

# IIAS in Leiden

Sandra Dehue (IIAS)

IIAS IS SITUATED IN the historic centre of the Dutch city of Leiden, a university town that combines modern urban facilities with 17th century charm. The city of Leiden is home to Leiden University, the oldest university in the Netherlands (founded in 1575). The Institute is situated at Rapenburg 59 in one of the mansions along the 'Rapenburg' canal. With a population of around 120,000 Leiden is a friendly and dynamic moderate-sized city located right in between Holland's major cities of Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam and Utrecht. These cities can all be reached by frequent trains within 12 to 40 minutes, and Amsterdam Schiphol Airport within 20.

## Asia in Leiden

Leiden abounds in expertise on and collections from Asia. Dutch relations with Asia go back more than 400 years, and Leiden University has from its beginning concentrated on the cultures and societies of 'the Orient', making it one of the oldest and renowned centres for Asian Studies in the western world. Moreover, this long-standing relationship with Asia is also reflected in the many and unique historical collections from Asia that are present in the university libraries (see p56), Leiden museums, and in other Leiden-based institutes such as the Royal Netherlands Institute for Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV).

At Leiden University a number of institutes in the Humanities and Social Sciences with specific expertise on Asian countries and Asia-related topics stand out. First and foremost, there is of course the Leiden University Institute for Area Studies (LIAS), which comprises the School of Asian Studies (SAS) and the School of Middle Eastern Studies (SMES). Area specialisations in the School of Asian Studies include Chinese, Japanese, Korean, South- & Southeast Asian, and Tibetan Studies. Expertise on regions belonging to the Middle East is present not only in SMES but also in the Netherlands Institute for the Near East (NINO). This independent Institute located on the premises of Leiden University also houses several collections that are valuable resources for researchers of, for example, Islam in Asia. Also in the Faculty of Humanities is the Institute for History which, among other areas, has a focus on Asian societies in a global context. Expertise on the art and material culture of East Asia and of South and Southeast Asia is present in the Art History department (and LIAS). Specific Asia expertise is also present in the Social Sciences, where Indonesia is one of the traditional foci of the Institute of Cultural Anthropology



Site of selected institutes and Museums along with IIAS transposed onto the Map of Leiden by Matthaus Merian, 1646. Image reproduced under a creative commons license courtesy of flickr.

and Development Sociology. This institute also has several researchers specialised in South Asia. The list of research topics of the Institute of Political Science includes Central Asia Politics and Chinese Politics. In the area of Law, the Van Vollenhoven Institute (VVI) collects, produces and disseminates knowledge on the processes of and relationships between law, governance and development, particularly in Asia and Africa.

For the purpose of this short overview of relevant institutes in light of IIAS' mandate, I would like to mention two more outside the Humanities and Social Sciences, namely the Institute of Environmental Sciences (CML) and the Institute of Biology. The first because of its twenty-year research programme in the Philippines, and the second because of its research and programmes in the areas of biodiversity, plant science and natural products, which make use of the extensive plant collections from Asia present in Leiden. From its foundation in 1590, the Leiden Hortus botanicus actively collected (medicinal) plants from Asia, as well as knowledge on the use of these plants. The Leiden herbarium of the National Herbarium Nederland (the NHN is part of the Leiden-based Netherlands Centre for Biodiversity Naturalis) is well-known for its extensive collections from South-East Asia, especially from Indonesia. As the oldest Dutch herbarium, it also contains several historic collections, among which the 17th century 12-volume Hortus Malabaricus, which has been

declared a testimony of cultural heritage to both the Netherlands and India. Leiden is also home to the Siebold House with collections from Japan, and two national museums that hold collections and have expertise pertaining to Asia: the National Museum of Ethnology and National Museum of Antiquities (RMO).

## LeidenGlobal, a new platform for global expertise

A number of the academic and cultural institutions mentioned above have recently brought together their respective and complementary scientific and cultural knowledge in a platform for global expertise called 'LeidenGlobal'. Through LeidenGlobal these institutions wish to connect with local communities, media, government, NGO's and the business world. Besides IIAS, the partners in LeidenGlobal are: Leiden University, The Royal Netherlands Institute for Southeast Asia and Caribbean Studies (KITLV), the Netherlands Institute for the Near East (NINO), African Studies Centre (ASC), the National Museum of Ethnology and the National Museum of Antiquities, and the Roosevelt Study Centre which is a research centre on twentieth-century American history located in Middelburg.

LeidenGlobal was festively launched on 27 November 2013 at the National Museum of Ethnology by the Rector Magnificus of Leiden University and the mayor of the city of Leiden.

# Who's who at IIAS



In alphabetical order:

1. Sandra Dehue  
Content Manager/Editor: collects information, edits and writes texts about IIAS activities and takes care of the Institute's corporate publications.
2. Mary Lynn van Dijk  
CRM/CMS and Publications Officer: looks after our databases and keeps in touch with our readers, manuscript reviewers, and authors.
3. Adele Esposito  
Coordinator Critical Heritage Activities: coordinates the activities in the IIAS Asian Heritages research cluster.

4. Martina van den Haak  
Seminars & ICAS: organises every single aspect of IIAS seminars, conferences and roundtables and helps organise the biennial ICAS Conference.
5. Ria van der Holst  
Controller: keeps us from overspending our budget and advises on the Institute's proper conduct of business.
6. Sandra van der Horst  
Fellowship Coordinator: takes care of all our fellows' needs, including: information, visa, accommodation, finances, access to resources, and many other concerns and needs.

7. Heleen van der Minne  
Coordinator Outreach Activities: develops activities for the IIAS Outreach Programme in co-operation with various cultural organisations in the Netherlands.
8. Philippe Peycam  
Director: provides strategic direction to the Institute, engages with partners worldwide in the development of new initiatives and networks and contributes his academic expertise to IIAS activities.
9. Paul Rabé  
UKNA Coordinator: coordinates the Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA) and related activities, as well as the activities in the IIAS Asian Cities research cluster.

10. Gien San Tan  
UKNA Project Officer: coordinates the exchange of the scholars within the Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA) and takes care of the programme's administration and reporting to the EC.
11. Paul van der Velde  
ICAS Secretary and IIAS Publications Officer: takes care of the overall management of the International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS), is the Secretary of the ICAS Book Prize Series & supervises IIAS' academic publications.
12. Amparo de Vogel  
Secretary: keeps IIAS operational in its day-to-day business.

13. Willem Vogelsang  
Institute Manager: deals with the Institute's overall management, helps fellows connect with the Leiden community and contributes his academic expertise to IIAS activities.
14. Thomas Voorter  
Communication Coordinator and Web Manager: advises on all matters of communication and develops IIAS' websites.
15. Sonja Zweegers  
Managing Editor: produces four issues of The Newsletter each year by soliciting and editing contributions from scholars worldwide as well as managing the full publication process.