

# **Transcultural Research – Heidelberg Studies on Asia and Europe in a Global Context**

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Michael Falser

Editor

# Cultural Heritage as Civilizing Mission

From Decay to Recovery

Proceedings of the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Workshop  
on Cultural Heritage and the Temples of Angkor  
(Chair of Global Art History, Heidelberg University,  
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Cover illustration: A press photograph depicting Maréchal Lyautey (in white uniform) in his role as the official representative of the 1931 International Colonial Exhibition in Paris, guiding his guests, the future George VI of England and his wife, through the pavilion structures of the event. In the background the entry gate to the ephemeral, 1:1-scaled replica of the 12th-century Cambodian temple of Angkor Wat. Parisienne de Photographie, © Roger-Viollet

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# Preface

The research field known as Global Art History is a new one that is being defined by a number of academic institutions worldwide in response to the challenge posed by global connectivity to existing disciplines. In Germany, the *Heidelberg Cluster of Excellence “Asia and Europe in a Global Context—The Dynamics of Transculturality”* has instituted the first and only Chair in the country for this area of study.<sup>1</sup> Built into the *Karl Jaspers Centre for Advanced Transcultural Studies* (renamed *Heidelberg Centre of Transcultural Studies* in 2014) as the institutional home of the Cluster “Asia and Europe,” the *Chair of Global Art History* under Professor Monica Juneja seeks to question the taxonomies and values that have been built into the discipline of art history since its inception and have been thereafter taken as universal. This includes a deconstruction of the disciplinary models within art history that have marginalized experiences and practices of entanglement. With a focus on the role of disciplines like archaeology, architectural conservation/preservation, and art history within larger political ideologies, this book seeks to contribute to the Chair’s main interest of investigating formation processes of art and visual practices in transcultural settings.

This book is particularly associated with one of Heidelberg Cluster’s four major research areas: “Historicities and Heritage,” which engages in a dialogue between modern disciplines like visual and media, anthropology, archaeology, and global art history. It discusses how texts, languages, spaces, objects—in this book, architecture—and concepts—in our context the notion of cultural heritage as part of culturo-political action programs—have been reconfigured over time to create entangled histories and memories as well as artefacts of hybrid materiality.

This book is part of my particular (Habilitation) project within this research area entitled *Heritage as a Transcultural Concept—Angkor Wat from an Object of*

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<sup>1</sup> For more information about Heidelberg Chair of Global Art History, accessed February 4, 2013. <http://www.asia-europe.uni-heidelberg.de/en/research/cluster-professorships/global-art-history.html>.

*Colonial Archaeology to a Contemporary Global Icon.*<sup>2</sup> The project investigates the modern concept of cultural heritage by charting its colonial, postcolonial, nationalist, and global trajectories. It does so through a case study of the twelfth-century temple of Angkor Wat in Cambodia and explores how different phases of its history unfolded within the transcultural interstices of European and Asian projects and conceptual definitions: from its “discovery in the jungle” by French colonial archaeology in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to its canonization as a symbol of national identity during the struggle for independence and decolonization, under the Vietnamese occupation and the genocidal Khmer Rouge regime, and finally as a global icon of contemporary heritage schemes after Cambodia’s national and cultural rebirth under UN assistance after 1990 until today. A study of material traces and architectural forms as well as of literary and visual representations of the structure are undertaken with a view to analyzing the processes of transfer and translation as well as the more recent proliferation of hybrid art forms in the wake of Angkor Wat’s transformation into a media icon. In general terms, the project deals with the modern processes of cultural appropriation, exclusion, and ascription that marked the transcultural relationships surrounding the Angkor Wat complex. By questioning the supposedly “universal” concept of “cultural heritage,” the project investigates how different regimes between Europe and Asia (France and Cambodia) made one and the same cultural heritage object—in this case the temple of Angkor Wat—an integral part of their different “cultural visions and civilizing missions.” Raising this question to a higher, comparative level through a wide range of case studies was the basic point of departure for this book, which was initiated at the *2nd International Workshop “Rebirthing” Angkor? Heritage between Decadence, Decay, Revival, and the Mission to Civilize* and took place at the Heidelberg Chair of Global Art History in May 2011.<sup>3</sup> Not all of the original papers presented at conference have been included in this book and some additional authors were asked to supplement the final result.

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<sup>2</sup> See the homepage of the project “Heritage as a Global Concept,” accessed February 4, 2013, <http://www.asia-europe.uni-heidelberg.de/en/research/d-historicities-heritage/d12.html>. The overall results of this project will be published in my forthcoming monography *Angkor Wat. From Jungle Find to Global Icon. A Transcultural History of Heritage* (De Gruyter: Berlin).

<sup>3</sup> See the original workshop, accessed March 30, 2013, <http://www.asia-europe.uni-heidelberg.de/en/research/d-historicities-heritage/d12/angkor-workshops/2011.html>. These conference proceedings are the second in a series. The first proceedings were published, together with Monica Juneja, in 2013 as “*Archaeologizing” Heritage? Transcultural Entanglements between Local Social Practices and Global Virtual Realities*. They analyzed (a) how built cultural heritage (Angkor was again the central point of investigation) is visualized and negotiated in different media from photography to computational sciences; (b) the kinds of tensions these (often idealized) “representations” hold for the site and its stakeholders; and (c) how new approaches in theoretical research and practical on-site conservation react to these problems. See the original 2010 workshop, accessed March 30, 2013, <http://www.asia-europe.uni-heidelberg.de/en/research/d-historicities-heritage/d12/angkor-workshops/2010.html>, and the webpage of the published workshop proceedings: <http://www.springer.com/social+sciences/book/978-3-642-35869-2>.

I would like to thank all those who contributed to the making of this book—above all, the authors themselves. I would also like to thank the German Research Foundation (DFG) for providing the funding for this publication, Prof. Monica Juneja for her invaluable theoretical input and personal encouragement, as well as the Gerda Henkel Foundation and Prof. Andreas Beyer, the director of the *Centre Allemand d’Histoire de l’Art* in Paris (2009–2014), for the financial and infrastructural support needed to finalize this publication. In addition, sincere thanks are due to Andrea Hacker of the editorial office at the Heidelberg Cluster for her friendly and efficient management of the project from the start, to Angela Roberts for her careful and competent copyediting, to Birgit Muench of Springer, and to Petronela Soltesz and Jennifer Pochodzalla for their technical assistance. Finally, I would like to extend my thanks to the two anonymous reviewers of the manuscript as well as to the series editors for their many constructive suggestions.

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Michael Falser





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