

## Authors' Biographies

**Blanka Katarzyna Dżugaj** is an Orientalist with a PhD in literary studies. Her research interests focus on the audio-visual arts of the Middle East and Asia, particularly cinema, and the socio-cultural issues of the Middle and Far East. She is the author of several publications on Asian cinema.

**Maria Grajcar Istvanova** serves as a postdoctoral researcher at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Slovak Academy of Sciences and lectures as an assistant professor at Masaryk University, Brno. She earned her PhD. from the Department of East Asian Studies, Comenius University Bratislava. She is a member of European Association of Chinese Linguistics, European Association of Chinese Studies, and Czech Association for Language and Cognition. Her major research interests include Chinese linguistics, corpus linguistics, and media discourse analysis. Her current research project is aimed at the study of the Belt and Road Initiative's image in the Slovak media.

**Agata Maria Karbowska** is an Assistant Professor at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków; Ph.D. degree in political science. She completed training at the African Studies Centre Leiden, gave open lectures at Trinity College in Dublin and the University of Iceland in Reykjavik about Sino-African Relations. She is the author of articles on the Middle East and Africa. Her research interests revolve around Islam, especially Sufism and political Islam, and the history, culture, society, economy and politics the broadly understood Middle East and Africa.

**Abdulrahman Al-Salimi** (‘**Abd ar-Raḥmān as-Sālimī**) is an Omani scholar specialising in early Islamic theology, Ibādī studies, Qur’ānic hermeneutics, and Islamic legal history, with a particular focus on the Arabian Peninsula and the Indian Ocean world. He is a board member of the German University of Technology in the Sultanate of Oman. He has held fellowships at leading international institutions and has published extensively with major academic presses, including Brill, Edinburgh University Press, De Gruyter, and Otto Harrassowitz. His research combines manuscript studies, intellectual history, and critical editions of early Islamic texts.

**Hoàng Phương Thảo**, Ph.D., is a lecturer at Hanoi National University of Education, Vietnam. Her research focuses on the sociology of religion, church-state relations, and the impact of digital transformation on religious practices and governance in post-socialist contexts. She has published on Buddhism in Vietnam, and broader issues of culture and governance in Asia. She is a member of the Vietnam Association of Religious Studies.

***Selected publications:***

Hoang Phuong Thao. 2018. 'Buddhism and State Management in Vietnam after Đổi Mới'. *Journal of Religious Studies*, 4, pp. 45–62.

Hoang Phuong Thao. 2020. *Religion in the Digital Age: Vietnamese Perspectives* [in Vietnamese]. Hanoi: Hanoi National University Press.

Hoang Phuong Thao. 2022. 'Digital Religion and State Governance in Vietnam'. *Asian Journal of Social Sciences*, 50 (2), pp. 178–196.

Hoang Phuong Thao. 2024. 'Religion and Policy of Catholic Prohibition under the Nguyen Dynasty: Analysis of Ritualistic Considerations'. *Vostok (Oriens)*, 1, pp. 91–102. DOI: 10.31857/S086919080027037-7.

Hoang Phuong Thao. 2024. 'Insights from Khiêm Cung Ký: King Tu Duc's epitaph and its relevance to the second half of 19th century Vietnam'. *Vostok (Oriens)*, 5, pp. 166–176. DOI: 10.31696/S086919080028896-2.

**Mahnaz Zahirinejad** is an Assistant Professor at the Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures, Polish Academy of Sciences. Her research focuses on the socio-cultural and political-economic development of Middle Eastern countries. She pays special attention to the study of the Iranian middle class, examining its socio-cultural and political-economic characteristics and its interactions with the state. She has published books and peer-reviewed articles on these topics.