



Fig. 1: Lina Puryanti speaks as part of a roundtable with partners in Tanzania. (Photo courtesy of the University of Dar es Salaam, 2024)

ICAS, Universitas Airlangga, AIIOC

The Story From Within

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AIIOC: What's in a name?

The Airlangga Institute for Indian Ocean Crossroads (AIIOC) is the leading partner organization in Indonesia that will host the ICAS 13 Conference-Festival. Stories from the birth of this organization are interesting, especially in its interpretation of the Asia-Africa connections that were built through a series of dialogues, roundtables, and seminars. It was established from one of the most renowned universities in Indonesia: Universitas Airlangga (UNAIR). Located in Surabaya, East Java, the spirit of knowledge production in this campus has always supported scholars with diverse perspectives to maintain curiosity and engagement with specific cases in the society. The so-called

A story of the birth of the Airlangga Institute of Indian Ocean Crossroads (AIIOC) was already told in an article penned by Philippe Peycam in the 95th edition of the *IIAS Newsletter*. That specific piece illuminated a chronological outlook on how the initial idea of AIIOC was firstly stimulated, and was finally realized. In this opportunity, we would like to enrich what has been written by Philippe with a sequential continuation of AIIOC's activities following IIAS and Leiden University's visit to Surabaya in May 2023, and of our future as we venture as an international hub with our various partners.

ethos in learning, researching, and engagement – the *tri dharma* – has brought ideas to nurture knowledge and further promote diverse ways of thinking into the mainstream of society. Diversity is one of the key characteristics of Indonesia as a nation, a spirit which resonates within AIIOC's veins.

The "Indian Ocean" in AIIOC serves as a literal and figural expression of what this hub

intends to carry out. AIIOC was born under a historical paradigm of how the relationships between various South and North nations and cultures were built. This paradigm emerged through a series of historical encounters at different junctures, especially during colonization. The Indian Ocean is a witness to how the connection was built by the slave mobilizations and spice trades. It was local fishermen in Africa, India, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia that brought not only trade but also values, traditions, languages, and cultures, all of which consciously and unconsciously persist in Surabaya. AIIOC was further inspired by the ideas of how the ocean has facilitated multiple ideas and connections from South to South, from one culture to another. To ground these ideas, AIIOC gathers people from different perspectives, from a variety of backgrounds and experiences, and from multiple sites of knowledge.

AIIOC is established by four faculties in the UNAIR: Faculty of Humanities, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Faculty of Public Health, and Faculty of Medicine. It was initially a simple discussion in the Rector

House in Surabaya between Dr. Philippe Peycam, Dr. Ni Nyoman Tri Puspaningsih, Dr. Lina Puryanti, and Dr. Irfan Wahyudi about how to make a hub for the South-South connections in Surabaya. Then, we agreed to invite more friends to discuss this potential and make a roundtable discussion in February 2023: "Envisioning Southeast Asia and Indian Ocean Studies." The invitees were colleagues from the Netherlands, Tanzania, Senegal, Zambia, South Africa, Singapore, Thailand, Estonia, Pakistan, Indonesia, and France. Along with the international partners and faculties are colleagues from Universitas Airlangga's African Studies Center, ASEAN Center, and European and Eurasian Center.

AIIOC is also established upon a lot of criticisms from outside voices that the campus acts more as ivory towers. These criticisms attack the detached nature of the university from the social reality around it, claiming that the institution is monotonous, elitist, bordered, and uninspired. Such criticisms are common in the discourse nowadays. The *tri dharma*, a moral compass for Indonesian higher education, is often enacted under a rigid disciplinary boundary. What lies under a collaborative spirit is oftentimes an unconscious competition motivated by various interests. These points become a driving force for AIIOC to cultivate a fresh climate of collaborative knowledge production not only within the university, but also outside with multiple actors.

ICAS, to start with ...

ICAS 13 is located in Surabaya, a city that embodies the fight from *Arek Suroboyo* (Surabaya Youth) against colonialism. The Battle of Surabaya (November 10, 1945) marks an early stage of decolonization by a city that was – and still is! – a space for collective identities of Chinese, Javanese, Maduranese, Arabs, and Europeans. Modern Surabaya encompasses the lively arts and architecture of these identities. Surabaya developed as a sphere for the decolonization of knowledge through its development as

Fig. 2: Participants of the roundtable with IIAS, AIIOC, and other partners at UNAIR in February 2023. (Photo courtesy of Rohman Obet, 2023)



an industrial complex, a busy harbor city, a cultural melting pot, and a research and knowledge center.

As a center of knowledge excellence, UNAIR is hosting ICAS and using its pivotal role in knowledge production in Surabaya, which includes one of the oldest Schools of Medicine in Indonesia. Its ace card, the Medicine faculty, is strengthened by the equally strong existence of its faculties in the social sciences, humanities, and technology. Multidisciplinary approaches and collaborations further characterize the university. A consciousness of the importance of trans-sectoral and trans-disciplinary work grew during the COVID-19 context, where most approaches towards vaccinations had to be done both medically and culturally. Multidisciplinary teams from the university worked together to produce the vaccine and successfully launched it under the title *Inovac* or *Merah Putih* in 2022.

The monumental COVID cases in Surabaya also inspire how ICAS 13 is contextualized. ICAS 13 is not only a representation of the intersectional work of scholars, but also showcases and engages the multiplex socio-historico-cultural condition of Surabaya. Every piece of the city, whether its living people or historical objects, is entangled in an interconnected network. Thus, "Crossways of Knowledge" becomes a fitting theme for this ConFest.

A gaze towards the future

As ICAS 13 marks our initial agenda and the most intensifying propeller of our establishment, a sustainable future then becomes our main goal. Several capacity-building activities, workshops, and roundtables with our international partners in Thailand, the Netherlands, India, and Tanzania have been carried out. It reflects our focus that positions ICAS not already as our culmination, but rather as a strong start and foundation for our next path.

The festivity of ICAS brings us an opportunity to partner up with local Surabayan artist collectives. ICAS becomes an avenue for us to be immersed in their creative activities and to shape a future together beyond ICAS. Our collaborative projects also involve inhabitants of *kampung* (neighborhoods) as a way for us to grow a novel inter- and intra-connected forms of knowledge production and consciousness.

Aside from our very locally-rooted activities, we are also fortunate to participate in the South-South-North (SSN) and the Humanities Across Borders (HAB) initiatives at IIAS. These programs put emphasis on transdisciplinary pedagogies and research agendas, in line with AIIOC's spirit, in areas that are often overlooked in dominant discourses. The questions of who should produce legitimating knowledge and to whom such knowledge should be given are central to our attempts in rethinking and reshaping the vista of knowledge production. This spirit, gracefully instilled by IIAS, is also extended to our already-connected African colleagues in Dar es Salaam, where a research hub with the same spirit of AIIOC is about to enrich our network.

The excitement that we have for our future cannot be overstated. Accompanied by our strong and collegial partners, both national and international, we will further proceed to open up new programs (research clusters, fellowships for post-master and post-doctoral individuals, academic and artistic initiatives, and many more), always focusing on the interconnected Indian Ocean, literally and figuratively.

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The (Pre-)History of AIIOC

Adrian Perkasa

The choice of location for the symposium in Surabaya was neither coincidental nor arbitrary. Surabaya was a part of the Southeast Asia Neighborhoods Network (SEANNET), which was another program of the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) that took place during the same time period. It was with the strong backing of Rita Padawangi, the principle investigator and coordinator of SEANNET, that she and Paul Rabé, the co-coordinator of that network and the coordinator of UKNA, agreed to hold the symposium in conjunction with the launch of the SEANNET program. As the local primary investigator, I recommended Kampung Peneleh as a neighborhood that could be included in the program for several years to come. Historically, the origin of this *kampung* can be traced back to the 15th century.

Even so many centuries ago, Surabaya emerged as a major urban settlement, which subsequently developed into Indonesia's second-biggest city today. The rapid urbanization and industrialization during the colonial period created complex legacies which affected but were not limited to the position of *kampung*s or neighborhoods. The term *kampung* in Indonesia received a more derogatory meaning and became a place where the authorities wanted to exert their power. As a distinct urban feature associated with elements of rurality (i.e., village-community), the notion of *kampung*s flourished in many parts of Asia, especially in Southeast Asia. Even in the Khmer language, the term is identical to that for 'port' or 'haven,' indicating the intensive and dynamic relations between many cities at the dawn of the age of commerce in this region. With this background, a *kampung* is not only a site but also a communal way to see the world and to be in the world. Attempts at molding collective human settlements into functional, class-based, ethnic compartmentalizations imposed by state and corporate norms that have elsewhere succeeded in fragmenting societies have so far failed to fully obliterate this truly Indonesian but also Southeast Asian way of living in society.

Since joining SEANNET's project in 2017, a number of staff and students at Universitas Airlangga, particularly in the Faculty of Humanities, have gained experience in interdisciplinary thinking and working on a local and worldwide scale. Our group uses SEANNET's community-engaged research paradigm to investigate various approaches to understanding urbanism, particularly in the neighborhood setting. In this initiative, we collaborated with Arsitek Komunitas Surabaya ('Surabaya Community Architects'), to conduct participatory mapping with Kampung Peneleh locals. In addition, we invited Urban Sketchers Surabaya to host public sketching workshops in this neighborhood. Drawing, as stated in a number of works, serves a variety of objectives by distinguishing and assisting us in comprehending our complex environment. It may also enable us to discover, either via our personal experience of seeing, observing, and documenting, or through the shared experience of viewing another's drawn record of an event,

Surabaya is one of Indonesia's largest cities, yet it is understudied. That's what I realized when I first got involved in the preparation of the Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA) symposium in 2017. In contrast to other Indonesian cities such as Jakarta, Bandung, and even Solo, which is not the provincial capital, Surabaya has relatively few internationally recognized studies. At least that was my impression when I exchanged ideas with almost all of the participants in the symposium. In my field of study (history), I know of only a few works by authors like Howard Dick, William Frederick, and most recently Freek Colombijn, among others. Therefore, I believe it was a great opportunity to host the UKNA symposium to push Surabaya into an intensive discussion with other cities in Asia.

by employing signs and symbols, mapping, and labeling our experience.

Furthermore, being involved in the SEANNET program provides many privileges for all members of the group to collaborate with and learn from various international scholars, artists, and communities. The students and a member of the local neighborhood association in Kampung Peneleh participated in workshops in several countries in Southeast Asia, such as Thailand, Vietnam, and the Philippines. Participating in the SEANNET program exposed me to a variety of IIAS activities. Prior to my appointment as a lecturer at Universitas Airlangga, I had only established a connection with the institute once. I visited Rapenburg 59 together with several Indonesian officials during a heritage workshop in 2013. On that occasion, I was really impressed with how IIAS, under the directorship of Philippe Peycam, created various programs related to Asia. Subsequently, the acceptance of the paper I co-authored with Rita Padawangi into a seminar that IIAS co-organized in Taiwan provided me with an opportunity to learn more about the institute. I met with several figures who have been in this institute's network for several years. Philippe's invitation to attend

a workshop in Zanzibar, just days before the Africa-Asia Conference in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, heightened my interest in such activities. In fact, IIAS also invited the director of Airlangga Global Engagement, Ni Nyoman Tri Puspaningsih, to the event. However, due to several issues, only I could join that inspirational event from Surabaya.

The relationship of Airlangga with IIAS actually originated during the early years of the institute. In 1996, IIAS sent a current copy of *The Newsletter* to the Universitas Airlangga's library [Fig. 1-2]. After two subsequent decades of no significant collaboration, the relationship between Universitas Airlangga and IIAS has now grown stronger than ever. This was accelerated by the embryonic period of the newly established Airlangga Institute of Indian Ocean Crossroads. This partnership and mutual support has provided a model that we all hope will endure for many years into the future.

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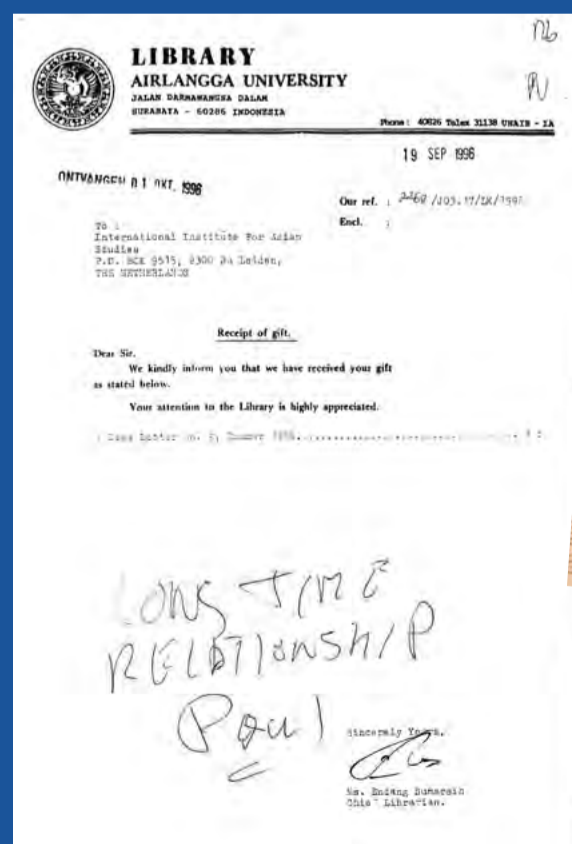


Fig. 1 (above): Issue #9 of *The Newsletter* (Summer 1996), an early point of connection between IIAS and Universitas Airlangga.

Fig. 2 (left): A note from Chief Librarian Endang Sumarsih at Universitas Airlangga to IIAS, confirming receipt of *The Newsletter* in 1996. (Photo courtesy of IIAS)