

Contents #45

TRANSNATIONAL MARRIAGE IN ASIA

- 1 & 4 Living apart together: cross-border marriage, Riau Islands style / Lenore Lyons and Michele Ford
- 3 Transnational marriage in Asia / Melody Lu
- 5 Muslim transnational families: Pakistani husbands and Japanese wives / Shuko Takeshita
- 6 Remittances and 'social remittances': Their impact on cross-cultural marriage and social transformation / Panitee Suksomboon
- 7 'Daughter-in-law for the second time': Taiwanese mothers-in-law in the family of cross-border marriage / Hsing-Miao Chi
- 9 'Arranged love': marriage in a transnational work environment / Michiel Baas

IN FOCUS: DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE

- 10-11 Making poverty history? Unequal development today/ Jomo K. Sundaram (extract from Wertheim Lecture 2007)
- 12 - 13 Goals set for the poor, goalposts set by the rich: Millennium Development Goals and the dumbing-down of development / Ashwani Saith

RESEARCH

- 14 Curating controversy: exhibiting the Second World War in Japan and United States since 1995 / Laura Hein
- 15 The 'Great Game' continued: Central Eurasia and Caspian region fossil fuels / Xuetang Guo and Mehdi P. Amineh
- 16 - 17 Asian New Religious Movements as global cultural systems / Wendy A. Smith
- 18 From tin to Ali Baba's gold: the evolution of Chinese entrepreneurship in Malaysia / Chin Yee Whah
- 19 Still standing: the maintenance of a white elite in Mauritius / Tijo Salverda
- 20-21 No place like home? : Return and circular migration among elderly Chinese in the Netherlands / David Engelhard
- 22 Chinese medicine in East Africa and its effectiveness / Elisabeth Hsu
- 23 Taking traditional knowledge to market: looking at Asian medical traditions through the lens of medicines and manufacturers / Maarten Bode
- 24-25 Agarwood: the life of a wounded tree / Gerard A. Persoon
- 26 The unbearable absence of parasols: the formidable weight of a colonial Java status symbol / Liesbeth Hesselink
- 27 Uncovering hidden treasures: establishing the discipline of Indian manuscriptology / Daniel Stender

PORTRAIT

- 28 - 29 MuXiYuan: a neighbourhood untouched in a changing Beijing / Jikky Lam

BOOK REVIEWS

- 30 New For Review
- 31 Bookmarked / New Asia Books update
- 32 Encapsulate everything, grasp nothing: Russian imperialist discourse in Uzbekistan / Nathan Light
- Intimate Empire: bodily contacts in an imperial zone / Clare Anderson
- 33 Not just nuns and oracles: contemporary Tibetan women / Sara Shneiderman
- 34 Chinese voices on abortion / Margaret Sleeboom-Faulkner
- 35 Getting beyond image to realist in Burma (Myanmar) / Donald M. Seekins
- 36 On the independence of civil society: the case of the Philippines / Niels Mulder
- 37- 38 The sophisticated aesthetics of Ehon and Ukiyo-e of a Meiji period Master / Patricia J. Graham
- The return of Dr Strangelove or: should we really stop worrying and learn to love India's bomb? / Nadja-Christina Schneider

INSTITUTIONAL NEWS

- 39-40 Announcements
- 41 ASIS - Forging links between distant lands
- 42 ECAF - Leading European institutions launch a consortium for Asian Field Studies
- 43 ICAS update
- 44 IIAS research
- 45 IIAS fellows
- 46 - 47 International Conference Agenda

Director's note

Building bridges to, from and with Asia

It goes without saying, networking is crucial for communication. Of course there is a business overtone and some direct motive, but there are strategic considerations too: It is good for your career, or it adds to your power and influence if you know many people in important positions - if you know the 'right' people. In the business world such motivations are understood by everybody and more or less accepted as necessary PR and a regular component of your work.

In academia we are catching on fast. Every year academics the world over travel to conferences in far flung places, attend receptions, participate in workshops, sit on learned committees, returning home with our pockets full with new business cards and contacts. For those of us trying to cut down on our global emissions, the internet and email is making building bridges and crossing borders easier than ever.

In this issue of IIAS Newsletter, we look at the consequences of people crossing borders and making connections with our theme on Transnational Marriage in Asia. The collection of articles hopes to offer new insights into marriage and migration, the impact on communities and the difficulties of building trust and genuine relationships in a cross-cultural environment.

Building trust and genuine relationships brings us back to networking, of course. Following the recent convention in Kuala Lumpur, ICAS has proved itself to be a prime example of an Asian Studies network that is successfully building bridges across regions, disciplines and subject areas. I am also pleased to report that IIAS has become an observer to an agreement founding the European Consortium for Asian Field Studies (ECAF). You can read more about this exciting initiative from the *École française d'Extrême-Orient* (EFEO) in the Institutional News pages of this issue. I also suggest you read the article 'Forging Links Between Distant Lands' (p 41) on the new addition to the Asian Studies fold - ASIS, The Icelandic Centre for Asian Studies. This surprising setting for the Asian Studies curriculum results from an explosion in trade, tourism and cultural exchanges between Iceland and Asian countries in recent years.

These are just a few examples of the bridges that are being built to, from and with Asia and by carrying on this trend and investing time in each other, I am convinced Asian studies will reap the rewards.

Max Sparreboom
director



The International Institute for Asian Studies is a postdoctoral research centre based in Leiden and Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Our main objective is to encourage the interdisciplinary and comparative study of Asia and to promote national and international cooperation in the field. The institute focuses on the humanities and social sciences and their interaction with other sciences.

IIAS values dynamism and versatility in its research programmes. Post-doctoral research fellows are temporarily employed by or affiliated to IIAS, either within a collaborative research programme or individually. In its aim to disseminate broad, in-depth knowledge of Asia, the institute organizes seminars, workshops and conferences, and publishes the *IIAS Newsletter* with a circulation of 26,000.

IIAS runs a database for Asian Studies with information on researchers and research-related institutes worldwide. As an international mediator and a clearing-house for knowledge and information, IIAS is active in creating international networks and launching international cooperative projects and research programmes. In this way, the institute functions as a window on Europe for non-European scholars and contributes to the cultural rapprochement between Asia and Europe.

IIAS also administers the secretariat of the European Alliance for Asian Studies (Asia Alliance: www.asia-alliance.org) and the Secretariat General of the International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS: www.icassecretariat.org). Updates on the activities of the Asia Alliance and ICAS are published in this newsletter. ◀

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