

Processes of Destabilization and Stabilization as Presupposition and Result of Processes of Inclusion and Demarcation (Draft)

Inclusion and demarcation of religious elements and systems are processes which can be started through religious and cultural contact. We can identify religious contact as taking place on the level of personal encounter, in the context of different forms of living together, through political expansions, etc. However, religious contacts initiate a variety of different dynamics of inclusions and demarcations which have already been discussed in Research Field 1 and are now the subject of a special focus groups led by Christian Frevel. Inclusion and demarcation themselves are useful to describe the processes of contact when used with specific subcategories. At the same time, religious contacts cause such processes in very different intensity with regard to content and duration.

The reasons for the varying intensity of the dynamics initiated through religious contact cannot themselves be described by the categories of inclusion and demarcation, nor can they be completely comprehended by looking at the form and character of the religious contact. At the same time, these conceptualizations of the processes cannot by themselves explain when and why these dynamics come to a (preliminary) termination.

For this reason one needs to investigate whether – next to the religious contact – one can observe or even presuppose destabilization on at least one side. In other words: is religious contact alone the presupposition for processes of interaction like demarcation or inclusion between different religious traditions, or is it necessary for a particular tradition to be “ready” (prepared) to enter interaction through contact? Is destabilization a suitable term to describe this “stronger readiness” for interaction? Are destabilizations of religious traditions the presupposition for intense processes to be initiated through contacts? How can we ask for destabilizations without postulating the inferiority of the destabilized tradition? It needs to be examined whether processes of demarcation and inclusion can also be observed in traditions which are not destabilized. Are these processes initiated merely through contact?

Demarcation and inclusion are principally unlimited processes once they have been initiated. However, Research Field 1 asks predominantly for the formation of religious networks of traditions. In this sense it also continually asks for the (preliminary) end of such a process and thus also for relatively lasting stabilizations which allow us (at least for heuristic reasons) to give a name to huge movements over a certain period of time, such as Early Buddhism, Early Christianity, Early Judaism, and to use this terminology in scholarly discourse.

However, what factors stabilize a religious tradition after it has gone through this process and has changed? How can we describe such a stabilization?

Both the destabilization and the stabilization of religious traditions can be stimulated through non-religious influences such as economic and political factors

(analytical category). These factors shall explain presuppositions of the processes of inclusion and demarcation. As a consequence of these processes the formation of religious networks of traditions shall be described. By asking for destabilization and stabilization we thus inquire for the framework of inclusion and demarcation.

In this context the question continually arises how the different frameworks and processes relate to one another. Only case studies will be able to show whether it is possible to clearly differentiate between both or whether also demarcation and inclusion themselves can have a stabilizing or destabilizing effect or can function as a catalyst for this.

Through extending our model in this way we intend our case studies to describe also destabilizations as a presupposition of these processes, and stabilization as their preliminary end. It should thus be asked whether formation could be comprehended as an interaction of destabilization and stabilization. We hope that this question will prove to be relevant also for other thematic fields and models.

In this context it is a particularly complex question whether demarcation/inclusion and stabilization/destabilization can (with regard to method) be described apart from one another, or whether they are the two different sides of the same coin.