

# The European Science Foundation Asia Committee after 2001

Short News >  
General

After having been active in two mandate periods of three years each between 1994 and 2001, the ESF Asia Committee ceased to exist as of 1 January 2002. Yet, in the spirit of the Asia Committee, many activities are flourishing and will continue to do so.

By Sabine A.M. Kuypers

Some Asia Committee members had done a lot of work to plea for a second extension of the ESF Asia Committee mandate. A proposal for such an extension was sent to the ESF Standing Committee for the Social Sciences (SCSS) and that of the Humanities (SCH) in Strasbourg early in 2001, and was published in this Newsletter (IIAS Newsletter 25, p. 58). An official reaction, in a letter sent by the ESF Scientific Secretary for the Humanities and the Social Sciences reached the Secretariat in November 2001, after the deadline of the Newsletter 25 had passed. Some excerpts of the reaction of the ESF:

"The proposal was discussed in the two Standing Committees at their Spring meetings and the decisions in both Committees were unfortunately not favourable to an extension. The minutes from the two Standing

Committee meetings were approved recently [...] I am pleased to be able to send to you, attached to this letter, the extract from the minutes concerning the proposal for an extension of the Asian Studies Programme." (from above-mentioned letter)

"The Committee was very pleased with the scientific activities of the programme during the second three-year period. Nevertheless, it was considered important not to retreat from the principle of a maximum period of six years for a programme. Furthermore, the Committee felt that the role of ESF should rather be to set incentives and to be an initiator rather than to support the same area of research for a longer period." (from the SCSS minutes).

"The Committee was of the opinion that area studies are of high importance but that there was no possibility for ESF to go beyond six years. It would rather be in the interest of Universities or national organisations to support an extension. The Committee unanimously felt that within the frame of ESF a programme could go on for a maximum of six years and that the aim of ESF should be to promote new ideas and launch new programmes rather than to fund permanent research areas. The Committee wanted however, to express their gratitude to the Asian Studies Programme and to forward their appreciation for the high quality of the activities during the second term of the programme." (from the SCH minutes).

## A Last Asia Committee Meeting in Bonn

On 2 October 2001, the Asia Committee's Executive Group met for the last time. During this Bonn meeting it was decided to draft a final report of the Asia Committee activities, to be sent to the ESF by the end of March 2002. Furthermore it was decided upon that the implementation of Asia Committee activities would continue in 2002, in accordance with earlier commitments with regard to workshops and travel grants. The Executive Group decided to allocate the funds that remained from previous years to the following activities: (1) support for the six European Associations of Asian Studies (see below); (2) thirteen travel grants; and (3) support for the new initiative for Asia Europe workshops (the ASEF-Alliance Annual Asia Europe Workshop Series). Although the ESF Asia Committee will no longer exist after 2001, the Secretariat in Leiden declared its willingness to take care of the administrative work resulting from the decisions taken in Bonn.

## What European Asian Studies future?

Committee members have always felt (I refer again to our proposal for extension, see *IIAS Newsletter 25*) the need to continue the Asia Committee's role as a Forum for Asian Studies in whatever way possible and, as such, as a body for cooperation with Asia. In

Bonn, this stance was once more defended. Contrary to what the ESF Standing Committee for the Humanities (SCH) suggested in the above quotation, we think that such a forum is a matter for European funding. Separate national governments or institutes cannot be expected to sponsor a European Asia Committee or a European Forum for Asian Studies. These institutes basically have a national interest and very limited funds for international institutional cooperation, let alone for supporting activities in which they are not always directly involved themselves.

It stands to reason that the European Commission create a special European fund for multilateral research cooperation: between Europe and Asia, Europe and the US, or any other continent. The framework programmes of the EC could provide an excellent opportunity to realize this type of fund and to stimulate internal European research cooperation for the benefit of larger international research linkages. We feel that the European Commission should capitalize on the research potential and expertise available in the respective member states, and that it should become less inward looking. Members of the Asia Committee, as was expressed in Bonn, felt that the European Commission might not yet be ready for these types of initiatives, which lie in the cultural, research, and civil spheres and which do not focus on solely European subjects or direct European commercial benefits.

However, some initiatives on behalf of "European Asian Studies" have already been taken. Many of those may be considered as a direct or indirect result of the work of the ESF Asia Committee.

## Strategic Alliance for Asian Studies

The Strategic Alliance for Asian Studies (presently: the Nordic countries, France, Germany, Belgium/EU, the Netherlands), for example, was founded in 1997 in the same European spirit, and by the very same actors as those who had been active in setting up the European Science Foundation Asia Committee.

Starting off as a Nordic-Netherlands undertaking, this Asia Alliance has steadily been developed and it could, in some ways, function as a forum for Asian Studies in Europe and as a focal point for partners in Asia and elsewhere.

## ASEF-Alliance Annual Asia-Europe Workshop Series

Without the ESF Asia Committee we would not have been able to set up the

Annual Asia-Europe Workshop Series. This workshop scheme is modelled after the ESF Asia Committee formula, an initiative now taken up by the Asia Alliance and the Asia-Europe Foundation, Singapore (ASEF), and financed by ASEF, the Alliance partners and the remaining budget of the ESF Asia Committee (see p. 55 in this issue).

## ICAS

The "European Asian Studies" are also represented in the International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS). In 1998, the IIAS and the AAS organized ICAS 1, in cooperation with the European Associations for Asian Studies, and under the patronage of the ESF Asia Committee as a European counterpart for the AAS. In cooperation with the Freie Universität Berlin and the aforementioned actors ICAS 2 was held in 2001, and in 2003, ICAS 3 will be organized together with the National University of Singapore! An ICAS Secretariat was established last year (see p. 56 for more ICAS info).

## The European Associations for Asian Studies

Through ICAS (preparatory) meetings the European Associations: AKSE, EACS, EAJS, ESCAS, EUROSEAS, and EASAS, whether or not in the form of the "Conference of Presidents of the European Associations for Asian Studies", will continue to meet and their visibility for the outside world will be enhanced.

The Asia Committee started off as an initiative of the French and Dutch ministers for Education: Curien and Ritzen respectively. With financial support from both governments and later through contributions by many national research councils that were member of the European Science Foundation, the Asia Committee was funded. A unique phenomenon in Asian Studies, for which we should be grateful to the initiators at the respective ministries and at the ESF in Strasbourg!

We should acknowledge here again the support given between 1994-2001 by two foundations in Asia: the Toyota Foundation, and the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange. We thank all programme participants, research fellows, and workshop organizers in Asia and Europe and last but not least, words of gratitude should be directed towards all scholars that have been active members of the Asia Committee, representing their own country and the European spirit at the same time. <

Information about the Asia committee will remain available on: [www.iias.nl/esfac](http://www.iias.nl/esfac)

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## ESF Asia Committee Travel Grants 2001 - 2002

**F. Adeney-Risakotta, MA** (Amsterdam School for Social Science Research) *'The politics of ritual and ritual of politics in the Moluccas. A social and cultural transformation of an Indonesian people'*

**Visit to:** Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique; Paris, France

**Dr M.P Amineh** (Amsterdam School for Social Science Research) *'Globalisation and Islam: the rise and decline of Islam as political ideology (1850-2000)'*

**Visit to:** School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS); London, United Kingdom

**Dr C. Dedeabant** (Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris) *'Re-inventing Pakistan/Indian society from without? The formation of South Asian civil society networks outside South Asia'*

**Visit to:** International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World, IIAS; Leiden, the Netherlands

**Dr E. Germain** (Journalist, France) *'The Chinese Muslim Diaspora at the beginning of the XXth century'*

**Visit to:** Foreign Office Library and SOAS; London, United Kingdom

**Dr P. Ho** (Wageningen University) *'Land issues in China'*

**Visit to:** SOAS, Oxford University; United Kingdom

**Dr R. Prior** (Freelance Illustrator, United Kingdom)

*'The collection of ceramics excavated by Olov Janse'*

**Visit to:** Leiden University, National Museum Copenhagen; the Netherlands and Denmark

**Dr F. van der Putten** (Leiden University)

*'Portuguese colonial policy toward foreign direct investment in Macao, 1945 - 1999'*

**Visit to:** Overseas Historical Archives, Lisbon National Library; Lisbon, Portugal

**Dr Y. Sadoi** (International Institute for Asian Studies, Leiden)

*'Human resource development in the automobile industry in Germany and its adaptability to the Japanese automobile manufacturers'*

**Visit to:** Institute for Innovation and Management, SIMT; Germany

**E. Schroeder-Butterfill, MA** (St. Cross College Oxford)

*'Javanese language study'*

**Visit to:** Leiden University; Leiden, the Netherlands

**F. Suchomel, MA** (Institute of Art History, Prague)

*'Typological determination of Japanese lacquer ware'*

**Visit to:** Denmark, the Netherlands

**N. Srivastava, MA** (Linacre College, Oxford)

*'Secular conceptions of India in Salman Rushdie's Midnight Children and Vikram Seth's A Suitable Boy'*

**Visit to:** Department of Political Science of South Asia Institute; Heidelberg, Germany

**S. Tsai, MA** (Department of Art History, Heidelberg)

*'From devotion to entertainment - Woodblock illustrated books of the life of the Buddha in East Asia'*

**Visit to:** University of Cambridge; Cambridge, United Kingdom <

## The ESF Asia Committee

The Asia Committee that is responsible for the execution of the ESF programme in Asian Studies is an independent, academic committee composed of authoritative, senior scholars from European countries, who have an interest in Asian Studies. The ESF ensures that committee membership reflects the disciplinary and geographical areas concerned. The AC can invite ad hoc observers from national governments, from related bodies in the US and Asia, and from private foundations. Obvious lacunae in the disciplinary coverage of the committee can be filled by individual experts invited by the committee.

The full committee meets at least once per year. An Executive Group meets twice a year, to implement and discuss the decisions taken by the full committee, and to prepare full committee meetings. The day-to-day business is conducted by the chairman, Prof. Thommy Svensson (Goteborg, Sweden), vice-chairman, Prof. Jean-Luc Domenach (Paris, France), secretary, Prof. Wim Stokhof (IIAS, Leiden, the Netherlands), and the ESF secretary, who may involve other committee members in the preparation of full committee meetings. The Asia Committee reports to the Standing Committees for the Humanities and the Social Sciences and the ESF Governing Council. <

## Address >

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## Agenda >

The Committee selected ten workshops to support during the course of 2001, which have now all been held. Abstracts of these workshops were printed in the Pink Pages of *IIAS Newsletter 23* (see the *IIAS website Newsletter archives*). Reports of all workshops were published in Newsletter issues in 2001, and the final report of the ESF AC-sponsored workshop, "Intellectual and Spiritual Authorities in 20th Century Middle Eurasia: Status, Networks, Discourse, Strategies", will be published in *IIAS Newsletter 28*.