

The IIAS Annual Lectures

Exchanging knowledge and forging links

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EACH YEAR IIAS ORGANISES an Annual Lecture that is presented by a distinguished international expert on some aspect of Asia and Asian Studies, or the relationship between Asia and Europe. In this way IIAS actively contributes to the exchange of knowledge and scholarship between the Netherlands and the rest of the world. The audiences attending these lectures are always very varied, and certainly not limited to academics. They include diplomats, journalists, representatives of the business community and NGOs, as well as members of the cultural world. The age of the audience is as diverse as the people themselves, from the young to the more mature, which is important for the future of Asian Studies in the Netherlands. It is also attended by the IIAS fellows and graduate and undergraduate students of Leiden University and academic institutions outside of Leiden. It is a unique opportunity for Asia scholars in the Netherlands, and for others with an interest in Asia and Asian affairs, to meet and discuss ongoing issues, especially at the well-attended reception enjoyed after the lecture. It also allows for networking among the participants in general. And networking is an essential core activity of the International Institute for Asian Studies.

In order to gain a wide variety of public, the lectures are widely announced in various places, such as *The Newsletter*, direct mailing, posters, and newspapers, as well as by word of mouth. In the past, some of the Annual Lectures were held in Amsterdam. In more recent years they have taken place in Leiden. For instance, in 2012 the venue was the historic Waag (Weighing House) in the centre of Leiden; in 2013 it took place in the equally historic 'Akademiegebouw' (Academy Building), the oldest building of Leiden University (the university moved into this former convent in 1581!). These locations, which also happen to be within walking distance of the IIAS offices, are always selected to highlight the special character of the Lecture, and to attract as wide an audience as possible.

The annual lectures are intended to intrigue the audience by presenting known, or indeed unknown themes in innovative ways and from new perspectives. They are presented in order to push boundaries, both in the speakers and the audience. The speakers are invited because of their own expertise and field of work. In the past, IIAS has invited speakers from Asia and beyond, academics and non-academics. They included politicians (as for instance Chris Patten, 2001), architects (Rem Koolhaas, 2005), artists (Pramoedya Ananta Toer, 1999), and others whose lectures contributed to a better understanding of Asia and the relationship between Asia and the rest of the world.

Space unfortunately does not permit a list of all the lectures since 1994, and some of the events were also far more than a lecture. One such event was particularly memorable - an evening programme in June 2010 that included a reading by the British historian William Dalrymple from his book, *Nine Lives: In search of the sacred in modern India*, accompanied by music and traditional dance (Paban Das Baul and Susheela Raman).

As can be imagined, the Annual Lectures ensure that at the end of the main presentation there are many questions and lively discussions. Sometimes these discussions become quite forceful as different points of view are highlighted, questioned and examined in detail. But the willingness to exchange ideas and gain new insights into known and unknown situations remains an important factor in the role of the IIAS lectures.

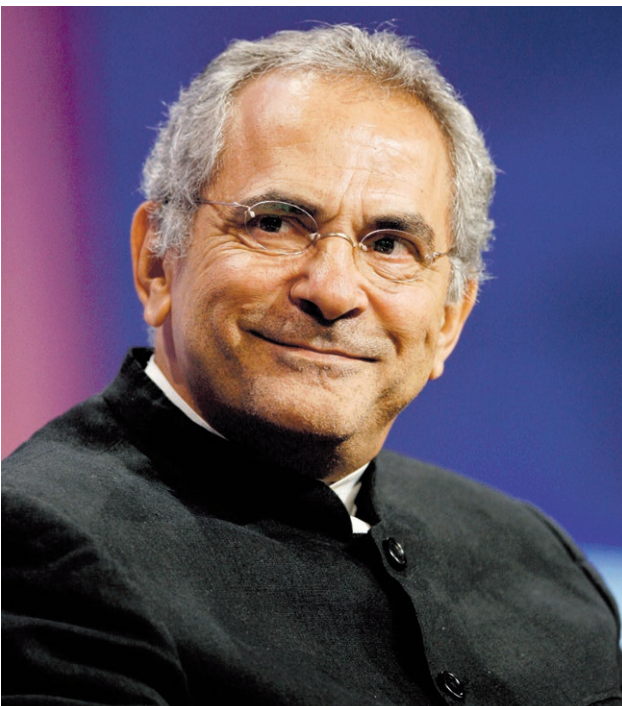
The first Annual Lecture, in 1994, was entitled 'De la vertu des aires culturelles et de celle des aires culturelles asiatiques en particulier', by Denys Lombard, former Director of the *Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales* and of the *Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient*. Since then, some of the themes addressed include 'Asia and the pre-modern world economy' (Professor Om Prakash, in 1995); 'Europe and Asia: sustainable

relations, sustainable growth' (Mr L.J. Brinkhorst, Netherlands Minister for Economic Affairs, in 2005); 'Al Qaeda in the Asia-Pacific: Origins, capability and threat' (Dr Rohan Gunaratna, from St. Andrews, 2003), and 'Trauma, memory, amnesia' (Ong Keng Sen, Singapore, in 2008).

Sometimes the lecturer represents a university or institute with which IIAS is strengthening relations, and the speaker thus helps to forge closer links between IIAS, the Universities in the Netherlands, and the home organisation of the lecturer. For example, Professor Geir Helgesen gave a very well-attended Annual Lecture in September 2012. His topic was the relationship between North Korea and the West ('A user's manual to North Korea: matters and issues that shape relations between them and us'). However, Professor Helgesen is also the director of the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS) in Copenhagen, which over the years has become an important European partner of IIAS, and, together with IIAS, the driving force behind the European Alliance of Asian Studies.

In September 2013, the Annual Lecture was delivered by Professor Carol Gluck of Columbia University, New York. She talked about the global aspects of Japanese modern and pre-modern history ('Modernity in common: Japan and world history'). But she also represented the University that will be a close partner of IIAS in a new international IIAS programme (2014-2016) that is being sponsored by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation entitled 'Rethinking Asian studies in a global context' (see page 16 of this issue).

And what is the future of the Annual IIAS Lectures? Various discussions are taking place to look at the nature of the lectures, how to relate them to the broader plans of IIAS and how to present the lectures to the public. What is certain is that the range of lectures over the next few years will be as varied as the work of IIAS itself. We soon hope to announce the speaker for the 2014 Annual Lecture!



Jose Ramos Horta

As a founding member of FRETILIN – the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor – José Manuel Ramos-Horta spearheaded the East Timorese resistance during the years of the Indonesian occupation of East Timor (1975 to 1999). After East Timor became independent, he served his country in several capacities: as its first foreign minister (2002-2006), then as Prime Minister (2006-2007), and finally as its second President (2007-2012). He was a co-recipient of the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize, and survived an assassination attempt in 2008. He is currently the UN Special Representative and Head of the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau. In 2001, he visited IIAS to give that year's Annual Lecture. He was then Minister of Foreign Affairs in the East Timorese Transitional Administration (UNTAET), under the aegis of the UN. His mind fully preoccupied with the subject, it was only natural that Horta would speak on 'East Timor: from ashes to nationhood, and its place in the region'. He spoke of both his country's recent past under Indonesian occupation as well as his hopes for its future. He shared his thoughts about rebuilding a viable economy in East Timor, and how the international arena could contribute to the process of reconstruction.



Carol Gluck

This year's Annual Lecture was provided by Professor Carol Gluck, George Sansom Professor of History and Professor of East Asian Language and Cultures at Columbia University. Professor Gluck writes on modern Japan, twentieth-century international history, World War II, history-writing and public memory in Asia and the West. Her most recent book is *Thinking with the Past: Modern Japan and History* (University of California Press, 2013), and *Past Obsessions: World War II in History and Memory* is forthcoming from Columbia University Press. Professor Gluck's lecture, 'Modernity in common: Japan and world history', was based on the dual assumption that just as one cannot tell the modern history of any society in isolation from the world, the history of the modern world can in fact be grasped from the vantage point of any place on the globe. In this instance, Japan, which has commonalities with other modern societies and, simultaneously, offers the opportunity to develop ideas about the 'modern' based on empirical evidence different from the European experiences that underlay earlier theories of modernity. She examined four questions frequently asked about modern Japanese history, in order to see how they appear when viewed in a global context – in the context of 'modernity in common'.



William Dalrymple

William Dalrymple is an acclaimed travel writer and historian of recent times. His travel books include *In Xanadu: A Quest* (1989), *City of Djinns: A Year in Delhi* (1993) and *From the Holy Mountain: A Journey in the Shadow of Byzantium* (1997). *White Mughals: Love and Betrayal in Eighteenth-century India* (2002) marked Dalrymple's shift from travel writing to revisionist history, and he continued in this vein in *The Last Mughal: The Eclipse of a Dynasty, Delhi 1857*. He came back to the travel book in 2009 – but gave it a totally different avatar, by mapping the spiritual traditions of India. Dalrymple's IIAS lecture in June 2010 on South Asia's diverse sacred traditions, and how these manage to cling on in the new India, was based on that 2009 publication, *Nine Lives In Search of the Sacred in Modern India*. It explores nine very personal stories – a Sufi, a possession dancer, a Buddhist monk, a Jain nun, a Tantric, a Baul minstrel, among others – each life representing a different religious path, while revealing the perhaps surprising persistence of faith and ritual in the face of India's commercial boom. In Amsterdam, his lecture and book reading was accompanied by performances of two musical-spiritual traditions that he had written about in *Nine Lives* – Baul Sangit of Bengal, performed by Paban Das Baul and his partner; and Tamil thevaram hymns, sung by the celebrated London-born Tamil vocalist Susheela Raman. The lecture was also the official launch of the Dutch translation of his book by Uitgeverij Atlas.