

The Newsletter is a free periodical published by IIAS. As well as being a window into the Institute, The Newsletter also links IIAS with the community of Asia scholars and the worldwide public interested in Asia and Asian studies. The Newsletter bridges the gap between specialist knowledge and public discourse, and continues to serve as a forum for scholars to share research, commentary and opinion with colleagues in academia and beyond.

Postal address  
PO Box 9500  
2300 RA Leiden  
The Netherlands

Visitors  
Rapenburg 59  
2311 GJ Leiden  
T +31 (0) 71-527 2227  
iias@iias.nl

Colophon  
The Newsletter  
No. 97 Spring 2024

Chief editor:  
Paramita Paul

Assistant editor:  
Benjamin Linder

Guest editor for The Focus:  
Stéphane Gros

Editors for The Region:  
Ilhong Ko (SNUAC)  
Norshahril Saat (ISEAS)  
Kostas Tsimonis  
(Asian Studies in Greece)  
Fábio Baqueiro Figueiredo  
(Federal University of Bahia, Brazil)

Editor for The Network:  
Sandra Dehue

Digital editor:  
Thomas Voorter

Graphic Design:  
Paul Oram  
Lava

Printing:  
Nieuwsdrukkerij Nederland,  
Amsterdam

Submission deadlines  
Issue #99: 1 July 2024  
Issue #100: 1 October 2024  
Issue #101: 1 March 2025

Submission enquiries  
[thenewsletter@iias.nl](mailto:thenewsletter@iias.nl)  
More information:  
[iias.asia/the-newsletter](http://iias.asia/the-newsletter)

Go to: [iias.asia/subscribe](http://iias.asia/subscribe)  
To unsubscribe, and to make changes (e.g., new address), click the link in the footer of our e-mails. To order multiple copies: [thenewsletter@iias.nl](mailto:thenewsletter@iias.nl)

Rights  
Responsibility for copyrights and for facts and opinions expressed in this publication rests exclusively with authors. Their interpretations do not necessarily reflect the views of the institute or its supporters. Reprints only with permission from the author and The Newsletter editor [thenewsletter@iias.nl](mailto:thenewsletter@iias.nl)

[iias.asia](http://iias.asia)



Fig. 1 (left): Director Philippe Peycam leads a toast to celebrate 30 years of IIAS, October 13, 2023. For a recap of our 30-year celebrations, see p. 48.

# A Year of Celebrations

## On The Newsletter and New Beginnings

Paramita Paul and Benjamin Linder

In October 2023, the International Institute for Asian Studies celebrated its 30-year anniversary. Our previous edition of *The Newsletter* (#96, Fall 2023) was a special issue comprising a diverse collection of stories about this institute – its past, its present, and more importantly, its future. The publication of that issue coincided with two days of events organized by our institute here in Leiden, meant to inaugurate nearly a full year of celebrations commemorating three decades of IIAS. The culmination will be ICAS 13, our flagship conference-festival (ConFest) to be held in Surabaya, Indonesia from July 28-August 1, 2024. This, too, will be accompanied by a bespoke edition of *The Newsletter* (#98, Summer 2024) with a particular emphasis on “Crossways of Knowledge,” the overall theme of our ConFest. Where, then, does that leave the current issue you are reading (#97, Spring 2024), sandwiched as it is between two special issues amidst the 30-year celebrations? Along with the two editions that bookend it, this issue exemplifies both the continuities and transformations that our editorial team brings to *The Newsletter*.

On p. 48, readers will find a retrospective photo collage looking back at the two events IIAS hosted for its 30-year celebration. On October 12, 2023, at the beautiful Stadsgehoorzaal in Leiden, the institute gathered an interdisciplinary and international group of colleagues for a public roundtable discussion: “Decolonizing Area Studies: An Open Conversation.” The productive roundtable, over the course of two rounds, sought to rethink the challenges and possibilities for Area Studies – as an institutionalized discipline, but also as a mode of inquiry – for the dramatic geopolitical and sociocultural

shifts facing our contemporary moment. The following day, October 13, marked the exact anniversary of IIAS’ inaugural celebration in 1993. To mark the occasion, we hosted an Open Day at our office on the Rapenburg canal. The event welcomed the university scholars, students, and the Leiden community for a day of cultural performances, interactive workshops, and delicious foods – from boba tea to gourmet *pani puri*, from traditional Bengali songs to Filipino dancing, from yoga sessions to lithography workshops.

Such celebrations are not only an opportunity to reflect on the past, but also to take stock of the present. One heartening and exciting dimension of the October events was the presence of so many partners from across the world. This included colleagues from Tanzania, Zambia, and Senegal, with whom IIAS works on the network-building platform *Africa-Asia: A New Axis of Knowledge*. It also included partners from the recently established Airlangga Institute for Indian Ocean Crossroads (AIIOC) at Airlangga University, who are hosting and co-organizing ICAS 13 in Surabaya. These are only a few examples. On pp. 56-47 of this issue, Thomas Voorter, Communications Coordinator and Web Manager at IIAS, presents a variety of data visualizations demonstrating the wide and ever-expanding reach of IIAS and its global connections.

At its core, *The Newsletter* remains a platform primarily dedicated to dissemination of diverse research and critical ideas, and this issue is no exception. Both “The Focus” and “The Tone” offer research from the Himalayas. In the former, guest editor Stéphane Gros curates a wonderful collection of articles around the theme of roads and infrastructure across the region

(pp. 28-41). In the latter, Anna Stirr highlights the work of her and her colleagues as they document and publicize various modes of musical performance in Nepal (pp. 44-45).

We are also extremely proud of this iteration of “The Study,” which includes articles on everything from Cold War-era visits of Africans to North Korea (pp. 6-7) to the divergent framings of Chinese landscapes in colonial-era paintings (pp. 10-11), from the written correspondence between anthropologist Bernard Cohn and historian Ranajit Guha (pp. 6-7) to the struggle for cultural preservation and heritage among the Oroqen people of Inner Mongolia (pp. 16-17), from digital reconstructions of a 5th-century pagoda-temple in Varanasi (pp. 8-9). Always seeking to respond to contemporary political events, we also invited a contribution exploring the legal dimension of recent anti-Muslim violence in India (pp. 12-13). Taken together, the collection of research articles highlights the admirable diversity of Asian Studies research and the sustained importance of bringing such work to a wide readership, reaching audiences within and beyond academia.

Since our editorial team came on board in 2021, we have implemented a suite of new projects at *The Newsletter*. This has included new and revamped sections of the print edition as well as new digital platforms. In this edition, too, we continue to expand the scope of the publication. “The Region” section includes contributions from two familiar guest editors: ISEAS-Yusuf Ishak Institute in Singapore (pp. 22-24) and Seoul National University Asia Center (SNUAC) in South Korea (pp. 25-27). However, in addition, readers will notice two new partners contributing to that section as well, both from places with emergent, or often overlooked, Asian Studies scholarship. On pp. 18-20, Brazilian colleagues present several translated (from the original Portuguese) summaries of recent articles that appeared in the journal *Afro-Ásia*. Increasingly, we are interested in pursuing the possibilities of translation in our pages, once again seeking to amplify research from beyond the Anglophone academy. Meanwhile, on p. 21, Kostas Tsimonis reflects on the current state of Asian Studies in Greece. In both Brazil and Greece, the academic study of Asia – and, indeed, “Asia” itself – looks quite different from elsewhere, and we are pleased to bring such perspectives into our pages.

Finally, readers will notice a slight but key change to the back cover of this issue. Instead of the typical “Available for Review” page, we have implemented a new one-page section entitled “The Imprint.” Moving forward, this new page will highlight the critical work of small publishers around the world. Such presses, often located beyond the Global North, produce some of the most innovative, incisive, locally informed, and high-quality books within and beyond Asian Studies. All too often, the global publishing houses and major university presses – those with resources to invest in promotion – receive an outsized share of attention. Frankly, even despite our best efforts, this problem also beset the “Available for Review” page that The Imprint replaces. Whether works of research, translation, literature, or art, the publishers on The Imprint regularly experiment to push against the conventions of academic and popular trade publishing. In this first edition, we are pleased to highlight a selection of recent titles from Gantala Press in the Philippines.

We hope readers enjoy the varied content of this issue. As always, we remain open to your proposals for the print issue of *The Newsletter* and its digital platforms. Pitch your ideas and submit your articles to the editorial team at [thenewsletter@iias.nl](mailto:thenewsletter@iias.nl).

Paramita Paul,  
Chief Editor of The Newsletter

Benjamin Linder,  
Assistant Editor of The Newsletter

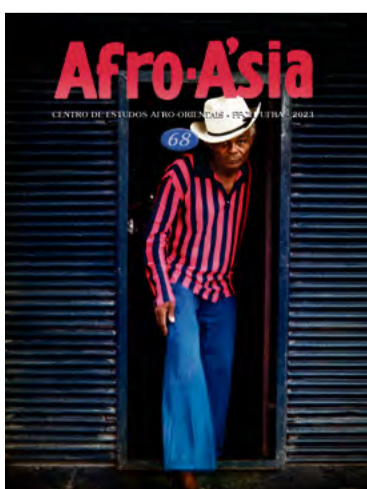


Fig. 2 (left): *Afro-Ásia* journal cover, n. 68, 2023. For an introduction to *Afro-Ásia*, see pp. 18-20. (Photo courtesy of *Afro-Ásia*)

Fig. 3 (above): Road in Eastern Tibet Khams region. The Focus section on roadways in the Himalayas can be found on pp. 28-41. (Photo by Stéphane Gros, 2004)