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Director's note

The first part of this newsletter consists of papers that were presented last year during an IIAS Masterclass organised round the theme of 'Comparative Intellectual Histories of Early Modern Asia'.

With some of you, the term 'master class' may evoke images of forms of education that belong to the past, and are no longer in vogue: the students lined up to absorb the wisdom conveyed to them by the master; the master speaking, the students listening. This certainly is a caricature of what is really happening, or what can be made to happen. As a matter of fact, at IIAS we see our Masterclasses as a valuable and intensive form of interaction between junior and senior scholars. The juniors, usually PhD students or young post-docs, are asked to prepare a presentation about their work. The master has read these presentations beforehand and reacts on them during the class. What follows is a debate between student and master and, of course, among the other participants. For the students this can be a pleasant excursion away from the paradigm of one's supervisor. Young researchers are forced to consider other ways of approaching their subject matter, and become acquainted with other disciplines, or with similar problems in other regions. Of course, many variations are possible within this format: fewer or more students, one or several masters, with or without an audience, etc. But as the example of the IIAS Masterclass by Sheldon Pollock shows, disciplinary and regional widening of one's research horizon is the prime effect, something that is often difficult to achieve within the regular MA or PhD training curricula. With the articles in this newsletter we hope to convey something of the excitement of a successful IIAS Masterclass. IIAS will continue organising Masterclasses. Do consult IIAS Newsletter and our website for announcements!

Max Sparreboom
Director



The International Institute for Asian Studies is a postdoctoral research centre based in Leiden and Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Our main objective is to encourage the interdisciplinary and comparative study of Asia and to promote national and international cooperation in the field. The institute focuses on the humanities and social sciences and their interaction with other sciences.

IIAS values dynamism and versatility in its research programmes. Post-doctoral research fellows are temporarily employed by or affiliated to IIAS, either within a collaborative research programme or individually. In its aim to disseminate broad, in-depth knowledge of Asia, the institute organizes seminars, workshops and conferences, and publishes the *IIAS Newsletter* with a circulation of 26,000.

IIAS runs a database for Asian Studies with information on researchers and research-related institutes worldwide. As an international mediator and a clearing-house for knowledge and information, IIAS is active in creating international networks and launching international cooperative projects and research programmes. In this way, the institute functions as a window on Europe for non-European scholars and contributes to the cultural rapprochement between Asia and Europe.

IIAS also administers the secretariat of the European Alliance for Asian Studies (Asia Alliance: www.asia-alliance.org) and the Secretariat General of the International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS: www.icassecretariat.org). Updates on the activities of the Asia Alliance and ICAS are published in this newsletter. <

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