

The Story of IIAS as a Publisher

A Conversation with Paul van der Velde

Mary Lynn van Dijk

From its inception in 1993, the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) has been active in publishing a wide variety of academic book series, promotional material of all kinds, and its flagship Newsletter that reports on what is happening in the field of Asian studies worldwide. IIAS Publications Officer Mary Lynn van Dijk talks to Paul van der Velde, who has been involved in publications at IIAS from the very beginning.

What was your position at IIAS when you started in the 1990s?

As Head of Communications, I was responsible for IIAS' academic publications, but also for ancillary publications such as guides, reports, yearbooks, lecture series, and public relations in general. The founding director of IIAS (Wim Stokhof) and I teamed up and brainstormed a lot on how we could stand out in the totally fragmented field of Asian Studies. We agreed that we should have an attractive quarterly publication in newspaper format, which should be distributed for free to all interested parties worldwide. I became the editor of the periodical you are presently reading and was responsible for the first 17 editions and a variety of supplements. Three years after its first issue, the newsletter had reached a worldwide circulation of 25,000 hard copies, and it was also available online from its inception.

How did you set up the Publications program?

Setting up *The Newsletter* and its international editorial board took up a lot of my time. Needless to say, an academic institute should also be active in publishing its and others' academic output. First, we concentrated on what our fellows were working on, which resulted in Yearbooks containing fellows' articles and also a Working Papers Series. Furthermore, we mounted an IIAS Lecture Series, which contained the speeches of politicians and Asia scholars held at the IIAS. Their printed versions were handed out to the participants at the end of the meetings. Furthermore, as a facilitating institute, we wanted to give an idea of who was doing what in the field of Asian Studies.

This led us to publish the *Guide to Asian Studies in the Netherlands*, the *IIAS Guide to Asian Collections in the Netherlands*, and also the *IIAS Internet Guide to Asian Studies*.

After years of working with a number of different publishers (e.g., Curzon, Brill, Kegan Paul International, etc.), we eventually thought the time was ripe to concentrate our publications into a single dedicated programme. Our proposal to start two series primarily on contemporary Asia was embraced by Amsterdam University Press. That AUP's books were distributed in the United States by University of Chicago Press and across Asia itself was an important factor that led to our decision.

When were the IIAS Publications (Monographs and Edited Volumes) and the ICAS Publications (Monographs and Edited Volumes) started?

After we were convinced that Asian Studies would be one of the spear points in AUP's publication policy, we signed the contract. Whereas all previous IIAS books had been hardcovers, we shifted to much cheaper paperbacks in order to increase the accessibility of our academic output. This was the beginning of the IIAS Publications Series (2007-2013) and the ICAS Publications Series (2006-2012), both of which consisted of monographs and edited volumes. To test the grounds, Josine Stremmelaar, at that time Executive Manager of IIAS and ICAS, and I co-edited *What About Asia? Revisiting Asian Studies* (2006) on the occasion of the retirement of Wim Stokhof as IIAS director.

I was appointed General Editor of both series. Much more important were the

Editorial Boards of these series which consisted of Asian Studies scholars such as Carol Gluck, Prasenjit Duara, A.B. Shamsul, and Wim Boot. With them and their contacts, I was able to set up both series in a reasonably short time span. The IIAS Publications Series served as a channel of publication for the many fellows visiting IIAS. The topics of the books reflected the kind of research being supported by IIAS during those years.

When were the current four series – Asian Cities, Asian Heritages, Global Asia, and Humanities Across Borders Methodologies – started?

Every now and then institutes such as ours change directions. Under the present-day director, Philippe Peycam, IIAS streamlined its research-led activities around three broad themes: Asian Cities, Asian Heritages, and Global Asia. Each of these "clusters" became the basis of a book series at AUP. Humanities Across Borders is a recent addition, and the first volume in its series is expected in 2022.

So far, 32 volumes (on average five per year) have been published with titles ranging from *Shadow Exchanges along the New Silk Roads* and *African-Asian Encounters: New Cooperations and New Dependencies to Beyond Bali: Subaltern Citizens and Post-Colonial Intimacy* and *Ideas of the City in Asian Settings*. The series editors of each of the series (Global Asia: Tak-Wing Ngo; Asian Cities: Paul Rabé; Asian Heritages: Adèle Esposito and Michael Herzfeld) play an important role, both in encouraging new submissions and in deciding whether submitted manuscripts fit in the series. They have been very successful, judging

from the number of books which have been published and the 17 books which now are in various stages of production. Also not unimportant, these books have been widely reviewed in major Asian studies journals worldwide. Book series are the global currency of our academic economy. Our new series from Humanities Across Borders, with appealing working titles as *Rice* and *Indigo*, will add a long overdue pedagogical and methodological dimension to our IIAS publications.

What would you consider your legacy at IIAS in terms of publications?

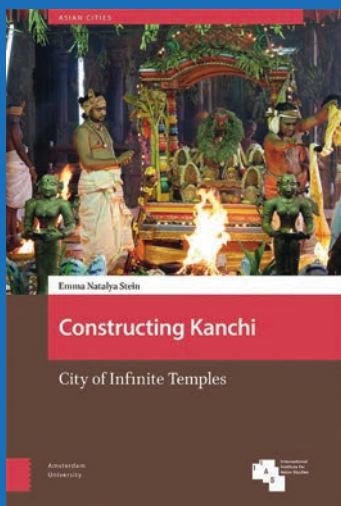
This is the most complicated question you can ask me because I cannot separate my work as editor from the many projects I have been involved with at IIAS over the past 30 years. They are all intertwined. I hope to have contributed to establish IIAS as one of the drivers of Asian Studies publishing, from books to *The Newsletter*. I derive most pride from having been (co)instrumental in the creation of the conditions under which what I labeled the New Asia Scholars can thrive. They all have a transregional, multidisciplinary, and multilingual approach to Asian Studies, an approach with concomitant academic attitude which lies at the heart of IIAS and ICAS.

Paul, many thanks for giving this insightful overview of the publications activities of IIAS from its foundation to the present day and beyond.

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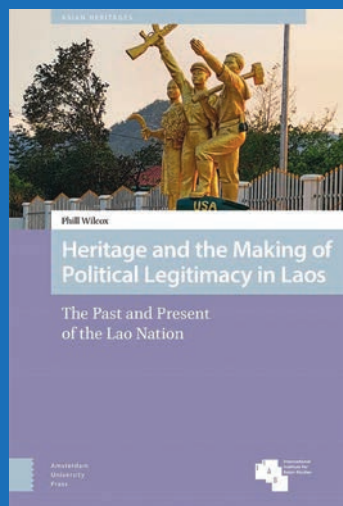
For more information on IIAS books, please visit www.iias.asia/books

IIAS Book Series with Amsterdam University Press



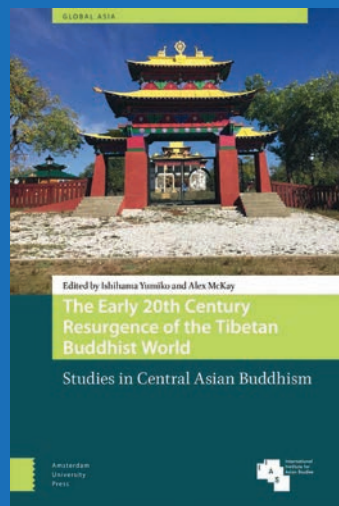
Asian Cities

Series Editor: Paul Rabé
Most Recent Title: *Constructing Kanchi: City of Infinite Temples* by Emma Natalya Stein, 2021



Asian Heritages

Series Editors: Adèle Esposito and Michael Herzfeld
Most Recent Title: *Heritage and the Making of Political Legitimacy in Laos: The Past and Present of the Lao Nation* by Phill Wilcox, 2021



Global Asia

Series Editor: Tak-Wing Ngo
Forthcoming Title: *The Early 20th Century Resurgence of the Tibetan Buddhist World: Studies in Central Asian Buddhism* by Ishihama Yumiko and Alex McKay (eds.), 2022



Humanities Across Borders (Methodologies)

Series Editors: Aarti Kawlra and Philippe Peycam
This newest book series will launch its first title in 2022. See this issue's "Announcements" section (Page 50) for more information.