The Transcultural Approach Within a Disciplinary Framework: An Introduction

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The term "transcultural" probably constitutes one of the most important and widely discussed conceptual keywords in the humanities and social sciences of recent years. The aim of this journal section is to analyse and evaluate the relationship between the transcultural paradigm and various more or less established academic disciplines or fields of research.

The contributors to this themed section have all worked in the context of an interdisciplinary research institution dedicated to developing and advancing the transcultural approach in the humanities and the social sciences. Many also taught in a master's programme in transcultural studies, a new and exciting transdisciplinary degree programme that introduces students from various disciplinary backgrounds to the transcultural paradigm and its associated methods and fields of investigation.

The editors' initial objective was to collect contributions that would explain how different academic disciplines interact with the transcultural paradigm. Thus, the themed section was intended to discuss the transcultural potential of a given discipline with the twofold aim of promoting awareness of its transcultural dimensions among specialists and students in the respective field, and of increasing mutual understanding among proponents of the transcultural approach who stem from different academic backgrounds. Since the latter usually work in a multidisciplinary environment, they often face the challenge of having to communicate differently with their "transcultural" colleagues than with peers in their respective discipline of origin—which can often lead to misunderstandings. Last but not least, this collection aimed to offer the contributors the chance to describe their traditionally defined academic fields of research while also showcasing the merits of applying a transcultural approach. During our discussions and the writing process, however, it became increasingly obvious that these initial objectives raised several complex questions that each contribution would have to answer.

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Defining the transcultural approach: Many disciplines—many definitions

Writing for this themed section posed a double challenge. On the one hand, our contributors were confronted with the problem of defining the content and limits of their respective academic discipline. Such a task not only requires the ability to summarize centuries-old traditions and fields of research without losing too many nuances; it also became increasingly unclear whether the academically organized fields of research treated here—Islamic studies, Sinology, Japanese studies, and religious studies—actually represent academic disciplines, e.g. from a methodological point of view.

On the other hand, the contributors faced the difficulty of agreeing on a common definition of the transcultural approach. This issue arose from the fact that during the past eight decades different fields of research have successively adopted the transcultural paradigm, which produced manifold definitions depending on the requirements of each field.

The transcultural approach originates in the conceptual term *transculturación*, which was coined by Fernando Ortiz in his study on processes of cultural reconfiguration in early modern Cuba, first published in 1940. Ortiz's aim was to find a conceptual alternative to the term "acculturation" which, in his opinion, failed to express that processes of interaction between groups of different cultural origin do not only result in processes of transmission, reception, adaptation, and assimilation, but also lead to the transformation and amalgamation of previously distinct cultural elements within a new cultural synthesis.[1]

After Ortiz's initial use, the term resurfaced in the field of transcultural psychology with publications going back as far as 1965.[2] In the following decades, it spread to various professional fields such as counselling,[3] nursing,[4]

1 Fernando Ortiz, *Contrapunteo cubano el tabaco y el azúcar* (Havana: Jesús Montero, 1940).

2 Anthony V. S. de Reuck and Ruth Porter, eds., *Transcultural Psychiatry: A Symposium* (London: Churchill, 1965); Ari Kiev, *Transcultural Psychiatry* (New York: The Free Press, Collier-Macmillan, 1972); Turan M. Itil, ed., *Transcultural Neuropsychopharmacology* (Istanbul: Bozak, 1975); John L. Cox, ed., *Transcultural Psychiatry* (London: Croom Helm, 1986); also see the journal *Transcultural Psychiatry*, edited by the Division of Social and Transcultural Psychiatry, Department of Psychiatry at McGill University since 1997.

3 John McFadden, ed., *Transcultural Counseling: Bilateral and International Perspectives* (Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association, 1993).

4 Madeleine M. Leininger and Marylin R. McFarland, eds., *Transcultural Nursing: Concepts, Theories, Research and Practice* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002); Jan İlhan Kızılhan, *Handbuch zur Behandlung kriegstraumatisierter Frauen: Transkulturelle Behandlungsmethoden und Techniken am Beispiel der Frauen aus dem Irak* (Berlin: Verlag für Wissenschaft und Bildung, 2016).

and corporate management.[5] However, the definition of the term "transcultural" as it was (and is) used by psychologists, nurses, counsellors, or managers differs considerably from the one coined by Ortiz and does not necessarily draw on the latter's thought. Confronted with the task of bridging cultural divides in communicative situations between medical professionals and patients, social advisors and clients, or managers and staff, these professionals were and are mainly interested in background knowledge about cultural differences and techniques of communication. The latter should enable them to overcome communicative obstacles that arise from the respective interlocutors' different cultural backgrounds as expressed in different world views, traditions, practices, and modes of understanding. In this context, the prefix "trans-" indicates these professionals' objective of bridging the differences between cultures, which are generally regarded as comparatively inflexible systems of thought and behaviour. According to this interpretation, such cultural differences can be bridged with the help of specific techniques that either enable the active professional to appeal to culturally "neutral" anthropological universals or to empathize and react adequately to certain modes of culturally defined thought and behaviour.

At the same time, humanities and social science scholars became increasingly aware that defining cultures as closed systems was fundamentally problematic. This can be witnessed in works by proponents of, for example, post-colonial studies such as Homi Bhabha, and resulted in the emergence of a modified definition of the term "transcultural."[6] Since the end of the twentieth century, and especially since the second decade of the twenty-first, the number of publications that employed this modified paradigm, and thus analysed a large number of themes and fields of research from a transcultural perspective, has increased significantly. Slowly but surely, a methodological approach began to develop, which, thematically, focused on interactive processes and thus followed the tradition of Ortiz and the professions outlined above. Methodologically, however, this approach endorsed a number of tenets from post-colonial studies, namely the necessity of regarding phenomena of cultural interaction not only from one single, e.g. "Eurocentrist," perspective, but of analysing each phenomenon from different, e.g. "subaltern," points of view with the aim of uncovering and adequately representing the complexity of human relations and related perceptions.

5 George F. Simons, Carmen Vazquez, and Philip R. Harris, eds., *Transcultural Leadership: Empowering the Diverse Work Force* (Houston: Gulf Publishing Company, 1993); Albert Koopman, *Transcultural Management: Ein umweltorientiertes Modell interkultureller Organisationsberatung* (Köln: Edition Humanistische Psychologie, 1994); Albert Koopman, *Transcultural Management: How to Unlock Global Resources* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1994).

6 Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

Consequently, the transcultural paradigm was applied to a large range of theoretical fields of research, which gave a new impulse to such diverse topics as gender issues,[7] cross-cultural as well as international relations and communication,[8] migration studies,[9] questions related to identity formation,[10] literary studies,[11] visual and media anthropology,[12] art history,[13] urbanism and environmental studies,[14] and political theory.[15] It is important to note that the transcultural paradigm has not only been applied to describe modern and contemporary phenomena, but also the past.[16]

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7 Ylva Hernlund and Bettina Shell-Duncan, eds., *Transcultural Bodies: Female Genital Cutting in a Global Context* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2007); Saugata Bhaduri and Indrani Mukherjee, eds., *Transcultural Negotiations of Gender: Studies in (Be)longing* (New Delhi: Springer, 2016).

8 Germaine W. Shames, *Transcultural Odysees: The Evolving Global Consciousness* (Yarmouth: Intercultural Press, 1997); Ellen E. Berry and Mikhail N. Epstein, eds., *Transcultural Experiments: Russian and American Models of Creative Communication* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999); Virginia H. Milhouse, Molefi Kete Asante, and Peter O. Nwosu, eds., *Transcultural Realities: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Cross-Cultural Relations* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2001); Andreas Hepp, *Transkulturelle Kommunikation* (Konstanz: UVK, 2006).

9 Kerstin Kazzazi, Angela Treiber, and Tim Wätzold, eds., *Migration – Religion – Identität: Aspekte transkultureller Prozesse* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2016).

10 Claude-Hélène Mayer and Stephan Wolting, eds., *Purple Jacaranda: Narrations on Transcultural Identity Development* (Münster: Waxmann, 2016); Irene Gilsenan Nordin, Chatarina Edfeldt, Lung-Lung Hu, Herbert Jonsson, and André Leblanc, eds., *Transcultural Identity Constructions in a Changing World* (Frankfurt am Main: PL Academic Research, 2016).

11 Karen R. Lawrence, ed., *Transcultural Joyce: Contributions of the XIV International James Joyce Symposium in Seville, Spain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Rocío G. Davis, *Transcultural Reinventions: Asian American and Asian Canadian Short-Story Cycles* (Toronto: TSAR, 2001); Elisabeth Bekers, ed., *Transcultural Modernities: Narrating Africa in Europe* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009); Nora Tunkel, *Transcultural Imaginaries: History and Globalization in Contemporary Canadian Literature* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2012).

12 Christiane Brosius and Roland Wenzelhuemer, eds., *Transcultural Turbulences: Towards a Multi-sited Reading of Image Flows* (Berlin: Springer, 2011); Christian Suhr and Rane Willerslev, *Transcultural Montage* (New York: Berghahn, 2013).

13 Pauline Bachmann, Melanie Klein, Tomoko Mamine, and Georg Vasold, eds., *Art/Histories in Transcultural Dynamics: Perspectives on Narratives and Frameworks in the 20th and 21st Century* (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2015); Michael Falser, *Angkor Wat: From Jungle Find to Global Icon; A Transcultural History of Heritage* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016).

14 Stefan L. Brandt, ed., *Transcultural Spaces: Challenges of Urbanity, Ecology, and the Environment* (Tübingen: Narr, 2010).

15 Sybille de la Rosa, ed., *Transkulturelle Politische Theorie* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2016).

16 Madeleine Herren, Martin Rüesch, and Christiane Sibille, *Transcultural History: Theories, Methods, Sources* (Berlin: Springer, 2012); Stefan Hanß and Juliane Schiel, eds., *Mediterranean Slavery Revisited (500–1800) – Neue Perspektiven auf mediterrane Sklaverei (500–1800)* (Frankfurt am Main: Chronos, 2014); Lucy Audley-Miller and Beate Dignas, eds., *Wandering Myths:*

The application of the transcultural paradigm to these and other fields of research in the humanities and social sciences has given rise to different understandings and a multiplicity of interpretations that are closely related to the exigencies and requirements of each field. Given the increasing flood of publications on the subject, it is thus hardly surprising that various definitions of "transculturality," the term "transcultural," and other variations have appeared,[17] including some early efforts at summarizing its research history and the current state of the art.[18] Defined over and over again, the term "transcultural" now not only lacks a standardized definition, but—considering the discrepancies between the applied and the theoretical sciences as sketched out above—is also used in considerably diverse ways. It is possible to discern four fundamental definitions:

I. In a very general way, the term "transcultural" can be used to describe phenomena that transcend cultural boundaries, in the sense that they are common to various, if not all, human groups. If approached in this way, the term is used to describe phenomena that could also be defined as anthropological universals (e.g. crime, intellectual activity, etc.), which, because they are common to all human groups, cannot be confined to specific cultural milieus. This definition certainly plays a role—at least implicitly—in the abovementioned fields of transcultural psychology, nursing, counselling, and corporate management, all of which need to draw on an understanding of anthropological universals to facilitate intercultural communication between individuals and groups defined according to cultural criteria. Such a definition is not only considered too broad by most scholars, but is also rejected because it still builds on the premise

Transcultural Uses of Myth in the Ancient World (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016); Wolfram Drews and Christian Scholl, eds., *Transkulturelle Verflechtungsprozesse in der Vormoderne* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016); Netzwerk Transkulturelle Verflechtungen, *Transkulturelle Verflechtungen: Mediävistische Perspektiven* (Göttingen: Göttinger Universitätsverlag, 2016).

17 See e.g. Wolfgang Welsch, "Transculturality: The Puzzling Form of Cultures Today," in *Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World*, ed. Mike Featherstone and Scott Lash (London: Sage, 1999), 194–213; Monica Juneja, "Kultur, Kulturtransfer und Grenzüberschreitungen: Joachim Eibach und Claudia Opitz im Gespräch mit Monica Juneja," *zeitenblicke* 11, no. 1 (2012), http://www.zeitenblicke.de/2012/1/Interview/ [Accessed on 30. March 2017].

18 Jutta Ernst and Florian Freitag, "Transkulturelle Dynamiken: Entwicklungen und Perspektiven eines Konzepts," in *Transkulturelle Dynamiken: Aktanten, Prozesse, Theorien*, ed. Jutta Ernst and Florian Freitag (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2014), 7–30; also see Wolfram Drews and Christian Scholl, "Transkulturelle Verflechtungsprozesse in der Vormoderne: Zur Einleitung," in Drews and Scholl, *Transkulturelle Verflechtungsprozesse*, vii–xxiii; Ulrike Freitag and Achim von Oppen, "Translocality: An Approach to Connection and Transfer in Area Studies," in *Translocality: The Study of Globalising Processes from a Southern Perspective*, ed. Ulrike Freitag and Achim von Oppen (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 1–21; Andreas Langenohl, Ralph Poole, and Manfred Weinberg, eds., *Transkulturalität: Klassische Texte* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2015).

that cultures constitute macro-milieus characterized by fixed frameworks of human thought and behaviour. It fails to acknowledge the observable complexity of processes of cultural interaction and identification.

II. A second, still rather general definition uses the term "transcultural" to define a specific variety of phenomena that transcend cultural boundaries. Having originated within a particular historical constellation, these phenomena become part of many different cultural milieus thanks to processes of diffusion, transmission, and reception—for example, Roman Law as it was received and implemented in post-Roman societies, or Islam or Buddhism as they are practiced in areas outside their historical regions of origin in later times. According to this definition, transcultural phenomena are shared by different and distinct cultural milieus without falling into the category of anthropological universals. Although this definition also fails to systematically question the notion that cultures constitute fixed frameworks of milieu-bound thought and behaviour, it nevertheless acknowledges that these cultural frameworks are and can be penetrated by external cultural influences, which then contribute to the transformation of the initial cultural framework. Although such processes of boundary crossing are often highlighted in connection with processes such as the impact of modernity on societies or the phenomenon of globalization[19], transculturality can obviously not be regarded as a recent phenomenon.

III. A third definition uses the term "transcultural" to delineate phenomena that are situated between cultural milieus separated by linguistic, religious, normative, or other kinds of boundaries. It builds on rather than discards the previous definition by focusing on milieus and agents that act as connecting links between different cultural spheres. Here, the prefix "trans-" does not denote phenomena that are common to various cultural milieus, but highlights those phenomena that, while being part of various cultural milieus, also stand between them. Such studies focus on acts of mediating and translating as well as so-called "cultural brokers."[20]

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19 See e.g. Gudrun Lachenmann, "Globalisation in the Making: Translocal Gendered Spaces in Muslim Societies," in Freitag and Oppen, *Translocality*, 335–367, on page 340: "Different voices have highlighted the necessity of a fundamental methodological reconsideration of approaches within a process of globalising social science. Elements in this debate are the increasing interest in strengthening qualitative methodology in what could be called transcultural (comparative) social research. Our analysis refers to concepts and phenomena considered to be constitutive of globalisation, such as social movements, networks, civil society, thereby avoiding dualisms of blocks, cultures etc. Globalisation is studied through its constitutional elements of interlinking and connectedness, flows."

20 Cf. Margarell Connell Szasz, ed., *Between Indian and White Worlds: The Cultural Broker* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994); Marc von der Höh, Nikolas Jaspert, and Jenny Rahel Oesterle, eds., *Cultural Brokers at Mediterranean Courts in the Middle Ages* (Munich: Fink, 2013).

IV. The fourth and most recent definition uses the term "transcultural" to describe a particular method of approach that, from a thematic point of view, deconstructs concepts such as "society," "class," "nation," "culture," or "civilization." Methodologically, this definition encourages analysis of phenomena that question supposed boundaries. It obliges the researcher to analyse phenomena from various angles and thus to insist on the multipolarity, multiple perspectives, and transformative dynamics inherent to the research subject.[21]

In sum: the transcultural paradigm serves different needs in different fields of research. Applied sciences such as transcultural nursing, transcultural management, or transcultural psychology employ the paradigm to overcome cultural boundaries because they inhibit intercultural communication between caretakers and patients or between different professional agents. The purely academic sciences, in turn, mainly employ the transcultural paradigm to focus on specific facets of human interaction. Highlighting the latter's complexity almost inevitably leads to the deconstruction of hitherto widely accepted academic categories.

Applying the transcultural approach: Questioning the boundaries of academic disciplines

The various definitions of the transcultural paradigm emerged in separate fields of research due to different exigencies and requirements. Consequently, it is necessary to elaborate on the complex relationship between the transcultural paradigm on the one hand, and individual disciplines or fields of research on the other. In this themed section, the focus lies on a selection of academic fields in the (theoretical, rather than applied) social sciences and humanities, in this case Islamic studies, Sinology, Japanese studies and religious studies To explain the relationship between the transcultural paradigm and their respective field, the authors of the following essays had to grapple with various issues which arise from the triple task of defining the transcultural approach, of circumscribing a traditional field of research, and of relating both to each other.

One important characteristic of studies using the transcultural approach as described in the definitions above (especially definitions III and IV) is that they are mostly situated either at the margins or between traditional academic

21 Cf. "Understanding Transculturalism—Monica Juneja and Christian Kravagna in Conversation," in *Transcultural Modernisms*, Model House Research Group, Publication Series of the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna 12 (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013), 22–35.

disciplines. This is primarily due to the thematic focus of the transcultural approach and its predilection for questions and topics that transcend ethnic, regional, national, linguistic, religious, and, in the widest sense, cultural boundaries. Every academic discipline needs to specify and limit the scope of its field of research in one way or another. Accordingly, there exists a considerable tension between the demands of the transcultural approach and the traditional definition of an academic discipline. For example, in the field of history, applying the transcultural approach necessitates transcending the framework of national, institutional, even universal history—in the latter case by pointing out different forms of universal history as written in different times, regions, and languages. In the field of linguistics, the transcultural approach calls for an analysis of phenomena that transcend the corpus and system of a given philology or even the linguistic sphere as such. In the study of specific religious traditions, the transcultural approach calls for an analysis not of the latter's systemic character, but of its entanglement with other (possibly competing) religious systems, practices, and institutional structures as well as their various cultural, political, and economic contexts. In the various area studies, the transcultural approach calls for an appraisal of the respective area's role within a much wider regional context, and so on. In addition to questioning (pre-defined) boundaries inherent to any subject of analysis, the transcultural approach also emphasizes the relevance of specific subfields of research, which often stand at the margins of established academic disciplines. In this way it stretches and even questions the boundaries of established fields of research.

Reaching beyond the confines of established academic fields represents a considerable intellectual challenge. Scholars who employ the transcultural paradigm are expected to master linguistic, methodological, and other academic skills that exceed those expected of a specialist in a single academic field. For young researchers still looking for a tenured post, adopting the transcultural approach can constitute a career risk: academic employers still tend to favour candidates with a firm grasp on what is traditionally considered a discipline or field of research, rather than an innovative, but experimental approach. Since the long-term relevance, impact, and explanatory potential of the transcultural paradigm are still difficult to estimate, the academic establishment hesitates to jeopardize its traditional disciplinary structure. This conservative recruiting policy seems partly justified if one considers the challenges associated with providing the next generation of students with a solid academic education in at least one field of study.

Most proponents of the transcultural approach either combine in their biography different strands of education, or have invested many years in the acquisition of additional academic qualifications. Dedicating serious attention to more

than one language, textual culture, and methodological framework is more difficult and time-consuming than focussing on one pre-defined specialization. At the same time, acquiring and teaching several disciplinary qualifications challenges students and academic teachers alike. Consequently, teaching the transcultural approach has to contend with compromise. One option is to focus on the education of more advanced young researchers such as PhD-candidates, leave the academic formation of B.A.- and M.A.-students to the traditionally organized academic system, and thus refrain from exerting influence on the core elements of academic education. This produces researchers that approach a transcultural field of study from the perspective of their original academic field of specialization. Alternatively, teaching the transcultural approach can begin at the basic level of university education, thus immediately and simultaneously exposing students to different fields of research and methodologies. This involves the risk of neglecting important auxiliary skills needed to delve into the depths of a particular field of research, e.g. language skills: there is no point in producing "experts" on Japan, Islam, or the European Middle Ages who have never read a Japanese, Arabic, or Latin text. Finding the correct balance of introducing transcultural, i.e. transdisciplinary approaches, into the traditional disciplinary structure of academia while maintaining high quality standards certainly constitutes one of the biggest challenges that proponents of the transcultural approach are facing at the moment.

Against this backdrop the collection of essays at hand elaborates on the relationship between the transcultural approach on the one hand and traditional disciplines or fields of research on the other. So far, this relationship has rarely been addressed and, if it has, then with concerns about challenges of interdisciplinary cooperation rather than the formation and education of transcultural scholars from an early stage onwards.[22]

The problem of cross-disciplinary cooperation constitutes an important challenge to all disciplines and fields of research as well as to transcultural studies as such: as already sketched out above, the diversity of interpretations associated with the transcultural paradigm also results from the fact that each scholar using the paradigm reacts to a very specific range of ideas, tenets, methods, and discussions that are characteristic of his or her field of specialization. Consequently, anthropologists, archaeologists, ethnologists, historians, philologists, political scientists, and specialists of certain regions, religious traditions, and textual corpora have to adapt the transcultural paradigm to a very different set of academic traditions and requirements.

22 Paula Krüger, ed., *Transcultural Studies: Interdisziplinarität trifft Transkulturalität* (Bremen: Universitätsdruckerei, 2005).

Taking a closer look at different academic disciplines or fields of research reveals that probably none of them lacks a transcultural component: in the history of humankind, no language, territory, religious, or legal system has been impervious to what we may term "external" influences. It would be incorrect to assume that academics have only recently begun to investigate phenomena that could be classified as "transcultural" according to the definitions given above: the field of European history, for example, firmly established as an academic discipline at latest since the nineteenth century, has never been completely dominated by ethnicist, racist, or nationalist ideas. Historians of religion, philosophy, or the sciences have always transcended the frameworks set by more specialized and occasionally also more narrow-minded historical approaches, thus creating alternative categorizations, epochal boundaries, and subfields of research. In the same way, the academic discipline of religious studies, slowly emerging in departments of theology during the nineteenth century, programmatically looked beyond the confines of specific religious systems. The aim was not always to compare, but to understand processes transcending the boundaries of specific religious traditions such as rationalisation or secularisation.[23] From a European perspective, the academic disciplines dealing with regions outside Europe, such as Arabic and Islamic studies, Indology, Sinology, or Japanese studies, all have a transcultural history of their own.[24] However, in spite of the fact that transcultural phenomena have always played a certain role in different fields of research, the question how the transcultural approach can be adapted to these fields has not received attention yet.

Analysing how different fields of research interact with the transcultural approach inevitably leads the investigating scholar into the respective field's disciplinary history. Academic fields of research are of different age and thus look back on a longer or shorter history of thematical and methodological evolution. This evolution continues due to the fact that particular societal constellations, technological developments, and changing institutional structures require different forms of knowledge and knowledge production. This gives impetus to the creation of new academic fields and subfields. transcultural studies is merely one among many that received an institutional framework in recent decades.

Although many scholars worldwide contribute to this field and several academic journals bear the epithet "transcultural" in their titles,[25] only few

23 See the contribution by Katja Rakow and Esther Berg.

24 See the contributions by Pablo Blitstein, Daniel G. König, and Hans-Martin Krämer.

25 See e.g. the journal *Transcultural Studies*, founded in 2005 and published by Brill,

universities so far offer degrees in this field of research.[26] Against this backdrop of constant thematic, methodological and institutional evolution, defining a particular discipline becomes rather challenging.

The question of how to define a particular discipline is not only problematic because the different fields of academic investigation represented in this themed section dispose of a longer or shorter history of institutionalization in a context that may be labelled "European" or "Western." It also arises because scholars of different backgrounds differ considerably in the way they define specific fields of research. For example, defining Islamic studies or Japanology is problematic, not only because both fields of research draw back on a large array of disciplinary approaches, but also because they emerged within a Western context that concerned itself with societies classified as "non-Western," thus creating a dichotomy between forms of external and indigenous knowledge production about the same subject-matters.[27] Scholars in these fields thus risk producing research results that are contested by members of the very societies under investigation for the sole reason that these scholars do not pertain to these societies. The history of these academic fields is thus characterized by tensions resulting from the question of who has the right to analyse and evaluate the cultural heritage of a particular society, a question intrinsically tied to the Orientalist debate.[28]

Investigating the role that the transcultural paradigm can play if applied to various academic disciplines or fields of research thus raised problems that we could not have imagined at the outset of this project. However, engaging with these problems furnished two important results: deconstructionist from a methodological point of view, the transcultural paradigm tends to question the relevance of boundaries, not only in a cultural sense. If applied to any given discipline or field of research, it will ultimately stretch or even question

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http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com/content/journals/23751606 [Accessed on 29. August 2016], as well as the *Journal of Transcultural Medieval Studies*, founded in 2014 and published by De Gruyter, http://www.degruyter.com/view/j/jtms [Accessed on 29. August 2016].

26 Among those offering a degree are Heidelberg University ("Transcultural Studies," http://www.asia-europe.uni-heidelberg.de/en/studies/ma-transcultural-studies.html, [Accessed on 29. August 2016]; Bremen University ("Transkulturelle Studien," http://www.kultur.uni-bremen.de/index.php?id=3020, [Accessed on 08. February 2017]; Warwick University ("Translation and Transcultural Studies," http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/applying/postgraduate/masters/tts/, [Accessed on 29. August 2016], Meiji Gakuin University ("Department of Global and Transcultural Studies," http://www.meijigakuin.ac.jp/en/academics/faculty/international/global_and_transcultural_studies.html, [Accessed on 29. August 2016].

27 See the contributions by Hans-Martin Krämer and Daniel G. König.

28 See the contribution by Daniel G. König.

the latter's defined boundaries. Applying the transcultural paradigm to various disciplines or fields of research is thus fraught with tension, a tension that ultimately seems rather productive, however: it opens up new perspectives by directly confronting the engaged scholar with the methodological, ideological, and institutional challenges inherent in every field of investigation. Coping with these challenges simultaneously may initially produce confusion and disorientation. Ultimately, however, it will result in an acknowledgement and critical evaluation of our contemporary forms of knowledge production and their adequacy, and will open up new lines of enquiry.