

KHK WORKING PAPER SERIES

# VI - DYNAMICS & STABILITY

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**Our Goal for ERIC** is to create a comprehensive, easy-to-use online companion to **Eurasian Religions in Contact** that informs readers about occasions, themes, modes, conditions and consequences of contacts between religious groups and the way religious thought and practice developed in and through such contact phenomena, eventually creating both the larger and smaller religious traditions of today and the religious field as a social entity distinct from other fields such as politics, economics and art. The companion will be comprised of **case studies** with each case study focusing on a particular geographical region, a particular moment in or period of time and a particular constellation of two or more religions encountering each other. Each case study will extrapolate the occasions as well as the historical and social contexts of such encounters and, most importantly, shed light on the issues, notions, themes and practices addressed in the particular contact situation.

In each case study, authors will present their material in light of a specific theoretical concept or approach. We particularly encourage authors to consider engaging their material with theoretical concepts and approaches **developed at the KHK *Dynamics in the History of Religions between Asia and Europe over the past years***. This includes specific understandings of the role of concepts such as "purity", "secret", "tradition", "gender", "media", "the senses", "the immanence/transcendence-distinction" and "dynamics/stability". The **KHK Working Paper Series** informs readers about some major aspects within the KHK's thinking about these concepts. We are looking forward to your contributions to this ongoing conversation!

The inseparable **interrelation of the concepts of dynamics and stability** is one of the most important elements in the study of religious history. On the one hand, the examination of the 'dynamics' involved here prevents the misapprehension of religious traditions as spatially and temporally stable, closely defined and autarkical entities. The notion, therefore, represents a modern scholarly claim. On the other hand, some concept of 'stability' involved allows the scholarly examination of phenomena of religion in the first place. In addition to that, stability is one of the most important claims in the self-characterization of religious traditions. Among others, the notion represents a claim of the object-language that cannot be ignored in scholarly description. The basic question is how to present a religious tradition as being subject to dynamics or how religions might be described dynamically while at the same time taking into account object-language claims and epistemological necessities of a certain stability.

Situations of **religious contact** play a key role in dynamizing the development of a religious tradition as well as in stabilizing one. As for the latter, they provide reason for the rise of stable material objects (that are the bases of scholarly examination) and, therefore,

introduce a dynamics, i.e. an intensification of expression. As basic forms of intensification one might consider sacralisation (i.e. the utilization of religious elements in other areas thus intensifying meaning) and self-reference (i.e. the systematization of religion *as* a religion, which leads to the emergence of a religious field, a notion of religion, a canon, dogmatics etc.). Opposite developments, i.e. the diffusion of expression or de-sacralisation via the influence of another religious tradition are as well manifestations of the dynamizing, or rather stabilizing effect of contact situations.

One may analytically differentiate between three basic types of dynamics: **inherent dynamics (development, growth and decay, differentiation, crystallization, 'densification')**, **external dynamics (demarcation, inclusion etc.)** and **phenomena of transfer combining internal and external elements regarding push- and pull factors**. The three types might be further investigated with regard to two basic forms of movement that is movement within space (expansion, shifting, withdrawal, material translocation) and movement within time (change of theory and practice, stabilizing, formation of canon etc.).

Articles relating to the topic of 'dynamics and stability' devote themselves to collecting and evaluating forms of dynamics that can be found with regard to a contact situation in the history of religion, for example phenomena of expansion, transfer, intensification, leveling, crystallizing, growth and decline etc., that might be used for a more adequate description of religious history. Of course, the concept itself might be investigated due to its presuppositions and heuristic value for scholarly research.