

Editorial Note

Having completed its first 50 issues, *Oriens Extremus* will begin a new series starting with the next issue. When the journal was founded in 1954, the scholarly world was quite different from what it is today. Wolfgang Franke, one of the founders of *Oriens Extremus*, looking back on those times, wrote that “for the universities in the federal republic of Germany, ... even in the 1950s, East Asia was entirely irrelevant.” The chair for Japanese studies had been abolished in 1945, Korean studies were unheard of, and in Sinology a single professor taught a handful of students. Elsewhere, too, “it was not until after the Second World War that the language and the unsurpassed cultural achievements of the most populous country on earth ceased to be the concern mainly of occasional students taught by isolated professors” (Raymond Dawson).

Under these circumstances, it seemed perfectly appropriate, even necessary, to publish a “Journal for the Language, Art and Culture of the Far East“ *in toto*. Henceforth, *Oriens Extremus* provided a forum for the budding East Asia disciplines, and its 50 issues have helped these disciplines grow and mature. Indeed, grown and matured they have: Hamburg, still home to *Oriens Extremus*, now has two professors and a junior professor for Japanology and Sinology each, as well as professors for Korean, Thai and Vietnam studies, the students of these disciplines number well over 500. This growth in numbers, which arguably reflects a global trend, is matched by the scope of differentiation within these disciplines. Whereas half a century ago, a few comprehensive journals were sufficient, nowadays an abundance of specialized periodicals for almost any sub-discipline of East Asian studies cater to a highly differentiated field of scholarship.

So whence *Oriens Extremus*? Do East Asian studies still need a journal that covers the whole of the “far east”? The editors believe, it does. True to its title, the scope of *Oriens Extremus* will stay broad. It will continue to publish articles dealing with China, Japan, Korea, and Southeast Asia, and it will continue to cover “far eastern” cultural and intellectual history from the beginnings until the modern age. However, it will not do so in a traditional fashion, simply lining up articles about widely differing fields, periods, and cultures. Rather, the new series of *Oriens Extremus* will assemble articles in English, French and German that deal with a specific topic, bringing together the perspectives of different disciplines in a common focal point. While still welcoming the submission of cutting-edge articles from any field at any time, *Oriens Extremus* will henceforth devote a significant part of every issue to a topic from the field of *conceptual history*. It specifically endorses scholarship that asks not how the East Asian world is or was, but how it is or was *described*, how these descriptions of the world change(d), and why this may be so. Focusing on concepts such as “time,” “culture,” “friendship,” “society,” “nation,” “history,” “religion,” “knowledge,” “education,” “justice,” etc., on certain periods in which concepts underwent dramatic change (the early modern age, for example) or the media and institutions that promoted conceptual change, *Oriens Extremus* will provide a *tertium comparationis* that relates contributions from diverse fields to one another. We encourage

scholars of literature, history, philosophy, or the social sciences to contribute to a forum that is meant to highlight specific topics in a comparative perspective. Thriving on diversity, *Oriens Extremus* will provide a frame for specific East Asian views on universal topics to become visible. In this way, it seeks to engage not only scholars from East Asian studies, but also to address readers from other disciplines dealing with similar questions.