
BACKGROUNDER

1. Foundation

The Zero Project Foundation (**ZP**) is a non-profit organization granted ANBI tax exempt status. We aim to elucidate the origin of the numeral zero (as distinct from the placeholder zero) in history as to date it remains unknown. There are longstanding conjectures that the origin of the numeral zero lies in India, but to date there has been no incontrovertible proof nor consensus among scholars. That the modern zero in use worldwide hails from India is well documented.

2. Background

ZP's working hypothesis is that the invention of the mathematical numeral zero required the prior evolution of a sophisticated concept of 'nothingness' or its derivative 'emptiness'. All ancient cultures (Egyptian, Babylonian, Chinese, Greek, Arabic, Mayans, etc.) could certainly have played an important role in either independent co-invention or transmission of zero.

3. Goal

ZP aims to clarify the issue, primarily by examining closely on this point what extant evidence there may still be, including: (copies of) ancient manuscripts / religious / philosophical treatises; stone inscriptions; archaeological sites; iconography; calendrics; numismatics, etc.

4. Realization

We aim to formulate four Ph.D or postdoc programs for qualified researchers proficient in ancient vernaculars. They will be surrounded by a team of parttime advisers from many different academic disciplines. **ZP** is currently in contact with universities across the world.

5. Milestones

- **ZP** organized two Camp Zero workshops in 2016 and 2017 attended by a host of academics to brainstorm on a roadmap for the in-depth research program into zero's origin.
- Formulation of a Position Paper to provide an overview of the present status of what is known about zero's origin and an Executive Summary drafted by the participants outlining the various fields involved.
- Compilation of a *Monograph on Zero*, a collection of articles on the origin of zero or else its significance in the field of expertise of the academic concerned.
- The online *International Conference/Workshop on Zero* from October of 2021 to April, 2022, co-organized by **ZP** together with Vrije Universiteit (VU), the Netherlands; the Amir D. Aczel Foundation. The contributors to the *Monograph on Zero* will be able to present and discuss their papers. Please find the full program, including the list of speakers at www.TheZeroProject.nl.

6. Board of Trustees

ZP's Board of Trustees, chaired by former ambassador of the Netherlands, Mr Eric F. Ch. Niehe, are of the view that it is high time that a concerted, systematic, interdisciplinary research program be launched into the invention of zero as well as zero's significance in various specialist fields, which is why the initiative was launched to establish the *Expertise Center on Zero* (XCZ).

THE ZERO PROJECT

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7. Memorandum of Understanding

ZP has meanwhile circulated an **Memorandum of Understanding** for the XCZ (also attached in the cover email). The universities below have signed on in principle – further details to be worked out, pending approval by their administrators:

- Friedhelm Hoffmann, LMU Munich
- Alberto Pelissero, University of Turin
- Kaspars Klavins, University of Latvia
- Sisir Roy, NIAS, Bangalore, India
- Ravi Prakash Arya, Maharishi Dayanand University, Haryana
- Pusan National University of South Korea
- Djamil Aïssani, University of Algeria

We have been informed by Dr S. Nandram, full professor at both Vrije Universiteit (VU) as well as the **University of Nyenrode** in the Netherlands [<https://www.nyenrode.nl/>] that the latter is willing to consider housing/staffing/equipping the XCZ, provided budgetary funding of **Eu.200K for a period of 5 years** is forthcoming. The envisioned XCZ would go a long way in attaining not only the Zero Project's objectives mentioned above but also related issues of concern to all MoU signatories.

The Zero Project was awarded **UNESCO Patronage** including use of the UNESCO logo (letter attached); as well as enjoying collaboration with **Dr Robert Lawrence Kuhn**, producer-host of the PBS TV series *Closer to Truth* (CTT). The CTT-ZP joint video production attracted over 32,000 views in the past two months, attesting to the relevance of the subject of zero's invention among professionals and public alike [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bUVN7E1wiBs&t=1s>].

The Board of Trustees kindly solicits adequate funding to launch the proposed Expertise Center on Zero.

Sincerely,

Peter Gobets

Secretary / Research Coordinator

Trustee Zero Project

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