Editorial Note

"A mighty tree in the forest has fallen"—*kua hinga te tōtara i te Waonui-a-Tāne*. This Māori proverb is often used on the demise of a great chief or authority (*rangatira*). As we mark the passing of our *rangatira* Rudolf Wagner (1941–2019), we would like to think that he would have appreciated this phrase, even if he probably had never heard it. First, Rudolf was a scholar exceptionally open to the viewpoints of "other cultures" —so much so that, in his late work on transculturality, he came to question radically whether any culture is indeed, in the final analysis, truly "other." In other words, he might have said: Do there really exist multiple separate "cultures?" Or is there, rather, a single "culture complex," from which apparently discrete cultures bud off, or bubble up, as relatively fleeting epiphenomena? Second, he expressed this idea exactly with the metaphor of the forest and the trees. Drawing upon recent work in biology that has reconceived the forest as a superorganism and supersystem of information and signalling—a "Wood-Wide Web"—he urged us to think of cultures as trees, and transculturality as the forest. And, of course, behind this witty formulation is a sharp point: we often miss the forest for the trees.

Rudolf Wagner's late and thus-far unpublished reflections on this perspective were memorably recalled,[1] in a spirit at once appreciative and critical (which Rudolf, ever feisty, would have relished), in a memorial address delivered by our colleague William Sax on the occasion of a workshop on October 31, 2019. Rudolf's passing on October 25 was painfully fresh that day, and it had originally been planned that he himself would speak. But we had gathered principally to mark a second watershed—the official end of the Cluster of Excellence "Asia and Europe in a Global Context." The Cluster was initiated in 2007 and sustained for twelve years with the funding of the Excellence Initiative of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, known in English as the German Research Foundation). From this fertile ground sprang a host of work in transcultural studies, which has done much to shape and advance the field. The same ground also eventually yielded the Heidelberg Centre for Transcultural Studies (HCTS), this *Journal*, and the Centre for Asian and Transcultural Studies (CATS), which comprises the HCTS, the South Asia Institute, the Institute for Anthropology, and the Centre for East Asian Studies, and a brand new and richly stocked library.

1 Rudolf Wagner's lecture, "Of Trees and the Wood, Cultures and CULTURE," given at the International Workshop: "Recalibrating Culture – Reconfiguring the (Trans-)Cultural," Heidelberg Centre for Transcultural Studies, University of Heidelberg, November 22–23, 2018.

Our workshop was entitled New Directions in Transcultural Studies.[2] As the title shows, our focus was on the future, rather than on nostalgia for past achievements. Participants saw much work still to be done in transcultural studies, and much promise. At the same time, the occasion did mark the end of an era in Heidelberg—especially when combined with the loss of Rudolf Wagner, who played such a key role in the genesis and life of these initiatives and institutions, and was a driving force and guiding light in much of what we have done. However, even when a mighty tree falls, the forest endures, and this figure encourages us to take a larger view. To shift the metaphor slightly, all of us who work as "foresters" in the world-wide community of transcultural studies, including the editors and contributors to this *Journal*, can best serve Rudolf's memory, and the legacy of the Cluster he helped to found, by ensuring that the field continues to flourish and grow. It is what he would have wanted.

As is only appropriate, this issue serves in part to mark Rudolf Wagner's passing and achievements. First, another memorable occasion honouring Rudolf took place in Heidelberg, again, regrettably soon after his passing. On the evening of November 14, the richly panelled and symbol-laden ritual heart of the University, the Alte Aula, was the scene of a ceremony to bestow upon him the Karl Jaspers Prize. This prize is given annually for "scientific work of international significance supported by philosophical spirit." It bears the name of another Heidelberg luminary, Karl Jaspers, whose name also graces the building housing the HCTS and the editorial offices of this *Journal*. At the prize giving, the acceptance speech—which, naturally, all had expected or hoped Rudolf would deliver himself—was movingly delivered on his behalf with great spirit and courage by his widow, Professor Catherine V. Yeh. The text of that speech, which was based upon notes Rudolf had sketched, is included in these pages. The issue also includes an obituary from Axel Michaels, who worked closely with Rudolf throughout the years on the founding of the Cluster and its daughter projects and institutions; and another from Egas Moniz-Bandeira, who completed his PhD in Sinology at the Cluster and thus came to know Rudolf through both of the disciplines dearest to his heart.

Even as we mourn him, Rudolf Wagner's own scholarly voice still speaks loud and clear in this issue, in an article he worked hard on right up to the end. Wagner sets out from a striking shift in the symbolism of Chinese money. In the imperial tradition, he points out, currency typically bore only inscriptions or other sigla, and coins often had holes in the middle (a suggestively empty centre). Meanwhile, in the Mediterranean and European world, currency

2 http://www.asia-europe.uni-heidelberg.de/de/aktuelles/nachrichten/detail/m/-59eb2dbab2.html.

was regularly marked by the image of the face or full body of a ruler. In the Republican period, Chinese currency begins similarly to feature images of eminent persons. Wagner situates this development in the context of a larger construction of a new model of the leader as a publically visible icon, with Sun Yat-sen as the first significant case, in a lineage of ideological work that leads more or less directly to Mao. Wagner argues further that this new iconography, and the assemblage of signifiers and meanings that accompanied it, were formed in a complex of transcultural processes surrounding the introduction and reception of the image of George Washington in China through the nineteenth century. He even suggests that the relation we might intuitively or naively assume between person and icon is reversed: rather than the icon being constructed after the fact around the living man, Sun Yat-sen may have carefully moderated or curated his behaviour and appearance in life in anticipation of the iconographic moment, and conformity with the iconographic programme.

Thus, like Mao's mausoleum, which Wagner studied earlier in his career, the new iconography of modern currency offers us an example of a particularly pointed application of the transcultural mode of enquiry. We might speak here of "ironies of the transcultural," which demonstrate how deeply the transcultural mode of inquiry can strike at complacent stereotypes about the constructs usually promoted and received as "cultures." Smack at the very centre—once pregnantly empty—of a currency which itself implies national "values" per se and the state as its guarantor, it transpires that one of the most sacrosanct icons in the nationalist repertoire is the product of a long work of transculturation; but that transculturation lies hidden, as in a palimpsest, behind a surface that presents only a visual rhetoric of autonomous and distinct national identity and destiny.

Freya Schwachenwald sheds light on some contradictory and thought-provoking aspects of a German historical figure, Prince Hermann von Pückler-Muskau (1785–1871), a landscape planner, cosmopolitan dandy, and sophisticated bon-vivant. In accordance with the multifaceted life of this eccentric personality, the author follows no single line of argument. Rather, she provides a variegated panorama revolving around Pückler's own biography and later historiographies about him, wrestling in the process with such complex and controversial subjects as colonialism, nationalism, racism, and sexism, as well as the processes of omission and selective hyper-focus by which historical identities get constructed and re-constructed. Schwachenwald tries metaphorically to bridge the seemingly disparate facets of Pückler's versatile persona: his approach to landscaping, opinions on art and aesthetics, written commentaries on foreign travels, politics, and even gourmet recipes. In the first part of the study, which is dedicated to Pückler himself, the author discusses his encounter with "nature" both as landscape planner and theorist,

contesting previous interpretations which assigned both nature and landscape planning no apparent meaning. As Schwachenwald lucidly demonstrates, Pückler strove to unlock natural space as a place of aesthetic experience, moving from its artistic shaping to its artistic framing as "picturesque."

Yet Pückler's posthumous fame is founded not only on his creative engagement with the landscape, but also on his eccentric personality and especially its reception in recent popular culture, historiographic research, and scholarship. In an attempt to reflect critically on the manifold ways Pückler's glamorously mythologized image has been instrumentalized, Schwachenwald explains how the ambiguity and exotic character of his work enabled its adaptation in very different and seemingly disparate political and social contexts throughout the past 150 years. Due critique is given to the selective memory of public and private institutions alike in their drive to commodify this exceptional personality. Finally, special attention is devoted to the mysterious and fascinating figure of Pückler's slave companion *Machbuba/Ajiamé/Bililee*, who is, if anything, an amalgamated character conflated from multiple enslaved women who accompanied Pückler on his journeys through North Africa and the Middle East. The article points out some important problems encountered in the later reception of Pückler's work, and a selective and rather dissonant approach in celebrating simultaneously his Germanness and his cosmopolitanism, while omitting such troubling aspects as his colonialist attitudes towards slavery, race, otherness, and gender.

The remaining three articles in the issue comprise a themed section, organized by Jens Sejrup, representing selected contributions to the conference Changing Global Hierarchies of Value? Museums, Artifacts, Frames, and Flows, held in 2018 at the University of Copenhagen and the National Museum of Denmark. All three papers analyse transcultural dynamics in the shifting meanings attached to the production and reception of objects circulating globally in circuits of collectorship and museum display. In his "Introduction" to the special section, Sejrup frames these contributions in terms of questions about possible global hierarchies of value and practices of classification. How might these cases, analysed in a transcultural perspective, disrupt claims that such hierarchies are unilaterally produced and dominated by "Euro-American" actors?

Around a single touring exhibition in the PRC, and close reading of a single object in that exhibition, Susan Eberhard weaves a rich investigation of a far-flung history of the transcultural expropriation, re-appropriation, and repeated reinterpretation of a class of mobile objects: silverware created for the Euro-American market, by a Chinese silversmithing industry closely connected with extraterritorial zones in the treaty port cities of the late Qing. Eberhard argues that these works are associated historically with a period and

set of circumstances often interpreted in terms of "national humiliation" at the hands of the Western powers. This would seem to make them unlikely vehicles for the articulation of new Chinese nationalist self-understandings in the post-socialist era, but this is exactly the use to which they have been turned. By dint of a gymnastic set of conceptual moves that Eberhard carefully dissects, the curation of the exhibition presents such silverware as trophies of new types of nationalist pride and triumph—evidence of the ingenuity and sophistication of Chinese craftsmanship (perhaps with an undertone of admiration for the entrepreneurship involved!), and also of a "Silk Road spirit" of "openness and inclusion."

At the same time, throughout their varied career, these materials are also overwritten with a complex set of narratives and significations surrounding the category of "authenticity." Such Chinese-produced silverware, as Eberhard documents, was often imprinted with "pseudo-hallmarks," which mimicked marks of quality and provenance used on silverware produced in regions under British colonial jurisdiction. Part of their international market success was therefore predicated upon a kind of systematically prepared misidentification of them, as bearers of a type of "authenticity" to which they in fact had no claim. This strategy seems to have worked, inasmuch as overseas collectors and curators believed the objects to be American or English, and this understanding may in part have been responsible for the preservation of the objects until a new fad for collection, this time on the part of Hong Kong and Chinese collectors, saw them "repatriated." In this context, the works are overwritten with a new discourse of "authenticity," now meaning that they are revealed in their true identity as bearers of genuinely "Chinese" positive qualities—the same aforementioned technical accomplishment, aesthetic sense, and cosmopolitan openness.

In both of these respects, the case studied by Eberhard also exemplifies the ironies of the transcultural. First, in an echo of Wagner's coins, Eberhard's silverware shows that the symbolic vehicles privileged by nationalist claims to distinctive identity, autonomy, continuity of cultural values, and even symbolic sovereignty are often products of thoroughgoing processes of transculturation. Indeed, the same might sometimes even be said of the very ideologies, discourses, and strategies constructed to shoehorn such items of "heritage" or privileged sites of memory into nationalist frames—which also often seem, in their broad brushstrokes, to be drawn from a common playbook with global or transcultural currency. This irony, of course, is only one facet of the broader irony by which the form of nationalism itself—one of the great engines constructing supposedly autonomous, distinct, self-identical, and self-determining cultures in the modern world—is a profoundly transcultural mechanism and product. An analogous irony often structures discourses of authenticity and their categories, which, as here, rely for their effect precisely

upon a similar type of distinction and autonomy, which implies an immunity to or exemption from transculturation. In this sense, Eberhard's focus and method might exemplify an agenda of research vital to transcultural studies. Arguably, we should study, just as closely as transcultural mechanisms themselves, the recuperative tactics by which the architects of nationalist or culturalist ideologies seek to efface or neutralize the signs and traces of transculturation. Indeed, perhaps, by a kind of "reading against the grain," the discursive intensity at such points of denial and strain might even serve as a kind of Geiger counter, which leads us to hotspots of transculturation, where the tensions occasioned for nationalist-culturalist frames are particularly acute. At such pressure points, we might unpick the patches and veneers applied by ideologists to uncover instances of transculturation particularly freighted or consequential; and amidst the present wave of feverish work to construct and manage "cultural heritage," such analysis is surely all the more germane, indeed, perhaps urgent.

Park Ji Young studies two museum exhibits sponsored by the South Korean government, one at the British Museum and one at the National Museum of Denmark, centering on the *sarangbang* ("scholar's study") and larger displays comprising entire houses containing the *sarangbang*. Park explores the tensions running through the resulting conjunction of different knowledge systems, institutions, and structures of authority, and the agendas attendant upon them, and the transcultural processes that operate in their interaction. Among the forces at play, the Korean government seeks to espouse through the *sarangbang* a certain appropriation of pre-modern, ostensibly pan-Asian, "Confucian" civilizational and moral ideals, in the service of an "invented tradition" that constructs Korea as a legitimate modern nation-state. Western museums, however, tend rather to frame the same objects in the terms of discourses grounded in aesthetics, scholarly or "scientific" canons for the study of culture, and exoticizing categories of ethnicity or otherness. To these elements, we might hypothetically add others that Park did not investigate, such as the understanding of Shin Young-hoon himself, the master artisan who constructed the houses, and those who worked with him; of museum staff other than those who determined the formally presented hermeneutics of the displays; or of the various publics who came to view them.

In the uneasy and polysemantic space constituted by these various forces and discourses, the house and its *sarangbang* become a site on which new meanings are generated and jostle with one another, and new questions arise. Among these questions are, again, the question of the nature of authenticity and the processes that produce it (which Park prefers to leave open, asking simply, near the end of her essay, "Are these *sarangbang* […] authentic objects […]?"), but also, the questions posed by Sejrup about supposedly hegemonic global hierarchies of values: What values and constructs of

knowledge, or *whose*, animate these exhibitions, or dominate their reception? The tools of transcultural query, of course, might rejoin that the question itself, posed in these terms, is most likely unhelpful or misleading. We might expect that no institution or agency could ever lock such objects into a single and harmonious set of meanings, and that even regarded as a complex and internally riven whole, the exhibits are the vehicle for the transculturated emergence of fresh constellations of meaning, outrunning the intentions of the various cultural agents that produce them. The fact that the "object" exhibited is a house—with overtones like home, hearth, and all that is most "ours" or "one's own"—might lend this case an additional symbolic trenchancy or poignancy (and here we might think of other, perhaps even more complex cases, such as the storied *wharenui* Rauru in Hamburg).[3]

Roberto Costa studies the dynamics of response to regional and global conditions in the production of traditional woodcarvings by the Asmat of West Papua, amid the artification of their works on the global market. No less than Eberhard's silverware, Costa's case presents us with rich material for reflection on the transculturational formation and transformation of notions of "authenticity," though with very different particulars and lessons. Various agents outside Asmat culture itself, including the Indonesian government, international art dealers and curators, and scholars, have attempted to define Asmat "authenticity" in various ways, often with the implication or overt conclusion that it is located primarily at some reference point in the past, and presently endangered or moribund. Through Costa's fine-grained ethnographic fieldwork, however, we gain a vivid portrait of the creative energy and agile thought and practice of the carvers themselves. Their voices, as Costa sensitively relays and analyses them, present a dynamic range of bases and models for authenticity that are not envisaged in the relatively static criteria of the aforementioned "outsider" discourses. This authenticity—perhaps better, these authenticit*ies*, in the plural—are in this picture very much alive and present, and like anything living, grow and develop in active response to complex changes in their environs.

We are surely warranted in characterizing the result of this investigation as a model of authenticity that accords better with some of the fundamental intuitions underpinning the transcultural approach. Indeed, this model yields, alongside the more customary critical fruits of that approach, a more

3 Rauru is a *wharenui*, or "great house," created in the nineteenth century by the carver Te Waru of the Te Arawa *iwi* (people) of the Bay of Plenty in New Zealand. Rauru's present "home" is MARKK (Museum am Rothenbaum Kulturen und Künste der Welt, formerly the Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg). Such "houses" (*whare*) are typically personages, not objects, with their own agency and authority, with an identity connected to or even equivalent to that of significant ancestors of the *iwi*. See Museum am Rothenbaum, "Das Haus Rauru Meisterwerk der Māori," MARKK, accessed December 14, 2019, https://markk-hamburg.de/ausstellungen/das-haus-rauru/.

positive and creative potential. Authenticity, that is to say, is here envisaged as fundamentally flexible and dynamic. Moreover, authenticity is here also constructed from the ground up (i.e. from the very level of the tactically adaptive selection of the criteria on which authenticity will be determined) by local agents—authors and authorities—in adaptive reaction to the transcultural dynamics that confront them in the open engagement of their culture with the "outside." The virtues of this approach are at least threefold: it offers sharper concepts with which we can conceptualize authenticity in transformation, against stereotypes predicated upon stasis, essence, or origins; it attends to the place of agents too often invisible or unheard in large-scale systemic analyses; and, in line with the themes of the special section identified by Sejrup, it powerfully shows that purportedly global hierarchies of value are continually and transculturally reshaped in engagements with a host of such local actors and conditions.

As always, we hope that you find this issue a fruitful read, and we look forward to readers' critiques and comments. At the juncture marked by the official end of the Cluster, it is especially apposite (for us in Heidelberg, but perhaps also our colleagues elsewhere) not just to reflect on what has been achieved, but also to identify directions for new developments. There remains much room for further refinement, systematization, and extension of the transcultural approach, as well as further strategic application to unsettle and supplement the received narratives and frames of more conventional disciplines and area studies. At the risk of overburdening and distorting it, we borrow one last time Rudolf Wagner's metaphor: If the "forest" is the field of transcultural studies, and individual studies the "trees," we certainly need new individual trees of known species (though it is surely ecologically unhealthy merely to clone existing trees). But it is far more exciting and valuable when new species emerge. In this vein, we also hope that the contributions presented here will stimulate further work, especially work that is theoretically and methodologically innovative, and we look forward to receiving submissions for future issues.

Michael Radich and Diamantis Panagiotopoulos

Fig. 1: *Axel Michaels and Rudolf Wagner, pictured at the Second Centre for Asian and Transcultural Studies Open Forum: China and the World, the World and China, in Honor of Rudolf G. Wagner, June 26, 2019. Reproduced with the kind permission of Susann Henker.*

Fig. 2: *Catherine V. Yeh and Rudolf Wagner, pictured at the Second Centre for Asian and Transcultural Studies Open Forum: China and the World, the World and China, in Honor of Rudolf G. Wagner, June 26, 2019. Reproduced with the kind permission of Susann Henker.*