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The IIAS and ICAS Publications Series

After working with a number of different publishers, we thought the time was ripe to concentrate our publications program. Amsterdam University Press (AUP) fully embraced our idea of two series primarily on contemporary Asia. That its books were distributed in the United States by the University of Chicago Press and that AUP also had a distribution network in Asia was clearly a plus. This was the beginning of the "IIAS Publications Series" (2007-2013) and the "ICAS Publications Series" (2006-2012), both consisting of monographs and edited volumes. The "IIAS Publications Series" remained very much a channel of publication for the many fellows visiting IIAS. The topics of the books reflected the kinds of research being done at IIAS during those years. Looking back on that time, we find monographs and edited volumes on gender, art, urban studies, migration, politics, and economics. In all, 18 books were published with an average of four books per year.

The idea for the "ICAS Publications Series" was born out of a demand from participants of ICAS to have their contributions published as a kind of proceedings. Because we had seen too many ragbag proceedings, we started thinking of another way of publishing a selection of the more than 500 articles flooding our desks, which had been presented at ICAS 4 (2005) and ICAS 5 (2007). After a thorough selection, we came up with eight possible edited volume titles; on average, each contained ten articles. From the contributors we chose one senior scholar and one junior scholar to edit the volume. We asked them to mail all articles to every contributor, who in turn had to return all their comments to the editors, thus establishing an internal review process. The outcome was eight book titles, which were all launched in one session at ICAS 6 (2009) in Daejeon, South Korea. Around 50 editors and contributors to the books were present at the session. In all, 23 monographs and edited volumes were published in the series. In view of the workload, this approach was discontinued,

but recently around 100 papers on a variety of topics presented at ICAS 12 were published as pre-publications in Open Access by Amsterdam University Press as an experiment which might be continued in the future.¹

Ongoing Series: Asian Cities, Asian Heritages, Global Asia, and Humanities Across Borders

In 2013 the series were streamlined along the lines of IIAS's research themes: Asian Cities, Asian Heritages, and Global Asia, whereas Humanities Across Borders is a recent addition that adds a long

overdue pedagogical and methodological dimension. Including these four IIAS series, AUP now publishes 15 Asian Studies series. This means that we almost never have to reject book proposals because if they do not fit in one of ours, then they often find their way into one of the other series. We are able to guarantee, if all deadlines are met, that a book after submission of the manuscript will be published within a year, an exceptionally short time span in comparison to other publishers. This includes the reviewing process.

So far, 40 volumes (an average of four per year) have been published, with 15 more books in various stages of production. Also not unimportant is the fact that titles from all of our publications series have not only been reviewed in *The Newsletter*, but also in major Asian Studies journals worldwide.

We hope that in the future all IIAS's series will be available in Open Access (there are signs pointing in this direction), which will make IIAS's research available to all for free: from in-house publications with hardly any impact to Open Access publishing with a potential global readership. The more than 100 books published by IIAS in the past three decades are part and parcel of the Asian Studies world, in which book series form the global currency and backbone of the academic community.

Paul van der Velde
IIAS, The Netherlands

Notes

- <https://www.aup-online.com/content/proceedings/ICAS-12?page=5>



My Intellectual Journey with IIAS

Tak-Wing Ngo

On an ordinary day in 1994, I received a phone call from someone I did not know, asking if I was interested in taking up a postdoc position in the Netherlands. At that time telephone scams were rare, so I agreed to set up a meeting in London, where I was doing my PhD at SOAS. It so happened that shortly after its inauguration in 1993, IIAS launched its first research project on the Chinese diaspora – the Qiaoxiang Project – and was recruiting postdocs. I was thrilled by the opportunity but eventually did not take up the position. My first encounter with IIAS ended, but my long intellectual journey with IIAS had begun.

Even though I did not join IIAS, I still ended up in Leiden after I accepted a lectureship in Chinese politics at Leiden University. On the very first day that I reported for duty in January 1995, I was told that I would be representing IIAS in organizing a joint conference in Copenhagen with NIAS, the Nordic counterpart of IIAS, on the theme of Asian values and democracy. The conference was a big success, with numerous follow-up activities. I also established a long-term relationship with

NIAS by taking over a book series editorship with NIAS Press on Democracy in Asia.

From the day IIAS projected its presence uninvitedly onto my path, my academic life has been intimately shaped by it. In the next two decades, IIAS supported nearly a dozen international workshops under my convenorship. They included initiatives to study the state and state-making in Asia, alternative modes of resource flows and allocations including rent-seeking and the shadow economy, and institutional voids in developmental governance. Taking full advantage of the organizational resources of IIAS, I carried out many of my own research activities under its name. Thanks to the open-mindedness and flexibility of IIAS, I was spared from wasting time writing up funding proposals and going through tedious procedures. In the bureaucratic academic world, IIAS is a breath of fresh air. Throughout these years since its inception, IIAS has remained active, innovative, and entrepreneurial. In fact, it is a dream institution for researchers, one that combines everything in the academic production chain: funding, research support, workshop logistics, conferences, publicity, and publications!

My career took a new turn in 2008, when IIAS surprised me again by nominating

me for its endowed chair. I became the IIAS Professor of Asian History at Erasmus University Rotterdam. Shortly before that, I established the IIAS Centre for Regulation and Governance, the first national research centre in the Netherlands devoted to the study of regulatory governance in Asia. In these positions, I recruited new PhDs, postdocs, and visiting fellows to expand research activities both for IIAS and for myself.

My link with IIAS did not weaken after I moved to the University of Macau in 2011. As soon as I had settled down in Macau, I began organizing for ICAS 8. Subsequently, ICAS 8 successfully took place in 2013, in a casino resort hotel with a huge turnout. It was worth my hair loss for the event. The following year I started a new IIAS book series with Amsterdam University Press, under the theme of Global Asia. More than a dozen books have appeared under the series. The series is still going strong, receiving many proposals each year.

In retrospect, my intellectual path would have been quite different without IIAS. For me, IIAS is not only a source of intellectual inspiration, funding support, and institutional backing, but also a training ground for a wide range of academic skills including academic administration, conference organizing, editing, and publishing. It has been my privilege to be associated with IIAS in all these years; I can also proudly say that I have contributed to the activities and development of this institute. Go on IIAS, happy anniversary!

Tak-Wing Ngo, University of Macau



Above: Cover of *Shadow Exchanges along the New Silk Roads*, co-edited by Eva P.W. Hung and Tak-Wing Ngo in 2020 for the Global Asia series at IIAS/Amsterdam University Press.

Right: Scholars gather in Macau for ICAS 8, which Tak-Wing Ngo helped organize with IIAS.

The Early Years of IIAS and its Newsletter: A Memoir

Alex McKay

Almost exactly two years after the official opening of IIAS on October 13, 1993, I arrived in Leiden to take up a Leverhulme Trust (U.K.) post-doctoral fellowship at the institute. I found a small apartment a few doors from the imposing early 16th-century building that housed the IIAS entrance on Nonnensteeg and began an association with IIAS that has never really ended. It was a time in which academia was being transformed by the arrival of the internet, and my first task was to master the new technology of email, which led naturally into a wider exploration of that extraordinary new research resource.

As a post-doctoral institute, the academic atmosphere at IIAS was very different to that of a university. A coterie of freshly-endowed doctorate holders from a variety of nations pursued their own research interests free of any particular duties or requirements. IIAS Director (1993-2006) Professor Wim Stokhof was a dynamic leader and an innovative and even relentless promoter of Asian Studies. He was also strongly supportive of the ambitions of his shifting cast of research fellows. He freely allocated funding for conferences and workshops and was, above all, prepared to give his people – both staff and fellows – opportunity. Some fellows took full advantage of that opportunity, arriving early at their desks and leaving only when the building closed at night, producing books and articles and building their careers and disciplines. Other fellows squandered the chance, for there were many distractions in Leiden. Aside from the many museums and galleries, it was always tempting to wander the cobbled streets and parks alongside the concentric rings of canals, or to pause and while away the time at the bars and coffee shops scattered along the way.

Lunch was provided for the fellows, with the aim of encouraging conversations that would lead to the cross-fertilisation of ideas and disciplines. The extent to which

that occurred was perhaps disappointing, with recent doctorates tending to be firmly wedded to their particular approaches and methodologies. The extraordinary range of subjects under study also made common ground hard to find, except perhaps for agreement over the most congenial cafes and bars. But some lasting contacts and friendships were made, and many seeds eventually bore fruit.

In the years that followed there were a number of wider IIAS initiatives that enjoyed considerable impact in the field of Asian Studies. Not the least of these was the International Convention of Asian Studies (ICAS), the first meeting of which was held near Leiden in 1998 and out of which developed the ICAS Book Prize (IBP) and later the Dissertation Prize. Others included such forums as ASEF (Asia-Europe Foundation) and ASEM (Asia Europe Meetings), as well as a series of publications by IIAS fellows, both in-house and later in partnership with Amsterdam University Press and Leiden University Presses. One particular initiative became central to the identity of IIAS: *The Newsletter*.

The Newsletter, originally named the *IIAS Newsletter*, was initially edited by Head of Publications Paul van der Velde, who took on many roles within the institute and went on to become the General Secretary of ICAS. Most recently he has published a memoir, *The Asian Studies Parade: Archival, Biographical, Institutional and Post Colonial Approaches* (Leiden University Press), which includes more detailed studies of the numerous initiatives in which he has been involved with IIAS and ICAS.

The Newsletter became essential reading for everyone in the Asian Studies field, with its mixture of news, articles, and illustrations filling the need for a publication that embraced every aspect of the field in an engaging manner. It enabled younger scholars to alert others to their concerns and research projects, provided an outlet

for more general or even provocative articles than those suitable for a specialist academic journal, and notified us of forthcoming conferences and publications. With the publication being free of charge, many an impoverished student, not least in Asia itself, was delighted to be able to add their name to the mailing list and feel themselves fully a part of the global community of scholars. By the time I joined IIAS, *The Newsletter* circulation was over 17,000. Before long I was able to assist its spread.

Heading to a conference in Budapest, at a time when Hungary was still emerging from the shadows of the Cold War, I helped IIAS staff at a booth they manned in the conference hall. The gathering had attracted a large number of Eastern European and Russian scholars to whom the free offering of a nice cotton conference bag containing the latest issue of *The Newsletter* initially seemed too good to be true. When they found the offer was genuine, I was mobbed by eager recipients, who subsequently contributed to the ever-increasing circulation of the publication! There can be few corners of the world which it has not reached.

IIAS has of course changed in its three decades of existence. Most obviously it has moved to a building on the Rapenburg, and Professor Philippe Peycam has succeeded Stokhof as Director. Several hundred scholars have worked there, and the field of Asian Studies has been transformed during that time. What Paul van der Velde has termed “the New Asia Scholar” has emerged as scholars of Asia throughout the world have come into day-to-day communication, but *The Newsletter* – whether online or in hard copy – has remained required reading. Long may it continue to be so!

Alex McKay
Australia



Above: Cover of *Their Footprints Remain: Biomedical Beginnings Across the Indo-Tibetan Frontier* by Alex McKay, published in 2007 as part of the IIAS Publications Series with Amsterdam University Press.

Below: Cover of *The Early 20th Century Resurgence of the Tibetan Buddhist World*, co-edited by Ishihama Yumiko and Alex McKay in 2022 for the Global Asia series at IIAS/Amsterdam University Press.

