



**Universiteit  
Leiden**  
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## **Editorial**

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## Editorial

'A new spring, and a new sound', so begins a famous Dutch poem. Will the birds sing differently, as the poet wishes in the next line? BKI, now 178 years old—surely one of the longest-running journals of Southeast Asian studies in the world, and known around its original home, the KITLV (Royal Institute), as 'the Old Dame'—starts 2022 with a remarkable new development. For this reason, the first issue of the year opens with an Editorial. After generations of sound and steady editing under the direction of two scholars, one in the role of Chief Editor and one as Managing Editor, from now on, BKI will be run by an expanded editorial team of seven scholars drawn both from the geographical region, Southeast Asia, and the disciplines in the humanities and social sciences that BKI is dedicated to examining.

Talking about birds' songs: perhaps as a sign of rejuvenation, and definitely thanks to the efforts of two of our team members, Susie Protschky and Faizah Zakaria, BKI embarked in December 2021 on a new adventure, as it can now also be reached, and reaches out, through Twitter. Please join us at @BKI\_Journal in discussions about our latest issues and publications.

As a new editorial team, we look forward to keeping the journal lively, sharp and relevant, and to uphold the high standards that have earned it an international reputation for excellence. We welcome quality research articles from emerging and established scholars, which will continue to go through a double-anonymous peer review process in addition to review by our editorial team. Thanks to the efforts of our publisher, Brill, we remain committed to making our authors' works freely accessible online to a worldwide audience through Open Access publishing. To our occasional Book Debates, in which the author of a new, significant monograph enters into dialogue with a panel of expert reviewers, we aim soon to add thematic debates on emerging currents and controversies in Southeast Asian studies.

The composition of the present issue and some of the following issues in this year we still owe to our careful and dedicated predecessors, Freek Colombijn and Rosemarijn Hoeffte. We thank them warmly for their consistent and vivid engagement with the journal. In the meantime, while a New Advisory Board is in the making and will join us from the next issue (178 2/3), we also would like to thank all the members of the previous Advisory Board, whose names still feature on the BKI webpage. Engaged and loyal as always, they

contributed creatively whenever needed. We will follow suit, as we will listen to new birds singing new songs too.

Let us briefly introduce the contributions to this issue. In an intriguing analysis of the politics of history formation, and the colonial, local and post-colonial twists therein, Farram explores the makings and re-makings of the myth of the Portuguese slave raids—from Timor—on the Tiwi Islands (Melville Island and Bathurst Island) at the north coast of Australia. Ironically, the first British who entered the islands in the early nineteenth century, and especially their mis-interpretations of the communications of the Tiwi-men and women they encountered, have played a fundamental role in the creation of this myth, with enduring legacies in scholarly studies in the late twentieth and twenty-first century. Knowledge production, and mis-representations, and the power relations they reflect, are also central in the article of Honings. He follows the Dutch protestant church minister Sytze Roorda van Eysinga, in his travels through the Dutch East Indies in the 1820s, visiting churches and schools, and writing extensively about the world outside, including the local inhabitants 'to be christianized'. Following a postcolonial approach Honings analyses Roorda van Eysinga's representations of Edenic landscapes (in which the Dutch minister recognizes the proof of god), and his depictions of local inhabitants (who should fit in god's plan, and need development), arguing how these representations created difference, and legitimized a violent colonial rule as a humanitarian project. In many ways, the Dutch minister is, thus, typically, driven and blinded by (a late Christian) Enlightenment's sense of superiority. All along, while disapproving of the institution of slave trade and slavery, Roorda van Eysinga buys a slave, for his own service.

Moving to the present, and the dead, John Lowe, in the third contribution, on necropolitics in Singapore, explores Singapore's governmental unequal management of military deaths, and its engagement with affects of masculinity, which, he argues, serve the government to maintain compulsory National Service. He does so by zooming in on four cases of death during military training (experiences in combat being absent), and exploring this question first from a governmental perspective, and then moving to the perspective of the bodies. These dead bodies he analyses as 'spaces' governing the living, to gain insight how death, live and the human body inscribed in Singapore's order of power. Turning to the living in Indonesia, Yanwar Pribadi in the final article, on 'polite citizenship', examines the role and effects of informality in the ways citizens in rural West Java make claims, and pressure authorities. He identifies 'politeness' as an important, distinct aspect of informal interaction between citizens, and between citizens and the state. These signify, in his view, an effective

communal culture of consensus formation that may be characteristic for state institutions in Indonesia.

Diverse, as usual for BKI, as the four contributions are, in topic and disciplinary background, it is tempting to see a connection, or a shared interest in the politics present in the sources we study, and yet different forms and levels of politics: the politics of historical and cultural representations and their legacies, the politics of dead military bodies and masculinity, and the political relationships between colonial subjects or postcolonial citizens, and the state.

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