

International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS)

IIAS Panels at ICAS 8

To celebrate the Institute's 20th anniversary, and proud to be associated with ICAS and to host its secretariat, IIAS sponsored and co-sponsored 16 panels and roundtables that reflect the vibrancy of IIAS' three thematic clusters: Asian Cities, Asian Heritages and Global Asia.

PANELS ORGANISED IN THE CONTEXT OF THE GLOBAL ASIA CLUSTER

Beyond the Ivory Tower: Re-defining the Relationship between Science and Society in Europe and Asia (Panels 29 and 56) Co-sponsored with the Center for Southeast Asian Studies (CSEAS) in Kyoto, Japan, and the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) in Singapore. Following an earlier IIAS roundtable in 2011 on the theme of 'Science and nature', these two roundtables explored the question how societal concerns about natural disasters, food security and environmental conservation redefine the role and position of science in Asian and European societies. *Convener: Gerard Persoon, IIAS Extraordinary Professor and holder of IIAS chair for Environment and Development, at the Leiden University Institute of Cultural Anthropology. Gerard was a co-organiser of the 2011 roundtable: 'Science and nature in Europe and Asia, Scientific Traditions and New Technologies'. 'Science and Society' is an ongoing project of the panel sponsors, based on the shared recognition that scientific knowledge is greeted with increased scepticism, distrust and sometimes even hostility in Asia and Europe.*

Cooperation in Energy Policy and Sustainability: China and the European Union (Panel 74)

This panel focused on energy security as one of the major global challenges of the 21st century. In particular it discussed the fact that both the European Union and China are dependent on foreign energy supplies, which force both polities to cooperate on energy security affairs and to share ideas how to address common energy challenges. *Convener: Mehdi P. Amineh, an IIAS Research Fellow and the (Dutch-side) coordinator of the IIAS Energy Programme Asia (EPA). This programme recently started its second joint research project 'The transnationalization of China's oil companies' together with Chinese and Dutch partners.*

Defining Asian Studies in Africa (Panel 150) and Moving Forward - The Future of Asian Studies in Africa (Panel 177)

These two related roundtables focused on the recently established pan-African 'Association of Asian Studies in Africa' (A-ASIA). It discussed two main issues, namely: (1) defining Asian Studies in Africa, and (2) the future of Asian Studies in Africa. 'Asian Studies in Africa' (ASA) is an IIAS initiative aimed at the promotion of the study of and teaching on Asia at African universities, involving partners in Africa, Asia and the US. The 'Association of Asian Studies in Africa' (A-ASIA) was established during a roundtable held in 2012 in Chisamba, Zambia. *Convener (Panel 150): Llyod Amoah, IIAS alumnus and a specialist on Africa-Asia from Ashesi University College is a member of the A-ASIA Steering Committee. Convener (Panel 177): Haifang Liu is Associate Professor and General Secretary of Centre for African Studies of Peking University and a member of the A-ASIA Steering Committee.*

Embodying Masculinities and Physical Appearance in Everyday Spaces of Work, Home, Consumption, and Leisure across Asia (Panels 190, 217 and 244)

These three panels focused on the embodied practices of masculinities and the way they are given expression by means of the physical male body in everyday spaces of work, leisure, consumption and popular culture across Asia. *Convener: Michiel Baas, project associate for IIAS, and currently a research fellow at Nalanda University (India). Michiel worked at IIAS from 2007 until 2012 as Coordinator of the IIAS Amsterdam branch.*

PANELS ORGANISED IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ASIAN HERITAGES CLUSTER

The Effects of UNESCO Politics on Local Notions of Heritage (panels 26 and 53)

This double roundtable aimed to explore what is preserved as heritage in specific, demonstrably politicized contexts throughout Asia. It tried to contribute to a better understanding of UNESCO's notions of 'heritage', 'safeguarding', or even 'authenticity', and how these notions affect local groups and communities. It also addressed the question of how encounters with tourists, heritage experts and researchers influence these local perceptions and value systems. To move beyond the dominant heritage frame, the roundtable discussed the role of other stakeholders, particularly of local communities and practitioners that are often silenced in these larger contexts. *Convener: Sadiyah Boonstra, project associate at IIAS, and currently a Fellow at the 2013 Alliance of Historical Dialogue and Accountability at Columbia University, Institute for the Study of Human Rights.*

Asian Artists as Agents of Societal Change at Home and Abroad in the 21st Century (panels 107 and 134)

Co-sponsored with the Asian Cultural Council. These two meetings focused on the position and role of Asian artists as agents of societal change. Among the main themes addressed was the question of how their work is rooted and related to local, regional, national and global contexts. And, if artists are regarded as agents of change, then on whose behalf do they act? For whom do these artists speak? And how do artists view their role themselves both within their community and outside? *Convener: Stanford Makishi is Director of Programs at the Asian Cultural Council, NY.*

Cloth, Identity and Power (panels 316 and 343)

These two roundtables were inspired by an earlier IIAS roundtable 'Ikat Weaving as Heritage for Sustainable Development' held in October 2012 in Indonesia. They focused on the role of cloth as a potential instrument for policy recommendations involving stakeholders that include weavers, traders, local-level governmental agencies, politicians, international designers, collectors, development professionals, scholars, and many others. *Convener: Aarti Kawlra, researcher and teacher at the Indian Institute of Technology Madras, a social anthropologist and IIAS alumnus. She participated in the 2012 roundtable on Ikat Weaving, and will be one of the conveners of the next IIAS Summer School (2014) on cultural heritage, organised in co-operation with the Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development at Chiang Mai University, Thailand (see page 35).*

PANELS ORGANISED IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ASIAN CITIES CLUSTER

Architecture and Image in Asia (Panel 209) Co-sponsored with the Delft School of Design at Delft University of Technology, The Netherlands

This panel brought together leading scholars in the field to discuss the theme of architectural heritage in Asia within the context of various urban developments. *Convener: Gregory Bracken, an IIAS Research Fellow and coordinator of the IIAS Postcolonial Global City research programme.*

Launching Three Research Themes on Contemporary Asian Cities (Panel 326)

Organised as a working meeting of the IIAS-coordinated Urban Knowledge Network Asia, this roundtable discussed UKNA's three main research themes of (a) The Future of cities; (b) Cities by and for the people; and c) The idea of the city. *Convener: Paul Rabé, the chief coordinator at IIAS of the Urban Knowledge Network Asia, a research and exchange network involving over a hundred researchers from 14 institutes in Europe, China, India and the United States.*



The 9th International
Convention of Asia Scholars
5 - 9 July 2015
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ICAS 8 and the Rise of Asia

Tak Wing Ngo

THE RISE OF ASIA has become a defining feature of the 21st century. The impact of Asia can be felt in two respects - material and epistemological. From the outset, the growing economic affluence and political influence of Asia has been changing the historical landscape of our age. This is most observable with the increasing share of Asian markets in the world economy, the development of a multi-polar international order, and the increasing pressure on global environment and resources. Equally far-reaching is the theoretical significance of Asia. The current development of Asia is challenging many of our conventional understandings about political and economic life. Our familiar ideas about the state and market, rule and governance, nation and identity, network and hierarchy, and so on, have shown major limitations in capturing the complexity and hybridity of the Asian cases. There is a need to refine our conceptual lexicons in order to grapple with the idea of Asia.

ICAS as an instrumental forum

The International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS) constitutes a major forum for such an epistemological adventure. It is the premier gathering of scholars on Asian Studies around the world. Since 1998, ICAS has taken place in different parts of the world, including Leiden, Berlin, Singapore, Shanghai, Kuala Lumpur, Daejeon, and Honolulu. Its eighth convention (ICAS 8) was held in Macao in June 2013. Unlike other conferences of Asian Studies where the majority of participants come from the United States and Europe, ICAS is a unique platform with the most diversified cross-continental representation and with the majority of participants coming from Asian countries. New ideas and research findings are exchanged not only among researchers who study Asia, but also among scholars who live in Asia. This is important because, so far, the conceptual lexicons and theoretical tools used in the social sciences and humanities have been derived almost exclusively from the West. Although these theories and methods have been applied throughout the world with considerable success, their limitations are becoming increasingly apparent, especially in a place like Asia with its long indigenous traditions of organizing social relations, its own norms about power and order, and its legacies of implementing rule. As Asian countries emerge to become prominent players in the world, the point has come to recognize that the region has something to offer in the development of social knowledge. In this regard, ICAS plays an instrumental role.

Theoretical significance of Asia

In brief, taking Asia seriously means more than addressing its growing economic and political influence. It also requires us to reconsider the theoretical significance of Asia. The rapid transformation that has taken place in many Asian countries during the last few decades represents not only a radical experimentation with grand reform in human history, but also a living laboratory for social scientists of nearly all disciplines to observe social change and human action from different theoretical perspectives. In this process, even a casual observer will not fail to notice the limitations in our current understanding of Asia. Such limitations, on the one hand, come from the inadequacy of our existing conceptual vocabularies in describing institutional forms and social practices that deviate from Western categories. Examples abound: the blurred boundary between the public and private domains; the overlapping positions and multiple roles assumed by ruling parties, government bureaucrats, and business conglomerates; the ambivalent structures of ownership in enterprises; and the fluid relationship between institutional linkage and personal network. On the other hand, our existing theoretical perspectives also have problems in accounting for numerous paradoxes in Asian politics and societies. For instance, everyday political life in many countries is tightly controlled and yet the electoral regime is open and competitive; nationalism as a unifying ideology runs high in many countries despite the prevalence of strong parochialism and separatism; and market liberalization has been undertaken with great determination amidst the establishment and strengthening of state monopolies.

The Asian case as breeding ground

These deviations and paradoxes have excited and inspired researchers of different disciplines - the overwhelmingly enthusiastic reaction to the call for papers at ICAS 8 was testament to that. The Asian case provides an ideal breeding ground to refine existing theories and to develop new ones. In particular, the time-space compression experienced by countries such as China, India, South Korea, Vietnam, and now Burma, in their radical reforms during the last decades, offers a unique opportunity to study some of the most important

issues of our time. These include questions of institutional change, social transformation, market reform, ethnic conflict, environmental hazard, national security, urbanization, migration, political control and resistance, social marginalization, inequality, to name a few. The reform process has been plagued with problems and impasse while at the same time filled with innovative solutions and unexpected consequences.

Macao and ICAS 8

Many of these questions were taken up at the panel discussions during ICAS 8. The mega event took place in Macao on 24-27 June 2013. It was co-hosted by the University of Macau and Macao Foundation. The rich cultural heritage and the strong historical legacies connecting East and West made Macao an ideal place to host ICAS 8.

Macao was the first as well as the last European colony in China. The more than four-century long interaction between the Chinese and Portuguese traditions has left Macao with a unique blend of cultural diversity, modernity, and cosmopolitanism. Altogether more than 1200 participants from 56 countries and 600 higher institutes of learning took part in the event. The importance of the conference for Macao is many-folded. First, it has brought fresh knowledge and perspectives to Macao, through the exchange with researchers in such areas as urban development, migration, and cultural heritage. Second, it underlined the emergence of Macao as a regional hub, by showcasing to the international academic community the relevance of Macao in knowledge creation and dissemination. Third, it helped propagate the cultural richness, economic diversity, and social vibrancy of Macao to the rest of the world.

What is more important was the exchange of new ideas and up-to-date research findings during the panel discussions. More than 250 thematically organized panels took place during ICAS 8. They clustered around such themes as culture and heritage, globalization and transnationalism, migration and connectivity, regionalism and urban development, and social and economic transformation. They were attended not only by academics but also by government officials, museum curators, NGO activists, journalists, business leaders, and members of the general public. It was a rare opportunity during which scholars and practitioners across different continents and regions gathered together to explore local and global problems.

Building new knowledge

Such ideational kindling will be no less provoking than the emergence of an economically powerful Asia. After all, the global order is not only shaped by the rise and decline of material powers, but also by the way we perceive and theorize our political and economic existence. This will be a key challenge for the next generation of scholars in the new epoch. While scholars working in many areas have been searching for a new way forward, it is anything but straightforward. One of the major problems is the limitation set by our own analytical language. We need to be able to communicate and exchange our ideas. At the moment we use English as our common analytical language. The problem is that even the most basic terms such as 'society', 'rights', 'citizen', 'authority', etc., are endowed with layers of meaning derived from European histories. When we use them to analyze other societies, we inevitably import the historical traits hidden behind those terms. Avoiding this trap is tricky, because if we abandon terms like 'power', 'community', and 'enterprise' in our discussion, we will end up with a conceptual void.

This is certainly not an obstacle that can be easily overcome. That is why continuous dialogue among Asia scholars is indispensable. And this underlines the role of ICAS in such dialogues. By hosting ICAS 8, Macao contributed to building new knowledge about Asia and the global order. Over time Asia should be able to develop its own social theories, methodologies, and concepts applicable not just to Asia, but also to the West. In doing so we will have a more nuanced perception of the world, one which is more historically and culturally sensitive. It will also be a more pluralistic and less hegemonic understanding of humanity.

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Sweet Sixteen

Paul van der Velde, ICAS Secretary

IN ITS 16 YEARS OF EXISTENCE the International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS), whose Secretariat is hosted by IAS, has brought together 12,500 academics and other professionals from 70 different countries at eight conventions, where 11,000 papers were presented during 2300 panels and roundtables. Behind these figures lies a world of multiple interactions, across borders and disciplines, which have resulted in new international research initiatives.

Year	Place	Participants	Panels	Papers	Countries	Institutions
1998	Leiden	1000	130	640	40	350
2001	Berlin	800	100	500	35	280
2003	Singapore	1100	250	940	54	400
2005	Shanghai	1200	270	1020	58	420
2007	Kuala Lumpur	1400	350	1400	60	500
2009	Daejeon	850	200	800	53	320
2011	Honolulu*	5000	770	4500	57	2250
2013	Macao	1200	270	1050	56	600

*Together with the Association for Asian Studies (AAS)

Olympics of Asian Studies?

ICAS was officially launched in 1997. Its core idea was to internationalise Asian Studies and increase the involvement of scholars from Asia. The main goals were to transcend the boundaries between disciplines, between nations and regions studied, and between geographic origins of the scholars involved. To a large extent ICAS has been successful in achieving these goals (see Tak Wing Ngo's contribution on this page).

ICAS is a biennial event organised by local hosts in cooperation with the ICAS Secretariat. ICAS offers the local host a unique opportunity to profile itself in the world of Asian Studies, and the convention itself connects in a dynamic way to the city in which it is held. While reflecting on ICAS, the organiser of ICAS 5 in Kuala Lumpur, Shamsul AB, dubbed ICAS "The Olympics of Asian Studies". Though the comment was made in jest, it is nevertheless true that ICAS has, over the years, become an active accelerator of research, and a platform for representatives of both academia and civil society to focus on issues critical to Asia and, by implication, to the rest of the world.

ICAS International Council

The first meeting of the ICAS International Council took place at ICAS 8 in Macau. It is an advisory body meant to further reinforce ICAS' institutional grounding and visibility in Asia. Concretely, the Council assists ICAS in facilitating collaboration with host partners, linking up with local networks, institutions and funding organisations. It includes prominent scholars in the field of Asian Studies and representatives of regional or big national Asian Studies organisations.

The growth of the ICAS Book Prize

The biennial ICAS Book Prize (IBP) is recognised as the leading award for Asian Studies publications. It was established in 2004 with the aim to increase the worldwide visibility of publications on Asia. The IBP has a remit that covers the whole of Asia and its relations to the rest of the world, and is both a global competition for publications on Asia and a platform for Asian studies.

Since its inception the number of submitted books has risen from 50 in 2005, to 250 in 2013; and the number of submitted dissertations has risen from 10 in 2007, to 100 in 2013. This remarkable increase in submissions has made the judging process even more difficult. Therefore, in addition to the awards for best books and dissertations in the Humanities and Social Sciences categories, and the Colleagues' Choice Award, we decided to institute the new category 'IBP Reading Committee Accolades', which will allow the judges to recognise notable works in the field that are not, for a variety of reasons, in contention for the main prizes. These Accolades allow the judges to recognise works that are particularly noteworthy. More information about the prizes and the submission process can be found on the ICAS website: www.icassecretariat.org

ICAS 9 in Adelaide

ICAS 9 will be held in Adelaide (5-9 July 2015). It will be hosted by an international team of experts, spearheaded by Adelaide's three leading universities - University of Adelaide, Flinders University of South Australia, and the University of South Australia - in cooperation with the Asian Studies Association of Australia. A new element introduced during ICAS 8 in Macao was the ICAS 8 Daily Newsletter. In cooperation with the biggest English-speaking newspaper, the Macao Daily Times, a daily conference supplement was produced highlighting the main events of the previous day and looking forward to the events ahead. It was both a useful tool for the participants and also informed the people of Macao about the event. Plans are afoot to have an ICAS 9 Daily Newsletter in Adelaide as well.

ICAS 9 in Adelaide will also introduce a new initiative by the ICAS Secretariat: the ICAS Book Presentation Carousel. This format will allow Asian scholars at ICAS 9 to present their books published in the period June 2013 to June 2015. Authors will be allotted a one hour time slot to present their publication. There must be at least one commentator who reviews the book, after which there will be a public discussion. At the end of the meeting, the authors will have the opportunity to sign their books. More information about the Carousel will be made available on the ICAS website.

We are looking forward to ICAS 9 in Adelaide and hope to see a lot of old and new faces Down Under. Meanwhile, we are meeting with possible candidates for the organisation of ICAS 10 in 2017.