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\_first edited by wiebe reints as original\_author on 2024-07-04\_  
\_last edited by abacus as translator on 2025-04-07\_

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 in colonised territories\_  
\_see also: Scientific research in colonised territories\_  
\_see also: Koninklijk Bataviaasch Genootschap van Wetenschappen en Kunsten\_  
\_see also: Wereldmuseum Leiden\_  
\_see also: Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao\_  
\_see also: Saba, Sint Eustatius and Sint Maarten\_

# Primary sources

Collection guide:

Archival access:

Archival access:

Digital collection:

Digital collection:

Digital collection:

Digital collection:

# Secondary sources

Book:

Magazine:

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# 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: