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European launch for 'Encounters with Civilisations'

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A new book exploring people's experience and tensions of dealing with civilizations and cultures different from their own is now available in mainland Europe after its initial release by Transaction Publishers in the USA in February.

'*Encounters with Civilizations: From Alexander the Great to Mother Teresa*', by University of Birmingham sociologist Dr Gëzim Alpion looks at four different countries bringing together themes such as history, the media, social issues and politics to assess the export of culture.

The fifteen essays, which are selected and introduced by Canadian scholar Gaston Roberge, cover Albania, Egypt, the United Kingdom and India, and explore how these countries have been shaped by different cultures. In an age of mass communication and global migration the book raises important issues about citizenship, multiculturalism and integration.

Alpion explains: '*Civilizations can co-exist, but not if some are written off as footnotes while others impose themselves as the norm.*'

The book explores how Egyptian culture and politics have been shaped by foreign domination while retaining ancient customs at the social level. In comparison, Great Britain has been an imperial power whose cultural pre-eminence has shaped the images of smaller countries in the eyes of the world.

Alpion writes of English images of his native Albania and offers a penetrating analysis of Mother Teresa as a Christian missionary in Hindu and Muslim India, focusing on her cultural presentation via the media and the cult of celebrity.

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Transaction Publishers, founded in 1962, is a major independent U.S. based publisher of books and serials in all disciplines of the social sciences and humanities. In the United Kingdom and Europe, its books are available from Eurospan (**eurospan@turpin-distributon.com (mailto:eurospan@turpin-distributon.com)**).

About the Authors:

Dr Gëzim Alpion is Lecturer in Sociology in the Department of Political Science and International Studies at the University of Birmingham. His works include '*Vouchers*', '*Foreigner Complex: Essays and Fiction about Egypt*', '*Mother Teresa: Saint or Celebrity?*' and '*If Only the Dead Could Listen*'. Alpion's controversial study '*Can Humans Know God? The Mother Teresa Conundrum*' will be released in 2013.

Professor Gaston Roberge teaches film and communication at St. Xavier's College, Calcutta, India. He has written eighteen books, one of which *Communication Cinema Development*, won an award at the National Film Festival of India in 1999.

Praise for the book:

'Like all good sociologists Alpion illuminates the core of a society through an analysis of its margins…. Alpion offers us a view of the other that is not embittered or destructive but ultimately positive and challenging.'

Professor Brian Shoesmith, Edith Cowan University, Perth, Australia

'Reminiscent of Durkheim's writings on strangers in places, '*Encounters with Civilizations*', covers centuries and cultures both past and present…. [Alpion] encourages us to think reflectively and critically about our own beliefs, experiences and understandings.'

Dr Claire Smetherham, University of Bristol, UK

'[*Encounters with Civilizations*] deals with history, culture, the media, social issues and politics…[and] is prompted by Dr Alpion's ongoing reflection on the problems people experience in their encounters with civilizations different from theirs. Thus, these texts pertain to philosophy.'

Professor Gaston Roberge, St Xavier's College, Calcutta, India

'This book provides further proof that Professor Gëzim Alpion is one of the most intelligent and acute observers in the world of the situation of Albanian culture and its most famous modern representative, Mother Teresa. His work is destined to be controversial but should be read as widely as possible.'

Stephen Schwartz, *Author of Two Faces of Islam*, Washington, D.C., USA

'Alpion seeks to do on paper what Mohammed Ali did in politics: release Egypt from the psychosis of its national inferiority complex, restore its nationhood, and revive Egypt for the Egyptians. And in [the essay] 'Foreigner Complex' he comes closer to depicting the essence of five thousand years of Egyptian identity than a thousand newspaper despatches from Cairo.'

Nicolas Pelham, Former Editor of the *Middle East Times*, Cairo, Egypt

'The book has important messages for those wishing to seek their futures on foreign soil.'

Professor Bonita Aleaz, University of Calcutta, Indi

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