

## Editor's Note

Since we launched our first issue in December 2010, *Transcultural Studies* has received a large number of visits, new submissions, and not least invaluable feed-back from readers, reviewers and authors. This positive echo has greatly inspired the editors to include new features and expand and strengthen the existing ones.

One of the most immediately visible changes is our new logo. Based on the international sign of the meeting point, it visually expresses what the journal is trying to do. The collection of essays that we are able to present in this second issue carries out this intention.

*Transcultural Studies* 1/2011 opens with a contribution by Rudolf G. Wagner. His study on the transcultural and translingual migration of the metaphor of “China asleep and awakening” is a bold attempt to investigate the constitutive role of metaphors and images in the formation of globalized concepts. It demonstrates that this process, generated by asymmetries at different levels, can be fully and meaningfully grasped only when the enquiry is no longer framed by the nation state as unit of investigation, but is defined according to the dynamics of travelling individuals, concepts and images. By introducing a number of key notions the article offers a useful methodological apparatus for research on transculturality. Because the electronic medium allows for flexible publication scheduling, the article has been available online for some time. This practice of uploading articles as and when they are ready will be continued to avoid the delays that paper-print most often brings with it.

Our second contribution by Hiroyuki Suzuki continues the series “Multi-Centred Modernisms”. It charts Japanese society’s changing perceptions of the colossal statue *Buddha of Kamakura* in order to trace the emergence of the modern, rapidly globalizing concept of art. This shift from religious icon to work of art, perceived as a source of aesthetic value, began with the Meiji restoration and was in no small measure shaped by the aesthetic assessments of European scholars, diplomats, antiquarians and collectors who travelled to Japan during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Our third contribution has also been authored by a Japanese scholar. In his article Atsushi Shibasaki situates the scholar Tomonaga Sanjūrō, a historian of Western philosophy, in the context of international political and cultural relations, but also in the field of modern Japanese intellectual history. This article was originally published in Japanese in 2009 and is the first that *Transcultural Studies* introduces under the new rubric “Translations” to an

English speaking audience. With this rubric, Transcultural Studies intends to offer an English-language platform for studies with a transcultural focus, which were originally penned in an Asian language.

The final part of the journal comprises the themed section *Byzantium beyond its Eastern Borders*, guest-edited by Christine Stephan-Kaissis. It offers three essays—by Stefan Faller, Zsuzsanna Gulácsi, and Claudia Wenzel—that investigate cases of Byzantium’s transcultural relations with Central Asia, China, and India. Based on a workshop that was held at the Institute of Byzantine Archaeology and Art History at the Ruprecht-Karls-University Heidelberg, these contributions explore the mechanisms of visual communication between Byzantium and the Asian continent.

Stefan Faller probes the applicability of transculturality to ancient cultures by investigating a broad array of sources on the Byzantine monk and merchant Cosmas Indicopleustes. Faller shows Cosmas to be a well-informed and well-travelled man, whose notions of the universe and man’s place in it suggest—his unwavering Christian faith notwithstanding—a braiding of ideas with Hindu, Buddhist and Jain cosmology.

In her essay on Mani’s *Picture-Book* and the visual language that informs it, Zsuzsanna Gulácsi demonstrates visual media’s flexibility not only in content, but also in genre (here in the context of religious instruction), and its readiness to merge with pictorial conventions of other cultural contexts. Her investigation of medieval Manichaean image-creation resounds strongly with the processes that Rudolf G. Wagner so carefully traces in the modern context of political cartoons.

The closing essay by Claudia Wenzel moves the discussion of flows between Asia and Europe towards parallel image-discourses that took place in Eastern cultures—mainly China and India—and Byzantium. The question whether the divine and its personification can be depicted concerned both cultural spheres and resulted in similar actions and reactions. Any attempt to depict “superhuman spiritual beings”—to borrow a phrase from Stephan-Kaissis’ *Introduction*—was strictly codified, while the invisible quality of these beings was sought to be incorporated by using sophisticated visual strategies. The question whether Buddha or Christ could be at all presented visually remained hotly debated, sometimes met with violent iconoclasm, and given human imperfection could ultimately not be answered in the affirmative.

We hope this issue will offer you valuable information and fresh insights. For the editorial board,

Monica Juneja