

Editorial

This issue of the Estonian Oriental Society's Yearbook Idakiri is inclined towards China. Five of its nine articles deal with issues of contemporary Chinese politics and ideology. Considering the current global geopolitical situation and the now-unconcealed ambition of the authoritarian communist superpower, the People's Republic of China, to "take over" the shaping and management of the world order by its own rules, the topicality of the issue is understandable. It is gratifying that a new generation of China experts has grown up in Estonia, who conduct high-level research and have chosen Idakiri for publishing of their studies.

In the opening article, Katja Koort, guest lecturer at Tallinn University, analyses the two most important discourses in the foreign policy of the People's Republic of China in recent times, "Chinese civilization" and "a great power with Chinese characteristics", which the PRC leadership often uses in its rhetoric, justifying China's ambition and "historical right" to return to the position of the world leader. "Xivilization" has become a journalistic keyword for this policy, hinting at the role of the Chinese leader Xi Jinping as the figurehead of the new policy.

Urmas Hõbepappel, an analyst at the University of Tartu, has studied the opinions and posts of Chinese netizens on Sino-Russian relations and shows that, although the official policy of the PRC sees Russia as a strategic partner of China, the attitude among the people is ambivalent. On the one hand, Russia is currently seen as an important partner of China, forming together a counterweight to "American imperialism". On the other hand, especially in the light of history, Russia is considered hostile rather towards China, as it has stolen vast territories from China in Eastern Siberia in the past, and their return is demanded.

Leslie Leino, a visiting researcher at Tallinn University, presents in his article an analysis of the 1983 speech "How to strengthen the ideological front" by Deng Xiaoping, the former de facto leader of the PRC and the "chief architect of economic reforms". The article proves that the major goal of the reforms initiated by Deng, who had a positive image in the West as a reformer and opener of China, was not to change China but to preserve and strengthen the power of the Communist Party. The focus of the analysed speech was opposition to the "hostile" and inappropriate for

China Western ideology, which Deng believed had at that time infiltrated the minds of many party members in a dangerous way and against which he called to struggle resolutely.

In the following article, Rando Künnapu examines the Chinese Communist Party's covert collaboration with Yiguandao, an officially banned heterodox religious movement in China. An analysis of media coverage of two temple rituals in China, in 2014 and 2016, reveals that the invitation of Yiguandao ritual masters operating in Taiwan to conduct rituals was related to the policy of rapprochement between China and Taiwan, supported by the CCP and the Kuomintang Party, which was in power in Taiwan at the time. The religious movement, which was striving to restore its legitimacy, was used for this purpose.

A review article by Ave Goršič, a senior researcher at the Estonian Literary Museum, on the history of 20th-century Chinese folklore studies, also covers a related field. The author shows that folklore collection and the rise of folkloristics as a discipline in China were linked to the rise of national self-awareness. During the Maoist period, folklore was utilised by communist ideology as a means of expressing and influencing the will of the masses. In the present and future context, the politics of intangible cultural heritage emerges as a key factor, granting folkloristics new visibility while simultaneously linking it to the cultural policy of the state, the heritage industry, and processes of identity construction.

The articles in this issue not related to China include weighty contributions by the distinguished scholars Tarmo Kulmar and Henn Käärrik. The former continues the publication of annotated translations of chapters from the 17th-century Peruvian-Spanish chronicler Inca Garcilaso de la Vega's chronicle, which was already begun in earlier issues of the Yearbook. This time we can read about the laws and moral norms established by the emperor of the pre-Hispanic Inca state, Inca Pachacutec Yupanqui. Käärrik examines the struggle of Hannibal Barca, the most famous military leader of the ancient world, against Rome in the context of the East-West confrontation. With a rigorous source-critical approach, he presents a new view of the key events of the Second Punic War, questioning Hannibal's defeat in the Battle of Zama and the occurrence of this battle in general.

The article by religious historian and choreographer-dancer Saile Johanna Langsepp provides an overview of the development of the Indian classical dance style bharatanāṭyam in the religious context of India. Based on the

analysis of classical texts on performing arts and dance and contemporary dance practices, the intertwining of the sacred and the secular in stage dance performances that grew out of Indian temple dance is examined, exemplified through the work of contemporary choreographer and dancer Rukmini Vijayakumar.

The section of articles concludes with an essay by free-lance researcher Erika Ader on the institution and cult of the living child goddess Kumārī in Nepal.

In the book review section, Igor Kotjuh writes about the collection “Memorandum” by Artur-Erik Laast, a member of the Estonian Oriental Society (EOS), veteran diplomat, and cultural historian, which was self-published by the author for his 80th birthday in 2025.

The issue also includes a jubilee story by Märt Läänemets on the occasion of the 70th birthday of Peeter Vähi, a long-time member of the Estonian Oriental Society, composer, traveller and orientalist, and an obituary by religious historian and assyriologist Amar Annus to Jaan Puhvel, an honorary member of the Estonian Oriental Society, a world-renowned scholar in the field of comparative mythology. As usual, the Yearbook 2025 concludes with a review of Eastern literature published in Estonian during the past year.

As a novelty, Idakiri will also publish illustrations this time. The issue includes reproductions of portrait paintings by four prominent Estonian orientalists, the authors of which are well-known Estonian artists: Portrait of Professor Tarmo Kulmar (Ilmar Kruusamäe 2025), Portrait of Artur Laast (Leho Rubis 2024), Portrait of Märt Läänemets (Kristina Viin 2022), Portrait of Indrek Ude (Sirje Piir 2016).

Märt Läänemets

Editor