

Asian Library

Introduction

'A more accurate view of the conditions in the East': Leiden University and Asian studies

BY WIM VAN DEN DOEL

In 1595, within two decades of the foundation of Leiden University, four Dutch ships of the Compagnie van Verre left for Java under the command of Cornelis de Houtman. When he set out for the East, De Houtman could not rely on any knowledge offered by Leiden, but used the information collected by the Enkhuizen-born Jan Huygen van Linschoten on his Asian voyage and included in his *Reys-gheschrift vande navigatien der Portugaloyers in Orienten*. The ships furthermore carried maritime maps and astronomical instruments devised by the Amsterdam minister Petrus Plancius. Knowledge on Asia was otherwise scarce. The Portuguese, who had been dealing directly with Asia for almost a century, were especially secretive about information on their trade routes. 'Asia' was a continent to trade with, and that is what Dutch merchants would be engaged in on behalf of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) in the 17th and 18th centuries. However, they, too, would rather keep the territories they possessed or traded with a secret.

As a result, Leiden scholars who studied the 'Orient' in this period were mainly focused on the Near East and on Semitic languages. They only came into contact with Asia serendipitously. For instance the Arabist and mathematician Jacob Golius came across the names of the 24 periods of the solar year in the land 'Cathay' in a Persian text. With the aid of the Italian Jesuit Martino Martini, he established that these names were Chinese loan words and that 'Cathay' was a name for China. Golius also received a few Chinese books from Martini, though the gift would not lead to a blossoming of Chinese Studies in Leiden. The actual study of the Asian world at Leiden University had to wait until the 19th century, when the establishment of the colonial state in the Dutch East Indies made it necessary to acquire greater knowledge of the languages, cultures and societies in the Malay Archipelago and to cultivate and transmit this knowledge. As a result, the development of Asian Studies at

Leiden University is intimately connected with Dutch colonial history.

KNOWLEDGE OF THE COLONIES

In spite of the need for knowledge about the Malay Archipelago, it was only in 1877 that chairs of 'Indology Studies' were established at Leiden University. In 1842 a training programme for colonial officials had been set up at the instigation of Minister of Colonies Jean Chrétien Baud, though not in Leiden but in Delft, at the Koninklijke Akademie voor Handel en Nijverheid (Royal Academy of Trade and Industry). As a result, the study of Javanese, Malay and Islamic law could not be pursued at Leiden University but in Delft. A few years later, in 1851, Baud laid the basis for what is now called the Royal Netherlands Institute for Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV), which he described as 'a powerful instrument to promote not only academic studies, but also the objectives of a just, enlightened and benevolent government'. Scholarship was to be the handmaiden of the colonial authorities, that much was certain. The KITLV was first located in Delft, after which it was moved to The Hague in 1864.

There were numerous complaints about the colonial training programme at Delft, which partly resulted from the fact that about half of the students, poorly prepared for the course as they were, failed their final exams. In 1864 the Dutch statesman Thorbecke arranged that candidates were no longer able to qualify as colonial civil servants through training, but had to follow a competition procedure instead. It was open to each candidate to prepare for this 'grootambtenaarsexamen' (an exam which qualified the successful candidate for senior public office) as he saw fit. At the same time Thorbecke created a new government institute in Leiden to provide training in the languages, geography and ethnology of the East Indies. Its government-appointed professors taught language and literature, geography



Figure 1: Jan Heemskerk Azn. He introduced the Higher Education Act (1876) and established professorships in the field of Indology studies at Leiden University.

and ethnology, as well as the history, law and governance of the Dutch East Indies and the religious laws, ethnic dispositions and customs in the archipelago. This government institute, however, proved unsuccessful, largely because of its fruitless attempt to reconcile academic and vocational training. The proximity of Leiden University had not made any difference. This had already been predicted by the Dutch MP Jan Heemskerk Azn. in 1864: 'unity of place may be important, but unity of action is more important'. At the time, Heemskerk had advocated transferring Indology Studies to the university and combining them 'with the studies of those who train for the practical life in the Indies'. He felt it combined 'the two forms of scholarship, the heavenly goddess and the milk-giving cow'.

In 1877 Heemskerk – now chairman of the Council of Ministers and Minister of the Interior – was able to put his ideas into practice. The government institute was abolished following the new Higher Education Act, and

chairs were now established at Leiden University in Javanese, Malay and the 'Mahomedaansch recht en de overige Volksinstellingen en gebruiken in Nederlandsch-Indië en het Koloniaal Staatsrecht' (Mohammedan law and other ethnic dispositions and customs in the Dutch East Indies and Colonial Constitutional Law). They were respectively occupied by Albert Cornelis Vreede, Jan Pijnappel and Pieter Antonie van der Lith, who had all been professors at the now abolished government institute. At the same time a professorship was created for the 'geschiedenis, letterkunde, oudheden, instellingen, zeden en gewoonten der volken van de Indische Archipel; physische aardrijkskunde van de Indische Archipel (history, literature, antiquities, dispositions, morals and customs of the peoples of the Malay Archipelago; physical geography of the Malay Archipelago), as it was officially called. The person appointed to this chair was Pieter Johannes Veth, in spite of the fact that he had never once set foot in the Dutch East Indies. In his three-volume *Java. Geografisch, ethnologisch, historisch* he presented geography and ethnology in an encyclopaedic way. He was undoubtedly the most influential of the professors to have been appointed in 1877. In his inaugural address he made a case for geography. 'The language and literature of a people, with its entire wealth of ideas and beliefs,' he stated, 'largely rely on the soil that feeds them, the air they breathe, and the means of existence arising from their country's location and the fruits it bears.'

Veth's successor George Wilken, who was appointed in 1885, concentrated on the people living in the Dutch East Indies. In his inaugural address he pointed out that ethnology, which 'had been regarded as an unfamiliar and undervalued part of geography for a number of decades' had now grown into 'an independent and powerful discipline'. It was a discipline which he felt should focus on 'the domestic, social and religious life of man, in all parts of the globe'. The study of 'savage peoples' was as

important to the sociologist 'as the lower plant or animal forms to the botanist or zoologist'. Darwin's laws, Wilken argued, also applied to human society. Primitive peoples had not 'become savage' due to some cause or other, but had simply been arrested in their development. In other words, anyone wishing to understand the development of society, necessarily had to begin with 'savage societies'. Dutch ethnologists had to devote themselves to the Malay Archipelago, and time was of the essence. 'More and more primitive societies are vanishing from the face of the earth,' Wilken warned, 'due to the levelling forces of European culture.' 'They must be studied before it is too late, before they succumb in the struggle for life, or else lose all originality under the pressure of a civilization imposed upon them.'

The discipline of cultural anthropology developed from the ethnology of the Dutch East Indies. In 1922 Leiden University Fund (LUF) appointed Jan P.B. de Josselin de Jong to the endowed chair in General Ethnology. He also worked as curator for the National Ethnographic Museum, where he was responsible for the African, American and Australian collections. Influenced by the French sociologists Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss and his fellow curator Willem Rassers, de Josselin de Jong would become the founder of the Leiden structuralist school of anthropology. Although he was endowed professor of 'general' ethnology, de Josselin de Jong's attention ultimately also focused on the Dutch East Indies. Between 1932 and 1934 he did fieldwork in the eastern part of the Malay Archipelago and in 1935 he was appointed full professor in the 'Ethnology of the Dutch East Indies in relation to General Ethnology'. In his inaugural address on *De Maleische Archipel als ethnologisch studieveld* he concluded that all attempts to classify mankind into smaller and sharply delineated categories on the basis of race or civilization had ended in failure. 'It is with civilizations as with races:

they are legion or only a few and essentially there is only one', de Josselin de Jong claimed. He did present Indonesia, as he also used to call the Malay Archipelago, as an 'ethnological field of study', a part of the earth with a population whose culture was on the one hand homogeneous and distinctive enough to serve as a separate ethnological object of study, while on the other hand displaying enough diversity to offer opportunities for an internally comparative study.

The study of Asian languages, cultures and societies at Leiden University was largely defined by the training of colonial officials. The so-called Indology Studies acquired an academic character from 1922 and were shaped by progressive professors like Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje and Cornelis van Vollenhoven. The former had become Professor of Arabic in 1906 after a long and influential career in the Dutch East Indies. He mainly concerned himself

Figure 2: Professor of General Ethnology J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong on a study trip of the Dutch East Indies (1932-1934).



Figure 3: Cornelis van Vollenhoven, professor of Dutch East Indies Adat Law.

with the position of Islam in colonial society. He felt that government should have no say in the religious life of its subjects, though he did think that political Islam ought to be repressed. Sound education might also help the Islamic population of the Dutch East Indies to 'rid themselves of some of that medieval rubbish, which Islam has been dragging with it for far too long'. In the meantime Van Vollenhoven, who had been appointed to a chair in 1901, had 'discovered' the adat or customary law of the Malay Archipelago. From behind his Leiden desk – he only went on two short visits to the Dutch East Indies – he strongly opposed all efforts to impose a single, European legal system on the population of the Malay Archipelago. Van Vollenhoven felt that 'the heterogeneous ethnic dispositions in the Dutch East Indies' would cause 'the legal robes of the one to sit on another like rented garb'. Within the Dutch East Indies, in other words, there existed large differences between the customary law systems of the several population groups, but at any rate there was an indigenous Indonesian system of law, occasionally coated with an Islamic veneer. In order to retain some kind of grip on the subject, Van Vollenhoven distinguished nineteen so-called 'adat circles' in the Dutch East Indies. He then collected various court rulings culled from travel accounts, official reports or other sources, and collated and published them from 1910 as *Adatrechtbundel*. No fewer than forty of these volumes appeared before 1940. Van Vollenhoven's magnum opus was his three-volume *Het adatrecht van Nederlandsch-Indië*.

As a legal scholar, Van Vollenhoven had been fully devoted to adat law. In the end, however, he felt that 'an adat law that was to respond to Eastern needs and appeal to Eastern hearts' would only be proof against 'the myopic hubris of Western law' when 'its discovery, adaptation, fertilisation, were to be continued in the spirit of the East', in short



by Indonesian legal scholars. Like Snouck Hurgronje and other Leiden professors, Van Vollenhoven therefore also had Indonesian students. It was Snouck Hurgronje who supervised the first Indonesian PhD student, Hoesein Djajadiningrat, who defended his doctoral thesis *Critische beschouwing van de Sadjarah Bantën. Bijdrage ter kenschetsing van de Javaansche geschiedschrijving* in Leiden on 3 May 1913. Van Vollenhoven also arranged that students from the law school in Batavia were allowed access to Leiden University in 1920 to attend the new course in East Indies law. It was the most popular study among Leiden's Indonesian students. One of them was Soepomo, who obtained his doctorate under Van Vollenhoven in 1927 with a thesis on *De reorganisatie van het agrarisch stelsel in het gewest Soerakarta*. Soepomo later became one of the principal authors of the first constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. As such 'Indology Studies' not only served the colonial state, they also equipped Indonesian students with the knowledge with which to shape an independent Indonesia after World War II.

SANSKRIT AND INDIA

Although the Leiden scholarly interest in Asia was mainly focused on the Malay Archipelago, other parts of the continent were certainly not neglected. When it came to the 'discovery' of Sanskrit, however, the Dutch academic community arrived rather late on the scene. The pioneer of Sanskrit had been the British colonial judge and founder of the Asiatic Society William Jones, who suggested in 1786 that Sanskrit belonged to the same language family as Greek, Latin, Gothic and Celtic. At the beginning of the 19th century the scholarly baton was taken over from the British by German and French scholars. The Hebraist Antonie Rutgers began teaching Sanskrit on a modest scale in Leiden in the 1840s, but had to acknowledge in the end that every European country boasted a chair in Sanskrit, with the exception of the Netherlands, Spain and Greece. It finally persuaded the curators of Leiden University to create a chair in Sanskrit in 1865. Its first occupant was Hendrik Kern, who was born in Purworejo in 1833 and had been trained in Leiden and Berlin.

Hendrik Kern – who in his young years in Makassar had seen his father taking walks with Dipanegara, the Javanese prince who led the Java War – accepted the chair with an inaugural address on *Het aandeel van Indië in de geschiedenis der beschaving en de invloed der studie van het Sanskrit op de taalwetenschap*. Kern then went on to tackle a plethora of subjects, resulting in numerous books and articles. 'If a life dedicated to scholarship can be heroic, such a life was Kern's', the Leiden historian Johan Huizinga would later write. Kern was a true polyglot, who rapidly mastered foreign languages. His student Willem Caland recalled him hunched over a text, 'while regularly a shimmer in his dark metallicly glistening eyes, and a nervous twitching of the hand holding his pipe, revealed the restless labour of his mind and imagination'. Ancient texts held life for him: 'He had no need of a



Figure 4: Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, professor of Arabic, Malay and Islamic education.



Figure 5: Hendrik Kern, the first professor of Sanskrit at Leiden.

Figure 6: J.J. Hoffmann, the founder of Japanese studies at Leiden.



grammar, glossary or commentary.’ He studied not only Sanskrit, but also numerous other languages, eventually becoming the founder of Austronesian linguistics through his study of Old Javanese. On the basis of the words for ‘iron’ and ‘little boat’ which the Austronesian languages had in common, he tried to establish in 1889 the origins of the forebears of all Austronesian-speaking peoples and proposed

it had to be mainland Southeast Asia. Nor did Kern confine himself to linguistics. Invited by the publisher A.C. Kruseman, he wrote a two-volume *Geschiedenis van het Buddhisme in Indië*, a work that also appeared in German, French and Japanese.

Kern was forced to accept emeritus status in 1903 when he reached the age of

70. His successor Jacob Samuel Speyer died suddenly ten years later, after which the chair in Sanskrit passed to J. Ph. Vogel, who until then had worked as superintendent with the Archaeological Survey of India, a society which commissioned excavations and systematically described archaeological finds and sites. He remained true to archaeology while a professor in Leiden, even though there was as yet no sound infrastructure to underpin his discipline. To make sure it was developed, he founded the Kern Institute in 1925, which received a major donation from LUF ‘to purchase furniture, for which the closure of the Hôpital Wallon provided an inexpensive opportunity’. That furniture was moved into Gravensteen, where the Institute flourished and built up a major library partly thanks to various donations. The Kern Institute also set up courses in modern Asian languages in 1927, ‘especially with an eye to daily life.’ The plans were not warmly embraced by the government, however, which led Vogel to observe: ‘that in this matter Leiden perhaps developed a more accurate view of the conditions developing in the East than The Hague’.

CHINA AND JAPAN

For a long time the Netherlands had been the only Western country allowed to trade with Japan, from the artificial island Dejima in the bay of Nagasaki. As a result, knowledge about Japan in the Netherlands mainly came from Dutch merchants stationed on Dejima, from François Caron in the 17th century to Isaac Titsingh in the 18th and Jan Hendrik Donker Curtius in the 19th century. A remarkable scholar in the service of the Dutch East Indies government was the physician Philipp Franz Balthasar von Siebold, who was born in Würzburg. He arrived in Dejima in 1823, introduced Western medicine in Japan, and also collected Japanese plants and objects, some of which he sent to the Leiden Hortus Botanicus. In 1829 Siebold was forced to leave

Japan on charges of treason. He settled on Rapenburg 19 in Leiden, more or less arranging his house as a museum for the objects he had brought from Japan.

A year later Siebold was staying in a hotel in Antwerp, where he met Johann Joseph Hoffmann, an opera singer from his native town who like Siebold held a doctorate from the University of Würzburg. Hoffmann was so impressed by Siebold that he abandoned his artistic career and settled in Leiden. Here he developed into an expert on Japan without once having visited the country, assisting Siebold in the publication of the latter’s *Nippon. Archiv zur Beschreibung von Japan und dessen Neben- und Schutz-Ländern*. In 1855 Hoffmann was awarded an honorary professorship in Chinese and Japanese languages by Leiden University, but after his death in 1878 the study of Japan and Japanese would disappear from the curriculum for almost four decades. In the colonial context, knowledge of Chinese outweighed the knowledge of Japanese in importance. The Dutch East Indies harboured a significant Chinese population and thus well-trained interpreters and translators were required.

In 1876 a professor of Chinese language and literature was accordingly appointed. This was Hoffmann’s student Gustaaf Schlegel – the son of the director of the National Museum of Natural History in Leiden. Professor Schlegel would compile the monumental four-volume *Hô Hoâ Bûn-Gi Lui-Tsam, Nederlandsch-Chineesch Woordenboek* and co-founded on board a train from Stockholm to Oslo what later became the influential international periodical *T’oung pao*. In 1904 Schlegel was succeeded by Jan Jakob Maria de Groot, who had started his career as an interpreter in the Dutch East Indies and had been appointed professor of Geography and Ethnology in Leiden in 1890. As a professor of Chinese, de Groot spent most of his time

working on what would become his six-volume *The religious system of China. Its ancient forms, evolution, history and present aspect, manners, customs and social institutions connected therewith*, in which he incidentally compared the Chinese to ‘savages in a low state of culture.’ This drew fierce criticism from another sinologist trained in Leiden, the writer and journalist Henri Borel. ‘China and Europe must learn to mutually understand each other, so that they may have a beneficial effect on each other, for the benefit of all of mankind’, Borel wrote in the Dutch literary periodical *De Gids* in 1912. ‘Prof. de Groot’s work is an obstacle in the way of this mutual understanding and breeds contempt and confusion.’

Meanwhile in 1911 a revolution had taken place in China which had led to the establishment of the Chinese Republic. It was an altogether different China than Leiden had been used to. ‘Sinology, too, needs to get out of the temples and embrace the new, young and transformed great life’, Borel urged his professional colleagues. There was far more urgent work in store for the sinologists than ‘browsing and slogging through ancient, Chinese superstitions’. The focus in Leiden, however, primarily came to lie on studying the legacy of classical Chinese civilization by scrutinizing Chinese texts. The person responsible for this research priority was Jan Duyvendak, who after having spent a few years in Beijing on behalf of the Netherlands government was first made lecturer in 1919 and then professor of Chinese in 1930. Duyvendak was actually an eminent scholar who commanded international respect and who was also an able administrator. On 20 December 1930 he opened the Sinological Institute, which was funded through compensation paid by the Chinese government to the Netherlands in 1901 following the Boxer Uprising. ‘The more China adapts to the changing circumstances in the world, the more it will become the hub around which the evolution of the Far East turns’,



Figure 7: Jan Duyvendak, the founder of Leiden University's Sinological Institute.

Duyvendak said at the opening of the Institute, which he therefore felt had the important task 'not only to preserve and propagate what is old, but also to communicate what is new'. The Sinological Institute soon developed into a major international centre in its field, training students from the Netherlands and abroad and building up an important library. Duyvendak also started *Sinica Leidensia*, a series published by Brill which included numerous Leiden books and dissertations. All this, however, did not mean that sinology in Leiden had abandoned its strong philological orientation. This was by no means the case, nor did it change after Duyvendak's death in 1954, when the Leiden philological tradition was continued by Professor Anthony Hulsewé.

The study of Japan in Leiden had in the meantime been resumed in 1917. That year Marinus Willem de Visser had been appointed professor of Japanese language and literature. After having previously worked for the Dutch delegation in Tokyo as an interpreter, de Visser

was primarily a scholar who confined himself to his study. His students included officers of the Royal Netherlands Indies army and students who were being trained for diplomatic service. De Visser did not manage to raise the study of Japan to great heights. 'A mediocre philologist, inclined to go by the book', was Duyvendak's opinion of him after de Visser's death in 1930. De Visser was succeeded by Johannes Rahder, who would train a number of subsequently prominent Japan specialists until Leiden University was shut down by the German occupier in World War II.

This war, in which Dutch nationals in the Dutch East Indies were confronted with an oppressive Japanese occupation, as well as the following years which saw the struggle for Indonesian independence unfold, caused a watershed in the study of Asian languages, cultures and societies at Leiden University. From then on the curriculum was no longer mainly defined by the colonial government in the Dutch East Indies. The need to study Asia was now informed by different priorities.

THE POST-COLONIAL ERA

'The transfer of sovereignty naturally caused the interest in Malay Archipelago studies to shift in character'. Thus said the former Director-General for Science Policy of the Ministry of Education and Sciences Arie Piekaar in 1976. No longer was there 'an influx of Dutch workers to the field, creating as it were a cultural crossover in constant interchange with the academic centres, resulting in an academic environment that produced men like Kern, Snouck Hurgronje and Van Vollenhoven as so many luminaries in Eastern studies.' Piekaar for that matter had not only worked for the Ministry of Education and Sciences. He was also a former colonial civil servant who had exerted himself to translate the Cultural Agreement which had been concluded between the Netherlands and Indonesia in 1968 into a

scientific programme that breathed new life into the study of Indonesia. In Leiden Piekaar had found vigorous and willing allies in Professors Hans Teeuw and Bob Uhlenbeck.

Teeuw had enrolled in Indology courses in 1938, but had been unable to complete his studies following the closure of Leiden University during the German occupation. Instead, he obtained a doctorate under the Utrecht Professor Jan Gonda with a thesis on *Het Bhomakāway. Een Oudjavaans gedicht* in 1946. After having conducted linguistic research in Indonesia between 1947 and 1951, he was eventually appointed professor of 'Bahasa Indonesia and Malay language and literature' in Leiden in 1955. There he became the colleague of Uhlenbeck, who had survived the wreck of the Junyo Maru during the war – one of the greatest maritime disasters in history – and had been appointed to the chair in Javanese language and literature.

Piekaar, Teeuw and Uhlenbeck first saw to it that the KITLV was moved from The Hague to Leiden. Next they initiated a Programme for Indonesian Studies (PRIS) in 1975, to be carried out by a Bureau of Indonesian Studies (BIS). Its establishment offered a new generation of Dutch scholars the opportunity to conduct research in Indonesia together with Indonesian colleagues. The triumvirate, however, had even bigger plans. They continued lobbying until Education and Science Minister Arie Pais instituted a so-called Indonesian Studies Working Group under Piekaar in 1981. This working group was already able to advise Pais' successor Wim Deetman a year later. It was another boost to Indonesian Studies at Leiden University, which now boasted four chairs in the field. As a result, Hans Ras was able to succeed Uhlenbeck as professor of Javanese language and literature, while Wim Stokhof and Henk Maier respectively became professor of Austronesian linguistics and professor of Indonesian language and literature. Finding someone to occupy the chair in the history of

Indonesia was rather more complicated, as a suitable candidate could not be found until Cees Fasseur was persuaded to give up his legal career in The Hague for a place in Leiden's academic circles. He 'fell for the temptation', as he recalled in his posthumously published memoirs *Dubbelspoor*, 'though I might ask myself whether I really wanted to'. Although a number of chairs had now been created, they were not to attract very many students in the years that followed.

In the meantime the Leiden Law Faculty had taken it upon itself to look after Van Vollenhoven's legacy. From 1939 the Adat law chair had been occupied by the former colonial civil servant Victor Emanuel Korn, even though his courses were attended by only a handful of students. Korn's successors Johannes Keuning and Johan Frederik Holleman were given a wider research focus, 'Popular law and legal development in non-Western societies', whereby the latter primarily focused on Africa. After Holleman had retired, the chair was abolished. The Groningen legal sociologist John Griffiths wrote in 1981 that Holleman's departure signalled the end of a 'tradition of national importance, Leiden's adat law school, the Netherlands' only truly world-class contribution to anthropology'.



Figure 8: A.J. Piekaar, Director-General for Science Policy of the Ministry of Education and Sciences and the champion of Indology Studies in the Netherlands.

Griffith's conclusion, however, was a little premature. In 1978 Leiden University decided to establish in collaboration with the KITLV the Nederlands Onderzoekscentrum voor het Recht in Zuid-Oost Azië en het Caraïbisch Gebied (NORZOAC, the Dutch Research Centre on Law in South East Asia and the Caribbean), a successor of the Documentatiebureau voor Overzees Recht (Documentation Bureau for Overseas Law) which had been founded in 1949. Jan Michiel Otto became director of NORZOAC in 1984. Funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Development Cooperation, he fostered stronger academic ties with Indonesia in the legal field. At the same time a Nederlandse Raad voor Juridische Samenwerking met Indonesië (Dutch Council for Legal Cooperation with Indonesia) was established, which oversaw various projects aimed at legislation, adjudication, governance and legal research and training. It was Otto's suggestion to rename NORZOAC as the Van Vollenhoven Institute in 1989 in honour of the great Leiden legal scholar.

In 1992 things took a turn for the worse, however. Dutch official criticism of Indonesia's military actions in East Timor caused the Indonesian government to cancel its development cooperation relationship with the Netherlands. This also meant the end of the legal cooperation between the Netherlands and Indonesia, so that the Van Vollenhoven Institute was forced to shift its focus. In 1998 Otto was appointed to the chair in Law and Governance in Developing Countries, which on the one hand meant that to all intents and purposes the chair once occupied by Van Vollenhoven and others was revived, but on the other hand that the geographical focus on Indonesia was abandoned. It was not until the 21st century that Leiden University's legal relations with Indonesia were restored. After 2007 a wide range of programmes and projects was once more pursued, such as the Building

Blocks for the Rule of Law Project carried out between 2009 and 2012 to enhance legal education in Indonesia.

The crisis in the Dutch-Indonesian relations of 1992 had also spelled the end for PRIS, which had already come under attack from a critical Netherlands government. Several projects by Leiden University, such as the Indonesian Linguistics Development Programme (ILDEP) were also cut short because they had been financed through Dutch development cooperation funds. What was continued, however, was the Netherlands Indonesian Cooperation in Islamic Studies (INIS), later transformed into the Training of Indonesia's Young Leaders Programme, which brought numerous Indonesian students of Islam Studies to Leiden.

Leiden's interest in Indonesia continued to exist outside of the official programmes, however. Historians from Leiden had managed to find their own way to Asia, including Indonesia. In 1974 Henk Wesseling, professor of General History, had initiated the 'Werkgroep voor de geschiedenis van de Europese expansie en de reacties daarop' (working group for the history of European expansion and ensuing reactions) which employed a few young research associates, began publishing an English-language periodical and organised a series of conferences on British and Dutch colonial history in Asia together with the Universities of Cambridge, Delhi and Yogyakarta. One of the staff members of what eventually became the Institute for the History of European Expansion (IGEER), Leonard Blussé van Oud-Alblas, developed a comprehensive international project in the late 1990s which focused on the use by Asian and other historians of the VOC archives mainly kept in The Hague and Jakarta. An Indonesian offshoot is Towards A New Age of Partnership, or the TANAP project, which resulted in a series of dissertations and led to strong ties with several Asian universities.

Thus Indonesian independence did not signify the end of the study of the languages,

law and culture of this country. Good scholarly relations with Indonesia were actively pursued in collaboration projects with Indonesian scholars. As a result, Leiden University has remained one of the major international centres for Indonesia Studies.

AREA STUDIES

'Relations between the Netherlands and the world outside Europe, especially countries like Japan, China and India (...) are bound to increase in the coming years'. Thus Education and Science minister Wim Deetman in the 1989 policy paper *Wetenschapsbeleid voor de jaren negentig*. He continued: 'this implies that our country must continue to rely on scientific knowledge about the political, social, economic and cultural changes taking place there at an often rapid pace'. However, in order to be able to study the political, social, economic as well as cultural aspects of a certain region or country, it was necessary to bring together various disciplines. This was by no means a foregone conclusion. For instance, the former Academic Council had agreed in 1975 that the social sciences study of modern South Asia and Southeast Asia would be incorporated in the University of Amsterdam, while the study of the languages and cultures of these regions would remain part of Leiden University.

Ideas about the interdisciplinary study of an area, however, had already taken root in Leiden before. For instance the Indology training programme for colonial officials had in fact been a multidisciplinary area study, even though such terms were not in use at the time. This training programme had been formally dismantled in 1951, but was, in a certain sense, continued. At the time, the economist Julius Herman Boeke had made plans to start a new programme of studies in Leiden under the name 'Eastern social studies' in the attempt to preserve Indological expertise for Leiden University. Boeke was convinced that there were fundamental differences between Western and

Eastern societies and that there was a need in the Netherlands for an academic programme aimed at 'societies conveniently to be termed 'eastern', so that we can continue to rely on comprehensive knowledge about our cultural and economic activities in these fields'. In the end, this new programme was included in the Academic Statute under the name 'Non-Western social studies'. The course was, in the words of the Leiden professor of anthropology Patrick de Josselin de Jong (a nephew of his distinguished namesake and predecessor), 'as it were a continuation on a broader scale of the former Indology programme, only outside of the colonial situation'. He added: 'The course as a whole might perhaps best be described as a conglomerate of area studies'.

In the decades that were to follow, 'area studies' primarily developed within the Faculty of Letters, later the Humanities, rather than in the Faculty of Social Sciences. In 1984 Wilt Idema, professor of Chinese language and literature, even urged the establishment of a Faculty of Area Studies. Though such a Faculty would never come into being, the Executive Board of the University decided in 1987 to form the Centre for Non-Western Studies (CNWS), in which the Faculties of Letters and Social Sciences joined forces.

Asian Studies at Leiden University received a further boost when the Dutch government acted on the *Baby Krishna* report by the so-called Adviescommissie Kleine Letteren (Minor languages advisory committee) under Frits Staal. This report warned of an imminent 'devastation in the 1980s' and a 'process of random slaughter of relatively defenceless organisational units'. Even though the wording was a bit strong considering the increasing number of scholars in the field of Asian Studies in Leiden in this period – certainly in the case of Indonesian Studies – the official response was to allocate the so-called 'Staal funds' to universities, totalling 10 million guilders a year, an important part of which went to

Figure 9: Frits Vos and his wife. Vos established Korean studies at Leiden.

Leiden University. Thanks to the Staal funds, academic posts in Asian Studies in Leiden were secure and many young scholars were able to obtain their doctorate in this field. It was also in Leiden that the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) was created, which would be headed by Wim Stokhof in 1993 and would evolve into a major and internationally renowned network organisation.

The interest in the study of India's ancient cultures never waned in Leiden. Whereas chairs in Sanskrit were being abolished at other universities in the Netherlands, the Leiden chair in this field continued to exist. Government cuts forced the Utrecht Professor Henk Bodewitz to transfer to Leiden, where he became the colleague of Tilmann Vetter, professor of Buddhology, and Jan Heesterman, professor of 'Languages and cultural history of South Asia, especially of the later centuries'. Which 'later centuries' exactly never became quite clear, but it did offer Heesterman the freedom to write about Hinduism, Indian civilization and Indian modernity. In 1993 he

published a comprehensive study about the Vedic ritual: *The broken world of sacrifice*.

Meanwhile Chinese, Japanese and Korean Studies were thriving in Leiden. That Korea became a focus of attention at Leiden University was the achievement of Frits Vos, who had been appointed professor of Japanese and Korean language and literature in 1958 after having previously served as special services officer with the Dutch UN detachment in Korea during the Korean war. In 1977 he published his major work: *Die Religionen Koreas*. 'Vos represented that rare combination: he was a scholar and a writer', as the Dutch essayist Rudy Kousbroek commemorated him. Kousbroek deplored the fact that Vos had never ventured beyond the confines of academe. 'His talent to tell a story, his magnificent phrases and his dry humour' remained 'buried in academic publications, where such qualities go unnoticed'. In 1994 Leiden University established a separate chair in the language and culture of Korea, which would be occupied by



Vos' student Boudewijn Walraven. The latter studied Korean religions, material culture and literature from an anthropological angle and tried, as he put it, 'to understand all these things in their context within the society that produced them', thereby striving to cause the 'various disciplines to strengthen each other'. It was a concise synopsis of what area studies were all about.

Meanwhile the post-war developments in East Asia generated a new interest. Japan had fast grown into one of the world's largest economies, which also supplied the Netherlands with electronics and automobiles, followed by South Korea, which likewise found a worldwide market for its products. At the same time a popular culture had developed in Japan and Korea which inspired interest and imitation. The developments in China, by contrast, were of an altogether different nature. The communist leader Mao Zedong carried out social experiments that led to indescribable terror and would cost the lives of millions of people. Sinologists or Japanologists could no longer remain content to study ancient texts or fathom Asian religions, if only to counterbalance such views as those expressed by the Amsterdam sociologist Willem Frederik Wertheim, who claimed that Mao's leadership was characterised by 'a climate of humaneness' and referred to Mao's policy as 'that brave Chinese experiment to create a new man'. In 1969 Erik Zürcher, professor in the History of the Far East and himself a great expert on Chinese Buddhism, founded the Documentation Centre for Contemporary China, which was used as a base by such scholars as the historian and sinologist Eduard Vermeer and the political scientist Tony Saich to study modern China.

In 1987 Kurt Radtke was appointed professor of the History of Modern Japan. He mainly focused on post-war international relations in East Asia. In his inaugural address he described to his audience the history of

Japan's place in the world, especially in the 20th century. He focused on Japan's dreams of the past and the future, stressing the importance of the knowledge of the Japanese language, 'without which any understanding of the dynamics of Japan's development is doomed to remain superficial', but also the acquisition of knowledge, 'which can only take place along multidisciplinary lines'. Radtke was succeeded by the Australian Rikki Kersten in 2001. At the same time a chair was established at Leiden for the study of modern China, to which the German scholar Axel Schneider was appointed. Kersten and Schneider received a major NWO (Netherlands Organisation of Scientific Research) grant in 2003 for a project called 'Historical Consciousness and the Future of Modern China and Japan: Conservatism, Revisionism, and National Identity'. The study of contemporary Asia had now reached maturity.

To keep a grip on the wide range of approaches and disciplines, the concept of area studies came to be embraced more and more in Leiden, precisely at a time when it came under increasing attack in the United States. The postmodernist professor of literature Edward Said in New York claimed in his seminal work *Orientalism* that geographical notions such as 'the Middle East' were nothing but Western constructs, meant to label the local population in ways that justified Western dominance. Scholars in the field of area studies were in his opinion no more than lackeys of Western imperialism. Leiden was hardly fazed by this form of criticism. 'As soon as one seeks to explain a phenomenon, one must look at its function within a wider cultural context', according to Wilt Idema, 'and to do so, one must rely on the help of area specialists in relevant disciplines'. Differences between the humanities and the social sciences were utterly irrelevant in this respect. Culture and society were simply two sides of the same coin. 'Developments within language, literature,

religion, philosophy, and art are intimately tied to social developments’, Idema wrote, ‘just as social behaviour can only be understood against a background of cultural assumptions that we can come to know through language and image’.

Idema left Leiden to go to Harvard University in 1999 and was succeeded by Maghiel van Crevel, who strongly defended the concept of area studies. It was by no means a coincidence, therefore, that in 2008 during a major reorganisation and restructuring of the humanities at Leiden University, the CNWS was abolished and the Leiden University Institute for Area Studies (LIAS) was established at the same time. Area studies according to Van Crevel ‘presented a dynamic synthesis of area expertise and disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, with special attention for language, place and positionality’.

Many of the Leiden scholars working in the field of Asian Studies found a new home in LIAS, from the professor of Sanskrit Peter Bisschop, who specialised in the study of

Purāṇa literature and Purāṇic mythology, to the professor of Modern Japan Studies Katarzyna Cwiertka, who studied the role of food and waste in Japanese society. Bisschop and Cwiertka were joined at LIAS by professors in the fields of Buddhology, Modern Southeast Asia, Indonesian and Javanese languages and cultures, Modern Indonesia, Austronesian and Papua languages, Chinese language and literature, Chinese history, Chinese language, Modern China, Korea Studies and the Literature and cultures of Japan. The prestigious European Research Council awarded an Advanced Grant to Jonathan Silk, professor of Buddhology, for his research project on ‘Open Philology: The Composition of Buddhist Scriptures’.

The time of the ‘devastation in the 1980s’ – if it had ever existed – was definitely a thing of the past. In the 21st century, a large and varied group of scholars at Leiden University are committed to the study of the languages, cultures and societies of Asia, focusing on the future without ignoring the past. Jan

Michiel Otto during the University’s 2017 Dies Natalis Celebration thus spoke of the modern relevance of the adat law scholar Cornelis van Vollenhoven. He noted that although the West had ‘valuable experience’ building a fully functioning rule of law, ‘theories and practices’ were to be found in Asia that ‘may assist us on the road to ‘unity in diversity’’. Otto alluded to Indonesia’s official national motto, Bhinneka

Tunggal Ika, ‘Unity in Diversity’. ‘Unity is required to achieve stability and prosperity; diversity is needed simply because people are different from each other’. The study of the Asian languages, cultures and societies past and present was now more relevant than it had ever been before.

Figure 10: Professor of Law and Governance in Developing Countries Jan Michiel Otto delivered the 2017 Dies Natalis lecture on the topicality of his predecessor Cornelis van Vollenhoven.

