

Stoneyards and Artists in Gandhara

The Buddhist stupa of Saidu Sharif I, Swat (c. 50 CE)

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Editors' Foreword

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The Department of Asian and North African Studies (DSAAM) at Ca' Foscari University of Venice is one of the "Departments of Excellence", a financial plan launched by the Ministry of Education to fund the top State University departments that stand out for the quality of their research, didactics and development project. As a "Department of Excellence", DSAAM aims to intensify its research interests on the transcultural dimension of historical, religious, philosophical, literary and artistic processes between Asia, the Arab world and Europe. To this end, the DSAAM has established the Marco Polo International Research Centre (MaP) for Global Europe-Asia Connections, whose primary mission is the understanding of the dynamics underlying the cultural, political and economic interactions and connections between and within Asia, Europe and the Arab-Islamic world. To foster international scientific cooperation and the dissemination of up-to-date research results on topics that are supported by the Centre, the latter has conceived a new publication called *Marco Polo. Studies in Global Europe-Asia Connections*.

In dialogue with the intellectual tradition of the Centre, our research interests are vast, spanning manifold spaces (from Japan to the Mediterranean Sea), times (from Neolithic times to today, and possibly the future), and themes (from modern geopolitics to religious identities to climate change to archaeological sites), with particular attention to trans-Eurasian interactions. This emphasis on intercultural contact and exchange, especially at the crossroads of the ostensible European-Asian divide, is evoked through the title of the series: indeed, Marco Polo travelled all the way from Venice to Beijing at the end of the 13th century, engaging with many different political contexts, nations, and civilisations along the land and sea routes later jointly known as the 'Silk Road' (or, better, Silk Roads). This concept, with its underlying reference to the exchange of things and ideas across socie-

ties, is a historical phenomenon of great significance associated with a distant past; however, the vital energy of the Silk Road(s) has never dwindled. The People's Republic of China announced the "Silk Road Economic Belt" (now known as the "Belt and Road Initiative") in 2013. In other words, the distant historical traditions of the Silk Road(s) continue to penetrate discursive reality in our own day and age. Globalisation - with its various and contradictory connotations - is an overarching motif that links the Silk Roads of the past and the present.

Inspired by the famous Venetian merchant, our book series prioritises studies that are inquisitive, bold, and dynamic, with a preference for transcultural and interdisciplinary studies. We welcome manuscripts that are grounded in rigorous scholarship and speak to international academic conversations within and across diverse disciplines, including history, international relations, economics, environmental studies, literature, languages, archaeology, art history, philosophy, religion, anthropology, geography, music, performing arts, social sciences, and the digital humanities. The books in this series will focus on specific research topics but will range from single-authored monographs to edited volumes with multiple authors, each contributing a chapter to an organically conceived whole.