour and prepared in close collaboration with a number of Indian authorities and Indian and Danish research institutions. The Initiative ranges from various research projects to restorations of buildings from the colonial time and the collecting of ethnographical items to elucidate present daily life, as well as historical and ethnographical exhibit activities in Denmark and India. The plan is in the various projects to involve a number of PhD-projects and also master students and trainees from both Denmark and India.

[More information about the projects within the Tranquebar Initiative.](#)



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