

Double Degree in Critical Heritage Studies of Asia and Europe

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In September 2017, the Double Degree Programme in Critical Heritage Studies of Asia and Europe for the first time welcomed students from Taiwan and South Korea to Leiden in the Netherlands, and Leiden students were in turn able to study in Asia. We invited four students to share their impressions and experiences with studying in Leiden and Seoul. The institutes involved in the Double Degree are Leiden University (Netherlands), National Taiwan University (Taiwan) and Yonsei University (South Korea). Discussions are ongoing with other Asian institutions to join this unique trans-regional educational platform.



The initiative is part of a wider ambition of IIAS to decentre the production of knowledge about Asia by establishing a continuing dialogic platform between universities located in Asia and Europe. The programme benefits from the input of renowned heritage expert Professor Michael Herzfeld (Harvard University) who serves as Senior Advisor to the 'Critical Heritage Studies Initiative' of IIAS, and who has been working with IIAS for some years to promote the field of critical heritage studies through courses, workshops, conferences and publications.

The Double Degree includes a one-year MA programme at Leiden University, which upon completion is recognised as part of a two-year MA programme in Taiwan and South Korea. The institutions involved in the Double Degree consider Asia as a fertile source of both theoretical and methodological insights in the highly contested area of heritage. Since colonial times, European-based concepts and technical approaches to conservation have dominated the understanding of heritage in Asia, in most cases through a top-down

Current Students

Anna Tonk

Anna Tonk (25) graduated in February 2017 with an MA degree in Asian Studies from Leiden University. She is currently enrolled at Yonsei University.



“Throughout my studies I changed fields multiple times, from Philosophy and Art History in Utrecht to Asian Studies in Leiden. When I finished my pre-master, I discovered the Double Degree Programme in Critical Heritage Studies and something clicked. History, art, social issues, practical problems such as management, and people who genuinely care about the world, were combined in this great field of Critical Heritage Studies.

In Leiden, I was introduced to the complexities within the concept of heritage and I also gained more confidence in my practical knowledge. My interest in heritage grew that year, as we were offered a myriad of methodologies and perspectives. I realized that this field gives me a varied set of academic tools, but also a field to venture in further. I learned that academic study does not have to be only theoretical, but also reflects on the realities by which people and their environment are affected.

At Yonsei University in Seoul, I am experiencing studying abroad for the first time. Although I thought a year was rather long, it is actually giving me the opportunity to hone my academic skills, test my critical thinking, and to learn a lot about myself. The semesters are packed with readings, assignments and engaging topics that give room to experiment with the different perspectives on heritage that I have learned in Yonsei and Leiden.

As a master's student with no background in Korean Studies, I have had some difficulties. Looking back on my first semester, a big lesson for me was that I still feel more comfortable with source material in English and doing interviews in English. Yet Korea is fascinating, and doing research here provides me with more insight and motivation to perform and explore. I found that there is much to discuss about heritage and that each individual case is different, even within the same country. While the exercises focus on Korean Studies, they are also enabling me to look into other heritage cases outside of Korea.

After graduation, I envisage multiple options for 'critical heritage studies' as a beautiful career path. I am not letting go of my aspiration to pursue a PhD, but I might try my hand at being a heritage worker first. Despite still searching for my place within this field, this has become a journey that I plan on never ending.”

Mingyuan Cheng

Mingyuan Cheng (25) is a master's student from the Department of Anthropology at National Taiwan University. She is currently following the Double Degree Programme at Leiden University.



“After staying in Leiden for about half a year, I can only love this canal city more and more. Leiden University is the oldest university in the Netherlands, offering wonderful research resources and teaching in the Humanities. With the new Asian Library, which just opened in September 2017, Leiden University's research opportunities focusing on Asia have been vastly enriched. The Leiden courses allowed me to interact with many people from almost every part of the world, with their distinct cultural background and perspectives, which has broadened my understanding of different societies while establishing solid friendships.

A much greater advantage to following the Double Degree Programme in Critical Heritage Studies is the opportunity to be part of the IIAS community. Situated in the town centre, IIAS brings in and links researchers from around the globe with their special concerns about Asia. The lunch lectures are one of my favourite events held by IIAS. I can highly recommend students to attend these lectures to learn more about cultural and economic issues in Asia without making any effort to travel far, while recharging oneself by the inspiring researchers and mouth-watering food.

During the 'Critical Approaches to Heritage Studies' class, fieldtrips were organized for us to the Textile Research Centre and the Leiden Heritage Archive in order to explore the history of Leiden, with a special focus on heritage conservation. Not only did I, each week, gain a deeper understanding of heritage from various angles, I also learned a lot from the very positive dynamics of the class while reflecting on my own work after presentations by my classmates of their case studies.

With both international and Dutch students living in this lovely city, life in Leiden is full of excitement and cultural diversity. The most enjoyable moments are exchanging our recipes and food cultures with each other, talking more about our own cultural roots, and joining festivals such as 'Leiden's Ontzet' and the 'Sinterklaasfeest' to experience local culture. It is always delightful to start a day by having a cup of coffee in a café alongside one of the canals, cycling through historical lanes, or doing grocery shopping at the street market every Wednesday and Saturday.

The first semester has come to an end, and I benefit greatly both from the courses and lectures provided by IIAS and Leiden University, and also from the experience I gain here every day. I never regret coming to Leiden to pursue the Double Degree Programme!”



imposition of ideas and processes. It is this hegemonic discourse, usually promoted by developmentalist states in Asia and elsewhere, as well as various processes of indigenous response, that the Double Degree Programme is highlighting.

The curriculum of the Double Degree allows students to explore the contested character of all representations of culture, the plurality of notions of heritage in Asian and European contexts, and the way distinct and conflicting values of indigenous, local communities and official state discourses are negotiated.

The programme focuses in particular on the politics of heritage and the questions of its legitimacy. Who controls heritage? What is the role of heritage in the constructed narratives of nationalism? How is heritage being used as a cultural practice to shape the discourses on nation-building and nation-branding?

Contact

If you would like to know more about the Double Degree Programme in Critical Heritage Studies of Asia and Europe, please contact the coordinator at Leiden University, Dr Elena Paskaleva, e.g. paskaleva@hum.leidenuniv.nl

Website

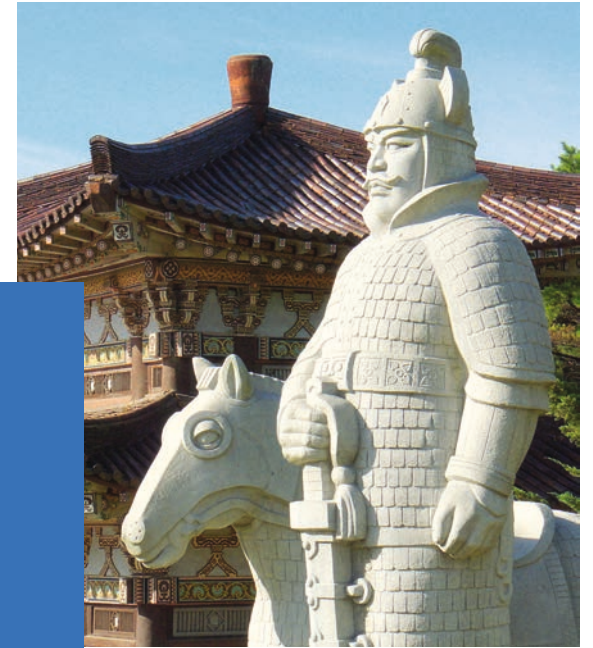
www.ias.asia/critical-heritage-studies

Partner institutions

Leiden University, the Netherlands
Leiden University Institute for Area Studies (LIAS), in cooperation with the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS)

National Taiwan University, Taiwan
Department of Anthropology (College of Liberal Arts), Graduate Institute of Building and Planning (College of Engineering)

Yonsei University, South Korea
Graduate School of International Studies



Current Students

Hyunmi Kim

Hyunmi Kim is a master's student of International Studies at Yonsei University. She is currently following the Double Degree Programme at Leiden University.



“Five months have passed since I came to Leiden as the first student of the Double Degree Programme from Yonsei University. Even though it may not be enough to thoroughly grasp every aspect of the program, I would like to share my experiences and impressions so far.

First of all, Leiden University offers various courses for MA students in Asian Studies that are not provided by Yonsei University. Especially for those who are interested in Asian culture and heritage, it will be fascinating to take the relevant classes. At the same time, it is possible to take courses from different tracks under Asian Studies, which offer a comprehensive perspective not only on heritage but also on Asia in general.

Students who apply for this program can also apply for the LExS grant that significantly reduces the tuition fee (In 2017/2018, LExS reduced the tuition fees for Leiden from EURO 16,600 to EURO 2,006). Students who apply for a LExS grant may also apply for a special grant from IIAS, to the sum of EURO 500 per month for a period of ten months.

Leiden University professors are responsible for and passionate about their classes and the students. They are always willing to help the students with any difficulties they may encounter, and try to collect students' opinions in order to improve the courses. In addition, there are abundant opportunities to participate in special seminars and lectures with diverse heritage-related topics. Various institutions at Leiden University organize a wide range of seminars and lectures related to culture and heritage in Asia. Since these are normally open to all Leiden University students, it is a good chance to learn about recent research on relevant issues and to get to know other people with shared research interests.

However, there is also a weak point. Even though the title of this Double Degree Programme is 'Critical Heritage Studies of Asia and Europe', almost all the courses in Leiden deal only with Asia as it is part of the Asian Studies programme. Therefore, a student who wants to learn about European culture and heritage may find it difficult to find relevant courses. Last but not least, I would like to sincerely thank IIAS for offering me this wonderful opportunity and supporting me in all the practical issues that I have encountered. I am sure that this experience will serve as a crucial foundation for the development of my future career.”

Calvin Hung

Calvin Hung is a master's students from the Graduate Institute of Building and Planning at National Taiwan University. He is currently following the Double Degree programme at Leiden University.



“Since I am in the Netherlands, let's speak in a Dutch way, which usually means openly and straightforward. I enjoy studying in Leiden more than I expected, except for the weather, and, sometimes, the administrative efficiency of the school. As the program is set to be one year, the pace of the semester is pretty fast. It's tiring to deal with the reading materials of 5 courses every week, including learning Hindi as a new language. However, after reading the materials and discussing them in classes, I learned a lot, including thinking from different perspectives.

For example, in the class on 'Material Culture of the Silk Road in Central Asia', I learned that the borders of central Asian countries were created by the USSR in the Stalin era. The design of the artificial borders was one of the strategies of governance by the Soviet Union. These socialist republics were established in different years in order to shape the idea of mono-ethnic countries. The Soviet Union also settled many minorities in Central Asia, including thousands of Koreans. The complexity of national identity and ethnicity in Central Asia affects the governance of heritage in this region.

The case that fascinates me a lot is the 'Manas Epic', which is seen as the national epic of Kyrgyzstan. But in the old version of 'Manas', the Kyrgyz were usually depicted in a negative narrative. The question of who decides what is whose heritage is a highly

political question. From cases in Central Asia, as well as the topic of my own thesis about the Earth Gods Parade in Shezi region in Taipei City, I find that the authorities usually hold the strongest power on the recognition of heritage. Other actors, such as local residents, often face the paradox of whether to adapt to the discourse of heritage by the authorities or to build up a new discourse. In the case in Taipei City, local residents nominate the religious ritual as municipal intangible heritage, claiming its uniqueness to all citizens in Taipei City. To me, the idea of a certain heritage expression as being valuable to all citizens is very debatable. Is it not much more accurate, and valuable, if a heritage is seen as a statement of memories and culture of a (large) group of people? I am still contemplating my answers, but I enjoy the process of being critical.

Before coming to Leiden, I had few ideas about critical heritage studies. Although knowing that Leiden is one of the most reputable places for Asian Studies in Europe, I didn't have a clear picture of my student life here. But now, with teachers willing to give their best, being surrounded by other hard-working and diverse students as well as the historical city of Leiden, I am blessed to be on the path of critical heritage studies”.