APRIL 2026

Universität Hamburg
DER FORSCHUNG | DER LEHRE | DER BILDUNG

Asien-Afrika-Institut

SEA-
NEWSLETTER

The Department for Languages
and Cultures of Southeast Asia

SEA-Students create a travelling exhibition

In the summer semester of 2023 students of the seminar 'Contemporary Art and Resistance in West Papua/Indonesia' presented their research and work on the topic in an exhibition, which, to our surprise and great delight, was also very well received outside the university and was requested several times from Museums and other Institutions within Europe.

The exhibition titled 'Contemporary Art, Culture and Resistance in West Papua/Indonesia' was first shown during October 2023 in the AAI but has since been reprinted twice to be shown elsewhere.

The main concern of the exhibition is about the political conflict in West Papua - the most eastern province(s) of Indonesia - which is perhaps one of the World's least noticed conflicts. Its origins can be traced back to 1962 when West Papua still was a Dutch colony and the U.S. facilitated what became known as the New York Agreement, which handed the area first to the United Nations and then to Indonesia. From 1963 - when Indonesia took over until today - the conflict is evident in the various forms of oppression by the Indonesian government against the indigenous Papuans. They have been subjected to violence and human rights violations, ecological damage and cultural dispossession, and are affected by mass immigration from the overpopulated Indonesian islands.

This exhibition aims to discuss human rights and social issues faced by the region's inhabitants as portrayed through their resistance movement, particularly through various forms of art. The exhibition features elements such as music, flags, sculptures, paintings, and even traditional cuisine, offering a holistic understanding of the rich cultural heritage and the challenges the indigenous Papuans encounter.

From beyond the University there is a lot of interest in the topic, especially by civil society groups and people who are concerned about Oceania, Indonesia and West Papua. Some did visit the AAI just to see the exhibition, like Oridek Ap - a Papuan residing in the Netherlands who immediately had the idea of showing it there. Because the exhibition posters are available as pdf-files they can be easily sent to other places and this is what has happened:

- the exhibition was shown at the 'Museum Sofiahof' in Den Haag during '*Roemah Papua*', an event in April 2024, and from there it travelled through the Netherlands.
- the exhibition was presented at the 'Museum auf der Hardt' in Wuppertal from November 2024 till March 2025. By then a German translation had been added.
- in the Netherlands the posters have been reprinted both in Amersfoort and in Utrecht in 2025 to be presented within the West Papua diaspora gatherings there.
- and in October 2025 the exposition travelled to Nürnberg where it was shown at the 'Naturhistorisches Museum' as a special event exhibition till the end of 2025.

This is a big success for the SEA department and for the students who have developed and compiled the exhibition. I want to thank all of them: Wira Atmaja, Vylqi Okensyah, Happy Yulfarida Arini, Munthe Apryanti M The, Astrid Martz, Hellen Kustanti, Laura Hirsch and Fachri Aidulsyah. You have done a great job.

Contributor: **Marion Struck-Garbe**
Photo credits: **Marion Struck-Garbe**

Call for Participation: Methodology Workshop 2026

The Young Scholars Group of the German Association for Asian Studies (DGA) is hosting its **2026 Methodology Workshop at the University of Würzburg on June 12–13, 2026.**

This interdisciplinary workshop is specifically designed for MA students, PhD candidates, and early-career researchers focusing on Asian Studies. The program features a keynote by **Prof. Dr. Cornelia Reiher (FU Berlin)** and offers intensive training in **qualitative research Methods, fieldwork training, and archival research.**

Key deadlines:

- Early bird registration: **April 30, 2026**
- Final registration: **May 31, 2026**

For more information on registration fees and to view the full flyer, please visit the official announcement page: click here

Contact:
nwg@asiaforschung.de
www.asienforschung.de

Crossing Borders and Preserving Texts: Professor Grabowsky in Taipei and Hong Kong

In January 2026, Professor Volker Grabowsky represented the Department of Southeast Asian Languages and Cultures at two major academic events in Taipei and Hong Kong, further strengthening the department's international presence in Tai and Southeast Asian studies.

From 13 to 15 January, he participated in the 8th Asian Borderlands Research Network Conference at National Taiwan University. The conference, which brought together scholars from across Asia, Europe, and North America, focused on the theme "Negotiating Asian Borders: Actors, Displacements, Multiplicities, Sovereignties," aiming to explore how borders are shaped, contested, and experienced in diverse historical and contemporary contexts. Within this framework, Professor Grabowsky contributed to the panel "Reimagining Global Multipolarity through the Mandala Model," delivering a presentation titled "Multiple Sovereignties and Fluid Borders: Intra- and Inter-State Relations among Traditional Tai Polities in the Upper Mekong Basin." His talk examined premodern Tai political formations and their systems of overlapping sovereignties and flexible borders, offering new perspectives on indigenous statecraft in mainland Southeast Asia and Southwest China.

Immediately after the conference, on 16 January, he was invited to the University of Hong Kong to give a public lecture entitled "Buddhist Manuscript Studies in Southeast Asia: The Case of Luang Prabang, Laos." Drawing on more than fifteen years of collaboration with the Buddhist Archives of Luang Prabang, he introduced the diversity of Lao manuscript culture, highlighted the importance of colophons for reconstructing monastic life and merit-making practices, and presented ongoing digitisation efforts documenting more than 3,500 manuscripts.

These activities underscore the department's commitment to advancing research on Tai history, manuscript cultures, and regional border studies, while fostering international academic exchange.

Contributor & Photo credits:
Prof. Dr. Volker Grabowsky

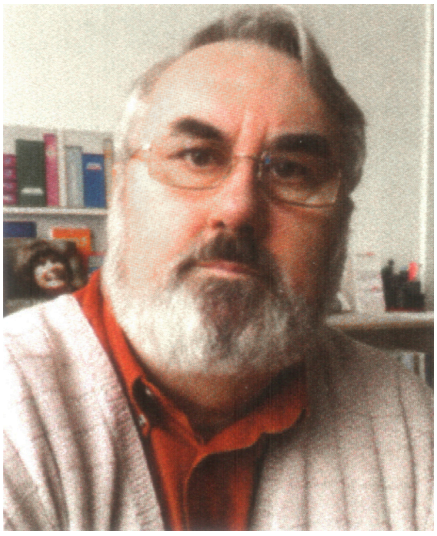
Obituary of Klaus Behling

Contributor: **Prof. Dr. Volker Grabowsky**

The Southeast Asia Department of the Asia-Africa-Institute at the University of Hamburg mourns the passing of Klaus Behling, who died on February 17, 2026, at the age of 76. With his death, the German-speaking Southeast Asian scholarly community has lost an internationally renowned expert on Indochina's history, whose diplomatic experience, analytical sharpness, and humanity made a significant contribution to regional studies.

Born on May 1, 1949, in Damgarten and raised in Barth, Klaus began studying Asian Studies with a focus on Khmer language and culture at Humboldt University of Berlin in 1967. His dedication to Cambodia and its history remained a lifelong passion. He graduated as a Diplom-Orientalist in 1972 but also completed an additional degree in foreign policy at the Academy of State and Law in Potsdam between 1971 and 1972, showcasing his early talent for understanding geopolitics.

From 1972 to 1977, he served as a diplomat for the German Democratic Republic in Cambodia (until November 1974) and in Laos (from 1975 until 1977), where he witnessed firsthand the region's dramatic political upheavals. His direct contacts with figures such as Hun Sen and Pen Sovan, and his detailed observations and conversations, granted him a unique perspective on regional conflicts and international relations. In 1979, he was re-deployed as the chargé d'affaires at the reopened DDR embassy in Cambodia, experiencing the Vietnam invasion and the demise of the Khmer Rouge regime from very close.



After postings in Romania (1981–1987), where he served as Cultural Attaché, and at the Institute for International Relations in Potsdam (1987–1991), he recognized early on the dynamics of global change – in both Europe and Asia. His keen eye for geopolitical developments and his ability to anticipate future trends are reflected in numerous publications.

Following German reunification, he began working as a journalist for Springer in Berlin in 1991. Particularly noteworthy is his position as a political editor in the BILD parliamentary and capital bureau, as well as his membership in the Federal Press Conference – distinctions and forms of professional recognition achieved by only a few journalists. In parallel, he contributed articles to the "Deutsche Rundschau", published in Toronto.

His most significant work is his book published in 2022, "Zwischen Bruderbund und Todfeindschaft: Kambodscha und Vietnam in den Jahren 1970 bis 1979 vor dem Hintergrund ihrer Beziehungen zum Ostblock" ("Between Brotherhood and Mortal Enmity: Cambodia and Vietnam from 1970 to 1979 in the Context of Their Relations with the Eastern Bloc"), in which he analyzes the conflicts of the 1970s in Indochina. For this project, he worked closely with unpublished preliminary studies and materials that he sent to me chapter by chapter; the exchange was characterized by scholarly depth and mutual enrichment.

Klaus Behling was characterized by profound humanity, a commitment to truth, and an unwavering belief in dialogue and understanding. His encounters with Cambodian leaders reflected his deep respect for their history and struggles. His lifelong dedication to telling the story of ordinary people—those affected by war, exile, and repression—embodied his moral conviction. Klaus Behling leaves behind a legacy of integrity, insight, and compassion. The University of Hamburg will honour his memory.

Lecture series: Vietnamese Culture Forum

Online Talk

Medieval Vietnamese Literature in the East Asian Cultural Sphere

Abstract

This talk will introduce a vibrant period of Vietnamese literature (10th–19th centuries), characterized by works composed in both Classical Chinese (Hán) and Nôm scripts, within a broader context of deep engagement with East Asian intellectual and cultural traditions. From political prose such as *Bình Ngô đại cáo* to humanistic masterpieces like The *Tale of Kiều*, medieval Vietnamese literature reflects national spirit, humanistic values, and distinctive artistic creativity.

Situated within a transregional framework, the talk will highlight how Vietnamese literature both participated in the Sinitic literary world and developed its own unique characteristics. It will also suggest new approaches to comparative literary studies and Vietnam Studies in the context of increasingly dynamic global academic exchange.

About the speaker

Dr. Đoàn Lê Giang

Member of the Central Council for Literary and Artistic Theory and Criticism; Member of the Professorial Council for Literature; former Dean of the Faculty of Literature and Linguistics and the Faculty of Vietnamese Studies at the HCM-VNU University of Social Sciences and Humanities.

He is the author and editor of numerous scholarly works on Vietnamese literature, including The Works of Nguyễn Thông (co-authored), Nguyễn Lộ Trạch – Memorials and Literary Works (co-authored), An Outline of Eastern Culture (co-authored), East Asian Literature from a Comparative Perspective (editor), and Revisiting the New Poetry Movement and the Prose of the Tự Lực Văn Đoàn (co-editor), among others.

Lecture details:

Friday, April 10th, 2026
14:30 – 16:00 (CEST)
19:30 – 21:00 (Vietnam)

Speaker: **Dr. Đoàn Lê Giang**
Moderator: **Dr. Nguyễn Nam**
Host: **Prof. Engelbert**

Language:
Vietnamese

Online (on Zoom)
Zoom-ID: 622 1733 7467
Passcode: 06272304
Zoom link: https://uni-hamburg.zoom.us/j/62217337467?pwd=9q89GRaB9L1TRn0BsVaI3542e6iuom.1

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AFRICA AND ASIA BEYOND THE HEADLINES

Lecture series Asia Africa Institute

Friday 14:00 – 16:00 (CET), Main Building, Edmund-Siemers-Allee 1, Lecture Hall H

10.04.2026 **Mercy and Mortality in Maguindanao (Philippines): Peace, Power, and Community in the Bangsamoro Peace Process**
Georgi Engelbrecht, International Crisis Group, Manila (Philippines)

17.04.2026 **Artificial Intelligence in Ethiopia – Imaginaries of Prosperity and Politics of Control**
Amanuel Tesfaye Kebede, Ph.D. Candidate, University of Helsinki (Finland)

24.04.2026 **Artificial Propaganda in Africa**
Prof. Henning Schreiber, African Studies, Asia Africa Institute, University of Hamburg

08.05.2026 **Guinea's Coup, Military Rule and Elections: Media and Public Opinion**
Dr. Gardy Stein, African Studies, Asia Africa Institute, University of Hamburg

22.05.2026 **Port Politics and the Reconfiguration of the Horn of Africa**
Tirsit Yetbarek, Head of Somaliland's Center for African Studies/ Senior Researcher at Jigjiga University (Ethiopia)

29.05.2026 **The Qeerroo and the Oromo Youth Protests in Ethiopia**
Getaneh Wudeneh, Ph.D. Candidate, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), Paris (France)

05.06.2026 **The 2025 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON): Football Tournament and the Improvement of the Quality of Play in Relation to the Bosman Ruling of 1995 in Europe**
Dr. Mukhtar Lawan (rer. nat.), Max Planck Institute for Structure and Dynamics of Matter (MPSD), Hamburg

11.06.2026 (Thursday) 18 – 20 CET **Asia floods in 2025. Indonesian case**
Dr. David Gaveau, TheTreeMap (France/Indonesia)

12.06.2026 **Political violence and genocide in Indonesia and Ethiopia: Historical memory**
Double-lecture, in conversation: Prof. Dr. Elsa Clavé, Austronesian Studies / Prof. Dr. Hewan Semon Marye, African Studies, both Asia Africa Institute, University of Hamburg

19.06.2026 **Misrepresentations of Granular Commodity Prices in Nigeria**
Buhari Abubakar, Deekwambos Farm Ltd/FarmRate + CGI (Nigeria)

26.06.2026 **Elephant(s) in the Room. Southeast Asia between China and the US**
Prof. Dr. Thomas Engelbert, Vietnamese Studies, Asia Africa Institute, University of Hamburg

03.07.2026 **Land, deforestation and women's resistance in West Papua**
Marion Struck-Garbe, Austronesian Studies, Asia-Asia Africa Institute, University of Hamburg

10.07.2026 **One Name, Many Lives: How Media and Politics Collapse Fulani Identity into „Herdsmen"**
Dr. Umma Aliyu Musa, African Studies, Asia Africa Institute, University of Hamburg

17.07.2026 **Roundtable: The challenges of reporting from and on Asia and Africa from Europe**
Amir Aman Kiyaro, former journalist with AP in Ethiopia / Philipp Abresch und Udo Schmidt, both journalists, former correspondents in Southeast and East Asia, NDR

Koordination

Prof. Dr. Elsa Clavé, Indonesian-Malay, and Philippines Studies / Prof. Dr. Hewan Semon Marye, Ethiopian Studies, both University of Hamburg

www.zfw.uni-hamburg.de/av-africa-asia