

Cultural Brokers in European and Asian Contexts. Investigating a Concept – Introduction

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The four essays introduced in this cluster represent one of the results of transdisciplinary discussions within the thematic platform »Global Eurasia – Comparison and Connectivity« at the Austrian Academy of Sciences. They resulted from comparative discussions on the concept of cultural brokerage, designed to name, describe and understand the phenomena of intercultural and transcultural exchange. In this introduction, interdisciplinary foundations of the concept of cultural broker are related to relevant contributions within medieval studies. Within it, the role model function of Christian missionaries with regard to the cultural and social-historical concept of the cultural broker is discussed, and the attributes associated with the concept of the cultural broker in the research discourse are defined, using the examples of early medieval Christian missionaries. The Vita of St Adalbert (d. 997), written at the beginning of the 11th century by Bruno von Querfurt, serves as an example. With its help, different contemporaneous attitudes towards cultural mediation in the given time and space are defined. The summary of the individual contributions in the thematic section concludes this introductory chapter.

Keywords: Middle Ages, cultural mediation, missionary narratives, language learning

Preface

Four essays introduced in this cluster represent one of the results of transdisciplinary discussion within the thematic platform »Global Eurasia – Comparison and Connectivity«, an initiative of institutes of the Austrian Academy of Sciences working in the humanities, social sciences, and cultural studies. Its aim was to pool the outstanding expertise of these institutes in a wide range of disciplines in European and Asian studies, open to the critical examination of content-related connections and comparisons across disciplinary boundaries, for innovative questions.

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The group focused on migrations of knowledge, cultures of translation, communities of knowledge, and locality and its transregional and global frameworks. The thematic platform allowed the participating institutes to take targeted measures to develop joint projects and to promote young researchers in the development of multidisciplinary perspectives. The discussion started in the autumn of 2019 with the workshop on »Normativity and Subversion in Cultures of Writing«, which produced many points of contact and laid a basis for several interdisciplinary endeavors. The joint work thus began very optimistically, with two further workshops planned for 2020, one of them on »Agency, Networks and Transregional Contexts«. The topic was human agency and the strategic options individuals or groups have for acting in certain ways. The other workshop was planned to discuss »Diffusion of Knowledge and Transformations of Spaces of Knowledge«. It aimed to ask how and in what ways innovations, both material (technological) and theoretical (the arts and sciences), spread and by which means they are transported, adopted, rejected or transformed.

However, this promising cooperation was interrupted by the Covid-19 epidemic in March 2020. The platform's research program had to be redesigned within the confines of the following two years, which were characterized by repeated lockdowns. The team used the unfamiliar situation to experiment with different formats of scholarly exchange and to explore previously unfamiliar dissemination channels. A series of short films were produced over the following two years, which were published on the OeAW's YouTube channel, as well as on the websites and social media presences of the initiative and the institute.¹ Despite the complicated situation of the two Covid years, it was still possible to establish a permanent exchange between the researchers involved, which ultimately resulted in the application for the »Cluster of Excellence Eurasian Transformation«, which was approved by the Austrian Research Foundation in spring 2023. This new environment ensures that the results of the work of the thematic platform in the form of the development of multi- and interdisciplinary research fields and the identification of new research questions are directly incorporated into future research work.

Essays presented in this section of the journal *Medieval Worlds* represent results of one of the thematic clusters designed at the beginning of the interdisciplinary collaboration within the initial platform. It was formed with the concepts of cultural brokers in mind and focused on »agents of knowledge transfer«, later changed to the more inclusive form of »agents of knowledge exchange«. The working group was formed in 2019 with the objective of presenting results at an international workshop in 2021. At first, the work group comprised researchers from the fields of history (medieval and modern), Byzantine studies, Oriental studies, East Asian studies (India, Tibet and Japan) and sociology.

As mentioned above, the Covid-19 pandemic both halted and ultimately postponed the planned work in the work group. It also led to a significant loss of participants, mostly due to institutional and workflow-related problems: the contracts of several collaborators ended or changed significantly before the new, envisaged date of the presentation in 2022. On the other hand, it was possible to add external experts from various fields to the working group. On 8 April, the external speakers staged a small workshop on the idea of cultural brokerage, with participants at the Austrian Academy and online.

1 Global Eurasia. Comparison & Connectivity, accessed on 18 June 2024: <https://www.oeaw.ac.at/en/global-eurasia>; Global Eurasia 2022, accessed on 18 June 2024: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLPpNV2SkU5oY-GIe3mSv-qu1KaQevLBWeg>

The project participants presented their contributions and preliminary results a few weeks later, on 29 April 2022, at the workshop »Diffusion of knowledge and transformations of spaces of knowledge«, held at the Austrian Academy of Sciences – again accessible online. Both presentations were received quite enthusiastically by the audience, which is why it was deemed sensible to publish the present set of papers in a themed cluster of this journal.

Cultural Brokers – Interdisciplinary Approaches

The concept of »cultural brokers« is one of those designed to name, describe and understand the phenomena of intercultural and transcultural exchange. It is mainly used in cultural sociology as well as in the educational sciences, psychology, economics and most recently, in migration studies in order to grasp various issues of cultural encounter in the present with the focus on future developments. Historiography works with this concept to a lesser extent, mainly because of its rather broad definition. Nevertheless, reflecting on cultural brokerage offers the opportunity to determine, above all, the role of prominent individual actors in an intercultural interaction as it was understood by themselves as well as by their contemporaries.² The concept of cultural brokerage can be especially valuable in the interpretation of the narratives of the past, such as histories, local chronicles, hagiographic texts and similar. Due to the relative paucity of written sources from the epochs before the introduction of print, historians often find it challenging to extricate themselves from the tales presented, especially in those contemporaneous narratives of the past that display high rhetorical and literary qualities. For the historian, contemplating one's own function as a broker between past and present often represents the sole avenue to step away from these often very suggestive narratives and discover new angles of observation.

The question of to what degree we may designate the cultural broker as a translator or mediator arises. In scholarly discourse, these three terms are often employed interchangeably, mainly because within cultural brokerage, both translation and mediation emerge as fundamental domains of activity. Lydia Liu, in her focused examination of translation as an act, succinctly encapsulates the central issue inherent in both concepts: »In whose terms, for which linguistic constituency, and in the name of what kinds of knowledge or intellectual authority does one perform acts of translation between cultures?«³ Brokers undertake the pivotal task of mediating and translating not between abstractions such as culture but between specific individuals and groups in space as well as in time, the latter being the most interesting issue for historians. The brokerage between past, present and future societies may be traced in some written sources and defined as a brokerage among the existing array of identifications that individuals and groups adhere to. In his revealing study of narratives of identification in early medieval Gaul, Helmut Reimitz defines the act of diachronic cultural brokerage as »a creative performance in social contexts, that are characterized by a complicated interplay between different social groups and identities that fuel the broker's actions and form the basis of their social prestige. Difference is the broker's stock in trade, but integration is what they offer.«⁴

2 Schaeffer, *Cultural brokers*, in this volume, 111, appreciates precisely this aspect of the term, which »centers attention upon human agents of change rather than abstract entities – upon »Buddhists«, for instance, rather than »Buddhism« – and is sufficiently broad and flexible to be useful in multiple contexts.«

3 Liu, *Translingual Practice*, 1.

4 Reimitz, *History*, 19.

On the other hand, as Liu puts it, »occupying an intermediary position, slightly removed from the ultimate decision-making authority, brokers sometimes find themselves capable of pledging more than they can ultimately fulfill.«⁵ In any case, rather than simply eradicating social disparities, they forge novel frameworks for integration into a broader collective that, in an ideal case, can be embraced by all participating social groups and identities.

Placing emphasis on identities rather than cultures indeed proves more conducive to unlocking the methodological potential inherent in the concept of the cultural broker. This shift redirects focus towards discursive constructions and subjects the theoretical robustness of the cultural broker concept to critical scrutiny. Cultural brokerage has perennially been, and remains, a realm intertwined with power dynamics, which Reimitz approaches with reference to prestige. It frequently served as a tool of coercion over those perceived as inferior, often stemming from disparities in the sophistication of rhetoric and education as well as efficacy of (military) technology. In any case, regardless of particular power relations between the involved parties, the outcome of every act of translation, mediation, or brokerage, ideally results in a new set of identifications or a reconfiguration of existing ones. These freshly minted or redefined identifications then set in motion a process of identity transformation for the individuals and/or groups involved, thereby catalyzing a corresponding transformation within their respective communities. If we define cultural brokerage through the lens of identity and embrace a dynamic understanding of culture and cultural exchange, then every individual could conceivably be seen as a cultural broker. However, if taken to its logical conclusion, this perspective would render the concept of cultural brokerage as an analytical tool obsolete.

The paramount contribution to the discourse on cultural brokerage arises predominantly from the fields of sociology and anthropology, rooted in part in the depictions of encounters between Europeans and indigenous populations since the dawn of colonial empires. As Margaret Connell Szasz observed, the interest in the concept of cultural brokerage was fueled by »contemporary interest in cultural intermediaries which has coincided with grown concern for cultural pluralism.«⁶ Consequently, these narratives have exerted a profound influence on the conceptualization of cultural brokerage and the conception of what constitutes an ideal cultural broker between groups, societies and cultures that are in a fundamentally asymmetrical power relationship.⁷ Kurtis Schaeffer summarizes this aspect of the cultural broker discourse neutrally, by highlighting one of its important features: »Brokers mediate between small, often local social groups and large, often translocal social groups ... they must attend to the needs and desires of both the smaller and the larger groups.«⁸ With the exception of migration studies the problem of power relations is often omitted in the application of the concept of cultural brokerage,⁹ because the focus is on the person of the broker, as Eric Hinderaker reminds us: »The essential fascination with brokers is biographical.«¹⁰

5 Liu, *Translingual Practice*, 1.

6 Schaeffer, Cultural brokers, in this volume, 112.

7 See, on the use of the term cultural broker by Clifford Geertz, Javanese Kijaji, and by Eric Wolf, Aspects of group relations, Reimitz, *History*, 19, and Schaeffer in this volume, 111-115.

8 Schaeffer, Cultural brokers, in this volume, 112.

9 See, on this, Sara de Jong, Cultural brokers, 45-59.

10 Hinderaker, Translation and cultural brokerage, 359

Hinderaker mentions here, among others, Malinche, »the Nahua woman who became translator, ally, and partner to Hernando Cortés: Her mystique is based in part on her extraordinary facility with languages, but it was her gift for shrewd and sometimes duplicitous negotiation and her unwavering loyalty to Cortés that has marked her as an especially powerful and controversial figure.«¹¹

Delving into the status of figures like Malinche, Kandiaronk,¹² and several other remarkable individuals renowned for traversing the boundaries between European and indigenous American cultures,¹³ the historian invokes narratives strikingly reminiscent of those surrounding Christian missionaries since late antiquity – the stories of Kandiaronk and Malinche were actually written by missionaries, and almost everything we know about their activities as intercultural mediators originated in them. The narratives on medieval missionaries depict emissaries faithful to a purportedly »superior« creed subjugating adherents of »inferior« ones, as seen through the eyes of erudite narrators who oscillated between disdain and fascination for the societies and cultures in question. These narrators interpreted the encounters and the roles of the missionaries in question through the prism of their own interests, expectations and experiences. Within their narratives, intellectual, i.e. rhetorical, superiority often served as a self-evident argument favoring the »natural« dominance of the »superior« culture over the inferior one, frequently defined by the protagonist's adeptness at acquiring languages swiftly in an implicit reference to the miracle of Pentecost, to the Holy Spirit poured out on the Apostles.

The ability to learn languages quickly and very well is thematized explicitly in some narratives about Christian missionaries as a feat accomplished through the direct intervention of transcendent authority. This is very prominent in the *Life* of St Constantine the Philosopher,¹⁴ a Byzantine scholar who in 860 set out from Constantinople at the invitation of the Moravian prince Rastislav to evangelize the Slavs. His constant engagement with foreign languages is described as an achievement brought about with God's help; it ultimately ensures the success of his missionary work.¹⁵ Some decades later *Vita Methodii*,¹⁶ i.e. the narration of the life of Constantine's brother Method, no longer highlights the language learning and declares both brothers were Slavs. This small shift points to a different perspective of the authors of both legends of intercultural mediation – the foreigners (the Byzantine missionaries) are seen by the milieu in which the Church Slavonic *Vita Methodii* was written as »their own«, as Slavs, i.e. individuals with a shared identity. Interestingly, according to the legend, on his deathbed Methodius appoints his successor in the bishopric with the argument that this man is the most suitable candidate because he is learned in Latin books.

11 Hinderaker, Translation and cultural brokerage, 359-360.

12 See the recent interpretation of the remarkable position of Kandiaronk as a cultural broker, Graeber and Wengrow, *Dawn of Everything*, passim.

13 A cultural broker nevertheless is not a simple border crosser or an inhabitant of a »contact zone« as the too broad understanding of the term sometimes seems to suggest. For such a very broad definition of cultural brokerage, see, for example, *Cultural Brokers at Mediterranean Courts*. For a detailed discussion of the contribution of this volume to the discussion of the term cultural broker, see Schaeffer, Cultural brokers, in this volume, p. 114-115.

14 See the recent edition of the text and the extensive commentary by Thomas Daiber in *Vita des Konstantin-Kyrill*.

15 *Vita des Konstantin-Kyrill*, ed. Daiber, 284-289.

16 Vavřínek, *Staroslověnské životy*, 85-112.

It seems the task of cultural brokerage had changed in the meanwhile: the follower of the Byzantine missionary bishop had to focus not only on the Slavic inhabitants but also on the Latin Frankish church.¹⁷

The *Vita Constantini* and *Vita Methodii* were written at a time when the communication methods extolled within it, depicted as signs of true Christian perfection, could indeed yield positive outcomes for establishing and perpetuating the equilibrium of powers. It was an era in which the protagonists operated within a much broader communication framework than was often the case later in the given region. The three powers presented in the *Vita Constantini* and *Vita Methodii* – the Byzantine Empire, the burgeoning papacy supported by the flourishing Carolingian Empire and the ambitious Frankish Church – converged in the region of Pannonia and its environs, including the present-day Balkans and Istria, to negotiate their respective spheres of influence in the Slavic mission.¹⁸ The most decisive interest in this question came from the Frankish Church. Ultimately, it was the Frankish Church that emerged victorious north of the Danube, even managing to assimilate not only the feared Normans but also the more recently arrived and perhaps even more feared Magyars by the year 1000.¹⁹

The triumph of the Frankish Church led to a temporary narrowing of the horizon for the elites in Central and East-Central Europe. The *Vita Constantini* depicted a wide world encompassing substantial portions of the Mediterranean region and Eurasia. With the consolidation of the spheres of influence came not a decline of the cultural brokerage, i.e. intercultural mediation as a social practice, but a decline in the appreciation of it, in its perception as a sign of true holiness. Here one must consider the circumstances of the origin of the *Vita Constantini*. Handed down in late medieval copies, it was most probably written by Constantine's brother Methodius at a time when the results of the missionary work of both brothers were significantly threatened by the attack of the Frankish Church, only to be finally destroyed soon afterwards. The *Vita Constantini* can therefore also be read as a testament, as a textbook of methods and strategies for intercultural mediation – a wistful dream of harmony for all those who had linked their life careers with the Slavic Church and had to watch as all their exclusive skills were no longer needed.

To illustrate this point within the same geographical context in which the Panonian legends originated – that is, between the papal see in Italy and the eastern border of the Frankish Empire – I will now turn to a very specific hagiographic work written some one hundred and thirty years later. In his article, Clemens Gantner considers the problem of a narrative treatment of failed brokerage and asks whether and under which conditions we could discuss the idea of a failed cultural broker.²⁰

17 Vavřínek, *Staroslověnské životy*, 102. On the Byzantine mission in Moravia, see Kouřil (ed.), *Cyrlometodějská misie a Evropa*; Ivanova, *Inventing Slavonic and Rychterová*, Old Church Slavonic in Great Moravia and Bohemia, 165–184.

18 Geary, *Language & Power*, 50: »Nowhere was the use of vernacular scripture more debated during the ninth century than in debates about the use of the Slavic liturgy in the recently converted regions of Moravia and Dalmatia, debates that pitted Frankish churchmen against Rome in their efforts to control the ecclesiastical life in these regions.«

19 On the Magyar migration and its impact in the Frankish realm, see Diesenberger, *Politik der Bedrohung*.

20 Gantner, *Ad utriusque imperii unitatem?*, 47.

In the case of the Prague bishop Adalbert, one of the most important saints of the »New Europe« (Christian polities that consolidated around the year 1000 on the eastern border of the Roman Empire, including Poland, Bohemia, and Hungary), we encounter a life narrative in which the failure of brokerage, or we may say its refusal, becomes the central sign of holiness.²¹

According to the legends, Bishop Adalbert of Prague distinguished himself primarily by practically failing to fulfill any of those brokerage duties that his office required.²² The two oldest vitae, written by Bruno of Querfurt and Johannes Canaparius (or Notker of Liège according to Johannes Fried),²³ both celebrate the saint's inability to show any talent for mediation as a special sign of holiness. This concerns communication with his flock in the bishopric of Prague, with the monastic communities in Rome and above all, with the non-Christian people whom the saint set out to missionize after repeated failures in his diocese as well as in his exile in Rome; an enterprise quickly rewarded with the crown of martyrdom.

The ability central to understanding the holiness of Constantine the Philosopher, namely, the rapid and efficient *learning* of languages, plays no role in the accounts of Adalbert's life. This reveals a shifted attitude towards languages from the perspective of the authors of the legends. Bruno of Querfurt, describing Adalbert's schooling, writes:

»He is also said to have spoken with three languages when the scourge scourged his back, and pressed painfully into his flesh. It was the custom of the pupils to speak Latin, and no one dared to speak in a barbarous tongue before the teacher. Only then, when the burning scourge was brought to bear upon him, did he babble, 'My lord!' as the pain, which knows no law, increased. With the same word both the Saxon and the Slav cry for mercy.«²⁴

The knowledge of multiple languages in the legend serves merely as the occasion for an anecdote, with German and Bohemian-Slavic language skills portrayed only as expressions of a lack of self-control under the influence of intense physical pain.

Adalbert embarked on his mission to evangelize »strange and unlearned nations, who do not yet know the name of the Lord«,²⁵ as the hagiographer characterized the non-Christian inhabitants of Prussia, the (Latin) learning being used here as a sign of distinction. The mission itself is depicted by the hagiographer as a wholly unprepared endeavor: Adalbert and some of his companions camp on the shore, eschewing any activity and making no attempt to engage with the region's inhabitants, let alone reach out to them in any way. The subsequent events are characterized by a fundamental misunderstanding on both sides: »...and a rumor soon spread among the Gentiles that strangers from foreign lands of unknown appearance and unheard-of manners had come to them.

21 On the transmission of the hagiographic texts dealing with the life and martyrdom of Adalbert of Prague, see Gašpar, Preface, 79-94; Sosnowski, *Studia nad wczesnymi żywotami św. Wojciecha*.

22 See, on the bishop as a broker, Reimitz, *History*, 27-32.

23 Fried, Gnesen, Aachen, Rom, 235-279; cf. Sosnowski, *Studia nad wczesnymi żywotami św. Wojciecha*, 25-66, 197; Gašpar, Preface, 88-92.

24 FRB I, 269: *Dicunt etiam tribus linguis pro una locutum; cum scope tergum verrunt, et ferientia flagella dolentem carnem frangunt. Auditoribus enim usus erat latialiter fari, nec ausus est quisquam coram magistro lingua barbara loqui. Unde admotis urentibus virgis, primum, mi domine garrit, iam cum increscit dolor, qui legem non habet, eodem verbo nunc Saxo, nunc Sclavus misericordiam clamat.*

25 FRB I, 286: *... ad exteras et incultas gentes, que nesciunt nomen dei.*

At first, as if out of the blue, people came in small boats, came to the shore, and babbled something barbaric. They were very angry, and sought the stranger.²⁶ The hagiographer characterizes them as barking dogs, bloodthirsty wolves, inhabitants of hell and sinners; the intentionally neglected preparation, the lack of any approach towards the non-believers and lack of interest in learning their language finally secure the saint's martyrdom.

What is more, the hagiographer inserted within the narration of the catastrophic encounters of the saint with the indigenous people a monologue of the saint concerning the conditions and the art of successful brokerage. Faced with repeated failure regarding missionary work, Adalbert suggests to his companions that they approach the locals in a constructive way:

»What we are to do, prosecuted by great accidents, where to turn, I do not know. The appearance of our body and the unusual dress, as I observe, are not a little offensive to the heathen. Therefore, if you will, let us change our spiritual garments, let the hair grow loose, let the beard grow on the shaven chin; perhaps, unrecognized, we may more easily be able to do the work of salvation. And if we become like them, we shall be more friendly to live here, to speak and live with them. And working with our own hands, we will provide for ourselves sustenance after the pattern of the apostles, and in the shelter of our souls we will recite the prescribed psalms.»²⁷

While Adalbert's martyrdom constitutes the center and climax of Bruno's legend, and we might therefore view the almost complete ignoring of the art of brokerage as part of the authorial strategy, legitimate within the given narrative on the martyrdom, the quoted passage warns us against judging the matter too simplistically, although the techniques and means of cultural brokerage are evidenced by hagiographers consistent labeling of them as »deception« in his text.²⁸

According to the legend, Adalbert planned to move into areas inhabited by societies whose language he commanded.²⁹ Language, as the most important means of brokerage, therefore also plays a role in Bruno's legend – albeit only in a passive sense: Adalbert takes no action to learn a new language in Bruno's narrative; he simply intends to go where he can communicate with the languages he already knows, and as we know, in the Legend, apart from Latin, there were only two – German and Czech, i.e. the Bohemian variant of Slavic at the time. The learning of new languages, something that was the foremost concern of the author of the *Vita Constantini* (including the techniques of how to do it), is ignored by Bruno, except for his remark on the Latin lessons, during which the scourge played the main role.

26 FRB I, 293: ... *et fama volans paganorum auribus adduxit, habere se hospites ignoto habitu et inaudito cultu. Primum ex improviso homines numero non plures parva nave veniunt; dant saltum ad terras. barbarum nescio quid frendunt; magna ira fumant, et hospites quaerunt.*

27 FRB I, 294-295: *Pressi magnis adversis, quid consilii arripimus? Quo nos vertamur, nescio. Habitus corporum et horror vestium nostrarum, ut video, paganis animis non parum nocet. Unde, si placet, vestimenta mutemus, cesariem pendentibus capillis crescere sinamus, tonse barbe comas prodire non prohibeamus; forsitan non agniti, melius habemus salute operari; similes eorum effecti, familiariter cohabitamus, alloquimur et convivimus; laborantes quoque minibus propriis victum quaeramus ad instar apostolorum; absconsa mente revolvamus sensum psalmodum.*

28 FRB I, 295: *Ad ferocium quidem Luiticum idola surda predicationis equos flectere placuit, quorum lingua cognovit, et quos necdum visus mutata veste et habitu fallere potuit.*

29 See note 27.

Why this is the case, we can only speculate: Bruno of Querfurt was a highly educated man who traveled throughout Europe in his time, was a member of the elite social circles of the empire and as such, always moved in multilingual environments. His own legend – as he ended his life as a martyr too – depicts him as an exemplary broker, especially concerned to know the language of the people he planned to approach.³⁰ Learning new languages would have been part of his everyday experience anyway.

In any case Adalbert's *Vita* presents us with an ideal world in which Latin should be sufficient for the tasks of real importance. The answer to the question of why it is so has to go beyond a statement of the dominance of Latin education. The absolute majority of the population in the areas where Bruno worked learnt languages outside formal, grammar-based education, which was reserved exclusively for Latin. This was not the case in Mediterranean societies, in which Constantine and his presumed hagiographer operated. The experience of the coexistence of several languages, usually acquired formally, surely formed the perception of the naturalness of literary languages. This eventually also referred to societies that did not yet have a written language, but it was regarded only as a matter of a little organizational effort to provide them with such. By contrast, Latin had a completely differently defined prestige and was understood as exclusive social capital by all those who mastered it. These diametrically opposed discourses on language very probably influenced the depiction of the language situations associated with the protagonists of the hagiographic texts discussed above.

The most significant lesson learned regarding the concept of cultural brokerage from the vitae discussed briefly in this introductory essay is the importance of exercising caution when making generalizations. While there may indeed have been a shift in attitudes towards how to engage with other cultures in the Roman Empire in the 10th century, it is also clear that this societal attitude was composed of the sum of individual attitudes, which were deeply intertwined with the personal experiences of each actor, making them difficult to comprehend through macro-sociological conceptualizations alone. And it is precisely here – with its focus on the individual and their scope of experience and education – that the concept of the cultural broker proves highly valuable. It can assist us in better understanding the individual's contribution within their historical dimension.

The contributions to this volume all play with the theory of cultural brokerage from different perspectives and in very heterogeneous settings. Still, it has to be conceded that the original outlook of the work group was even more diverse. We have tried to maintain that multifaceted view at least in our approach and make the theoretical model of the »cultural broker« as inclusive as possible without doing injustice to the very roots of the idea. This does not mean that the individual contributions to this section did not turn out very heterogeneous – one of the problems, as we have established above, is that the cultural broker approach nearly always needs to be adjusted to the various cases and one runs the distinct threat of it becoming too arbitrary to further our knowledge. At the same time, the possibility to adjust the cultural broker model to so many different test cases also contributes to the model's usefulness and, frankly, its beauty.

30 The strategies of missionary work expressed in Bruno's *Vita of Adalbert* and in his own *Vita* were discussed by Wood, *Missionary Life*, 217-218 and Sosnowski, *Kategorie*, 205-230.

Our joint approach has thus been to follow a fixed set of criteria that need to be met to constitute the applicability of the »cultural broker«. These criteria are set out in detail in the contribution by Kurtis Schaeffer to this cluster of articles. We should mention here already, however, that the criteria embody a healthy dose of evaluating their respective salience, in the sense that they are met to very different degrees in the test cases that we present in the cluster

Schaeffer sets out to explain the genesis and fate of two concepts: first the concept of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, often oversimplifying but useful. More importantly, he then follows up with a similar, but far more in-depth exercise on the model of the cultural broker from the perspective of Asian and historical studies. He reiterates the beginnings of the idea in social anthropology of the mid-20th century and how the theoretical approach was imported and considerably refined in historical studies decades later. Again, he shows that while the model of the »cultural broker« always carries the danger of becoming all-encompassing and hence useless, it can still be useful, especially when it comes to intercultural and diachronic comparison. Schaeffer then proceeds to distil from his historical analysis of the genesis of the concept a set of five criteria that need to be met by each individual in order to enable us to regard them as a cultural broker. In doing so, he remains far more restrictive in the employment of the model than other historians before him, as he clearly points out, and as other contributions in our cluster tackle further.³¹ It is one of our aims that while the model of the cultural broker can indeed be used for many documented cases across time and space, it cannot be applied arbitrarily but needs to follow certain »rules«. These criteria are then applied by Schaeffer to his test case, the early Tibetan Buddhist monk, translator, and traveler Vairocana. On this basis, he argues that through precise criteria, the broker concept can be a sensible guide or model for our research.

With Cristina Pecchia's contribution, another perspective is added to the concept, by looking at the intersection of »scholarly personae« and cultural brokers, using the example of *pandits* in the society of British India of the 19th century. Pandits are experts on Sanskrit knowledge systems, in which system they can be compared to scholars, admittedly by European standards. Pecchia shows first that, like the cultural broker, the »scholar« does not correspond to an individual but rather to a set of existing models which actors in the field could employ. Drawing on Schaeffer's contribution, Pecchia then adds an analysis regarding in what way pandits could function as cultural brokers, also addressing the caveats that remain in the light of centuries of looking at these figures through the colonial and orientalist eye. She then introduces her first example, Madhusudan Gupta, an Ayurveda expert, who worked with a British medical doctor to translate the arcane system of old Indian medicine for a European audience. Her second example of the scholar Gangadhar Ray Kaviraj fits far less easily into our scheme, which, however, makes it an even more important test case for our theoretical joint venture. Gangadhar was an authority in the field of Ayurveda. His important scholarly contribution was an edition and commentary of important Ayurvedic texts. Even though his activity was mostly focused on his in-group, through his scholarly work, he made his culture and knowledge accessible to people far beyond it, as an agent of knowledge transfer.

31 See Gantner, Anastasius Bibliothecarius, in this volume p. 184.

Cinzia Grifoni's contribution ties in neatly with the idea of the scholar as cultural broker established by Pecchia, as well as with the observations on the importance of language as a means of brokerage made above. Grifoni analyses the case of Otfrid of Wissembourg. Otfrid was a renowned Carolingian teacher who worked in a multilingual environment and aimed at making the content and the Latin interpretation of the Bible accessible to an audience who had a poor command of Latin. To pursue his goal, he adopted two strategies. On the one hand, he affirmed proudly the value of the vernacular as a language for praising God and authored a pioneering Old High German rendering of central Christian texts, the Gospels. On the other hand, he simplified the Latin of the exegetic tradition and summarized its content: he produced commented editions of several books of the Bible, in which he surrounded the text of the Scriptures with marginal annotations conveying the kernel of previous explanations in a simpler Latin. These commented editions proved to be an important model for later systematic scholarly work on the Bible in the course of the European Middle Ages. Grifoni shows that, through his scholarly work, Otfrid offered his German-speaking audience integration into the Latin Church. He was a cultural broker both for his own, multicultural community, as well as for many future generations of theologians and Christians after him – closing the circle to our Asia test cases.

As the final contribution to the journal section, Clemens Gantner presents the case of Anastasius, librarian of the Roman church in the ninth century CE. In contrast to the former contributions, it is comparatively easy to show that the protagonist of this article matches all the criteria of a cultural broker, as a translator, author and diplomat working for several popes as well as for a Carolingian emperor. However, Anastasius is also known today as a politician and religio-political advisor of the pope. The main objective of the article is thus to compare Anastasius's role as a cultural broker with his other *personae*, which were and still are at least as present in his appraisal by historians. We can see from this case study that cultural brokers were seldom, if ever, only cultural brokers. Often, as in the case of Anastasius, they will have played many roles throughout their lives, hence leaving us with a multitude of faces that are not easy to discern by the modern onlooker – and the question is, if they can and should be analyzed separately at all. The case of Anastasius is also interesting as it clearly shows a political persona that was unsuccessful in that field, but through his double role as a politician *and* a translator/diplomat/cultural broker nevertheless remained an important and prominent figure in Rome and parts of western Europe for several decades. His texts, just like in the other three test cases before, remained of unbroken importance for centuries.

Cultural broker is one of those terms that immediately holds great promise through its focus on the actor, through the perspective of change, through the aspect of internal dynamics and not least, through the optimistic narrative that can be spontaneously associated with it – a narrative about communities that can overcome their mutual mistrust and find a common language. The positive promise is seductive, and that is precisely why it is important to use the term with caution. Its discursive nature must always be revealed. The longing for harmony mentioned above as a strong emotion behind the narrative of the *Vita Constatnini* is inherent not only to the actors and narrators of the present but also to those of the past.

References

Abbreviation

FRB I = Fontes Rerum Bohemicarum I: Vitae sanctorum et aliorum quorundam pietate insignium / Prameny dejin ceskych I: Životy svatých a některých jiných osob nábožných, ed. Josef Emler (Prague 1873).

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