

The International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS)

ICAS turns 21

Globalisation was the buzz-word in the 1990s. From the first year of its creation in 1993, the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) was a promoter of the internationalisation of Asian Studies. The IIAS's periodical *The Newsletter* (initially called the *IIAS Newsletter*) quickly established itself as the communication channel in the very fragmented field of Asian Studies. We took 1,500 copies with us to the Association for Asian Studies (AAS) annual meeting in Washington in 1995. At the end of the meeting everybody was carrying our free tote bag plus the interdisciplinary, cross-regional message it carried. Clearly, there was a new kid on the block.

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The Birth of ICAS

The IIAS delegation learned a lot at the meeting. Amongst other things: we were practically the only non-Americans; the venue of the meeting was an anonymous chain hotel that lacked any connection to Asia; and the exhibition area was dominated by US publishers. However, the scale of the conference with 200 panels and a thousand participants was impressive, and so too were the manifold interactions and smooth organisation of the meeting. In sum, it worked well, but we missed the international aspect.

It was not difficult to convince our European colleagues to join us at the next AAS meeting in Honolulu in 1996. We participated with a strong delegation of European Asia scholars and at a meeting of the AAS board we presented a preliminary copy of the *Guide to Asian Studies in Europe*. It was hard for them to believe that Western Europe had at least as many Asia scholars and institutions researching Asia as the

US did. Then Secretary-Treasurer, John Campbell, concluded our conversation by saying: "For the first time we know whom to call in Europe".

Since I was tasked with deepening IAS's contacts with the US, I paid a visit to the AAS Secretariat in Ann Arbor. I pitched the idea of an international conference in Leiden in 1998 to further internationalise Asian Studies in a cross-regional and multidisciplinary way. To cut a long story short: the AAS, six European Associations for Asian Studies, and the European Science Foundation Asia Committee, collaborated on the first edition of ICAS. It took place near Leiden in 1998.

ICAS 1, Leiden, 25-28 June 1998

We think of this convention as a platform at which Asian, American and European Asianists can study problems of interest to all.

J. Campbell and W.A.L. Stokhof, co-chairs, programme committee ICAS 1

Nearly one thousand participants gathered during this convention. We named it a convention because we brought people together with an interest in Asia. The meeting was the first of such a size in the context of Asian Studies in Europe. Twenty five percent of the sessions transcended the usual boundaries between disciplines, between nations studied, and especially between the geographic origins of the presenters. This was pointing in a new direction. The venue was a convention centre at the seaside town of Noordwijkerhout near Leiden, where a plethora of other public activities took place, such as a South Asia Film Festival, dance performances by the School for New Dance Development, a journalists' forum on the Eurasian Century, music performances, a Pakistani truck art exhibition and the *Contemporary Art from Asia* exhibition in cooperation with the Gate Foundation and Canvas World Art. The French composer Henri Tournier wrote a composition for a programme of musical travelogues *Views of Asia*, a joint film project in cooperation with EYE Film Museum, and the Rotterdam Conservatory, based on an idea developed by Helga Lasschuijt and Paul van der Velde.

Quoting one of the participants: "The greatest value of ICAS was that it did allow a greater mixing of Asian, North American and European scholars than we have experienced at any previous such gathering. This was of course one of the aims of the convention and we hope that its unqualified success will be a sufficient incentive to attempt a "repeat performance" in future. We are all greatly impressed with the convention – its venue, its scope, the excellence of the organisation, the diversity of activities and the range of scholars who attended".

ICAS 2, Berlin, 9-12 August 2001

This truly interdisciplinary conference opened up whole new, intriguing insights and knowledge for me.

Kati Kuitto, co-organiser ICAS 2

The second instalment of ICAS took three rather than two years to come about, which was partly due to the Millennium Bug alarming everyone at that time. No less than 14 associations in the field of Asian Studies were involved in its organisation, and it took place in five buildings of the Free University in the middle of Berlin. The IAS provided free access to the Internet, which must have been a relief for many in the post-millennium era. By this time practically all academicians were online, which certainly increased the connectivity amongst them.

If I had to single out one of the keynote speeches of all ICAS editions it would certainly be the one given by Wang Gungwu, one of Asia's most important public intellectuals. He is best known for his explorations of Chinese history and for his writings on the Chinese Diaspora (albeit not a term he himself likes to use). His keynote address was about "Divergence and Dominance. Challenges to Asian Studies". Wang characterised the development of Asian Studies and mentioned the risks, but also the opportunities, of the different ways in which Asian Studies is performed in present times. In 2018, in the first part of his autobiography *Home is not Here* (NUS University Press) he reflects on family, identity, and the ability of the individual to find a place amid historical currents that have shaped the world. He will certainly broach the topic of Asian Studies in the second part of his autobiography (forthcoming) and he will doubtlessly evoke new horizons that will put the field of Asian Studies in a new cyclical perspective.

Wang Gungwu attended a meeting of all organising parties in Berlin, where two important decisions were made that had a decisive influence on the future development of ICAS. The first was the decision to organise ICAS in Asia, every two years, in cooperation with a local host. This was not only to further increase Asian participation, but also to connect to the Asian city in which it was being held. The second decision was to establish a permanent ICAS Secretariat, to be hosted by IAS in Leiden, in order to facilitate and safeguard the concept of a cross-disciplinary and cross-regional approach to Asian Studies. In short, to guarantee the continuity of the ICAS process and assist the local hosts in the organisation of ICAS.

ICAS 3, Singapore, 19-22 August 2003

ICAS 3 Singapore brought ICAS to Asia for the first time. With a significant presence of scholars from Asia, ICAS 3 hopefully helped in a small way to break down a few silos and build new bridges for Asia research.

Alan Chan, organiser ICAS 3

The organiser of ICAS 3, Alan Chan of the National University of Singapore, reminded us of another aspect of globalisation. “The planning of the Convention took an uncertain turn when SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) brought international travel almost to a complete standstill”. Fortunately ICAS 3 at the Raffles City Convention Centre was the first big meeting allowed to take place in Singapore once SARS had abated and attendance was barely affected. With more than a thousand participants, gathering in more than 250 panels, ICAS 3 not only showcased the vitality of Asian Studies in Asia itself, but also proved that the intuitive decision to move ICAS to Asia was completely justifiable.

It enabled a direct connection to the Asian environment not only in the convention centre itself, but also to explore the many attractions multicultural Singapore has to offer. Alan Chan noted: “ICAS serves an important function in promoting Asia research and in providing a forum for scholarly exchange and collaboration. We are indeed pleased that we are able to bring ICAS to Asia for the first time”. It would not be the last time, as the next three editions also all took place in Asia. Being there offered an ideal breeding ground to refine long-standing theories and to develop new, more Asia-informed ones. In particular, the time-space compression experienced in Asian countries in their radical reforms in the past decades offer a unique opportunity to study some of the most important present-day issues. These included questions of institutional change, social transformation, market reform, ethnic conflict, environmental hazard, national security, urbanisation, migration, political control and resistance, social marginalisation, and inequality, to name but a few. All these questions were clearly present in the first book of abstracts, which the participants found in their neatly designed ICAS 3 conference bag along with the programme book.

ICAS 4, Shanghai, 20-24 August 2005

ICAS is the largest gathering of scholars in the Humanities and Social Sciences not only in China but also in Asia.

Wang Ronghua, President of Shanghai Academy for Social Sciences

At the end of the opening ceremony in Singapore, the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences (SASS) presented Shanghai as the venue for ICAS 4. Their video presentation started a tradition, which has carried on till the present day. The fact that Shanghai would be the next venue should be seen within the wider context of new developments in China at that time. The People's Congress had decided that more should be invested in the Humanities and Social Sciences, which had hitherto been dealt a step-motherly treatment.

ICAS 4 took place in the headquarters of the Communist Party in Shanghai, in a building that resembled an enormous cake, one which had been a present from Stalin to the people of Shanghai (when I revisited the city in 2013 tall skyscrapers completely dwarfed the building). We used an annex with marble floors, with more than enough rooms to accommodate 250 panels. Wang Ronghua, the President of SASS, stressed the close cooperation with the municipality of Shanghai, which translated into a state of the art dinner and a magnificent trip along the Huangpu river, passing the neon-lit Bund. For the first time the convention was given a general theme. SASS fittingly chose "The Future of Asia". Since it was a closed meeting, "sensitive" topics such as "AIDS without Boundaries" and "Bad Girl Writing" could also be freely discussed.

During the opening ceremony the winners of the first ICAS Book Prize (IBP) were announced. This new initiative by the ICAS Secretariat was taken to create by way of a global competition both an international focus for publications on Asia (academic English-language books on Asia in the Humanities and Social Sciences) while at the same time increasing their visibility worldwide. In contrast to other prizes in the field of Asian Studies the IBP is both trans-regional and trans-disciplinary, with an international reading committee. During ICAS 4 we also published the first ICAS supplement to the *IIAS Newsletter* (now *The Newsletter*), entitled "Publishing in Asian Studies". In it, publishers, editors and writers reflected on how to increase the visibility of Asian Studies by developing a wide range of activities.



Figure 16. Covers of programme books of ICAS 5, 6, 7 and 8. Photo: Cindy Bakker

ICAS 5, Kuala Lumpur, 2-5 August 2007

ICAS is the Olympics of Asian Studies.

Shamsul Amri Baharuddin, organiser ICAS 5

The Institute of Occidental Studies (IKON) and the Institute of The Malay World and Civilisation (ATMA) of the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) teamed up to organise ICAS 5, for which the theme “Sharing a Future in Asia” was selected. The Minister of Higher Education of Malaysia wrote in his welcome address: “The hosting of ICAS 5 is very timely, held at a defining moment when we are embarking on a new path and transforming the country’s higher education system to make Malaysia the regional centre for educational excellence”. ICAS 5 coincided with the celebration of 50 years of Malaysian independence, which furthermore connected to the Visit Malaysia Year 2007. In cooperation with the city of Kuala Lumpur a circular bus line connecting places of cultural interest was launched, and still operates to this very day.

ICAS 5 took place in the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre (KLCC). The nearly forty exhibitors at the ICAS Book Fair had no reason to complain both in terms of visitor numbers and spectacular vantage point, as the centrally located exhibition hall had a clear view of the famous Petronas Twin Towers. The Book Fair had already been a fixed feature of ICAS since the beginning, but in Kuala Lumpur it matured.

The organiser of ICAS 5, Shamsul Amri Baharuddin summed it up perfectly: “ICAS 5 is the place where researchers of all categories, from various fields, coming from all over the world, but all interested in Asia, convene, interact and build networks to share their research findings and personal experience”. This was a clear impetus for the ICAS Secretariat to keep ICAS travelling through Asia, each time drawing special attention to the local dynamics of the country and region in which the convention was held.

In Kuala Lumpur it was the first time that the number of grouped panels (individual abstracts that are thematically grouped by the organisers, on a trans-regional and trans-disciplinary basis) was double the number of organised panels and roundtables. This combining of organised and grouped panels resulted not only in an ideal mix of top down and bottom up contributions, but it also yielded an amalgamation of many different paradigmatic approaches, which give ICAS its signature vibe.

The second ICAS supplement to the *IIAS Newsletter*, “Academic Publishing Today” addressed the challenges and pitfalls of getting a book published. For the first time e-books were highlighted and a new IIAS initiative “New Books Asia” was launched: an online platform to browse the newest Asian Studies titles and read/contribute to the latest book reviews.

ICAS 6, Daejeon, 6-9 August 2009

We have so far been too neglectful of the value of Asian identity. Time has come to re-evaluate the entire inheritance of all of humanity within the context of the Asian Continent Civilisation as whole.

Young-Oak Kim, keynote speaker at ICAS 6

When the ICAS Secretariat visited Daejeon in 2007, we first met with former Prime Minister Hung Gu Lee in Seoul. He graciously offered to be the Honorary General Chair of ICAS 6, a move that proved to be extremely instrumental in bringing ICAS 6 about. Sang Jik Rhee, local host at Chungnam National University (CNU), was the main organiser; he ingeniously put together no less than eight sub-committees to streamline the process. They decided on a general theme “Think Asia”, with a wink to an everyday supplement in the *Korean Times* entitled “Think English”. The ICAS Secretariat visited the Daejeon Convention Center (DCC), which was still under construction at that time. It stands on the former site of the 1993 World Exhibition, and one can still observe some highly peculiar constructions that survived, in what is now called Expo Park.

Although the financial crisis erupting in 2008 had an impact on the organisation, sponsoring and attendance of ICAS 6, there were still nearly one thousand participants. They had to “endure” three keynote speeches by American, European and Korean representatives. The latter was the famous and popular Korean philosopher Young-Oak Kim who was riding the waves of Asian values, concluding that: “The Eurocentric historical view of the world can no longer hold itself as a model of universally valid values”. His speech was delivered in Korean and simultaneously translated into English; it lasted nearly two hours! Befittingly, yet surprising us all, he concluded his talk by singing David Bowie’s *Changes*.

All participants received two free copies of the brand new ICAS Publication Series. No less than eight volumes were concurrently launched during an event where more than fifty editors and authors were present. The books were based on contributions to ICAS 4 and 5. From five hundred submitted papers roughly one hundred were selected by the General Editor of the series. These were arranged along thematic lines and given a working title. A senior and junior editor were asked to supervise the process of collegial review. This meant that everybody had to read the contributions by all the other authors. It resulted in a very rigorous reviewing process, experienced by all contributors as an innovative and rewarding way to review books.

The ICAS 6 supplement to the *IJAS Newsletter*, “Choice in Academic Publishing”, opens with the following words by the editor Marie Lenstrup: “All academics, by the nature of modern academe, must be both authors and readers. To the familiar invocation to “publish or perish” we could add another to “read or rot” or as publishers might be tempted to put it, to “buy or be damned”.

ICAS 7, Honolulu, 31 March – 3 April 2011

While the structure, activities, and culture of each organisation (AAS and ICAS) vary somewhat, they share the common goals of promoting the study of Asia and transcending boundaries between disciplines, nations, and geographic origins of scholars of Asia.

K. (Shivi) Sivaramakrishnan, AAS President

During ICAS 4 (Shanghai, 2005) a delegation of AAS board members and the ICAS Secretariat had suggested the idea of organising a joint AAS-ICAS “meet”. It took a while before we agreed on a location, yet eventually Honolulu rose on the horizon as the obvious choice. After intensive negotiations an agreement was signed in Philadelphia in 2010. Since it was the 70th birthday of AAS, the theme was “Celebrating 70 Years of Asian Studies”. Both the AAS and the ICAS Secretariats had to work full speed to deal with the unprecedented number of submissions. AAS took care of all panel submissions, and ICAS put together no less than 350 panels based on an inflow of 2,500 individual abstracts, mostly from Asia.

An impressive 5,000 participants gathered in the Honolulu Convention Center from 31 March to 3 April 2011 making it the biggest meet in the field of Asian Studies so far. The reception was sponsored by the University of Hawai’i at Mānoa, the East-West Center and the Confucius Institute. It was a memorable meeting, which kicked off with the welcome reception on the Great Lawn at the Hilton Hawaiian Village and Beach Resort & Spa overlooking the Pacific. The Kenny Endo Taiko Ensemble on Japanese drums entertained the participants while a fireworks display added further lustre to the gathering. The gaiety of the reception was understandably tempered by the March 11th Tōhoku earthquake and subsequent tsunami on the east coast of Japan. A Japanese princess was present at the official opening of the joint meeting and thanked the inhabitants of Hawai’i and those present on behalf of the Japanese people for their support.

Nearly 800 panels were included in a programme book as thick as the phone book. It was more than triple the size of our regular conferences and a large number of them were in the category “Border Crossing and Inter-area”. A bewildering variety of topics were discussed ranging from “Literary Monsters and Demons” to “Global Representation of China” and “Women in Asia” to “Media and the Message”. In the main lobby of the Convention Center there were continuous musical performances, and for the first time a professional photographer, Wim Vreeburg, was engaged and made a colourful impression of this memorable meeting, sending out a clear signal to the outside world that Asian Studies is a thriving and vibrant community.

Our joint gathering was from the outset both a risk and a challenge but it paid off in many respects, foremost in terms of attendance. More than 2,000 scholars

hailing from Asia set in motion further internationalisation of Asian Studies and triggered the annual AAS-in-Asia meetings, which started in 2015. The ICAS Book Prize received 200 submissions, prompting the reading committee to put in place Accolades, so as to recognise a larger subset of titles, including “Publishers Accolade for Outstanding Production Value”, the “Edited Volume Accolade” and “Teaching Tool Accolade”.

ICAS 8, Macao, 24-27 June 2013

*The hosting of ICAS 8 is testimony to our commitment
of achieving excellence in higher learning.*

Wei Zhao, Rector University of Macau

The rich cultural heritage and the strong historical legacies connecting East and West made Macao an ideal place to host ICAS 8. Who would have ever dreamed that ICAS would take place at The Venetian Macao, the fourth biggest structure in the world, primarily a casino, shopping mall and hotel.

ICAS 8 was organised by the University of Macau (UM) and the Macau Foundation while Professor Tak-Wing Ngo acted as the local host assisted by Wai Cheung, the present ICAS programme coordinator. The 1,200 participants representing 600 institutes of higher learning gathered in more than 350 panels. Within these panels, new ideas and research findings were discussed, not only among researchers who study Asia, but also among scholars who live in Asia. Holding the convention in Macao reminded us yet again of the importance of holding ICAS in Asia. The conceptual lexicons and theoretical tools used in Social Sciences and Humanities have derived almost exclusively from the West. Although these theories and methods have been applied throughout the world with considerable success, their limitations are increasingly apparent, especially in Asia, with its long traditions of organising social relations, its own norms about power and order, and its legacies of implementing rule. With Asian countries emerging to become prominent players, there comes a point when we recognise that the region has something to offer in the development of (social) knowledge. ICAS offers a platform to facilitate this process.

The city of Macao played a central role in discussions on urbanism and heritage. The panels and roundtables on these subjects were attended not only by academicians, but also by government officials, museum curators, NGO activists, journalists, business leaders, and members of the general public. It was a rare opportunity during which scholars and practitioners across different continents and regions gathered together to explore local and global problems.

ICAS 8 had several firsts. It witnessed the first meeting of the ICAS International Council (ICAS-IC), now a well-established advisory body composed of academicians, representatives from civil society and previous ICAS organisers from Asia, Africa, Australia, Europe, Latin America and North America. From its inception ICAS benefitted from their inputs and it has certainly widened the global reach of ICAS. During its first meeting Lloyd Amoah, Secretary of the newly founded Association of Asian Studies in Africa (A-Asia), presented the plan for what would in turn become the conference “Africa-Asia: A New Axis of Knowledge”, which took place in Accra (Ghana) in September 2015 with the support of the ICAS Secretariat and the University of Ghana. The second edition of the “Africa-Asia conference” took place in September 2018 in Dar es Salaam with the University of Dar es Salaam acting as a host. Nearly 400 researchers, craftsmen and artists gathered there in nearly 100 panels.

Another first was the reporting on the conference in cooperation with the *Macau Daily Times*. Sonja Zweegers, Editor of *The Newsletter*, cooperated with local journalists to produce a daily supplement reporting on what was taking place, and coming up, at ICAS 8 (<https://issuu.com/iias/docs/icas8-newsletter>).

ICAS 9, Adelaide, 5-9 July 2015

This is the first time that interculturality has been given such prominence in Australia. ICAS 9 seeks to harness international expertise on interculturality in Asia. This will be another way in which Asia expertise can help shape public policy in unexpected and positive ways.

Gerry Groot and Purnendra Jain, organisers ICAS 9

When the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) informed us that ICAS belonged to the top five percent of conferences world-wide in terms of numbers we decided on a franchise experiment. Four Australian cities showed an interest, but Adelaide's bid was the most all-encompassing: three universities (the University of Adelaide (UA), Flinders University and the University of South Australia), the city of Adelaide, the Adelaide Convention Bureau, the state of South Australia and the International Convention Management Services Company, had worked closely to bring the bid together. And so, the city on the southern coast of Australia, with a tradition of strong ties with Asia, was selected as the location for ICAS 9.

After negotiations with the Asian Studies Association of Australia (ASAA) during its meeting in Perth in 2014, several of its regional associations decided to have their biennial meetings coincide with ICAS 9. This was a way to guarantee sufficient numbers of participants in a place, not without reason, coined “down under”.

At ICAS 9 the ICAS Secretariat (ICAS-Sec) launched a new format: the Book and Dissertation Presentation Carousel, which gives participants the opportunity to



Figure 17. Covers of programme books of ICAS 9, 10, and 11. ICAS 12 had no programme book since it was online and therefore the Cultural Platform of ICAS 12 is represented.
Photo: Cindy Bakker

present their research findings in a concise way for those interested in the topic. It proved to be a very fruitful format for both presenters and audience and it has become a popular fixed feature of the convention. The young doctors pitching their dissertations found it an easy way to come into contact with interested publishers. The latter in turn were quite happy to get in touch with prospective authors. This win-win situation has brought and will bring about many happy marriages between publishers and authors.

The issue of *The Newsletter* published shortly after ICAS 9 asked the question: Who is the New Asia Scholar? Content was based on interviews conducted and contributions commissioned during the meeting in Adelaide. ICAS is a fitting platform to ask such a question because it has the greatest diversified cross-continental representation. One of the most obvious observations is that Asian Studies is now more and more being produced in Asia. New ideas and research findings are discussed not only among researchers who study Asia, but also among Asia scholars, practitioners and artists who live in Asia. In approximately 20 articles ranging from “The new Asia scholar’s role in Asian/area studies” and “A China scholar working in China”, to “Navigating our culturally interconnected world” and “Africa and the unmasking of Asia”, we are beginning to see the contours of this New Asia Scholar.

In retrospect, the meeting was an important one for Adelaide because it brought fresh knowledge and perspectives on Adelaide’s relations with Asia through the exchange with a wide range of top researchers in, to name but a few fields: urban development, social and economic transformation, migration and connectivity, history and cultural heritage. “Interculture Adelaide” was one of the platforms where this was made specific. It brought together scholars, policymakers and other stakeholders to consider the idea of interculturality, broadly defined as a set of cultural skills supporting openness and adaptivity. Also from a financial point of view ICAS 9 was beneficial for Adelaide. The Adelaide Convention Bureau later estimated that ICAS 9 injected 5 million Australian Dollars into the Adelaide economy.

ICAS 10, Chiang Mai, 20-23 July 2017

The emergence of the ASEAN community in Asia is a hope for economic, political and socio-cultural connectivity as well as a challenge for policymakers and the grassroots.

Chayan Vaddhanaphuti, organiser ICAS 10

After a decade it was high time to return to Southeast Asia. The Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development (RCSD) at Chiang Mai University (CMU) in Thailand requested the opportunity to organise the 10th edition of ICAS in connection with 50 years of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN),

and to hold it back to back with their Thai Studies conference. According to the organiser of both conferences, Chayan Vaddhanaphuti: “The emergence of the ASEAN community in Asia is a hope for economic, political and socio-cultural connectivity as well as a challenge for policymakers and the grassroots. ASEAN in Asia is, thus, one of the central themes of this conference”. As a result, Surit Pitsuwan, former Secretary-General of ASEAN, was invited to speak at the opening ceremony, where he made a passionate plea for democratic values and academic freedom.

His speech closely connected with the ICAS Keynote Roundtable “Upholding Democratic Values in Southeast Asia: Intellectual Freedom and Public Engagement”. Two Southeast Asian historians and a social rights activist from Thailand addressed the situation of democratic deficit prevailing in most Southeast Asian countries by focusing on the social and political roles they play as actors and witnesses of ASEAN’s recent history. More than three hundred participants joined in the lively discussions chaired by IIAS Director Philippe Peycam. This format proved fruitful and is also planned for future editions of ICAS because it embraces a multitude of voices and views and is apt for a meeting such as ICAS.

This multitude of voices should also be present in the ICAS Book Prize (IBP). ICAS and the IBP can be regarded as one of the ways to facilitate the confluence of localised “connected knowledges” and also the decentring of the landscape of knowledge about Asia. From the start, the IBP has had a broad interdisciplinary basis – Social Sciences and Humanities – instead of the traditional geographic or disciplinary compartmentalisations. The diversification of the IBP’s language basis, in collaboration with partners and sponsors from other language areas than English, was realised at ICAS 10: the ICAS Book Prize was extended to include Chinese, German, French and Korean language editions.

The film screenings organised by Mario Lopez of the Center of Southeast Asian Studies (CSEAS) of Kyoto University were a reflection of Southeast Asia’s rich ethnic and cultural landscape, and an outcome of CSEAS’s Visual Documentary Project, which aims at examining everyday life in Southeast Asia through documentary filmmaking and stimulating the dialogue with ASEAN countries. No less than thirty documentaries varying in length from 15 to 70 minutes were presented, with titles ranging from *Ageing in Bangkok* to *Burmese in Thailand* and *Lives Under The Red Lights to Silence of the Summer*.

ICAS 10 in Chiang Mai was memorable in so many ways. The venue was massively impressive, the Rati Lanna Resort catered the most beautiful and delicious Lanna-style receptions and lunches, and Akkanut Wantanasombut together with Rhinosmith Design co., created the most stunning overall design of any ICAS yet! Not to mention the twenty thematic exhibitions in traditional wooden structures, showcasing a wide variety of local projects, including, for example, “Salween Local Research Display: bringing the Village to the Conference”. Local researchers from

villages along the Salween River, which flows through Thailand, Myanmar, and China, have been conducting research into the social and environmental issues related to the river; they displayed the outcomes of their research to start conversations with academics, professionals, activists and others from all over the world. To top it off, a real market place with a wide variety of local quality produce stood at the entrance of the convention centre. Many participants took craft items home along with fond memories of an exceptional ICAS.

ICAS 11, Leiden, 16-19 July 2019

ICAS now runs an inclusive space in which different social stakeholders – from academic to cultural institutions, from citizen associations and regions – work hand-in-hand to promote scholarly knowledge in society.

Philippe Peycam, Director IIAS

Nobody could have predicted that it would take 21 years before ICAS returned to its place of birth: Leiden. It was time, perhaps, to ask – has it fully grown up? By no means. There is still a world and more to explore for this fledgling. Yet we had learned a lot over the previous two decades and brought our combined experiences to this meeting on our home ground. “How the weather will be, nobody knows!” is how I ended my article “ICAS at 21” in *The Newsletter*. Now we do know! The sun started to shine the very moment the ICAS 11 parade was set in motion, and it stayed with us for the duration of the convention.

Considering the location, the theme of the 2019 ICAS was *Asia and Europe: Asia in Europe*. And to make it more of a European affair, we reached out to some friends of ours with whom we frequently collaborate, and asked if they would join us in this endeavour. We were delighted when GIS Asie (French Academic Network for Asian Studies) agreed to come on board as co-organisers and incorporate their own biennial conference into the ICAS programme. GIS Asie was also the main sponsor of the French-language ICAS Book Prize.

Holding the convention in Leiden meant that the ICAS team was not only performing its regular secretarial tasks, but also those of co-organiser, together with GIS Asie and local host Leiden University. From the outset, we knew this would mean more work for us, but we had no idea of what was to come. Compared to our usual 1,000-1,200 participants, this edition welcomed more than 2,300 attendees! They hailed from 75 countries and represented all conceivable fields of research within the Asia-related Humanities and Social Sciences, Civil Society and the Arts.

As with every edition of ICAS, we wanted to connect with the host city. Leiden University was our local host, housing the event in its buildings and sponsoring the

attendance of a very large number of scholars. The City of Leiden also proved to be very generous; it was the main sponsor and helped us deal with much of the bureaucratic elements of organising such an event. Many of the ICAS activities took place outdoors or in other public venues, so that more of the city's residents and business owners could enjoy and profit from this sudden influx of visitors in an otherwise off-season. On the Pieterskerkplein (Peter's Church Square), for example, at the heart of the ICAS area, we organised a Food and Cultural Market. At this market, open to the public as well as ICAS participants, visitors could enjoy a selection from Dutch and Asian cuisines, and be entertained and informed by a number of artisans performing age old Dutch traditions, such as clog crafting, liquorice making and "ship in a bottle" making. The market was open every day during the convention and along with a large number of local cafés and restaurants made ICAS participants feel welcome.

The academic programme of ICAS 11 was bigger than ever; it included close to 550 panel sessions, roundtables, and book/dissertations presentations. The programme commenced with a festive parade through the streets of Leiden, which led the participants to the Hooglandse Kerk where the convention's opening took place. As they filed into the gothic church the attendees were welcomed by the sounds of the 17th century church organ, culminating in Beethoven's *Alle Menschen werden Brüder* (Ode to Joy). They were then welcomed by a number of representatives of the university, organisers and the city. In the church's luminous atmosphere the opening ceremony played out, in which welcome words and the ICAS Book Prize (IBP) ceremony were interchanged by the musical composition *Wind Flow between Asia and Europe* in which musician and singer Enkhjargal Dandarvaanchig carried us to the steppes of Mongolia on the waves of his unbelievable tonal register. We wrapped up the formal procedures with an extraordinary performance, brought to us by Henri Tournier and Enkhjargal Dandarvaanchig, in which they combined Western, Indian and Mongolian musical elements.

This special composition by Henri Tournier was one of the contributions of our co-organiser GIS Asie, but certainly not the only one, because for the first time more than two hundred academics from the Francophone world participated at ICAS. We were also happy to welcome a fairly large delegation of Asia scholars from the Russian Federation. Likewise the presence of many colleagues from Africa and Latin America was new. This was partly a result of ICAS's involvement in the organisation of conferences in those continents, with the University of Ghana, the University of Dar es Salaam and the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, during the past four years. This cooperation also resulted in the foundation of the Africa-Asia Book Prize and the addition of the Spanish/Portuguese edition of the IBP, which had a flying start with no less than 66 submissions.

The ICAS Asian Studies Book Fair attracted over 30 exhibitors and a good number of acquisition editors were present to connect with potential authors; again ICAS facilitated many a happy meeting and new publication! Other events included a film festival; a number of photo exhibitions and displays; and “The IIAS Academic Freedom Space”, a meeting place for discussions on academic freedom which will become a permanent feature of ICAS.

There were also side events such as curated visits to the Asian Library; canal boat rides; tours of the National Museum of Ethnology including a visit to the *Restorient* studio there; an “Introduction to Japanese painting conservation”; walking tours of “Historical Leiden and Leiden’s Alms Houses” and an “Asia in Leiden city walk”; as well as lectures and workshops at the Textile Research Centre and the Hortus Botanicus.

In its role as the home of the ICAS Secretariat, the offices of IIAS were open to all interested parties and exhibitions and demonstrations at the IIAS building at Rapenburg 59 included an introduction to IIAS, an ICAS Retrospective including a Book Prize Exhibition, the Photo Contest Exhibition “IIAS 25 years” and a Chinese calligraphy demonstration and workshop.

For the first time ICAS ended with a blast! The grand closing party at the City Auditorium (Stadsgehoorzaal), a beautiful concert hall in the middle of Leiden, featured live music, karaoke, drinks, bites, dancing, and some really good unwinding and celebrating after a productive and inspiring convention week. The conviviality was certainly enhanced by the 120 student volunteers who wisely spent part of their holiday assisting us in creating such a youthful and enthusiastic atmosphere. The local newspaper reported that a new concept of conference had seen the light of day.

ICAS has never simply been a purely academic endeavour – it is creating, sharing and collecting knowledge, it is network building and facilitating new partnerships, it is learning from those beyond academia (such as civil society and practitioners), it is recognising great research, publications and effective projects, it is showcasing the arts, it is enjoying time spent with like-minded people, and it is so much more. When contemplating ICAS 11, I am reminded of Paul Gauguin’s *D’où venons-nous / Que sommes-nous / Où allons-nous* (1897), which shows the embrace of the Pacific culture and people, not as the other but as the human. That is the direction in which we are moving, no matter where we come from.

ICAS 12, Kyoto, 24-28 August 2021

Everything was so well organised, the participants having the opportunity to alternate between watching pre-recorded presentations, participating in the discussions, witnessing live events, taking time to “visit” Kyoto. I have no words to thank the organisers, as well as the participants for the effort of producing presentations on such a variety of topics related to Asia.

Quote from the ICAS 12 survey

On Tuesday, 10 August 2021, we are sitting in the IIAS office in Leiden, the Netherlands, looking at each other and wondering whether everything is ready before sending the access codes for the ICAS 12 Academic Platform to the participants. In the past couple of weeks, the ICAS 12 panel participants have carefully prepared their presentations and have either uploaded them or recorded them within the platform. Now the time has come to make it available to their ICAS 12 colleagues. A rich database of more than 1000 presentations was available to be explored in the two weeks before ICAS 12 officially opened on 24 August.

After the launch of the Academic Platform on 10 August, we were proud to present the Cultural Platform on 20 August, which was meant to evoke the city of Kyoto itself. Participants would enter a beautifully designed Kyoto-style floor plan with different buildings to explore. Although we could not wander around Kyoto and the conference venue itself, the multiple 3D art galleries on the platform effectively approximated the experience of being at an exhibition. Entering the first exhibition space (*Visual Arts Meets Research*), participants could walk around and explore two projects lead by faculty members of Kyoto Seika University – namely, *WADAKO: Stories of Japanese Kites* and *Washi: From Mulberry to Manga, the Art of Paper in Japan*. The second exhibition space featured graduation works by students of Kyoto Seika University, which were produced in the faculties of Japanese Painting, Sculpture, Ceramics, Textile, Printmaking, Video & Media Arts, Illustration, Graphic Design, Digital Creation, Product Communication, Interior Goods and Design, Fashion, Architecture, Cartoon Art, Comic Art, and Character Design. Beyond these virtual exhibitions, the platform also included the ICAS 12 Hidden Talent Gallery, a special space in which colleagues could showcase other talents beyond their academic field. The result was a rich variety of music, dance, fashion, poetry, manga, food, arts and crafts, and other performances

There was so much going on in the Cultural Platform that it was difficult to discover all of it. For example, the vast selection of 32 documentaries included in the ICAS 12 Film Festival, which was curated by Dr. Mario Lopez of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University. Titles ranged from *Ambon: A Return to Peace* to *Golek Garwo*, from *Mlabri in the Woods* to *The Father I Knew 2020*. This

film festival edition also showcased a selection of short animated films bringing out issues of social relevance, which were created by students of the Graduate School of Film and New Media, Department of Animation, Tokyo University of Arts.

The publishers and institutes of our *Asian Studies Exhibitor Gallery* also found a place in our Cultural Platform. Several booths could be visited to learn about the latest books, products, and activities in Asian Studies. Participants could also gain more insight about publishing during two *How to Get Published* sessions, which were led by editors from Brill. Other features of the Cultural Platform included the *Poster Gallery*, where participants presented their latest research as a poster of which some were also accompanied by a short explanatory video; the *Networking* space, where participants could virtually gather with the Kamo river in the background; the *Photo Booth*, where participants could take a selfie to add to the *Crafting a Global Picture* mosaic; and the *Explore Kyoto! Bus*, where participants could explore and learn more about Kyoto. Not to be missed was the *Catch-Up Cinema*, where one could view recordings of the live events that one had missed earlier in the conference, and which also presented a rich collection of short video clips of (Japanese) cultural performances and activities. The selection ranged from *noh* play (Japanese original dance with drama) to *sado* (tea ceremonies), from *zazen* (meditation with temple chief priests) to *kamishibai* (“paper play” stories) specially created for ICAS 12

The *Live Events Stage* featured a range of events and performances during the breaks. It started with the official opening speeches. Following this, a keynote symposium occurred, in which Prof. Oussouby Sacko (President of Kyoto Seika University), Prof. Juichi Yamagiwa, and Prof. Shoichi Inoue discussed the importance of locality and crafting a global future based on the diversity of nature and culture. Besides live performances, the *Live Events Stage* was also a space where experience was shared. There were several interviews: the rapper Moment Joon shared his experience as a Korean immigrant in Japan and how it influences his music. Cameroon-born, Japan-raised cartoonist René Hoshino discussed his manga work; and Marty Gross enlightened us about his Mingei Film Archive Project, which aims to restore, enhance, and preserve films and recordings documenting the history of Japan’s Mingei Movement and its ongoing legacy in the world of contemporary ceramics. Participants could also enjoy a variety of performances, which even brought some people in Kyoto on the dancefloor during the opening concert by Millogo Benoit, who has been working between Japan and Burkina Faso since 2007. One could also relax and appreciate the beautiful sounds of the piano during a concert by Dr. Masafumi Komatsu.

Another essential element of ICAS is the ICAS Book Prize. This edition honoured publications in Chinese, English (including dissertation prizes), French, German, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish, and it also included a prize

for the Best Article on Global Hong Kong Studies. With nearly 1000 submissions, the Reading Committees did a tremendous job singling out the winners. During the ceremony, we made a trip around the world to hear from Secretaries of the various languages, each of whom introduced the recipient(s) of their respective edition's IBP Award. Winners happily reacted in a short video clip to this wonderful news. The ICAS Secretariat would like to thank the IBP Secretaries, Reading Committees, and the IBP sponsors and partnering institutes for supporting the nine language editions and article prize.

Perhaps the most important building in the Cultural Platform was, of course, the *Live Sessions* space. By entering this room, you would be taken to the Academic Platform, where on 24 August we finally kicked off five days of live sessions. 1500 participants from all over the world gathered online in more than 300 sessions, structured along 13 main themes, to exchange and discuss their latest research. We were also happy to work with *Engaging for Vietnam* for the second time, which included a large number of Vietnam-related panels in the ICAS 12 programme. The one-hour live sessions were programmed in a 12-hour/day schedule to cross the different time zones. The sessions consisted of short recaps of each presentation, followed by a longer period of lively discussion, exchange, collaboration, and Q&A. The International Academic Forum (IAFOR) in Japan coordinated all sessions in Zoom and arranged for each session to be supported by a technical moderator to assist the participants as needed. If more time was needed for further discussion after the allotted hour passed, we were happy to offer break-out rooms in which participants could talk in a more informal setting.

Our conference format – pre-recorded presentations made available before the official ICAS 12 conference dates, coupled with live sessions focused more on discussion and exchange – aimed to break through the online fatigue of sitting in hours-long sessions. We hoped to create opportunities for a more in-depth discussion of research. Also, participants who were unable to attend the live sessions would still have the opportunity to view the presentations, as these would be available until 15 October, long after the formal conference concluded.

The five days of live sessions and other activities flew by. Before we knew it, we had reached the last event of ICAS 12 on Saturday, 28 August. It was time to sit back and enjoy *kyogen* – traditional Japanese comic theatre. For the closing speeches, we joined two different parts of the world again, Japan and the Netherlands. With great enthusiasm, Prof. Oussouby Sacko expressed his insights from Kyoto on the intensive and wonderful week full of fruitful exchanges, discussions, making new connections, and reconnecting with new and old friends. After his inspirational talk, we moved to Leiden, the home base of the ICAS Secretariat.

This ICAS 12 was the last edition in which Paul acted as ICAS Secretary and General Secretary of the ICAS Book Prize, as he will be retiring on 1 November 2021.



Figure 18. Kae Amo. *Manga drawing of the ICAS Team*. 2019. 8 × 15cm. Photo Cindy Bakker. From left to right: Martina van den Haak, Thomas Voorter, Narutai Riangkrur, Paul van der Velde and Wai Cheung.

Because the ICAS Secretariat team also had to stay in Leiden given the impossibility of traveling to Japan, we experienced ICAS 12 from our computers, just as our participants did. Nevertheless, we became aware that, even online, we could bring the ICAS community together and bridge research across different regions, disciplines, and time zones. We successfully brought together junior and senior scholars from more than 70 different countries. Special thanks also to our ICAS 12 partner, Kyoto Seika University, and all of their partnering institutes. We are grateful for the rich, varied programme they created. Thanks in particular to Prof. Oussouby Sacko, Dr. Shuzo Ueda, Dr. Manabu Kitawaki, Ms. Hiroko Iguchi, the Academic and Cultural Committee, and all supporting staff for their hard work in bringing Kyoto to the ICAS 12 participants. During our weekly online meetings, we together crafted the ICAS 12 experience, and we appreciate them taking on the adventure with us. Even though the experience was virtual, we hope that the participants got a touch of the Kyoto vibe by navigating the Academic and Cultural Platforms. We do hope that, someday soon, there will be an opportunity for all to visit this wonderful city in person.

The richness and diversity of the different research presented at ICAS 12 has not gone unnoticed. We are therefore happy to announce a new ICAS project. Amsterdam University Press (AUP) has approached us to participate in their new Open Access Conference Proceedings Series. ICAS 12 participants will be invited to submit their paper to be considered for the *ICAS Proceedings*. In this experimental phase, nearly 100 are selected. This offers participants the opportunity to

publish their work in an accessible and widely distributed forum (<https://icas.asia/icas-12-conference-proceedings>).

After ICAS 12 concluded, we invited the participants to provide us with their feedback in a survey. Hearing back from participants is always important to see how things can be improved in future. As this was the first-ever online ICAS, the first-hand experiences of our ICAS 12 participants are even more important for us, as these give us an understanding of what worked and did not work and thereby help us plan for the future. For example, should we continue ICAS online, or is there still a need to meet each other in person when possible? Nearly one third of our participants made the effort to submit the survey. In general, the responses were very positive. The overall ICAS 12 experience was rated with an 8. With so many participants, there are of course different opinions and needs. Most appreciated the format, but there were also those who prefer the more traditional in-person format of longer sessions with full presentations and a short Q&A. Suggestions were also made to improve the online format further.

Although the online ICAS 12 experience was much appreciated, there are also some downsides to an online format. Some participants mentioned that they were unable to fully engage themselves in the conference. Because they were not physically attending the conference, many participants were thus not free from their other obligations at home (e.g., teaching, meetings, family care, and so on). Also, the different time zones made it difficult to attend all sessions one might have liked to join. Despite this, 65 percent indicated that they would be interested in a future online edition of ICAS. However, there also exists a large desire for *in situ* meetings. Ninety percent mentioned that they would prefer the next ICAS to be an in-person conference. With this online ICAS 12 adventure and the feedback sinking in, we will keep a close watch on different developments worldwide regarding the pandemic effects, but also new evolutions in the field of (online) conference organisation. The time has come for us to think about the next ICAS. The future will show us how, where, and when ICAS 13 will take place.

The ICAS Book Prize: A Multilingual Window on the World of Asian Studies

At ICAS 4 in Shanghai, to further establish its brand and position in the field of Asian Studies, ICAS launched two significant initiatives: the ICAS Publication Series in cooperation with Amsterdam University Press (AUP), primarily based on articles presented during ICAS, and of course, the ICAS Book Prize (IBP).

Right from the start, the IBP was designed to be different in nature than the (few) prizes in the field of Asian Studies at that time. The existing prizes were limited to particular regions or disciplines, and often named after one of the professorial stars in the field. Access to and judgement of the prizes tended to occur in a rather closed circle of familiarity, and was mostly resistant to external input. There was clearly room for improvement and innovation.

Original source: Velde, Paul van der. 2020. "The ICAS Book Prize: A multilingual window on the world of Asian Studies", *The Newsletter* 86 Summer, 5-9. <https://www.iiias.asia/the-newsletter/article/icas-book-prize-multilingual-window-world-asian-studies>. Velde, Paul van der. 2020. "The ICAS Book Prize: A multilingual window on the world of Asian Studies", *The Newsletter* 86 Summer, 5-9. <https://www.iiias.asia/the-newsletter/article/icas-book-prize-multilingual-window-world-asian-studies>. Velde, Paul van der. 2021. "Nearly 1000 Submissions in nine languages. The ninth (2021) ICAS Book Prize Edition", *The Newsletter* 89. 9-20.

Turning the First Page of the ICAS Book Prize

The main idea behind the ICAS Book Prize (IBP) was to create, by way of a global competition, an international focus for academic publications on Asia so as to increase their visibility worldwide and beyond academic circles. As a result, the IBP was conceived as a general prize for academic publications on Asia, in both the Humanities and Social Sciences. The IBP Reading Committees consist of scholars in diverse disciplines, focusing on various regions, working on and originating from different continents: a composition that reflects the transcending nature of ICAS.

The ICAS Secretariat approached a diverse group of participants of the first three ICAS meetings with the question of whether they would be willing to become a member of the IBP Reading Committee. Excellent remuneration was offered, including a return ticket to ICAS, free lodging for the duration of the meeting, plus of course they could keep all the submitted books. No wonder there were more than enough candidates to choose from. The first Reading Committee consisted of four members, a secretary and a chair. They originated from Asia, Australia, Europe and North America, and represented the broad fields of the Humanities and Social Sciences in relation to Asia.

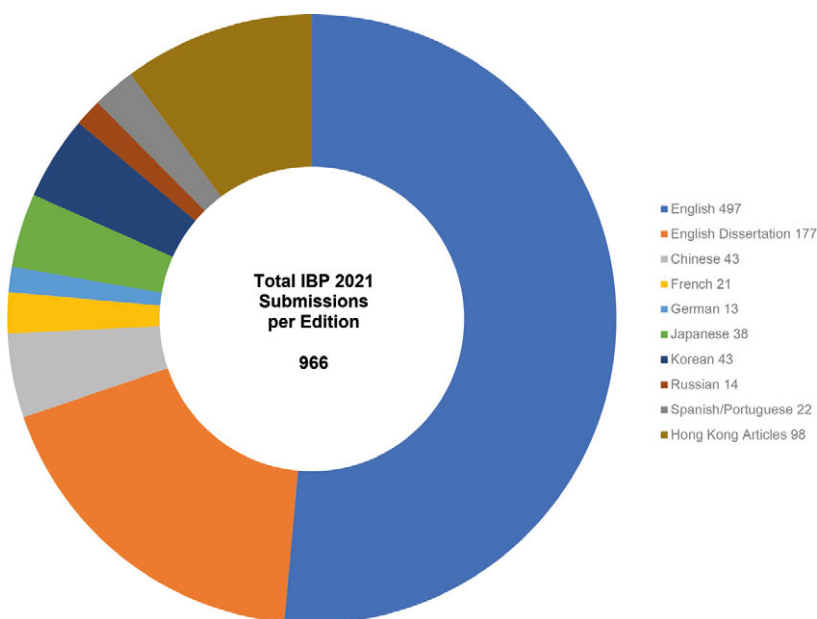


Figure 19. IBP Submissions 2005-19. Source: *The Newsletter* 86. Summer 2021.

With a Reading Committee in place we started promoting the IBP through various platforms, including the *IIAS Newsletter*. On page 42 of issue 34 (2004), the IBP was announced to the world for the first time: “All scientific books published in 2003 and 2004 on Asian topics are eligible. Three prizes will be awarded: (1) best study in the Humanities; (2) best study in the Social Sciences; and (3) best PhD dissertation.” We reached out to a large number of (academic) publishers, who in general welcomed the new concept. In all, we received 38 books (23 Humanities and 15 Social Sciences) and five dissertations. The shortlists of three books per category were made public during a brief ceremony in the ICAS exhibition booth at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies (AAS) in Chicago on 1 April 2005.

The Reading Committee met in Shanghai, one day before the opening of ICAS 4, for final deliberations during the so-called “decision dinner”. The first IBP Awards Presentation took place on 20 August 2005, in the Friendship Hall of the Shanghai Exhibition Center. At the end of the ICAS Opening Ceremony the IBP Secretary presented the jury report, which was based on citations provided by members of the Reading Committee. The IBP Awards Presentation would become a permanent feature of all future ICAS Opening Ceremonies. Shortly after the ceremony, the jury

citations were put on the ICAS website (where they can still be found) and shared with multiple Asian Studies outlets, such as H-Asia.

The winners of the first IBP were both present at the Awards Ceremony. They were Elizabeth C. Economy for her *The River Runs Black: The Environmental Challenge to China's Future* (Cornell University Press, 2004) and Christopher Reed with his *Gutenberg in Shanghai: Chinese Print Capitalism, 1876-1937* (UBC Press, 2003). Sam Wong was the first winner of the IBP Best Dissertation Award with his thesis "Community participation of Mainland Chinese migrants in Hong Kong – rethinking agency, institutions and authority in social capital theory". As a prize, his dissertation was published by AUP in the ICAS Publications Series: *Exploring 'Unseen' Social Capital in Community Participation. Everyday Lives of Poor Mainland Chinese Migrants in Hong Kong* (available from <http://oapen.org>). It was no small wonder that three publications on China won prizes, since a substantial part of the submitted books were about this upcoming political and economic powerhouse. In a special section of the *IAS Newsletter*#37 – "Publishing on Asia" – this was further contextualised and a rich tapestry of publications on all parts of Asia were highlighted. (https://issuu.com/ias/docs/ias_nl_37)

IBP 2007, Kuala Lumpur: IBP Colleagues' Choice Award

Based on comments from ICAS 4 participants, the ICAS Secretariat was motivated to initiate the Colleagues' Choice Award, in order to enable persons interested in Asia to cast a vote for their favourite book. This was only possible thanks to recent IT developments. An online polling system was established, and voting was possible from mid-March to mid-July. Giving a voice to the practitioners was in line with the ICAS bottom-up approach to the field of Asian Studies. From the beginning we were aware of the fact that the winning title of the Colleagues' Choice Award would not necessarily be the "best" publication, but rather the book with an author or publisher best equipped to mobilise votes for their publication. In order to be a successful author, however, this is not an unimportant aspect of publishing.

The first winner of the IBP Colleagues' Choice Award was Nordin Hussin, working at the Institute of Occidental Studies of the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, the organising entity of ICAS 5. Here follows a part of the citation, which sheds light on why voters liked his book: "Without a doubt *Trade and Society in the Straits of Melaka: Dutch Melaka and English Penang, 1780-1830* (NIAS Press, 2006) is a truly pioneering study of urban history, one that we rarely see in Southeast Asia. This study compares Melaka and Penang in the context of overall trends, namely, policy, geographical position, nature and direction of trade, morphology and society, and how these factors were influenced by trade as well as policies [...] By documenting

the impact of imperialist ambitions on the economy and society of two major trading centres, this book will provide a point of reference for all future research concerning the period.”

The Reading Committee for ICAS 5 reviewed 80 books and 10 dissertations. The members of the Reading Committee were: Jennifer Holdaway, Christopher Reed (winner of the IBP 2005 Humanities Prize), Paul van der Velde (Secretary), Anand Yang (Chair), and Guobin Yang. The prizes were awarded by Deputy Prime Minister Dato'seri Najib Tun Razak during the ICAS 5 Opening Ceremony at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Kuala Lumpur on 2 August 2007.

The winner of Best Book in the Humanities was Madeleine Zelin, with her *The Merchants of Zigong* (Columbia University Press, 2006); the winner of Best Book in the Social Sciences was Pei-Chia Lan and her *Global Cinderellas. Migrant Domestics and Newly Rich Employers in Taiwan* (Duke University Press, 2006). Winner of Best Dissertation in Asian Studies was Karen Laura Thornber, for her thesis “Negotiating and Reconfiguring Japan and Japanese Literature in Polyintertextual East Asian Contact Zones: Japan, China, Korea, Taiwan” (Harvard University).

For the first two editions of the IBP, the Reading Committee reached their final decisions during a dinner one day before the Awards Presentation. After IBP 2007, it was decided to expedite the decision-making process so that the shortlisted authors could be informed earlier in the year, so as to increase the likelihood that they could and would attend ICAS.

IBP 2009, Daejeon: The Network Search for Dissertations

The third IBP Awards Presentation took place during ICAS 6, on 6 August 2009, in the Grand Ballroom of the newly built Daejeon Convention Center. The Awards were presented by the members of the Reading Committee: Mehdi Amineh, Vinesh Hookomsingh, Xiaoming Huang, Alex McKay, Paul van der Velde, and Anand Yang. After the ceremony, all ICAS 6 participants could pick up two free copies of the ICAS Publications Series, of which eight were launched during a special session with more than fifty editors and contributors present.

The 2009 winner of Best Book in the Humanities was Anthony Barbieri-Low, *Artisans in Early Imperial China* (University of Washington Press, 2007); the winner of Best Book in the Social Sciences was Anne E. Booth, *Colonial Legacies: Economic and Social Development in East and Southeast Asia* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2007); Laurent Pordie was the winner of the Colleagues' Choice Award, for the edited volume *Tibetan Medicine in the Contemporary World: Global Politics of Medical Knowledge and Practice* (Routledge, 2008); Best Dissertation in the Humanities was won by Birgit Abels for her thesis “Sounds of Articulating Identity: Tradition and

Transition in the Music of Pulau”; and the winner of Best Dissertation in the Social Sciences was Iza Hussin with “The Politics of Islamic Law: Local Elites and Colonial Authority in Malaya, India and Egypt”.

While the number of books submitted for this edition of the IBP had neared one hundred, the dissertations were lagging with just 12 submissions, which were obviously only a fraction of all dissertations written on Asia in English. What could be done to increase that number for the next IBP? We thought the best way to tackle this situation was to put in place a special Reading Committee for Dissertations, consisting of peers of the young doctors. Whom better to ask than the IBP 2009 Best Dissertation winners: Birgit Abels (Humanities) and Iza Hussin (Social Sciences). We invited them to scout for dissertations all over the world and use their growing academic networks to at least double the number of dissertation submissions for the following IBP in 2011.

IBP 2011, Honolulu: From Traditional to Contemporary Asian Studies

The fourth IBP Awards Presentation took place on 1 April 2011 in the Kalakaua Ballroom of the Hawai'i Convention Center, during the Opening of ICAS 7; it was combined with the Ceremony of the Association for Asian Studies (AAS) regional book prizes. President of Ceremonies was four-time IBP Books Reading Committee Chair, Anand Yang, not only one of the pillars of the IBP but also one of the promoters of the joint meeting of ICAS 7 and AAS in Honolulu, which took place from 30 March to 3 April 2011. No less than five thousand participants attended the meeting, making it the biggest ever held in the field of Asian Studies. It was a clear signal to the outside world that Asian Studies was alive and kicking.

The public relations campaign around the combined meeting also had a positive impact on the number of books and dissertations submitted to the IBP. Book numbers doubled while the number of dissertations even tripled. The latter also implied that the newly created IBP Dissertations Reading Committee had done an excellent job. In all, 174 books were submitted by more than 40 publishers worldwide; 75 in the Humanities and 99 in the Social Sciences. A trend that had already been noticeable in IBP 2009 became fully manifest during the fourth edition: whereas for the first IBP, 65 percent of the books had been in the Humanities and 35 percent in the Social Sciences, it was completely the other way around for the fourth edition. This marked a clear shift in the field of research from traditional (orientalist) to contemporary Asian Studies. This also became clear in the supplement of *The Newsletter*#56 “Asian Book Series as Global Currency”. Many of those featured series were contemporary in nature (https://issuu.com/iias/docs/icas_nl56_supplement).

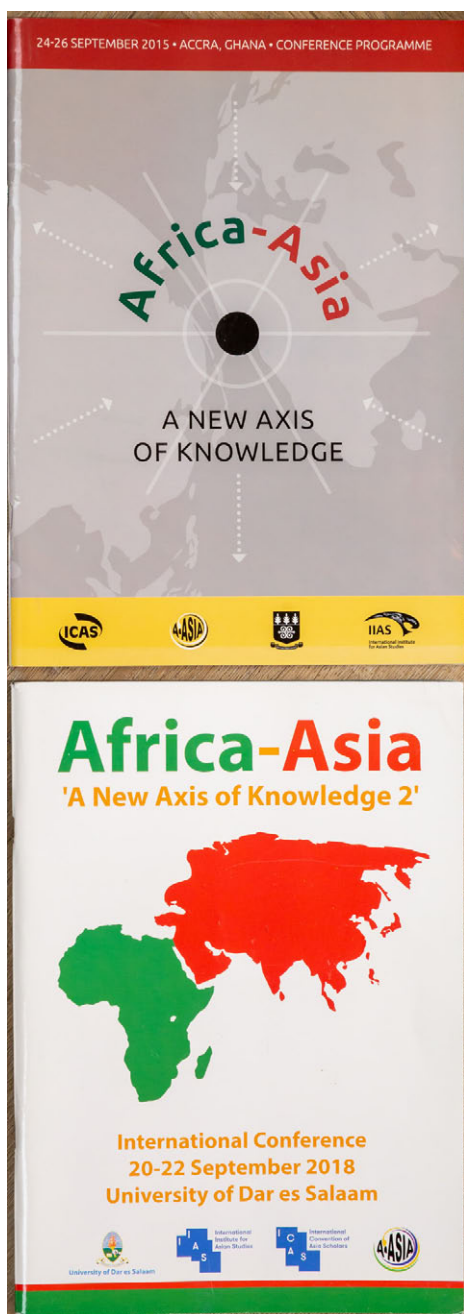


Figure 20. Covers of programme books of the conferences “Africa Asia: A New Axis of Knowledge 1 and 2”. Photo Cindy Bakker.

This was not the only shift we observed. We also saw a clear change in geographical backgrounds of the authors. During the first IBP only 10 percent of the participating authors were of Asian descent; the fourth edition of the IBP saw a marked increase to 40 percent. Asian Studies were clearly more and more being carried out by Asian scholars, yet their books (in English) continued to be predominantly published by Western publishers. Unsurprisingly, a third of the books submitted for the IBP 2011 were about East Asia, but Southeast Asia and South Asia also formed a large number of publications. Popular themes were art and culture, (post)colonial, gender and identity, history, international relations and politics, literature, media, Islam (a newcomer), literature, nationalism and state formation, religion and society. With such a wide diversity of excellent books we started thinking of ways to reward more books than only the main winners. This was successfully developed for the next IBP in 2013.

The IBP 2011 Reading Committee for Books consisted of Manuela Ciotti, Derek Heng, Alex McKay, Khun Eng Kuah-Pearce, Paul van der Velde (Secretary) and Anand Yang (Chair). The Reading Committee for Dissertations consisted of Birgit Abels and Iza Hussin. For the Humanities, Stein Tønnesson won Best Book for his *Vietnam 1946. How the War Began* (University of California Press, 2010), and Carmen Perez Gonzalez won Best Dissertation for her “A Comparative Visual Analysis of Nineteenth-Century Iranian Portrait Photography and Persian Painting”. The Reading Committees chose the following winners in the category Social Sciences: Uradyn E. Bulag, *Collaborative Nationalism: The Politics of Friendship on China's Mongolian Frontier* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010) and Imran bin Tajudeen for his thesis “Constituting and Reconstructing the Vernacular Heritage of Maritime Emporia in Nusantara: Historic Adaption and Contemporary Accentuations”. The public voted online for the winner of the Colleagues' Choice Award. It went to Alexander Huang and his *Chinese Shakespeares: Two Centuries of Cultural Exchange* (Columbia University Press, 2009).

IBP 2013, Macao: Guide to the IBP and the Addition of Reading Committee Accolades

At ICAS 8 in Macau we celebrated the fifth edition of the IBP. Within one decade the IBP had grown from an experiment with 38 books and 5 dissertations to an established prize with 250 publications submitted by 60 publishers worldwide and 100 dissertations. As previously mentioned, we wanted to start recognising more titles for their excellence, not just the main winners. In order to increase the diversity and creativity of the judging process and so that the Reading Committees would be able to single out a larger number of books and dissertations, we decided

to create the Reading Committee Accolades. The Accolades were to be awarded to any of the books and dissertations submitted, not just those which had made it onto the long/shortlists for the main prizes.

The IBP Reading Committee Accolades were, and continue to be, awarded separately for the two main categories, Humanities and Social Sciences, but the exact Accolades can vary each year (and not all need to be allocated). Accolades are awarded to both Books and Dissertations. Since their inception, the Accolades have included: Publisher's Accolade for Outstanding Production Value; Most Accessible and Captivating Work for The Non-Specialist Reader Accolade; Specialist Publication Accolade; Ground-Breaking Subject Matter Accolade; Teaching Tool Accolade; Best Art Book Accolade; and the Edited Volume Accolade. The Accolades bring prestige rather than cash prizes with them, but all winners receive an IBP certificate, and some even proudly hang them on their wall. To be a winner of an IBP Main Prize or Accolade, or to be included on the long/shortlist, is an important career milestone; importantly, the inclusion alerts academic publishers to the quality of the author's work.

To assist the Reading Committees, I had already in 2009 prepared a modest "Guide to the ICAS Book Prize", which contained an alphabetical enumeration of all submissions so that the readers could check if they had truly received all books. The sharp increase in the number of books in 2013 made it necessary to create a more elaborate "Guide", which now contained structured information to help the Reading Committees to better navigate the multitude of publications. It included an overview of not only titles, authors and publishers, but also the categorical division of books, the regional distribution and the most important topics treated in the publications. The guide also included the procedural regulations, a timetable, and the rules for eligibility of submissions.

The fifth IBP Awards Ceremony took place during ICAS 8, in The Venetian Macao Resort Hotel on 25 June 2013. The IBP 2013 was sponsored by The Kingdom of the Netherlands represented by the Consulate General in Hong Kong and Macao; ICAS's mother institution and co-host, The International Institute for Asian Studies; Amsterdam University Press; and the University of Macau. The members of the IBP 2013 Reading Committees were Birgit Abels, Michiel Baas, Sebastian Bersick, Annu Jalais, Alex McKay, Imran bin Tajudeen and Paul van der Velde (Secretary). Together they awarded the following prizes: Best Book in the Humanities went to Julia F. Andrews and Kuiyi Shen, for their *The Art of Modern China*. (University of California Press, 2012); Best Book in the Social Sciences was received by Miriam Kahn and her *Tahiti: Beyond the Postcard. Power, Place, and Everyday Life*. (University of Washington Press, 2011); Best Dissertation in the Humanities was awarded to Birgit Tremml for her thesis "When Political Economies Meet: Spain, China and Japan in Manila, 1517-1644"; Roberto Benedicto won the Best Dissertation

in the Social Sciences for his thesis “Bright Lights, Gay Globality: Mobility, Class, and Gay Life in Twenty-first Century Manila”; and the 2013 Colleagues’ Choice Award went to Fabrizio M. Ferrari, *Guilty Males and Proud Females: Negotiating Genders in a Bengali Festival* (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2011).

IBP 2015, Adelaide: The New Asia Scholar

The Focus section of *The Newsletter*#72 (Autumn 2015) was devoted to a phenomenon that we were calling “The New Asia Scholar” (<https://www.iias.asia/the-newsletter/newsletter-72-autumn-2015>). During ICAS 9 in Adelaide we took note of new trends and developments in Asian Studies. The meeting was a particularly useful observatory due to its diversified cross-continental nature. A number of ICAS 9 participants were invited to contribute a piece to *The Newsletter*, focussing on the question: “Who is the New Asia Scholar?”

The IBP itself has also proven to be an excellent trend identifier and forecaster. For a start, in 2015 we noticed that Asian Studies was moving from Western based Asian Studies to studies coming from the region itself, based on local conceptual lexicons and theoretical tools. Secondly, the shift from Humanities to Social Sciences, already perceived in 2009, continued and intensified; and thirdly, 50 percent of the authors had an Asian rather than Western background, which was a remarkable rise in numbers.

An issue that had come to worry us more and more was the language in which these submissions were written. International publications have always been dominated by English language works. Presuming English as the *lingua franca* of Asian Studies produces at least two implications: English speaking authors are writing about other cultures in a non-local language, thus missing much of the specific nuances (even though they might proudly speak the local language, they do not tend to publish in it); and non-English writing authors are limited in their international reach (or at most, their works have been translated into English only after an international publisher has deemed their work “interesting enough”). As organisers of the IBP we recognised the growing challenge of having only one language centre stage, and in response to demands from the field we realised the need for a change. Prospective partners were approached to either organise and/or sponsor a number of non-English language editions of the ICAS Book Prize. These were to be launched on time for the next IBP in 2017.

One of the incentives for a more diversified and decentralised approach came from our colleagues in Africa, particularly the African Association for Asian Studies (A-Asia), and accordingly, the first “A New Axis of Knowledge” conference was held in Ghana in 2015, followed in 2018 by the second meeting in Dar es Salaam.



Figure 21. Asian Book Series as Global Currency. Supplement to *The Newsletter* 56. Spring 2011. Colored drawing, 14 × 20 cm. Illustrator Ben Vranken. Photo Cindy Bakker.

Alongside the two meetings also came the regional version of the ICAS Book Prize: the Africa-Asia Book Prize. Books submitted to this prize focussed on Africa-Asia relations and Asian Studies in Africa.

Another interesting, more logistical development, was the sheer number of books being shipped to our offices every two years. Publishers were sending us 6 copies of each submitted title, which we then forwarded to the Reading Committee members. For the IBP 2015 we received approximately 1500 books! Our offices turned into a warehouse *cum* distribution centre. Someone finally came up with the bright idea of asking the publishers to send the hard copies straight to the Reading Committee members. This was only one of the solutions to the many practical problems when running what had become one of the biggest book prizes in the world. Another solution found was to the problem of the growing collection of books from previous editions of the IBP; by now more than six hundred books filled two book cases in the ICAS Secretariat's office. What could be a better destination than the Leiden University Library, especially since it was precisely at that time building an entire floor to house its new Asian Library! Consequently, an agreement was signed between the Leiden University Library and our mother institute, the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS), that the Asian Library would become the sponsor of the IBP. In return, we gifted the library all remaining books from previous (and future) IBP editions.

The IBP 2015 Awards Presentation took place in the Adelaide Convention Centre during the ICAS 9 Opening Ceremony. The Reading Committees were compiled by Christina Firpo, Duncan McDuie-Ra, Alex McKay, and Aysun Uyar. They awarded Best Book in the Humanities to Adam Clulow, *The Company and the Shogun: The Dutch Encounter with Tokugawa Japan* (Columbia University Press, 2014); Best Book in the Social Sciences went to Jinghong Zhang, *Puer Tea: Ancient Caravans and Urban Chic* (University of Washington Press, 2014); awards for Best Dissertation went to (respectively for Humanities and Social Sciences) Deokhyo Choi for his “Crucible of the Post-Empire: Decolonization, Race, and Cold War Politics in U.S.-Japan-Korea Relations, 1945-1952” and Tutin Aryanti for her “Breaking the Wall, Preserving the Barrier: Gender, Space, and Power in Contemporary Mosque Architecture in Yogyakarta, Indonesia”. Finally, the public voted for the winner of the Colleagues’ Choice Award, which in 2015 went to Khoo Salma Nasution, *The Chulia in Penang: Patronage and Place-Making around the Kapitan Kling Mosque 1786-1957* (Penang: Areca Books, 2014).

IBP 2017, Chiang Mai: A Multilingual Discourse at the IBP Party

ICAS is a successful facilitator of localised but connected knowledge about Asia, and an enthusiastic actor in the decentring of knowledge about and in Asia. As a reflection of this approach, the IBP enacted its existing wish to diversify its language basis. The ICAS Secretariat successfully enthused relevant institutes operating in Chinese, French, German and Korean to take on the challenge to organise their own respective language editions of the IBP: The Education University of Hong Kong (Chinese Edition), Groupement d’intérêt scientifique Études asiatiques (GIS Asie) (French Edition), the German Institute of Global and Area Studies (GIGA) and the Schweizerische Akademie für Geistes-und Sozialwissenschaften (SAGW) (German Edition), and Seoul National University Asia Center (SNUAC) (Korean Edition). Together with the Asian Library/Leiden University (English Edition), the IBP was now shouldered by six institutions in Asia and Europe. All books were submitted centrally through the ICAS website, but each Language Secretariat was responsible for their own Reading Committees, for contacting publishers/submitters, and for collecting hard copies. They all succeeded in receiving at least 30 books (a commendable start, comparable to the first English instalment); the Korean Language Secretariat outdid all with nearly 100 submissions.

The Secretariat of each language edition, in cooperation with the IBP General Secretariat, put together a Reading Committee of four persons, representing the field of Asian Studies in the widest sense. Towards the end of this new multi-language edition I decided to relinquish my position as Secretary. I handed over those

duties to Sonja Zweegers, Editor of *The Newsletter* at IIAS, and I took on my new role as General Secretary of the IBP, in order to coordinate the various language editions, and secure all necessary agreements and sponsorships.

The IBP 2017 Awards Presentation took place on 20 July in the Plenary Hall of the Chiang Mai International Exhibition and Convention Centre. It was memorable to see the winners of all the language editions on stage. Upon leaving the hall everyone was given the *ICAS Book Prize 2017* publication, a new initiative by the ICAS Secretariat. The booklet listed all shortlisted books, winners, citations, Reading Committees, organisers and sponsors.

In previous years there had always been a small IBP dinner organised for the winners and Reading Committee members, but with the growing numbers involved we decided to throw a proper IBP party. The winners were given the floor to say a few words (which had not been possible during the ceremony). Our first multilingual ICAS Book Prize party was a roaring success, lasting well into the wee hours.

The English language Reading Committee members for Books were Manuela Ciotti, Tom Hoogervorst, Claudio Pinheiro, Tina Shrestha and Paul van der Velde (Secretary). They awarded the Best Book in the Humanities to Seth Jacobowitz, *Writing Technology in Meiji Japan: A Media History of Modern Japanese Literature and Visual Culture* (Harvard University Asia Center, 2015); and Best Book in the Social Sciences was awarded to Han F. Vermeulen, for his *Before Boas: The Genesis of Ethnography and Ethnology in the German Enlightenment* (University of Nebraska Press, 2015).

The Reading Committee for Dissertations included Tutin Aryanti, Deokhyo Choi and Alex McKay (Chair). They awarded Best Dissertation in the Humanities to Lisa Hellman, for her “Navigating the Foreign Quarters: Everyday Life of the Swedish East India Company Employees in Canton and Macao 1730-1830”; and Best Dissertation in the Social Sciences to Gauri Bharat, for her “Place-making Through Practice: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Santal Architectural History”. And finally, the Colleagues’ Choice Awards (respectively for Humanities and Social Sciences) went to Christina Elizabeth Firpo, *The Uprooted: Race, Children, and Imperialism in French Indochina, 1890-1980*. (University of Hawai’i Press, 2016) and Adams Bodomo, *Africans in China: Guangdong and Beyond* (New York: Diasporic Africa Press, 2016).

And for the first time there were prizes for languages other than English. The German language edition awarded their main prize to Hans van Ess, *Politics and Historiography in Ancient China: Pan-ma i-t’ing*; the Chinese language edition Best Book went to Lui Tai-Lok, *Hong Kong Model: From the Present Tense to the Past Tense*; the main prize of the French language edition was received by Marine Carrin, *The Language of the Gods: Santal Ritual Discourse Between the Oral and the Written (India)*; and the Korean language edition recognised as Best Book: Jaehun Jeong, *The History of the Turk Empire 552-745: The Rise and Fall of Ashna’s Power*. [The titles of the books in this paragraph have been translated into English.]

A number of publishers also attended the IBP party, as they had travelled to Chiang Mai to exhibit their products and services at the ICAS Asian Studies Book Fair. The number of publishers involved in the IBP English edition had been quite stable (at 60) for a few years; however, for the first time we could clearly discern a core group of seven publishers that had submitted more than 15 books. These were, in alphabetical order: Amsterdam University Press, Brill Publishers, Cambridge University Press, Harvard Asia Center, ISEAS Publishing, NIAS Press, and the University of Washington Press. The following 13 publishers submitted five to ten books: Columbia University Press, Cornell University Press, Hong Kong University Press, Hurst & Company, Lexington Books, NUS Press, Oxford University Press, Peter Lang, Polity Press, Primus Books, Routledge, SUNY Press, and University of Hawai'i Press. The remaining publishers, most of them academic, submitted up to five books. It was clear that the majority of publishers producing books on Asia (in English) were located in either USA or Europe, although we were also made aware that an increasing number of these companies were opening up branches in Asia, so as to be able to effectively scout new authors in the field, the majority of whom are from Asia. This was also the main reason for them to exhibit at ICAS, as most of the participants hail from the region.

IBP 2019, Leiden: The IBP Books and Dissertations Carousel

The IBP dinner at the Hortus Botanicus during ICAS 11 in Leiden was, with over 30 guests, a particularly generous affair as we had added yet another language edition to the group: a combined Spanish/Portuguese edition, organised by Sephis. Its Chair, Claudio Pinheiro, had performed in-depth research into the state of affairs of Asian Studies in Latin America before establishing the Secretariat. His efforts resulted in no less than 66 publications submitted for their first IBP in 2019. The number of submissions for each language varied from 20 to 100 and taking into account the English edition we received a total of 754 submissions.

The IBP Books and Dissertations Carousel had been set in motion as an experiment during ICAS 9 in Adelaide, had matured at ICAS 10 in Chiang Mai, and came of age during ICAS 11 (15-19 July 2019) in Leiden. Eighty presentations took place during 15 sessions, nearly half by young doctors for whom the IBP Carousel was initiated in the first place: "To offer young doctors the opportunity to briefly present the significance of their work to an audience of interested scholars, publishers and potential employers, who in turn may question the candidates on their findings. This is also intended to be a relatively informal chance for presenters to meet others interested in their field of enquiry". A number of presentations (in English) were about books written in languages other than English, and we hope that this platform will indeed see even more non-English language authors during future editions.

With another hat on, as IIAS Publications Officer, and together with my assistant Mary Lynn van Dijk, we convened a panel at ICAS 11 on the three IIAS Book series (“Global Asia”, “Asian Cities”, “Asian Heritages”), with the aim to look back on the 25 monographs and edited volumes published in these series in the past four years. The series editors took the lead in explaining how they work and what kind of manuscripts they want to include in their series. Tak-Wing Ngo (organiser of ICAS 8 in Macau) said the following about his “Global Asia Series” (although this could also apply to the IBP and ICAS in general): “The Series takes issue with the conventional practice of treating Asia as merely the empirical testing ground for universalised theories developed from Western experiences. Instead, it underlines the contributions of Asian knowledge, values, and practices in making our modern world. The Series deliberately keeps a broad scope to include studies that focus on a wide range of topics and disciplines. Books published under the Series are unified not by a common theme or theoretical approach, but by a critical stance that highlights the autochthonous contributions of Asia to Social Sciences. As such, the Series as a whole addresses contemporary issues related to transnational interactions within the Asian region, as well as Asia’s projection into the world through the movement of goods, people, ideas, knowledge, ideologies, and so forth. Priorities are given to well-researched manuscripts that seek to develop new perspectives and theories about global Asia”.

The IBP 2019 awards ceremony took place during the opening of ICAS 11, in Leiden’s Hooglandse Church, on 16 July 2019. Nearly 2500 people attended the ceremony, and all were presented with the *ICAS Book Prize 2019* publication at the end of the session. The booklet included all shortlists, winners, sponsors, organisers, reading committees of the IBP 2019. The English language Reading Committee for Books included Seth Jacobowitz, Rachel Leow, Thien Huong Ninh, Olga Sooudi, and Sonja Zweegers (Secretary). The prize for Best Book in the Humanities went to Howard Chiang, *After Eunuchs: Science, Medicine, and the Transformation of Sex in Modern China* (Columbia University Press, 2018); Best Book in the Social Sciences was awarded to Sareeta Amrute, *Encoding Race, Encoding Class: Indian IT Workers in Berlin* (Duke University Press, 2016).

The members of the Reading Committee for Dissertations were Bart Luttikhuis, Alex McKay (Chair) and Anna Romanowicz. They awarded Best Dissertation in the Humanities to Leonor Veiga for her “The Third Avant-garde: Contemporary Art from Southeast Asia Recalling Tradition”; and Best Dissertation in the Social Sciences to Aleksandra Lee for her “Modeling China: Business, Politics, and Material in China’s Museum Industry”. The Colleagues’ Choice Awards (respectively for Humanities and Social Sciences) went to Abdur-Razzaq Lubis, *Sutan Puasa: Founder of Kuala Lumpur* (Areca Books, 2018) and Azmil Tayeb, *Islamic Education in Indonesia and Malaysia: Shaping Minds, Saving Souls* (Routledge, 2018).

The Main Prize for the Chinese language edition was awarded to Feng-mao Li, *Transforming 'Sacred Religion' into Daoism: Festival, Belief, and Culture in the Chinese Society of Malaysia* (National Taiwan University Press, 2018). The French language Reading Committee recognised as Best Book, Michèle Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens and Marianne Bujard, *The Qin and Han Dynasties: General History of China (221 BC-220 AD)* (Les Belles Lettres, 2017). Thomas Zimmer, *Awakening from the Coma? A Literary Positioning of Today's China* (Tectum Wissenschaftsverlag, 2017) was the winner of the 2019 German language edition. Best Book in the Korean language was awarded to Jae-hoon Shim, *From a Vassal to the Hegemon: The Birth and Rise of the State of Jin in Early China* (Ilchokak Publishing, 2018). And for the first time, the Spanish/Portuguese edition presented its ICAS Book Prize; in fact it had two winners: Madalena Natsuko Hashimoto Cordaro, *Japanese Erotica in Painting and Writing of the 17th to 19th centuries, 2 volumes* (USP, 2017) and Óscar Figueroa, *The Preceding View: Visionary Power and Imagination in Ancient India* (UNAM, 2017). [The titles of the books in this paragraph have been translated into English.]

Increasingly Asian scholars are and must be at home in different cultures, languages, subjects and disciplines. In an article in 2015, we coined this development the “New Asia Scholar”, who is increasingly superseding the very specialised disciplinary or regional Asia scholar. One thing is for sure: all those who have been members of the Reading Committees in the past two decades have become by the very nature of their horizon-widening exercise New Asia Scholars. They form the avant-garde in a development which in the near future will lead to a paradigmatic shift in Asian Studies with new approaches not only based on Western concepts (amalgam) but will for sure increasingly include Asian concepts (gamelan). The fusion of both will lead to ground-breaking new insights that will transcend traditional institutional structures and methodologies and will turn into constantly changing hypersensitive networks, brain and craft parks, where ideas exchange without any restrictions.

IBP 2021, Kyoto: Looking Back to the Future, Part 1

From the beginning, the IBP has been a general book prize of a region and discipline transcending nature. From its seventh edition in 2017 it also became multilingual; by adding Japanese and Russian, the ICAS Book Prize is now considering nine languages that have (long) established research traditions in Asian Studies. Is it conceivable to add even more languages to the IBP without it imploding? I am of the opinion that because English is one of the official languages of India, Hindi or Tamil editions will be unlikely. Bahasa Indonesia, spoken throughout the Malay world, Swahili as the biggest East African language, and Arabic spoken and read throughout the Islamic world, could be possible candidates.

The scholars who have been members of a Reading Committee have fully experienced the horizon-widening experience of the IBP. They received and processed books from not only their own fields of study, but far beyond. Many of them have used the submitted books as pedagogical tools in their teachings on Asia. They work together with the other committee members, and somehow always seem to agree on who should be the winner.

How the IBP will be further impacted by the de-globalising tendencies in the world today, no one can be sure about. However, we do predict that the new Russian language edition will attract a higher number of titles on Central Asia, the Japanese edition will likely introduce us to topics we have never even heard of before, more and more of the authors will originate from Asia and be published by Asia-located publishers, more Asian authors will write about Asian countries other than their own, more books on Asia will be written in a language other than English, etc. And the ICAS Book Prize will continue to boost and document all these developments through its original aim: to increase the global visibility of and interest in academic works on Asia.

Another way in which the IBP works to make Asian Studies and its publications more visible and accessible is through the ICAS Book Fair. The last few ICAS meetings have seen between 30-40 publishers exhibit their wares and services, but this number could rise because of the increasing number of languages involved in the IBP. Closely connected to the IBP is the ICAS Books and Dissertations Carousel, in which authors present their recent work; it has witnessed a clear growth in the number of presentations of books not written in English, thus familiarising wider and wider audiences with works written in non-English languages.

We have also seen how presentations of dissertations are increasingly impacted by developments in IT. Quoting the Chair of the IBP Dissertations Reading Committee, Alex McKay: "What is also notable is that the form of a doctoral dissertation has lost the traditional boundaries of extensive text and relevant illustration. Many submissions incorporate video and other technological innovations of the last decades, once tentatively but now confidently deployed by a generation that has grown up with new tools of expression. That tendency, like ICAS itself, is likely to only grow". So far, the IBP has only accepted dissertations written in English, but this does not exclude the possibility of dissertations in other languages in the future.

The Colleagues' Choice Award was introduced in 2007, and has been included in every instalment of the IBP ever since. However, with the steep yearly rise in the number of votes we are no longer able to guarantee the validity of the polls, and so after the IBP in 2019 we decided to stop awarding this prize. Nevertheless, we are convinced that the Colleagues' Choice Award has made the IBP more popular by highlighting books that would otherwise have gone unnoticed. We will of course continue to award Reading Committee Accolades to the submitted books and

dissertations. The Accolades are an invaluable method to acknowledge a larger number of very deserving titles.

Why compete for the ICAS Book Prize? Where will it get you? Well, Alex McKay, one of the pillars of the IBP, wrote on that matter in *The Newsletter* # 76 and # 83: “The best dissertations will have the primary merit of originality, along with scholastic qualities such as depth (and breadth) of research, evidence of intellectual quality, clear and sophisticated arguments, good organisation and presentation of evidence leading to significant conclusions liable to be of interest to the wider field, a consistent and properly considered theoretical and/or methodological framework, and of course it must include due acknowledgement of sources and proper presentation of bibliography, notes and associated scholastic apparatus. They will also have the minimum of typographical errors and the standard of writing and use of English language will be of a good standard”.

The criteria for the IBP Book Reading Committee were summarised as follows: “There are several criteria which determine what is a good book: originality in the treatment of the topic; the depth of the research; opening up a new field of research; providing a definitive study on a certain topic; being well written or making clear arguments. [...] Inclusion on the [long] list is a significant achievement and means that the author belongs to the top tier of Asia scholars.” With these considerations in mind the Reading Committees start their yearlong reading process, which results in longlists, then shortlists. Being included on those lists is already a great honour and references to them frequently pop up on CV’s of scholars to enhance their resume. The winners of the prizes are ultimately those that come closest to the criteria outlined above and for them it means a boost to their careers and a reward for many years of meticulous and intensive research. The recognition for one’s work, knowledge and dedication that comes with winning the ICAS Book Prize is priceless, often leading to unexpected but well-deserved career-related rewards.

IBP 2021, Kyoto: Looking Back to the Future, Part 2

The diversification of languages for the IBP was further extended by the addition of Japanese and Russian editions, bringing the total to eight editions representing nine languages. There are very strong Asian Studies traditions going back centuries in both Russian and Japanese. It is only natural that they are part of the IBP, along with the excellent studies written in those languages, which should become part of the international discourse on Asian Studies. During the ICAS Book Prize Dinner, we invited Alexey Maslow, Director of the Institute of Far Eastern Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, to set up a Russian Language Edition, while I want to single out the Japanese Language Edition because two previous attempts to set it

up were foiled. Therefore the ICAS Secretariat sponsored this first edition and with good result mainly thanks to the endeavours of its Secretary Aysun Uyar Makibayshi of Doshisha University in Kyoto, who managed to get in 38 publications. We do not doubt that in view of this unprecedented result many institutes in Japan will jump at the chance to sponsor future IBP Japanese Language Editions.

One other newcomer was the Hong Kong Article Prize. Many times in the past I was asked whether it would be a good idea not only to include books but also articles in the IBP because, certainly in the Social Sciences, a lot of the academic output is in articles. Therefore we welcomed the idea of the Society for Hong Kong Studies to have, on an experimental basis, an article prize for Hong Kong studies. With more than a hundred articles submitted it clearly fulfils an existing need for this field of study and gives us an idea of the wide variety of academic periodicals in which our colleagues find a safe haven to contribute their ideas to.

With this multilingual approach, ICAS was increasingly decentring the landscape of knowledge about and in Asia. The English Language Edition with which it all started will remain – now with 497 books and 176 dissertations – for some time to come the biggest in number of submissions. However, other editions have the potential to grow substantially – in particular the Asian language editions, which started out with more submissions than the first English Language Edition. It takes a lot of energy, time and experience before a prize is deeply rooted and starts to blossom.

The following ten institutions in Asia, Latin America and Europe either organised or sponsored the respective language editions. CATS, Centre for Asian and Transcultural Studies (German Edition), GIS Asie, French Academic Network on Asian Studies (French Edition), ICAS, IAS and the Asian Library at Leiden University (English Edition and Japanese Edition), IFES, Institute of Far Eastern Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences (Russian Edition), NCU, National Chengchi University (Chinese Edition), SEPHIS, The South-South Exchange Program for Research on the History of Development (Spanish/Portuguese Edition), Society for Hong Kong Studies (Hong Kong Article Prize Edition) and SNUAC, Seoul National University Asia Center (Korean Edition).

The secretariat of each language edition, organised and sponsored by an Asian Studies institution in cooperation with the IBP Secretariat at ICAS, puts together a Reading Committee (normally of 4 academics) consisting of scholars in diverse disciplines, focusing on various regions, working on and originating from different continents: a composition that reflects the transcending nature of ICAS. Each secretariat has succeeded in finding enthusiastic members for their respective Reading Committees and persuaded publishers and periodicals in the field of Asian Studies to submit their publications.

Once the number of submitted books to a language edition reaches one hundred, two prizes are awarded, one in the Social Sciences and one in the Humanities.

In view of the large number of submissions we have, since the sixth edition (2013) Accolades have been put in place to highlight specific aspects of books and dissertations. Although primarily awarded in the English Language Edition, other editions also started to award them or came up with their own Accolades. For example, the Chinese Language Edition (which doubled the number of submissions thanks to the work of its energetic Secretary Cha-Hsuan Liu) has put in place an Accolade for the Best Translation into the Chinese Language, and the Spanish/Portuguese Edition came up with the Outstanding Contribution to the Field of Asian Studies Accolade. It is not only the prize winners who are acknowledged: everyone who is on the longlists or shortlists or receives an accolade is a rightful winner. Roughly ten percent of all authors thus receive recognition and rightly so because we all know how much it takes to get published.

ICAS prides itself on being the platform for young scholars and practitioners. Therefore from the first IBP onwards we put a lot of effort into the Dissertations Edition. This time around, there was a record number of 176 dissertations submitted, 99 in the Humanities and 77 in the Social Sciences. The predominance of Humanities submissions was notable. The two categories were almost equally represented at ICAS 11. At earlier ICAS meetings Social Science submissions predominated. Those submitting their dissertations came from 101 different universities in 21 countries, with a particularly strong component of American universities represented (33). This is indicative of a cultural difference, with particular merit awards being more commonly endowed by American institutes than those of most other countries, and their students thus being more accustomed to promoting their work in such a manner.

Slowly it was sinking in that this was my last IBP as General Secretary. I left with a smile, convinced that my successor Martina van den Haak, who was IBP Acting Secretary from 2008 to 2013, will continue with much gusto. She will work in cooperation with the secretaries of the language editions and with Wai Cheung (co-organisier of ICAS 8 and ICAS Programme Manager) who succeeded Sonja Zweegers as Secretary of the IBP English Edition. A special thanks to Alex McKay who has been involved with the IBP almost from its inception and for the past four editions was the Chair of the Dissertation Reading Committee.

Needless to say I would like to thank all IBP Secretaries, Members of the Reading Committees, the authors who in the past have submitted their publications or dissertations, and the publishers who provided the copies of all these wonderful books. It will come as no surprise that I am eagerly looking forward to the tenth edition!

The New Asia Scholar

In the following article, revised for this publication, Paul van der Velde discusses different perspectives on the identity and approaches of the “New Asia Scholar”. The original sources of statements and opinions attributed to the various individuals whose work is discussed here, may be found in the original articles cited at the conclusion of this section.

Original source: Velde, Paul van der and Zweegers, Sonja. 2015. “The New Asia Scholar”, *The Newsletter* 72 Autumn. 17-19. Focus Section. <https://www.ias.asia/the-newsletter/article/new-asia-scholar>

There have been many developments in the field of Asian Studies and among its scholars during the last few decades, and we have been taking note. Our particular observatory has been the biennial meetings of the International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS), which had its first assembly in 1998, and its most recent in 2021. After the first two meetings in Europe (Leiden and Berlin), ICAS was moved into Asia (with two diversions: Honolulu and Adelaide), not only to further increase participation of scholars from Asia, but also with the idea that the Asian case provides an ideal breeding ground to refine existing theories and to develop new ones.

Unlike other Asian Studies conferences, where the majority of participants come from the United States and Europe, ICAS boasts the greatest diversified cross-continental representation, and most of its participants come from Asian countries. One of our most obvious observations has been that Asian Studies is now being produced more and more in Asia. New ideas and research findings are discussed not only among researchers who study Asia, but also among scholars who live in Asia. This is important because so far the conceptual lexicons and theoretical tools used in Humanities and Social Sciences have been derived almost exclusively from the West. Although these theories and methods have been applied throughout the world with considerable success, their limitations are increasingly apparent, especially in a place like Asia (or Africa for that matter).

Reverse and Inclusive Discourses

As Asian countries emerge to become prominent players in the world, there comes a point when we recognise that the region has something to offer for knowledge production. One example of this is the ICAS Book Prize (IBP), which since its inception in 2005 has seen the percentage of Asian authors rise from 20 to nearly 50 per cent at the most recent convention. This will hopefully make apparent that

English language publications are but an iceberg slowly melting into an ocean of multilingual Asian Studies.

Tak-Wing Ngo (University of Macau and local host of ICAS 8), commented on this realisation. He signalled that, recently, there has been an increasing demand for alternative scholarship within Asian Studies, for a move away from Western theory, and “for the development of ‘reverse discourses’ in order for non-Western scholarship to theorise back at the West”. But as local Asian centres and networks of knowledge emerge, seeking to interact with the rest of the academic world, they encounter the problem of language. And now the challenge has come to continue to judge scholarship according to quality not quantity, and to, in Tak-Wing’s words “encourage internationalisation without compromising indigenous scholarship”.

Not only is Asia a breeding ground for new knowledge and theory, it is also a new home for the many foreign Asia Scholars who wish to “get up close” to the discussion. Lena Scheen (New York University Shanghai), a sinologist from Leiden University, moved to Shanghai so that she could experience the benefits of being among her research subjects, but has now also been forced to learn how to deal with becoming part of her own research field. Essentially, she considers it to be a benefit: “to be required to consistently question your surroundings and yourself in it, creating never-ending opportunities to learn”.

Besides the refreshing reversal of roles and locations, we are also seeing a new inclusiveness in many areas of research. Priya Maholay-Jaradi (National University of Singapore) presents herself and her professional career path, as exemplary of a new Asia scholar involved in the arts. She discusses how, as museums and university programmes draw closer together, their shared resources are resulting in new pedagogical tools and exhibition programmes; new media, such as video and digital archives, are gradually becoming part of a new arc of “scholarship-archives-museum-publications-teaching”; and the politics and poetics of culture are being implemented as tools for development and community activism. As museum theory is being linked with practice, academic research on museums becomes more socially relevant to local communities, “in an academic climate where researchers are increasingly encouraged to demonstrate the social impact of their research” (Yunci Cai quoted by Priya Jaradi).

Towards a Multilingual Level Playing Field

The IBP organisers have recognised the growing “problem of language” and in response have added five eligible languages: Chinese, Japanese, Korean, French and German. Language plays an increasingly obvious role in Asian Studies; it is of importance for both collecting data and distributing it. Occasionally, language is the

tool with which one will come to understand a culture, or a relationship between cultures. And knowledge of a particular language will often mean the difference between being able to publish for an international audience or not. The pressure to publish is a familiar sensation for most academics, but it weighs heavier on some than on others. John Bohannon has gone so far as to declare “an emerging Wild West in academic publishing”, and Ulrich Kozok (University of Hawai’i at Mānoa), has commented on the growing pressure to publish so as to advance one’s career at Indonesian universities. In addition, Indonesian academics find themselves in that disadvantaged situation of having to publish in a foreign language. With the pressure high and predator publishers on the lure, their choices are perhaps understandable. But standards of quality control must be improved if the reputations of academics, and the scientific world of research, are to be protected.

Duncan McDuie-Ra (University of New South Wales) was a member of the IBP 6 Reading Committee and is a former accolade winner. He has commented on the benefits those roles have presented him. Although an immense task, judging the IBP gave him the opportunity to act as a clearinghouse, advise anyone he could on which books to read next, and to accumulate new names for peer-reviews. Significantly, he was able to observe the extremely broad field of Asian Studies, and the current state of its publishing. Duncan comments on the ongoing value of books (monographs in particular), produced despite the pressures of academic life, and notwithstanding the “phantom crisis” in the Humanities and Social Sciences. As a judge, wading through the 200 plus submitted books, he found that the field of Asian Studies is very much alive.

Paul Kratoska and Peter Schoppert have recently witnessed a shift in Asian Studies publications in their role as publishers located in Southeast Asia (NUS Press, Singapore). Western authors have in the past mainly written to explain Asia to audiences in their own part of the world, but Asian publishers have tended to find the appeal of that scholarship limited. However, distribution of research published by Asian scholars in local Asian languages has in its own way also been restricted, that is, until the recent developments encouraging Asian scholars to publish in other languages (mainly English). Their audience is evolving and is starting to include scholars in the West, but also scholars based in other Asian countries. The shift: authors from all over the world are embedding themselves in local discourse, publishers are going straight to the source, and innovative technologies are helping regional knowledge to reach new global audiences.

As a publisher and the owner of Silkworm Books in Chiang Mai (Thailand), Trasvin Jittidecharak is in a suitable position to comment on the “problems of language”. She has raised concerns acknowledged by many in the field: the lack of funds for academic publishing and the pressures of writing in English for non-native speakers. But importantly she also notes the problem of censorship in many Asian

countries. Political systems are perhaps developing towards more liberal forms in many areas of “new” Asia, but freedom of speech is still far from being a reality.

Another aspect of this discussion of language concerns was raised by Tom Hoogervorst (Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies), who asks if the “New Asia Scholar” is perhaps motivated by, or even swept up in, “the crisis of area studies”, be it real or just an apparition. Has the scholar gone into survival mode, demanding innovation and adaptation? As a researcher of interethnic contact through language, Tom wonders what role language will play in the scurry to reconfigure the field. He follows the path that language-learning in area studies has taken in the recent past; from western researchers learning local languages in their attempts to become “regional experts”, to the centrality of English for academic theorisation, to the engagement of native speakers as fieldwork assistants, concluding with the undeniable importance of the study of language to help understand the rapidly homogenising world.

Paradigmatic Shift?

The changing field of Asian Studies brings with it a new academic, one we have termed the “New Asia Scholar”. Marlon James Sales (Monash University) has astutely remarked that the term can refer both to a scholar who is attuned to the newness of Asia as a field of inquiry, and also be interpreted as a reconfiguration of “who” studies Asia. Marlon is an “incidental” Asianist, one of a variety of scholars whose specific fields of study (in Marlon’s case, linguistics/translating) draws them nearer to Asia by looking at the continent through a “new” set of lenses. He suggests that both the area of the world and the scholars who study it are “new”. But more than that, Marlon discusses the limitations of interculturality in Asia (the acknowledgement of different cultures in Asia), and calls rather for transculturality, which alongside the differences also acknowledges the permeable borders of languages and cultures.

In fact, one of the main themes of recent ICAS gatherings has been interculturality; to be understood as the encounter between hegemonic and non-dominant cultures as well as frictions, overlapping, interdependencies, potentials for conflict and mutual interference caused by this. Cathy Monro (University of Sydney) has called attention to the oft-failing collaboration between the academic and legislative worlds, particularly in the context of interculturality. Anyone in the field of Asian Studies knows how diverse and vast topics of academic research can be. We’ve all seen those monographs come by with exotic titles such as “Yak milk preservation on the Mongolian steppe”, “Embroidery from the Sumatran forests”, or “Coconut collection from the beaches of some tropical island”. And as you pick

up the book to delve into bizarre new worlds, a little voice in the back of your mind might be asking “why?”. Why indeed. It is not always immediately clear why particular research has been undertaken, or what its significance for society could be (assuming that one would want to have at least a slight impact on society beyond the academic bleachers). Too often, research findings fail to find their way into the realm of practical applicability. Researchers are not always concerned with this aspect, and policymakers habitually bypass academic research findings in their decision-making.

Jinghong Zhang (Australian National University), winner of the 2015 IBP in the Social Sciences, commented on the dilemmas encountered when attempting social scientific research in the globalising and commercial world (the “new” Asia). Where the new world wants fast and clear answers, the new social scientist must learn how to adapt. Forfeiting their desire to understand the “why” and the “how”, they must learn to answer the “what”, in the process possibly losing their academic soul. However, learning to adapt to the changing environment, Jinghong concluded, would also conceivably give them something new and valuable in return.

Imran bin Tajudeen (National University of Singapore) also commented on the links between knowledge production and usefulness for the “new” commercialised world. He approaches the New Asia Scholar as both an emerging scholar who is changing the conditions for knowledge production, and also one who is challenging the existing forms of knowledge produced about (Southeast) Asia. Imran observed how the old regime of scholarship was motivated by the need to serve various colonial territories, with its legacy still being felt not just in the West, but in Asia too. The post-colonial era continued to see scholarship regimes produce research with utility for Western knowledge consumers. These Anglo-American academic traditions subsequently went on to form the framework of research for most Asian institutions and scholars; alternative discursive domains and traditions of scholarship remain very limited even today.

Current scholarship in the US mould is concerned with what Benedict Anderson has cynically called the “theory market in the academic marketplace”, resulting in the dilemma that scholarship with a concern for social engagement must operate beyond and in spite of the adopted US model. To generate critical and socially-engaged scholarship, new avenues must be paved so that research may reflect concerns rooted in the locality studied. These ideas resonate with Dell Upton’s advocacy for a cultural landscape approach to architecture and urban history, and with an emerging notion of the “flipped academic”, where publication is delayed in favour of community engagement.

New Approaches and Players in Asian Studies

Asian Studies as a field of research is constantly developing, but at times a more concerted effort must be made to identify, define and design new approaches. The IIAS is responding to the organic developments outlined above – new knowledge, new scholars, in a new Asia – as have numerous other knowledge institutions in the field. In 2014, IIAS initiated a programme, funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation: “Rethinking Asian Studies in a Global Context”. With the objective of reshaping the field of Asian Studies, the programme seeks to foster new Humanities focused research. In practice, this means adapting Asian Studies to an interconnected global environment built on a network of academics and practitioners from Asia, the Americas, Europe and Africa. Educational opportunities are created by selecting cross-disciplinary methodological questions likely to shift scholarly paradigms as they pertain to Asia.

Titia van der Maas (IIAS) is the project coordinator of the “Rethinking Asian Studies” programme. She points out how recent technology has improved communications and the sharing of knowledge, and how uniformity in this and in research methodology has facilitated the running of research (projects) across the globe. However, it is nevertheless important to not forget the pursuit of alternative interpretations; to question and challenge the establishment. Although a field of studies will evolve organically in some ways, there are always good reasons to promote more deliberate developments.

In a similar vein of highlighting new players in the field, David Camroux (Sciences Po) delivers a wealth of bibliographic references in his demonstration of the changes occurring in the field of political science research in Southeast Asia. An emergence of new scholarship is introducing comparative dimensions, crossing disciplinary boundaries, and juxtaposing theoretical arguments and observations drawn from various regions of the world, requiring us to rethink a number of assumptions and interpretations.

New approaches and players are also emerging in “new” regions of the world. Cláudio Pinheiro (Rio de Janeiro Federal University) provides a historical overview of Latin America’s curiosity about Asia, which challenges the hegemony of the Northern framework, helping to de-provincialise Asian Studies. This curiosity has passed through various phases; at first defined by Orientalist approaches emulating colonialist views, later by the theories of Development and Modernity; from a diffuse 19th century aristocratic inquisitiveness to the professional academic interest of post-WWII; from disperse connections between peripheral parts of the world to alternative models of modernisation. Area Studies, in general, can both develop capacities of intellectuals dedicated to the interdisciplinary study of specific spaces, whilst simultaneously isolating academics in self-contained realities. It

has also validated the prevalence of a North Atlantic expertise, which has hindered the postcolonial peripheries from observing one another intellectually. Pinheiro therefore advocates the institutionalisation of Asian Studies in the Global South (particularly Latin America and Africa), which will help to improve the progress of the field, to de-centralise Asian Studies, and to encourage debates that cross disciplinary boundaries.

The institutionalisation of Asian Studies in the Global South has recently seen fruition in Africa, where the African Association for Asian Studies (A-Asia) was founded in 2013. Lloyd Amoah (University of Ghana) is Secretary of A-Asia and was also one of the convenors of the conference, “Africa-Asia: A New Axis of Knowledge”. Lloyd notes that, despite the fact that Asia-Africa relations can be traced back to antiquity, there has always been a notable lack of institutional pursuit of knowledge about Asia in Africa. He references Kierkegaard’s “midnight hour” and declares that the hour of “unmasking” has finally struck. Burdened by a past of imperialist subjugation, both the continents of Asia and Africa are perhaps finally ready to see each other without the blurring mask of colonialism, struggles of independence, and the Cold War. New relations are being forged; ones that take their source from ancient connections, but which also attempt to craft fresh engagements befitting a rapidly changing world.

Habibul Khondker (Zayed University in Abu Dhabi) has discussed the challenges and potential of Asian Studies in the Arab states of the Gulf, concentrating mainly on the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, and paints a picture of hopeful future growth. Although initially established to cater to the human resource needs of a modernising world, the universities in the Gulf region are starting to “Look East” and to recognise the importance of global relations and developments, possibly encouraged by the infatuating influences of Asia’s pop culture, which are emblematic of the “new” Asia.

One hears the expression “the Asian Century” all the time, but what really does it mean? Are we just talking about growing economies and evolving political systems? Or is the “new” Asia more than that?

Looking Ahead

In his key-note address, “Looking Back, Looking Ahead: Asia in the 21st Century”, at the ICAS 9 opening ceremony in Adelaide, Takashi Shiraishi (National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies, Tokyo) started with an overview of the economic, political and social developments in Asia, among Asian areas and countries, and in relation to the rest of the world. He continued by targeting Area Studies specifically. The quote reproduced below comprises Shiraishi’s concluding words to his speech.

His address, and especially these observations, sum up our discussion of the “New Asia Scholar” and the field of Asian Studies better than we could ourselves, so we leave it to Professor Shiraishi to conclude this introduction:

“I have worked as a historian, an international relations specialist, a political economist, and a foreign policy expert over the last 40 years, but have always studied Asia, Southeast Asia initially and Asia more generally in recent years. It is my conviction that Area Studies have a lot to contribute to our understanding of the very complex global, regional, national, and local processes at work, precisely because our perspective is anchored in historical and comparative approaches to and across areas rather than in any disciplinary box. The “crisis” of area studies has been talked about since the end of the Cold War era, with budget cuts, disciplinary compartmentalisation and the imposition of quantitative, technical assessment standards borrowed from some of the natural sciences and now applied uncritically to the Social Sciences and the Humanities. At the same time, we are very much aware that no discipline can account for the complexity of the lived experience and processes currently unfolding across different scales. Our understanding of the region these days is most often based on a certain discipline, and disciplines are useful because they pose questions from which we can undertake our study of and engagement with the world. But I believe that area studies provide an arena in which we can talk across disciplines and learn from each other.

At a time when we have all the more reason and need to learn about ourselves and our neighbours, this crisis of area studies may in fact be a crisis of knowledge and authority, or rather the way in which we go about producing, authorising or validating, and sharing knowledge. We need to ask the question of whose crisis this is, and whether we are not ourselves guilty of thinking within a box, or even in a box within a box, and complicit in reproducing the inequalities that structure knowledge production. In the traditional approach to Asian Studies we go to a “field” somewhere, do research and write about “other” people not our own, publish in our own national language as well as in English but not the languages of the people we are talking about, talk to our fellow academics in America or Europe or Asia while feeling ourselves above the debates happening within communities in the region and in the different countries, not talking to nor citing the scholarship produced by our colleagues in this region, and then insisting that everyone should publish in English language journals with high impact factor. The point is that people in the region and the world move on and things are unfolding right in front of us, and for many of the people who find themselves in an “area” – in the many senses and contexts in which it is understood as such – that area is not something removed or out there, but the ground on which they, and we all live, work, love, hate, have children, move about, grow old, and die. Let us be open-minded and stop thinking about Asian Studies as something out there, but something we do together with our friends and colleagues here.”

The Publishing History of the International Institute for Asian Studies

From its inception in 1993 the IIAS has been active in publishing a wide variety of academic book series, promotional material of all kinds and its flagship newsletter which in a journalistic way reports on what is happening in the field of Asian Studies worldwide.

This is a somewhat reworked version of the article by Dijk, Mary-Lynn van. 2021. "The Story of a Publisher: A Conversation with Paul van der Velde", *The Newsletter* 90 Autumn. 52. For a complete overview of all IIAS publications see: www.iias/publications. For an overview of my publications see: www.paulvandervelde.nl.

Deadline Time

Setting up the newsletter and its international editorial board took up a lot time which could be summarised as deadline time. Needless to say, an academic institute should also be active in publishing its and others' academic outputs. First we concentrated on what our fellows were working on which resulted in two *IIAS Yearbooks* (1994-95) with such titles as *Cultures of Madagascar* to *New Approaches to Board Games Research* and *Administrative Reform in the People's Republic of China since 1978* and *Performing Arts of Asia*. Furthermore, we mounted an IIAS Lecture Series (1993-1998) containing the speeches of politicians and Asia scholars held at the IIAS with topics varying from *Asia and Dutch Development Cooperation* to *Cultural Rapprochement between Asia and Europe* and from *The Revival of Chinese Nationalism* to *Concepts of Science in Europe and Asia*. Furthermore, to get an idea of who was doing what in the field of Asian Studies, IIAS as a facilitating institute published the *Guide to Asian Studies in the Netherlands*, *IIAS Guide to Asian Collections in the Netherlands* and also the *IIAS Internet Guide to Asian Studies* which gave an overview of this then – 1996 – only emerging new setting.

London and Singapore-based Publishers

These were all in-house publications so in fact IIAS acted as a publisher. Each of its publications came with its own ISBN number. Although we were able to sell these publications by promoting them at international conferences and online we realised that this was not an ideal situation. So while we still continued with our in-house publications contacts were established with several publishers to replace our yearbooks. In the end we chose Kegan Paul International in London, a publisher with



Figure 22. Book case containing all IIAS publications from 1994 to 2022 showing the spines of the publications. Photo Cindy Bakker.

a global distribution network. Thus the Studies from the International Institute for Asian Studies came into being (1996-1999) in which eight volumes were published with titles varying from the *Hani-English / English-Hani Dictionary* to *ABIA South and Southeast Asian Art and Archaeology Index* and from *New Developments in Asian Studies* to *A Concise History of Dutch Mauritius, 1598-1710*. The choice of Curzon as our new publisher was not a surprise because we had a very positive experience with Curzon when editing the *Guide to Asian Studies in Europe* (1998) which was the result of the work of an international team which for many years unearthed what

was going on in the field of Asian Studies in Europe. We found out that there were at least as many Asian scholars in Europe as in the United States and for some time this guide remained an essential resource for anyone who wanted to know “Who is Who” in Europe in Asian Studies. The European Database for Asian Studies was the e-version of the *Guide* on which the present-day IIAS database with its over 30,000 entries is based. Furthermore Dick van der Meij together with Wim Stokhof, set up the Curzon-IIAS Asian Studies Series (2001-2005) in which 13 Volumes were published with titles ranging from *Images of the Modern Woman in Asia* to *Nomads in the Sedentary World* and from *Asian-European Perspectives Developing the ASEM Process* to *The Indian Ocean Rim*.

The IIAS and ICAS Publications Series with Amsterdam University Press

After working with a number of different publishers we thought the time was ripe to concentrate our publications programme. It resulted in two series on primarily contemporary Asia with Amsterdam University Press which had a track record of contemporary publications. That its books were distributed in the United States by Chicago University Press and that AUP also had a distribution network in Asia was also a big factor featuring in our decision-making process. After we were convinced that Asian Studies would be one of the spearheads in AUP's publication policy we signed the contract and whereas all previous IIAS books had been hard covers 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 consisting of monographs and edited volumes.

The Editorial Boards of these series consisted of well-known Asian Studies scholars such as Carol Gluck, Prasenjit Duara, A.B. Shamsul and Wim Boot. With them and their contacts we were able to set up both series in a reasonably short time span. The IIAS Publications Series remained very much a channel of publication for the many fellows visiting IIAS. The topics of the books reflected the kind of research being done at IIAS during those years. We find monographs and edited volumes on gender such as *Woman Rights: The Politics of Eugenic Abortion in Modern Japan*, *Frameworks of Choice: Predictive Testing and Genetic Testing in Asia* and *Their Footprint Remains: Biomedical Beginnings Across the Indo-Tibetan Frontier*. Also books on art saw the light of day such as *Austronesian Soundscapes: Performing Arts in Oceania and Southeast Asia* and *China with a Cut: Globalisation, Urban Youth and Popular Music*.

Furthermore, there were publications on politics and economics as for example *The Making of the Asia Pacific: Knowledge Brokers and the Politics of Representation*,

The EU-Thailand Relations or publications in the field of migration such as *Asian Cross-border Migration: Demographic Patterns and Social Issues*. Also Urban studies featured with *Aspects of Urbanization in China: Shanghai, Hong Kong, Guangzhou*. They were very nicely executed with colorful covers capturing the topic of the book. In all 18 books were published with an average of four books a 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. Since we had seen too many rag-bag proceedings we started thinking of another way of publishing a selection of the more than five hundred 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 containing on average ten articles. From the contributors we chose a senior and a junior scholar to edit the volume. We asked them to mail all of these 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 ranging from *Chinese Women and the Cyberspace* to *Identity in Crossroad Civilisations: Ethnicity, Nationalism and Globalism in Asia* and from *Islam in Indonesia: Contrasting Images and Interpretations* to *Asian Material Culture*. They were all launched during a session in a theatre at ICAS 6 (2009) in Daejeon (South Korea) in the presence of around fifty editors and contributors to the books.

In order to promote our series, participants of ICAS 6 received two free copies from the series which they had chosen beforehand. In all 23 books were published. The editorial board of the series consisted of scholars closely connected to ICAS such as Jennifer Holdaway, Christopher A. Reed, Anand A. Yang and Guobin Yang who were also involved in the then nascent ICAS Book Prize. For both series, reviewers were chosen from our database and also authors had to give us three names of possible reviewers out of which we picked one and gratefully added all to our reviewers database for future use which happens to this very day. The reviewers had the choice between a cash reward or could order an equivalent in AUP books.

Asian Cities, Asian Heritages, Global Asia, Humanities across Borders Series

Every now and then institutes such as IIAS change direction. Present-day director Philippe Peycam streamlined research at IIAS along three main themes: Asian Cities, Asian Heritages and Global Asia (Humanities Across Borders is a very recent addition to the series). It is always difficult to discontinue a series but we had much to go on since these themes had been very much present in the previous series and in a certain sense the Global Asia Series has many of the traits of the ICAS

Publication Series. AUP now has (including our four series) 15 Asian Studies series all in hardcover and has become one of the main publishers in the field worldwide. This means that we almost never have to reject book proposals because if they do not fit in our series they find their way into one of the other series.

So far 32 volumes (on average five a 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: Tak-Wing Ngo, Asian Cities: Paul Rabé, Asian Heritages: Adèle Esposito and Michael Herzfeld) play an important role in both generating new manuscripts and deciding whether submitted books 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 unimportantly, as with our previous publications series, these have been widely reviewed in major Asian Studies journals worldwide. Book series remain the global currency of our academic economy. The new series Humanities Across Borders with working titles as *Rice* and *Indigo* will add a long overdue pedagogical and methodological dimension to our IIAS publications programme.

The Asian Studies Parade

Our hope is that in the future all IIAS series will be in Open Access which will make IIAS research available to all for free. It will also significantly increase the readership of the series which is no doubt a win-win situation. From in-house publications with hardly any impact to Open Access publishing, it will bring a global audience *The Newsletter* has had since its foundation. The more than one hundred books in eleven series published by IIAS in the past decades were all reviewed in it. The Asian Studies Parade moves on. Many more volumes in the IIAS series will appear and the *ICAS 12 Proceedings* have been published in Open Access containing nearly one hundred articles on a wide variety of topics representing the rich tapestry of IIAS publishing.