Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV)

Abstract

The Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV) was founded in 1851 with the task of establishing a scientific collection and promote the sciences in the Dutch colonies. Nowadays, the institute focuses on the study of Southeast Asia and the Caribbean region. In 2014, the entire collection of the KITLV was transferred to the Leiden University Libraries.

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Description

The Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV) was founded in 1851 by [Jean Chrétien Baud](#), [Taco Roorda](#) and [Gerrit Simons](#). From 1873 land studies, or geography, was left to the Koninklijk Nederlands Aardrijkskundig Genootschap (Royal Dutch Geographical Society, KNAG), founded in that year, while history joined linguistics and anthropology as a KITLV area of research. The initial tasks of the KITLV were threefold: establishing and maintaining a collection (including, for example, a large photographic collection), conducting research into and within regions colonised by the Netherlands, and publishing its research results in the journals *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde* and the *Nieuw West-Indische Gids*, with the latter focusing exclusively on research in and into the (Dutch) Caribbean region. Although the KITLV focused on the Dutch colonies in Southeast Asia and the Caribbean, the emphasis was on research in and into the Indonesian archipelago.

From its inception, the focus of the research conducted by the KITLV followed the same lines as Dutch colonial policy. When the transfer of sovereignty to Indonesia took place in 1949, the KITLV's attention initially shifted to New Guinea, which remained under Dutch control until 1963. When New Guinea also ceased to be part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, attention shifted to Suriname and the Caribbean. In 1966 the KITLV moved from The Hague to Leiden, where it became part of the university. Despite decolonisation, and perhaps thanks to the improved relations between the Netherlands and Indonesia in the 1960s, a KITLV representation was established in Jakarta in 1969, collaborating with the Indonesian scientific institute Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia (LIPI). Nowadays [KITLV-Jakarta](#) is part of Leiden University Library.

In 1990, a policy decision was made to attach the KITLV to the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW), rather than having the institute fall directly under the then Ministry of Education and Science. This attachment was confirmed in the late 1990s and the

KITLV institute became part of the KNAW, which it remains to this day. Due to budget cuts in the cultural sector two of KITLV's three tasks were divested in 2014. Since then the collection of books, photographs and other objects has been managed by Leiden University Library while publication of the journal *Bijdragen* was transferred to Brill publishers (part of De Gruyter since 2024). In 2014 it was also decided to separate the KITLV association from the research institute.

Today, according to its website, KITLV aims "to be a world-class research institute for the study of Southeast Asia and the Caribbean, with a focus on Indonesia and the 'Dutch' Caribbean, from an interdisciplinary and comparative perspective."

Provenance research

In 2014, the management of the KITLV collection was transferred to Leiden University Library (UBL). The archival inventories are available through the UBL's [collection guide](). The KITLV collection contains texts and images from and relating to Indonesia and Southeast Asia (80%) and the Caribbean, especially Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles (20%). The collection totals 750,000 items (about 12,000 metres of shelf space). The collection comprises more than 20,000 periodicals as well as 100,000 linked descriptions of individual articles (resulting from previous documentation activities by KITLV).

The manuscript collection is divided into [Asian manuscripts](), which can be found in the UBL catalogue using the attribute "D Or", and [European manuscripts](), which can be found using the attribute "D H".

The KITLV [map collection]() has its own access within the UBL's Digital Collections website. This also applies to the KITLV [images and photographs collection](). The KITLV archives of the [Oral History Archive Indonesia]() (SMGI) and the [Southeast Asian pop music]() collection also have their own websites.

The KITLV text collections can be requested through the UBL's [online catalogue](). Most publications printed after 1900 are available for loan. Publications printed before 1900 must be consulted in the Special Collections reading room; the same applies to other materials, such as manuscripts, archives, prints and drawings.

Related Aids

see also: [Sources]()
see also: [Civil servants]()
see also: [Science]()
see also: [Koninklijk Bataviaasch Genootschap van Wetenschappen en Kunsten]()
see also: [Wereldmuseum Leiden]()

Primary sources

Collection guide:

> Library of the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV)
> [https://collectionguides.universiteitleiden.nl/resources/ubl301]()
> *Digital access to the KITLV collection at Leiden University Library. This collection guide provides a comprehensive overview of all KITLV materials available through the UBL.*

Archival access:

Asian manuscripts (KITLV)
https://catalogue.leidenuniv.nl/primo-explore/search?query=any,contains,d
%20or.&tab=all_content&search_scope=lib_kitlv&vid=UBL_V1&facet=rtype,include,ma
*Access to the KITLV collection of Asian manuscripts in the Leiden University
Library catalogue. This collection can also be found using the attribute 'D Or'.*

Archival access:

European manuscripts (KITLV)
https://catalogue.leidenuniv.nl/primo-explore/search?query=any,contains,d
%20h&tab=all_content&search_scope=lib_kitlv&vid=UBL_V1&facet=rtype,include,mar
*Access to the KITLV's collection of European manuscripts in the Leiden University
Library catalogue. This collection can also be found using the attribute 'D H'.*

Digital collection:

Maps (KITLV)
https://digitalcollections.universiteitleiden.nl/view/collection/kitlvmaps
*The map collection of the KITLV has its own access within Leiden University Digital
Collections. The web page provides access to 16,000 maps and 500 atlases of
Indonesia, Suriname, the Netherlands Antilles and Southeast Asia, mostly from the
nineteenth and twentieth centuries.*

Digital collection:

Southeast Asian & Caribbean Images (KITLV)
https://digitalcollections.universiteitleiden.nl/view/collection/kitlvphotos
*The KITLV photo and image collection has its own access within Leiden University
Digital Collections. Around 1890 the KITLV began collecting photographs to
capture a visual record of the colonial territories in the Dutch East and West Indies.
This UBL website provides access to a large collection of photographs, prints and
drawings.*

Digital collection:

Oral History Archive SMGI (KITLV)
https://digitalcollections.universiteitleiden.nl/view/collection/smgi
*Through this page you can access the collection of interviews of the Stichting
Mondelinge Geschiedenis Indonesië. The collection contains audio files and
summaries of interviews with 724 individuals about their experiences in the former
Dutch East Indies.*

Digital collection:

South East Asian Pop Music (KITLV)
https://digitalcollections.universiteitleiden.nl/southeastasianpopmusic
*Through this page you can access the KITLV's collection of Southeast Asian pop
music, mainly from Indonesia.*

Secondary sources

Book:

Kuitenbrouwer, Maarten and Poeze, Harry A. Dutch scholarship in the age of empire and beyond: KITLV - the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies, 1851-2011. Leiden: Brill, 2014.
https://search.worldcat.org/title/858749398?oclcNum=858749398
Historiography of the KITLV that covers one hundred and fifty years of KITLV history but is at the same time a history of the scholarship regarding the (former) Dutch colonies. This is an English version, not a one-on-one translation, of the 2001 publication Tussen oriëntalisme en wetenschap.

Magazine:

Bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde/Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia
https://brill.com/view/journals/bki/bki-overview.xml
The journal of the KITLV, initially published by the KITLV itself but now published by Brill. All volumes from the first 1853 edition onward are available through Brill. Earlier editions also contain minutes of Board and General Meetings; nowadays the focus is on research from and into Southeast Asia in various disciplines.

Relevant Data

Identifiers:

http://www.wikidata.org/entity/Q2282075 , Name variations:

KITLV, Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde , Tags: Activity:

Collection, [Archive](http://vocab.getty.edu/aat/300312242 , Type of objects:

Photographs, Books, Documents, Maps, Manuscripts , Geographical:

Indonesia, ABCSSS islands, Suriname , Period of activity: Year of start: 1851, Year of end:

, Collections: General remarks: content: The KITLV collections were transferred to the Leiden University Library in 2014. The collection of books, journals, photographs, archival and audio-visual materials, among others, can for this reason be found through the Leiden University Library catalog , content-type: text/markdown, Within the Data Hub: