

# NIOD Fellowships in Southeast Asian Studies (1930s-1950s)

Agenda >  
Southeast Asia

With generous support from the Japanese embassy in the Netherlands, the Netherlands Institute for War Documentation (NIOD) invites applicants for short-term research fellowships in Southeast Asian Studies, esp. Indonesia. NIOD is a research and documentation centre, and it is part of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences. The institute is based in Amsterdam and its researchers study the history of the Netherlands and Southeast Asia in the twentieth century.

Recently NIOD launched a new documentation and research programme, entitled 'Lasting attachments: personal orientations and national perspectives

on colonialism and conflict in Indonesia, 1930s-1950s. Towards a multi-faceted interpretation of history'. The research programme consists of three projects:

- Changing roles and shifting loyalties: Indonesians, Japanese, and Dutch during the early Revolution;
- Gender and racial relations during the early Revolution;
- 'State of the Art' work on Indonesia in the Pacific War.

As part of these projects NIOD has initiated a short-term research fellowship programme (six weeks or three months) specifically meant for scholars from Asia working in one of these fields. For academic applicants, eligibility is limited to junior scholars holding an MA degree and senior scholars holding a PhD degree. For other applicants, an equivalent level of professional achievement is expected. All applicants should have a very good command of spoken and written English. The closing date for this year's application is 1 April 2003. <

More info >

Please send your applications to:

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# Sri Lanka at the Crossroads

Agenda >  
South Asia

28-30 November 2003  
Matara, Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka has a geo-strategic location in the Indian Ocean. Traditionally famous for its serenity, nowadays it is characterised by its socio-economic development and a competitive democracy. During the post-colonial period, the island-nation has, by and large, successfully attained the objectives of a higher rate of literacy, economic growth, improved health and educational services, and a higher level of political participation.

Sri Lanka has been going through major changes and upheavals during the last several decades, including an ongoing ethnic war since 1972 (now under ceasefire), two armed revolts in the south and major changes in demography, social differentiation, and the economy. Furthermore, Sri Lanka is

subjected to gross changes in the socio-economic environment because of intensified globalization. All this has its repercussions in the socio-economic, political and cultural spheres. The Ninth ICSLS conference will explore this broad juncture in Sri Lankan society.

The ICSLS is a biannual meeting of scholars preoccupied with research on Sri Lankan history, society, ethnicity, demography, economy, education, polity, literature, foreign policy, international relations, diaspora, gender and other related issues. It provides an academic forum where scholars on Sri Lanka Studies, exchange their research findings and ideas in order to advance scholarly exchange and have more innovative research in future.

The conference aims to provide a forum for taking stock, rethinking, and making plans in the light of past experience. Scholars on Sri Lanka Studies from around the world are invited to contribute papers on their research in their respective fields, on a wide range of topics and from a wide variety of disciplinary perspectives, with direct or indirect bearing on changes in Sri Lanka. Like in previous conferences, we aim for 'an exercise in conceptualization and theorization of Sri Lankan reality'. <

Contact >

The deadline for submitting abstracts is 15 June 2003. Please send abstracts and direct inquiries to:

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# Religious Mobilization and Organized Violence in Contemporary South Asia

Agenda >  
South Asia

3-4 April 2003  
Roskilde, Denmark

Religious violence, also called communal violence, is often described as a ritual or a 'pact of violence between social groups' that keeps the community boundaries in place. At times the ritual turns from symbolism into organized pogrom. This is sometimes explained, for example by the police agencies, as the work of 'local criminal elements', or as the effects of deep religious passions and sentiments. These explanations not only provide convenient excuses, but also imply that religious violence be accepted as an inevitable feature of the South Asian social fabric.

Any meaningful legal enquiry into the development of religious violence, therefore, is made redundant because violence with religious overtones is considered outside the universe of criminal offences. This raises questions about the role of the state and institutions of law enforcement and policing. Do they hibernate at such critical times or do they actively engage themselves in violence? In Gujarat, the state's withdrawal, or its active complicity at times, has been clearly demonstrated where the state's Chief Minister followed the internecine violence with a *gaaurav yatra*, the celebratory 'journey of pride' through Gujarat. The chosen strategy was indeed a far cry from a display of restraint and/or remorse that we tend to associate with state executives, in case of such turbulent events. Here we could witness a high official of the state justifying the killings as a Hindu reaction to repeated Muslim provocation and mischief. The pretence of neutrality and arbitration between communities has been replaced by a more openly partial and 'ethnicized' stance in favour of the majority community.

How can we understand the face of violence characterized by a lack of remorse combined with brash display of communal power? This question opens the domain of religious mobilization through sustained, long-term programmes organized by nationalist groups with religious overtones and

undeclared political ambitions. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS, a national volunteer organization); Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP, Global Hindu Organisation); Minhaj Ul Quran (MUQ, Path to Quran); and Markaz Dawa-Wal-Irshad, of the Wahabi sect; are some of the organizations in India and Pakistan that over some decades have successfully mobilized urban men and women to participate in new Holy Wars fought on both real and virtual turf. The impact of this mobilization can be seen for example in Gujarat where after the recent riots some VHP leaders congratulated themselves for having 'successfully raised the Hindu consciousness'. The significance of these riots lies not just in the brutality and the number of people killed but also in the systematic destruction of residential and commercial properties that belonged to Muslims. With the destruction of homes and sources of livelihood, the continuation of socio-economic exchanges between the communities in the post-riots situation has been rendered impossible. Like their Hindu opponents Islamic organizations, the ones stemming from the Wahabis in particular, seem to be engaged in militant activities, suicide attacks and other activities, that are col-

lectively dubbed as Islamic terror networks. With these transnational networks the issue ceases to be of mere national or even bilateral significance between India and Pakistan.

The third and last theme is the symbolism, scale, and nature of violence. The attacks on Hindu temples in Gujarat and Jammu in 2002 and the destruction of the Babri Masjid (mosque) in Ayodhya a decade ago, augured a new kind of highly charged symbolic politics. Violence is no longer represented as the mindless act of fringe elements of society but as an act with a well thought-out strategy and years of mobilization behind it, using to full effect the emotional power of TV media and a strongly communalized vernacular press. Government banning of electronic media from Gujarat in March 2002, for instance, stands in stark contrast to the highly charged news coverage in India of the attacks on temples, or incidents in Kashmir.

This two-day workshop attempts to cover the issues and questions opened by the recent events in South Asia through comparative or specific studies of religious violence, organizations and their (trans)national linkages both at empirical and conceptual levels. <

More info >

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