Editorial

This special issue of *Idakiri* (*Eastern Bulletin*) is dedicated to Indrek Ude (19 February 1961 – 28 June 2024), a long-standing managing editor of *Idakiri* and an honoured member of the Estonian Oriental Society. Inspired by Ude's legacy, the Society organised the summer school of oriental studies "Do 'East' and 'West' Exist? Cultural Boundaries and Cultures Without Boundaries" (Ermistu, Estonia, on 15–17 July 2025).

The engaging discussions held at the summer school encouraged us to initiate a special issue of *Idakiri* on the theme, providing a platform for publishing both articles based on the presentations given at the summer school and other related research inspired by the summer school. Some questions discussed during the summer school are briefly introduced below.

Are the constructs of 'East' and 'West' even necessary in today's world? The consensus at the summer school was that, from the perspective of common understanding, these concepts serve as necessary tools for recognising intercultural differences; however, it is crucial to bear in mind their relative nature.

Is it possible to compare Eastern and Western traditions and place them in dialogue with one another, and how? Viewed from within, the underlying assumptions of our own tradition often remain invisible to us. It is only when we encounter an unfamiliar tradition that the hidden premises of our habitual way of thinking begin to surface; thus, comparison undoubtedly broadens one's worldview. Certainly, to avoid superficial results, much depends on the criteria chosen as the basis for comparison. A profound comparison therefore requires sufficient competence regarding both traditions involved. Incidentally, the same applies to translation: a good translation requires the translator to have a deep understanding of both cultures and languages.

One should not limit oneself to comparison alone but should also strive for substantive dialogue. This raised the question whether meaningful comparison and genuine dialogue can even exist independently of one another, given that dialogue occurs within each individual as well as between different persons. Ideally, dialogue and comparison would be closely intertwined, even though they are distinguished by a fundamental difference. Comparison is a stricter and more rigid method than dialogue; it tends to take place from an external perspective and is, by nature, more objective.

Dialogue, conversely, unfolds from within and is more personal. Extinct cultures and languages present a challenge, as one cannot engage in dialogue with them in the same way as with living cultures. In any case, both comparison and dialogue offer opportunities for a better understanding of others and of oneself.

Stemming from the abovementioned standpoints, this special issue seeks to juxtapose certain traditions of the East and the West and to foster a dialogue between them. In doing so, we must not forget that our conception of the 'East' may well be a product of our own imagination rather than an accurate understanding of another culture. Therefore, it is worth constantly reminding ourselves that Oriental studies are largely grounded in the aim of understanding the 'East' or the Other in order to better understand ourselves.

The issue includes seven articles in Estonian, accompanied by abstracts in English.

It must be admitted that the scope of topics in this special issue reflects the editors' own interests, as subjects related to Buddhism and philosophy are particularly close to our hearts, both professionally and personally.

We would like to warmly thank everyone without whose contribution this special issue would not have come to be: Indrek Ude, whose legacy gave impetus to the whole undertaking; the organisers, speakers, and listeners of the summer school whose ideas and discussions laid the foundation for several of the articles here; the authors who generously shared their knowledge and time with us; the reviewers for their constructive criticism; the language editors Urve Ansip and Ilmar Anvelt whose careful eyes have polished the texts; layout designer Katrin Kisand under whose hand the content acquired a beautiful form; Artur Kuus who designed the cover; and last but not least the editor of *Idakiri* Märt Läänemets who supported us throughout the whole process.

We hope that this special issue is a worthy step, in Estonian language and culture, along the path toward a dialogue between East and West, and that it will be followed by many more discussions, summer schools, and special issues.

We hope you will enjoy the read.

Vivian Puusepp and Elli Marie Tragel
Editors of the special issue