

IIAS research programmes, networks & initiatives

Programmes

Care of the aged: gender, institutional provisions and social security in India, the Netherlands and Sri Lanka

This IDPAD/IIAS comparative research project addresses the implications of population aging for the social security and health care of elderly people. As the experience of ageing is gendered and can vary according to class, caste, and religion, the project addresses different social and economic groups, with an emphasis on women.

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Catalogue of Sanskrit manuscripts

In 1929, two crates of 17th and 18th century Sanskrit manuscripts arrived at the Kern Institute, University of Leiden. This Gonda/IIAS project is preparing a scientific catalogue of the roughly 500 South Indian Sanskrit manuscripts written on palm leaves in ancient Indian scripts such as Grantha, Telugu, Malayalam, Nagari and Nandinagari.

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Energy programme Central Asia

This programme on the geopolitics of energy focuses on Chinese, Indian, Japanese and South Korean strategies to secure oil and natural gas from the Caspian region (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Iran, and Russia) and the Persian Gulf. The programme is institutionally supported by IIAS and the Clingendael International Energy Programme (CIEP), Den Haag.

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Indonesianisasi and nationalization

From the 1930s to the early 1960s, the Indonesian economy transformed from a 'colonial' economy, dominated by the Dutch, to a 'national' economy in which indigenous business assumed control. This NIOD project explores this transformation, studying the late-colonial era as well as the Japanese occupation, the Revolution and the Sukarno period. Two issues are given special attention: *Indonesianisasi* and nationalization, in particular the expropriation of Dutch corporate assets in Indonesia in 1957-58.

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Illegal but licit: transnational flows and permissive politics in Asia

This research programme analyses forms of globalisation-from-below, transnational practices considered acceptable (licit) by participants but which are often illegal in a formal sense. It explores limitations of 'seeing like a state', and instead privileges the perspectives of participants in these illegal but licit transnational flows.

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Socio-genetic marginalization in Asia

The development and application of new biomedical and genetic technologies have important socio-political implications. This NWO/ASSR/IIAS research programme aims to gain insight into the ways in which the use of and monopoly over genetic information shape and influence population policies, environmental ethics and biomedical and agricultural practices in various Asian religious and secular cultures and across national boundaries.

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Syntax of the languages of southern China

This project aims to achieve a detailed description and in-depth analysis of a limited number of syntactic phenomena in six languages, both Sinitic and non-Sinitic, spoken in the area south of the Yangtze River. The project will systematically compare these descriptions and analyses to contribute to the development of the theory of language and human language capacity.

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Trans-Himalayan database development: China and the subcontinent (Phase I)

The project's main goal is to combine the database of cog-

nate words in Tibeto-Burman languages, maintained by the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences) with language data of the George van Driem Himalayan Languages Project (Leiden University) to create a joint, online database of Tibeto-Burman languages with a mirror-site in Leiden. The project's second objective is to continue documentation of endangered Tibeto-Burman languages in China in cooperation with the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology.

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Networks

ABIA South and Southeast Asian art and archaeology index

The Annual Bibliography of Indian Archaeology is an annotated bibliographic database for publications covering South and Southeast Asian art and archaeology. The project was launched by IIAS in 1997 and is currently coordinated by the Postgraduate Institute of Archaeology of the University of Kelaniya, Colombo, Sri Lanka. The database is freely accessible at www.abia.net. Extracts from the database are also available as bibliographies, published in a series by Brill. The project receives scientific support from UNESCO.

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Islam in Indonesia: the dissemination of religious authority in the 20th and early 21st centuries

Forms and transformations of religious authority among the Indonesian Muslim community are the focus of this research programme. The term authority relates to persons and books as well as various other forms of written and non-written references. Special attention is paid to the production, reproduction and dissemination of religious authority in the fields of four sub-programmes: *ulama* (religious scholars) and *fatwas*; *tarekat* (mystical orders); *dakwah* (propagation of the faith); and education.

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Initiatives

Earth monitoring and the social sciences

The space age has dramatically impacted all nations. In Asia, the 'space-faring nations' of India, China and Japan have successfully developed space technologies and applications. Other Asian nations have readily adopted these applications, including satellites for telecommunications, for gathering data on the weather, and environmental and earth resources. IIAS has initiated a series of workshops on the topic.

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Cross-border marriages in East and Southeast Asia

The past decade has seen a rapid increase in the intra-Asia flow of brides, particularly between Southeast and East Asia. While in Europe intermediated marriages continue to be seen as a form of the commodification of women, recent scholarship in intra-Asia cross-border marriages challenges this dominant view.

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Piracy and robbery on the Asian seas

Acts of piracy loom large in Asian waters, with the bulk of all officially reported incidents of maritime piracy occurring in Southeast Asia during the 1990s. This is of serious concern to international shipping, as the sea-lanes between East Asia, the Middle East, and Europe pass through Southeast Asia. IIAS and the Centre for Maritime Research at the University of Amsterdam are currently identifying issues and concerns, and are delineating core elements of an interdisciplinary research programme on piracy and robbery at sea in Asia.

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For more information on IIAS research: www.iias.nl

ANNOUNCEMENT



Three men from Oewaboe, valley of the Nögölö, Dèm tribe. From the collection in LeRoux's *De Bergpapoea's van Nieuw-Guinea en hun woongebied* (1948-1951).

By Aeroplane to Pygmy Land:

revisiting the 1926 Smithsonian Institution / Dutch colonial government expedition

16 November 2006 | National Museum of Ethnology | Leiden

Matthew W. Stirling (1896 – 1975), pioneer archaeologist and ethnologist, was moved by curiosity for 'pygmies' and the unknown interior of New Guinea. After resigning from the Smithsonian where he was assistant curator until 1924, his wanderlust brought him to Netherlands New Guinea. In 1926, he led a Smithsonian / Dutch colonial government expedition to the highlands of New Guinea, which produced a wonderful film and startling photographs of people and panoramas by C.C.F.M. Le Roux, curator of the Museum of the Bataviaasch Genootschap.

The expedition was the first to use a hydroplane in New Guinea. The small aircraft was transported by boat from Surabaya and up the Mamberamo River. The base camp built where the vessel could no longer travel up river became home to the Dutch and American expedition leaders, a military escort of 75 Ambonese soldiers, around 130 Dayak canoemen and carriers, and some 250 Malay convicts who mainly worked as carriers. From the Rouffaer River, the expedition spent three months in the interior of the northern central ranges of West New Guinea. During aerial surveys of the terrain, Stirling spotted cultivated land in area thought to be uninhabited.

Stirling brought home 20,000 feet of film footage, much of it featuring 'pygmies' who had never before seen outsiders. While most of the nitrate film footage was lost, Paul Taylor of the Smithsonian Institution has recently disclosed some spectacular surviving fragments. This footage and other digitalized materials from the expedition will soon be available, together with interpretative essays, as part of the Smithsonian Institute's Digital Collections (www.sil.si.edu/digitalcollections). Although all copies of Stirling's original film, 'By Aeroplane to Pygmy Land' appeared lost, a Dutch compilation has been preserved. An abridged version of 'Wonderen uit Pygmy Land' was released as 'Expeditie door Nieuw-Guinea 1926' (B&W 80 min. silent film) in 1995 by the Film Museum in Amsterdam.

The 1928 *New York Times* review of 'By Aeroplane to Pygmy Land', screened at the 55th Stret Playhouse, took particular interest in 'the manner in which the explorers are supposed to uncover the habitat of these Nugollo Negroes. First they espied a clearing in the land's dense verdant cloak, and then, through telescopic lenses, they took pictures of the pygmies, showing them at first unsuspectful, but finally apprehensive. They are a wily lot, those little Ethiopians.' Explorers drew their inspiration from popular and scientific imagery of Africa since the 1870s, which had its roots in Greek and medieval European legends about small humans. The imagery of pygmies and their 'Stone Age material culture' is later employed in the Dutch film to underpin racial differences between whites, Dayaks and Papuans. Alluding to the slow progress of New Guinea's colonisation, the Dutch film ends with a dramatised departure of the expedition team from the highlands and poses the question: Will the pygmies miss the Europeans?

Overlooked until now are the telling notes contained in the diaries of the director of the National Herbarium in Bogor, Docters van Leeuwen, and the military commander Posthumus, and, of course, Le Roux. Together with the pictorial stories and Le Roux's posthumously published three-volume set *De Bergpapoea's van Nieuw-Guinea en hun woongebied* (1948-1951), their observations narrate Papuan interactions with outsiders that are worth revisiting. The Smithsonian Institution, the National Museum of Ethnology, the Papua Heritage Foundation and IIAS are organising this revisit in Leiden, during which the expedition website will officially be launched, parts of the film screened, photographs displayed and some of the collected artefacts exhibited, while speakers will detail the dynamics of the expedition and the meaning of its outcomes.

– Jaap Timmer

For further information:
www.rmv.nl, www.iias.nl or www.papuaheritage

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