

Nearly 1000 submissions in nine languages

The Ninth (2021) ICAS Book Prize Edition

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The ICAS Book Prize (IBP) was established in 2003 by the International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS). In addition to the English edition with which it all started, we included publications in Chinese, German, French, and Korean for the seventh edition and, for the eighth edition, a combined Spanish/Portuguese prize. The diversification of languages for the IBP is further extended by the addition of Japanese and Russian editions for this ninth edition, which brings the total to eight editions representing nine languages. If more languages will be added in the future remains to be seen and is primarily dependent on a sizable output of Asian studies publications in a given language. With this multilingual approach, in cooperation with a host of partners and sponsors worldwide, ICAS is increasingly decentring the landscape of knowledge about and in Asia. With this approach in mind the ICAS Secretariat also founded the Africa-Asia Book Prize and organised two editions (2015 / 2018). The future editions will be coordinated by the Association for Asian Studies in Africa (A-Asia) in cooperation with the recently founded Centre for Asian Studies at the University of Ghana.

The IBP Partners

The following ten institutions in Asia, Latin America and Europe either organise or sponsor the respective language editions. CATS, Centre for Asian and Transcultural Studies (German Edition), GIS Asie, French Academic Network on Asian Studies (French Edition), ICAS, IIAS and the Asian Library at Leiden University (English Edition and Japanese Edition), IFES, Institute of Far Eastern Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences (Russian Edition), NCU, National Chengchi University (Chinese Edition), SEPHIS, The South-South Exchange Program for Research on the History of Development (Spanish/Portuguese Edition), Society for Hong Kong Studies (Hong Kong Article Prize Edition) and SNUAC, Seoul National University Asia Center (Korean Edition).

The secretariat of each edition, consisting of a secretary and an acting secretary, in cooperation with the IBP Secretariat at ICAS, puts together a Reading Committee consisting of scholars in diverse disciplines, focusing on various regions, working on and originating from different continents: a composition that reflects the transcending nature of ICAS.¹ Each secretariat succeeded in finding enthusiastic members for their respective Reading Committees and has persuaded publishers and periodicals in the field of Asian studies to submit their publications. All their endeavours have resulted in nearly one thousand submissions (966) by more than a hundred publishers and periodicals worldwide fulfilling the promise stated when the prize was founded in 2003: 'To create, by way of a global competition, an international focus for academic publications on Asia so as to increase their visibility worldwide, also beyond academic circles'.²

The Editions

The English Language Edition with which it all started will remain – now with 497 books and 176 dissertations – for some time to

come the biggest in number of submissions. However, other editions have the potential to grow substantially – in particular the Asian language editions, which started out with more submissions than the first English Language Edition. It takes a lot of energy, time and experience before a prize is deeply rooted and starts to blossom. Here I want to single out the Japanese Language Edition because two previous attempts to set it up were foiled. Therefore the ICAS Secretariat has sponsored this first edition and with good result mainly thanks to the endeavours of its Secretary Aysun Uyar Makibayshi of Doshisha University in Kyoto, who managed to get in 38 publications. She had previously served on the Reading Committee of the English Language Edition and she has put her experience to good use. We do not doubt that in view of this unprecedented result many institutes in Japan will jump to become sponsor of the future IBP Japanese Language Editions.

There were two more newcomers. During the ICAS Book Prize Dinner at ICAS 11 in Leiden, we invited Alexey Maslow, Director of the Institute of Far Eastern Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, with an eye on setting up a Russian Language Edition. We planned a meeting in Moscow to forge its Reading Committee in June 2020. The pandemic was an obstacle for this to happen, but nevertheless it turned out well in the end. The other newcomer is the Hong Kong Article Prize. Many times in the past I was asked whether it would not be a good idea not only to include books but also articles in the IBP because, certainly in the social sciences, a lot of the academic output is in articles. Therefore we welcomed the idea of the Society for Hong Kong Studies to have, on an experimental basis, an article prize for Hong Kong studies. With more than a hundred articles submitted it clearly fulfils an existing need for this field of study and gives us an idea of the wide variety of academic periodicals in which our colleagues find a safe haven to contribute their ideas to.

The Prizes and The Accolades

Once the number of submitted books to a language edition reaches one hundred, two prizes are awarded, one in the Social Sciences and one in the Humanities. This is the case for the English Language Edition and the Dissertations Edition. Furthermore, in view of the large number of submissions we have, since the sixth edition (2013) put Accolades in place to highlight specific aspects of books and dissertations. Although these are primarily awarded in the English Language Edition, other editions also started to award them or come up with their own Accolades. For example, the Chinese Language Edition (which doubled the number of a submissions thanks to the work of its energetic Secretary Cha-Hsuan Liu) has put in place an Accolade for the Best Translation into the Chinese Language, and the Spanish/Portuguese Edition came up with the Outstanding Contribution to the Field of Asian Studies Accolade. It is not only the prize winners who are acknowledged but everyone who is on the longlists or shortlists or receives

an accolade is a rightful winner. Roughly ten percent of all authors thus receive recognition and rightly so because we all know how much it takes to get published.

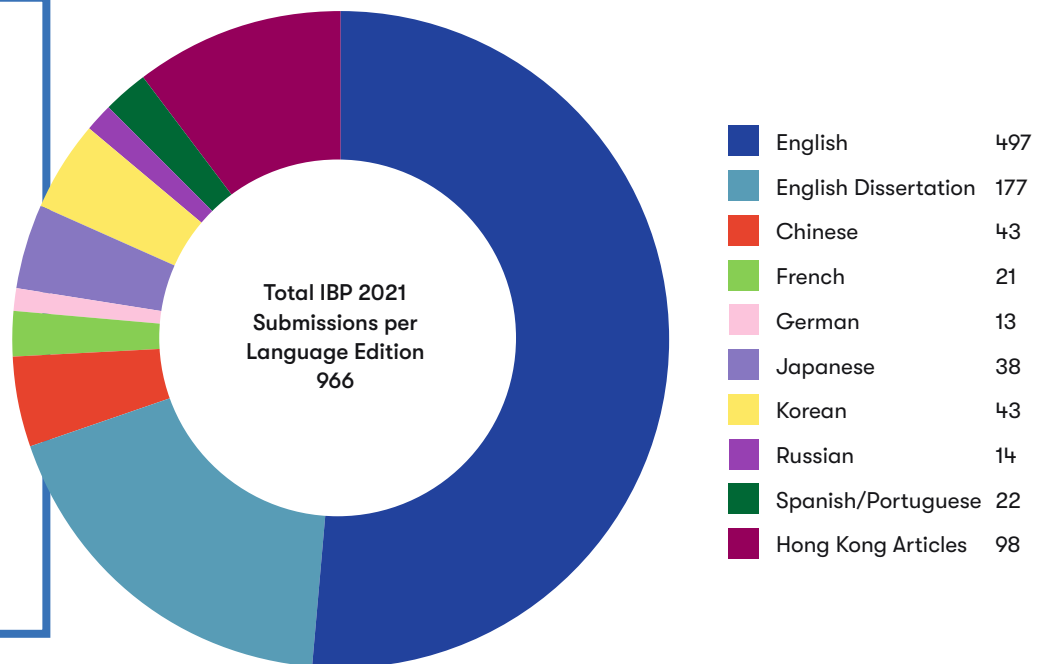
The Dissertations

ICAS prides itself to be the platform for young scholars and practitioners. Therefore from the first IBP onwards we put a lot of effort into the Dissertations Edition. This time around, there was a record number of 176 dissertations submitted, including 99 in the Humanities and 77 in the Social Sciences. The predominance of Humanities submissions was notable. The two categories were almost equally represented at ICAS 11. At earlier ICASs, Social Science submissions predominated. Those submitting their dissertations came from 101 different universities in 21 countries, with a particularly strong component of American universities represented (33). This is indicative of a cultural difference, with particular merit awards being more commonly endowed by American institutes than those of most other countries, and their students thus being more accustomed to promoting their work in such manner.

As for subjects, dissertations centred on China (41), on India (22), on Indonesia (18) and on Japan (17). But the classic model of a study of one region from within a single discipline is increasingly redundant, with a growing percentage of submissions being cross-disciplinary and/or concerned with cross-regional or cross-cultural issues. Thus entrants include such topics as studies of European millennials' labour migration to Asian metropolises, or Discourses of English and Development at two Bangladesh rural madrasahs. We are curious how these developments compare with dissertations written in other languages. We know there are national dissertations competitions in South Korea and France, for example, and it would be an enrichment if these and also those in other languages are also put on the IBP stage.

Fusion of Amalgam and Gamelan

Increasingly Asian scholars are and must be at home in different cultures, languages, subjects and disciplines. In an article in 2015, we coined this development the New Asia Scholar, who is increasingly superseding the very specialized disciplinary or regional Asia scholar.³ One thing is for sure: all those who have been members of the Reading Committees in the past two decades have become by the very nature of their horizon-widening exercise New Asia Scholars. They form the avant-garde in a development which in the near future will lead to a paradigmatic shift in Asian studies with new approaches not only based on Western concepts (amalgam) but will for sure increasingly include Asian concepts (gamelan). The fusion of both will lead to ground-breaking new insights that will transcend traditional institutional structures and methodologies and will turn into constantly changing hypersensitive networks, brain and craft parks, where ideas exchange without any restrictions.



There is a rapture on the lonely shore

Slowly it is sinking in that this will be my last IBP as General Secretary. I do that with a smile, convinced that my successor Martina van den Haak, who was IBP Acting Secretary from 2008 to 2013, will do so with much gusto. She will work in cooperation with the secretaries of the language editions and with Paramita Paul, who has succeeded Sonja Zweegers (many, many thanks Sonny!) as editor of *The Newsletter* and as Secretary of the IBP English Edition. A special thanks to Alex McKay who has been involved with the IBP almost from its inception and for the past four editions was the Chair of the Dissertation Reading Committee.

Needless to say I would like to thank all IBP Secretaries, Members of the Reading Committees, the authors who in the past have submitted their publications or dissertations, and the publishers who provided the copies of all these wonderful books. It will come as no surprise that I am eagerly looking forward to the tenth edition in 2023!

Paul van der Velde,
General Secretary, IBP

Notes

- <https://www.icas.asia/the-newsletter/article/icas-turns-21>
- <https://www.icas.asia/the-newsletter/article/icas-book-prize-multilingual-window-world-asian-studies>
- <https://www.icas.asia/the-newsletter/article/new-asia-scholar>

IBP 2021 contents

| | |
|---|-------|
| English Language Edition Humanities | 10-11 |
| English Language Edition Social Sciences | 12-13 |
| Chinese and French Language Editions | 14-15 |
| Spanish/Portuguese Language Edition | 16-17 |
| Japanese, German and Russian Language Editions | 18-19 |
| Korean Language Edition and Hong Kong Article Prize | 20 |