

IIAS Outreach: Connecting Knowledge and People

Annemarie van Leeuwen

In today's society, the sciences and the arts are gradually moving more towards one another from their relatively separated positions. IIAS finds it important to help bring these different kinds of knowledge together, because we have the firm conviction that science and the arts are both creative processes and overlapping domains which can and do inspire one another.

For a number of years now, IIAS has organized outreach activities as part of our policy to transcend disciplinary borders. With our outreach programme, we aim to cross the borders of academic-focused events by incorporating a diversity of cultural domains like film, literature, dance, and other forms of art into the discourse. In reaching out to these domains, IIAS is also reaching out to a wider audience; not only to Asian Studies scholars, but also to others with various interests in Asia. Academics and non-academics meet,

become acquainted with each other's worlds, and broaden their Asian horizons and their understandings of their respective regions. By connecting knowledge and people in a very practical sense, IIAS facilitates opportunities for new synergies to emerge, which in turn can lead to innovative approaches in all disciplines.

As part of this goal, we have had the pleasure to work with many different people from many different disciplines in recent years, with artists and scientists alike,

on a broad variety of outreach events. These include film screenings, talks by artists and museum curators, public lectures at the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, book talks, and workshops, to name but a few. In what follows, we present two reflections from colleagues who have worked closely with IIAS and its various outreach activities over the years: (1) Roald Maliangkay, former coordinator of the IIAS Amsterdam branch, and (2) OOI Keat Gin, historian at Universiti Brunei Darussalam and former IIAS fellow.

Looking to the future, we are excited to continue the outreach programme and to keep expanding and innovating in response to our ever-changing world. There is a synergy here as well: as an institute, we continue to be inspired by the community we have the pleasure and honour to work with.

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Fruitful Interlude

OOI Keat Gin

There is a saying that the Dutch "think with their pockets," and that "parsimony is not an embarrassment, but a virtue." On the contrary, the Dutch were generous, to my person at least, with indulgence in my scholarly endeavours. Appointed as an Affiliate Fellow of IIAS (2002-2004), I sojourned a month or two each year, undertaking research in the Netherlands. Thereafter, I held a Visiting Research Fellowship (2005-2006) with the *Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie* (NIOD, Netherlands Institute for War Documentation). Even when I was with IIAS, I spent most of my research time at NIOD working on materials related to wartime Dutch Borneo (present-day Indonesia Kalimantan). In both capacities, I was based in Amsterdam with trips to the General Archives at The Hague.

Accommodation ranged from a studio in the Red Light District to a spacious apartment on the outskirts (a daily train ride to Centraal Station), all agreeable and intriguing. My wife Swee Im and I had fond memories of our times in bohemian Amsterdam: strolling hand-in-hand by the canals, observing elementary schoolchildren walking two-by-two through the traditional window prostitution neighbourhoods, breathing in the strong 'strange' smells emitting from 'coffee shops' (though not indulging in their 'specialties'), enjoying beer and frites, hosting home-cooked dinner get-togethers, grocery shopping using a 'huge-sized' trolley, wowing at the 'Night Watch' in the Rijksmuseum and Van Gogh's 'Irises,' walking through Albert Cuyyp Market, Waterlooplein, Bloemenmarkt, and Nieuwmarkt.

An affiliate IIAS fellowship was indeed fruitful and transformative, as it allowed space and time which enabled the pursuit of my main research interest that subsequently produced *The Japanese Occupation of Borneo, 1941-1945* (Routledge, 2011), *Post-war Borneo, 1945-1950: Nationalism, Empire, and State-building* (Routledge, 2013), and *Borneo in the Cold War, 1950-1990* (Routledge, 2020).

This was a pioneering breakthrough, as the trilogy focused on Borneo as a single entity.

The Japanese Occupation of Borneo considers the nature of wartime Japanese military rule in Borneo, contrasting the different administrations of the Imperial Japanese Army, which ruled the northern portion of the island, and the Imperial Japanese Navy, which ruled the southern half. The immediate post-war years (1945-1950) were a crossroads: *Post-war Borneo* discusses the various factions and powers, both local and international, all contending for control of the island. In midst of post-war reconstruction and economic resuscitation, the upheavals which affected Southeast and East Asia during the Cold War deeply impacted Borneo. The attempted communist takeover of Sarawak from the 1950s, a failed uprising in Brunei in 1962, Sukarno's *Konfrontasi* (confrontation), and the horrific purge of Leftists elements in the mid-1960s are detailed in *Borneo in the Cold War*.

Although this is not to discount the contributions played by numerous other fellowships, the IIAS fellowship came at an opportune time when I was planning to focus my research on Dutch Borneo,

and subsequently to the said trilogy on the historical development of Borneo in the second half of the 20th century. Furthermore, IIAS afforded the strengthening of bonds with other scholars: Remco Raben (NIOD, Utrecht University); Elly Touwen-Bousma (NIOD); Peter Post (NIOD); Leo Douw (University of Amsterdam).

Heleen van der Minne, who managed IIAS Amsterdam branch then, was always attentive and helpful, and I am most grateful that she organized the launching of my three-volume award-winning *Southeast Asia: A Historical Encyclopedia, From Angkor Wat to East Timor* (ABC-CLIO, 2004). For the IIAS-sponsored event, she secured the former meeting hall of the Seventeen Gentlemen (The Heeren XVII), Board of Directors of the *Vereenigde Nederlandsche Geocroyeerde Oostindische Compagnie* (VOC, United East India Company).

In closing, I take this opportunity to register my gratitude to, and congratulate IIAS on its 30th Anniversary, and may its promotion of Asian Studies be a bountiful enterprise.

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Meanwhile, over in Amsterdam ...

Roald Maliangkay

To be perfectly honest, I don't really know how it happened. But in January 2005, I somehow managed to land the job of IIAS Amsterdam Branch Head. Apart from having worked in bars for a decade, I had little experience managing people and I cannot imagine that my ability to pull a perfect pint gave me a winning advantage. But perhaps Wim Stokhof thought I was speaking metaphorically.

The branch office and its affiliated fellows were located inside a large, old-but-renovated building at the southernmost part of the Oudezijds Achterburgwal, next to the Oudemanhuispoort. It was a place I visited a few times a week, as a casual lecturer for the Asian Studies in Amsterdam (ASiA)

program. Responsible for the program were my patron saints Jacqueline Vel, Willem van Schendel, Mario Rutten, and Leo Douw. They introduced me to Thomas Voorter and Ireen Hoogenboom, and the equally lovely Heleen van der Minne, IIAS's local administrator. Most of us were located along the same dull hallway, which we tried to breathe life into by way of posters, some samplings of Willem's Bangla pop, and a glass display cabinet with a collection of, surely, inedible canned food from across Asia. I like to think it made a difference, though in my memory the hallway was always quiet and deserted. The IIAS office, on the other hand, was a small but vibrant center full of books, colorful merchandise, and large plants that we hoped would one day add some green.

The people were all fantastic to work with and learn from. At Leiden University and

SOAS, I had been affiliated with East Asian studies, and it was exciting to be part of an area studies community in another city and to learn about other parts of Asia. Heleen took care of all the real work, conscientiously filling in forms and managing finances, and politely answering emails and phone calls. My job was much easier than hers. Although I occasionally helped provide support to fellows, I was mostly engaged in the promotion and coordination of IIAS-related activities, while trying, at least, to resolve administrative complications and complex requests. I also sought to salvage our office plants, which somehow refused to grow without the occasional shot of espresso. Many of our activities routinely took place in one of the nearby former offices of the East India Company (VOC), which added a degree of gravitas that we often neutralized by way of a post-event drink at our then favorite local hangout Kapitein Zeppos. I wish I had been able to engage more with fellows during my time at the IIAS, but I lived in an outskirt of Rotterdam, and it was a long journey home.

To me the IIAS occupies a unique and important position in Asian studies. While scholars working on Asia can be found

around the world, there are few places that make a genuine effort to foster synergies in research across the humanities and social sciences. As someone who works on entertainment and popular culture in East Asia, it's exciting to know the Institute continues to support a broad range of approaches. It may not advocate area studies per se, but the culture that I was fortunate to be part of for some time, certainly embraced multi-disciplinarity and an interest in the full complexity of Asian cultures. My time at the IIAS had a profound influence on my career since, and I hope it will continue to support the work of countless fellows in the future.

Some six years after I left in 2006 to take up a position in Australia, the office was closed. I suppose those caffeine junkie plants were donated to a nearby café, but I do wonder what happened to the canned food collection. I imagine it's still there, waiting for one very courageous adventurer with a mean appetite.

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