

IIAS Fellowship Programme

In the spotlight

The International Institute for Asian Studies annually hosts a large number of visiting researchers (research fellows) who come to Leiden to work on their own individual research project. In addition, IIAS also facilitates the teaching and research by various professorial fellows as part of agreements with Dutch universities, foreign ministries and funding organisations. Meet our fellows at www.iias.asia/fellows



Joel Bordeaux

“Without going out the door, know the world”

IIAS Research Clusters:
Asian Heritages; Global Asia
1 Nov 2020 – 31 Oct 2021

The country was already under partial lockdown when I arrived in November, so I wasn't entirely sure what to expect. The university was basically closed, too, but if one must studiously avoid the office and public transport, Leiden is a lovely place to do so. Here I have at least been given the opportunity to migrate a not-insignificant portion of the library's impressive South Asia collections to my apartment!

In fact, considering my own largely speculative sense of what life at the IIAS is

normally like, it seems fitting to settle into a project about imaginary journeys and lost locations here. My research, you see, concerns representations of 'China' and 'Chinese' ritual in Hindu sources, but I have come to suspect that the majority of the premodern Indian authors I have been reading were likely also 'working from home.' It is doubtful whether many of them ever left the subcontinent, or for that matter, whether they share a consistent understanding of the

geography of the places they refer to in Sanskrit as *Cīna* (China) or *Mahācīna* ('Greater China') other than locating them beyond the Himalayas.

What they do generally agree on is that the esoteric, so-called Chinese form of ritual taught by the Buddha in this foreign land ignores many of the regulations around purity and auspicious timing that typically structure Hindu rites – and indeed, there is evidence in the earliest sources of 'pious plagiarism' from early 2nd-millennium Indian Buddhist tantras that do just that. Presently, I am looking at how some early modern commentators (known to have travelled to Nepal at least, where they may well have encountered living Buddhist traditions long since extinct in India) attempted to assimilate or indigenize these supposedly imported practices. My hope is that this will yield clues as to what was considered essentially 'Chinese' about them.

During the last several months, I have enjoyed many productive conversations

with Leiden University faculty, library staff, and graduate students; mostly via webcam but occasionally out of doors, too, as the weather has grown more accommodating. I've been particularly fortunate to read Sanskrit – including an otherwise impenetrable manuscript by a terribly absentminded scribe – with Peter Bisschop and to discuss my project with Péter-Dániel Szántó, who often engages related matters in his own scholarship. Happily, I have also received a steady stream of useful feedback from across the globe in response to my online lecture ('The goddess Tara, Buddhism, and 'Chinese' ritual in Hindu tantra'),¹ and invitations to present additional work both in Leiden and at the University of Amsterdam. All told, I am very much looking forward to continuing my research here.

Notes

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=77oz4tb8r0Y>



Samia Kotele

From the quest for religious authority to the development of a new gender theology: the history of female ulema in Indonesia since the 20th century

IIAS Research Cluster: Global Asia
15 Aug 2020 – 15 Aug 2021

My research stay at IIAS has been an outstanding chance to continue my research despite Covid-19 restrictions. Having the opportunity to work in the Special Collections of Leiden University led me to look into the intellectual history of female *ulema*

throughout the 20th century. The access to relevant and indispensable sources like correspondence, press, and manuscripts encouraged me to rethink my approach and methodology while my ethnographic research field in Indonesia was put on hold. Beyond

studying the nexus between Islam, gender, and knowledge production in a comparative perspective, this body of sources invited me to place female thought at the core of my study.

Through a study of concepts and ideas, my research aims not only to depict connections between reform and the condition of women, but also aims to understand the constant interactions between everyday life and the reflected life of female *ulema* in Indonesia. The richness of the sources pushed me to not only focus on moments of historical ruptures, but also to pay attention to the micro-evolutions occurring in various domains such as religion, education, politics and philanthropy, in which female *ulema* played a public and/or private role. The IIAS fellowship has given me the chance to discuss and widen my perspectives by giving me the tools to decipher the contexts

of production and reception of the discourses of pioneer women since the beginning of the 20th century. The extraordinary access of a wide range of sources from a diverse set of geographical locations allowed me to question the exceptionality of the engagement of women, both in the religious field and its contribution to the evolution of ideas through the process of human circulation. Leiden's vibrant community of researchers keeps inspiring me to enrich my visions and situate the historiographical stakes of this issue at the crossroads of Islamic and Asian studies. This serene and fascinating environment, together with its historical significance, has been an exceptional chance for me to develop my thought. I hope I can continue in the future to contribute to the intellectual and cultural scene.

IIAS Fellowship possibilities and requirements



Apply for an IIAS fellowship

The International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) in Leiden, the Netherlands, invites outstanding researchers to apply for an IIAS fellowship to work on a relevant piece of research in the social sciences and humanities. The next application deadline is 1 October 2021.



Combine your IIAS fellowship with two extra months of research in Paris

When applying for an IIAS Fellowship, you have the option of simultaneously submitting an application for an additional two months of research at the Collège d'études mondiales of the Fondation Maison des sciences de l'homme (CEM-FMSH), in Paris, France, immediately after your stay in Leiden. The next application deadline is 1 October 2021.



Apply for a Gonda fellowship

For promising young Indologists at the post-doctorate level it is possible to apply for funding with the J. Gonda Foundation of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) to spend three to six months doing research at IIAS. The next application deadline is 1 April 2022.



Information and application forms:
www.iias.asia/fellowships

