

# From the Director

The 50th issue of the IIAS Newsletter is worth a moment of reflection. *The Newsletter*, as it is now called, has a new face, a new design, a new name. The editor however is the same, Anna Yeadell, and the institute from where *the Newsletter* is issued is the same IIAS. I should like to use this occasion to update the reader on the policy and activities of this institute.

Max Sparreboom, Director

QUALITY, IN ALL ITS FORMS, is the key to all IIAS activities. As a hosting/facilitating institute it is of great importance to us that our researchers are able to work on their projects in a professional and pleasant atmosphere, furnished with all the necessary facilities and resources, including staff support. Quality is also paramount in the decisions we make when selecting IIAS research programmes and individual fellows' projects. In this regard, attention is paid to research methods, the use of collections and informants, and output in the form of publications (both academic and those destined for a wider audience) and seminars. For the same reasons, the many fellows that visit our institute in the cadre of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) are, wherever possible, embedded in existing IIAS programmes or those of colleagues from Leiden University and other universities.

IIAS is what I like to call 'extraverted.' It looks to what is happening in society. Many of our current and new research programmes are focused on science/scholarship as a way of solving societal questions, such as sustainable development, good governance, civil society, social cohesion, and education. In this way, IIAS research in the coming years will give attention to the problematic of large cities in Asia, rural development in post-conflict societies, governance questions in China and India, but also to new religious movements. This does not mean that there is no room left for curiosity- or science-driven research, research in which the unraveling of complex processes and the searching for starting points for renewal and improvement of theories are central, or the opening up of new textual or historical sources. Our ABIA (Annual Bibliography of Indian Archaeology) programme and the Gonda Fund financed fellowships for research on India are good examples of this. In other words, the research we facilitate is diverse and ranges from studies in the field of Asian linguistics, religions, politics, economics and literature to music/arts, media and history.

IIAS is meant for post-doctoral researchers. Most of our fellows hold a PhD in some branch of learning from the social sciences or humanities. It is especially the younger guard among them in whom we have an interest. We are planning to organise meetings with talented junior researchers - PhD students or recent PhDs - where they present their own ideas on the future of their field of research.

Alongside the hosting and undertaking of academic projects and the subsequent disseminating of the results of work in progress during seminars and conferences, IIAS is also responsible for facilitating knowledge exchange between the academic world and a wider audience. *The Newsletter* is a clear example of this. Besides this we

organise lectures, debates and other events with partners such as De Rode Hoed (centre for cultural debate in Amsterdam), international festivals and museums. Much of this knowledge transfer takes place in Amsterdam in co-operation with the Asian Studies in Amsterdam (ASIA) programme from the University of Amsterdam.

In fact, almost everything that IIAS undertakes is based on co-operation. IIAS has a proven and successful track record in collaborating with partners, such as the European Alliance for Asian Studies, the Asia Europe Foundation in Singapore, the National Science Council in Taiwan and - if you call participation in grant schemes collaboration - with the Research Council NWO, the Royal Netherlands Academy of Sciences KNAW, and several Asian and European organisations. We are constantly searching for new opportunities to join efforts with other institutes in the Netherlands, in Europe, Asia and the US. A good example is the organisation of the International Convention of Asia Scholars, ICAS: The upcoming ICAS 2009 is being organised in Daejeon in Korea in co-operation with Chungnam National University.

We pride ourselves in having a flexible and responsive way of operating. IIAS has a board and an academic committee, all consisting of committed scholars from different disciplines and universities, who each bring their expertise to the institute. Research initiatives can be handled in an unbureaucratic way; that is, we can decide how we wish to pursue initiatives, depending on the subject and the circumstances. This may be through a one-off workshop based on the work of one of our fellows, through a series of workshops such as the series on Piracy in Southeast Asia, a master-class, or a full-scale international research programme with researchers paid via external funds, such as the programme on Socio-Genetic Marginalisation in Asia, which will be concluded this year.

Co-operation is also the key word within the office at IIAS, among IIAS staff members. Together we create the conditions to host our research fellows as best we can; together we deliver our 'products', whether it be *the Newsletter*, our publication series, our seminars or other initiatives.

We at IIAS - that is the board, the academic committee and IIAS staff - are constantly searching for new opportunities and seeking ways to improve the way we work, as well as applying for external funding for what we consider good and timely new research. The new look Newsletter is just one example of how IIAS continues to evolve.



The Director  
at 4000 metres  
in Sichuan