

## KHK WORKING PAPER SERIES

# IV - MEDIA

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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!

Scholarly interest in religion and media has dramatically increased in recent decades (Hoover 2006). This was mostly triggered by the emergence of new forms of religious practice in newly established media – such as Televangelism or online churches. However, some researchers have taken these contemporary phenomena merely as a starting point to think of the relationship of religion and media in more general terms. This came along with the adoption of a wider understanding of media, which was not limited to electronic devices, but also included historic media, such as scrolls, images and figurines, as well as more abstract media such as "space" or "sound" (Horsfield 2015, Lundby 2013).

The KHK shares this interest and aims at strengthening historical research in the wider research field on media and religion. With regards to religious contact, we are particularly interested in two areas of research:

- A) We assume that intra- and interreligious contact is made possible (or facilitated) by the use of specific media, such as envoys and letters in Ancient times, as well as TV-talk-shows, social media etc. nowadays. For ERiC, we are interested in case studies focusing on the question **how religious encounters are shaped by the media that enables such contact** and how the involved parties are adopting to – possibly new – media environments.
- B) With Stolow (2005), Meyer (2013) and others, **we assume that religious practice necessarily involves the use of media**. Like Meyer, we understand religion “as a practice of mediation between humans and the professed transcendent that necessarily requires specific material media, that is, authorized forms through which the transcendent is being generated and becomes somehow tangible.” (Meyer 2013: 8) Simply put, religious practitioners require one or several media in order to bridge the gap between their own immanent being and the transcendent which is supposed to be evoked, worshipped or communicated with. This can be a traditional medium, such as a holy book, a more recent medium such as a smartphone application, but also an offering, a building, a person (e.g. a priest) or one’s own body. We assume that, as media use is an existential activity in any religion, the questions which media are considered proper and how they should be properly used in religious practice, is paramount for all religions. However, typically, media and media use of a given religion only becomes tangible for researchers, if and when it is debated. For ERiC, we are interested, first, in **case studies where such debates develop into intra-religious conflicts** and schisms (e.g. in the debates on the use of images in Protestantism). Second, we invite case studies in which encounters of different religious groups (= inter-religious contact) lead to a **re-evaluation of their respective media usage**, possibly going along with the adoption or the rejection of new media in their religious practice.

## References:

- Hoover, Stewart M. (2006): Religion in the Media Age. London u.a.: Routledge.
- Horsfield, Peter G. (2015): From Jesus to the internet. A history of Christianity and media. Chichester, West Sussex, Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell.
- Lundby, Knut (Ed.) (2013): Religion across media. From early antiquity to late modernity. New York: Peter Lang.
- Meyer, Birgit. 2013. Material Mediations and Religious Practices of World-Making. In: Lundby, Knut (Ed.): Religion across media. From early antiquity to late modernity. New York: Peter Lang, p. 1-19.
- Stolow, Jeremy (2005): Religion and/as Media. In: *Theory, Culture & Society* 22 (4), S. 119-145.