



KHK Working Paper Series

I. Typology

VOLKHARD KRECH 

ABSTRACT Our goal for *Entangled Religions* is to inform 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. *Entangled Religions* publishes case studies on the issues outlined above. The engagement with explicit analytical concepts is of specific importance, as those concepts shall serve as *tertia comparationis*, which allow comparability of individual case studies. We invite authors to consider engaging their material with analytical concepts, categories and approaches that have been discussed in the Käte Hamburger Kolleg (KHK) “Dynamics in the History of Religions between Asia and Europe” (2008–2022), or to introduce other concepts and theories to the discussion. The KHK Working Paper Series informs readers about some major aspects of the KHK’s thinking about these concepts. We are looking forward to your contributions to this ongoing conversation!

Entangled Religions aims to contribute to a theory of religious transfer and thus to the historiography of a perhaps emerging global history of religion. This includes a typology of religious contacts, which is being developed using individual case studies. This paper outlines some basic types of religious contact which can be grouped into (1) Synchronic Intra-Religious Contact and (2) Synchronic Inter-Religious Contact. The following examples might serve as stimulations for typifying case studies.¹ [1]

Synchronic Intra-Religious Contact

Synchronic intra-religious contacts include, first, processes, usually described as **schisms, the formation of confessions, sects and schools as well as the differentiation between orthodoxy, heterodoxy and heresy**. For example, the expansion of the reform movements [2]

1 For an extended version see Krech (2012): <https://doi.org/10.1080/0048721X.2012.642572>. This working paper was written in 2017 and updated in 2023.

during the early modern age lead to intra-religious contacts which give dynamism to the rest of the Christian complex of traditions through the reinterpretation and enrichment of Christian traditions.

Second, intra-religious plurality includes **distinguishing between different carrier strata**. [3] The distinction between **official and popular religion or intellectual and popular religiosity** (see Vrijhof and Waardenburg 1979) indicates a direction of intra-religious plurality which takes into account the different supporting layers. By popular religiosity I mean different ideas and practices which emerge as a result of a monopolisation of the definition of and command over the “holy goods” or “religious capital” of those who are excluded from the definition of and command over these holy goods (Ebertz and Schultheis 1986, 25).

Third, intra-religious plurality encompasses the **differentiation between different strata** [4] within a religious tradition. Perhaps the distinction introduced with regard to this by Theo Sundermeier and further developed by Jan Assmann between primary and secondary religions will prove itself useful (Wagner 2006). Elements of primary religions continue to exist in secondary religions. The intra-religious contact also includes internal mission. The Muslim mission (in Arabic *da'wa*) in the twentieth century, for example, is not aimed first and foremost at converting non-believers, but far more at brothers and sisters in faith who have allegedly lost their way (this is the position of Hasan al-Bannâ, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, for example).

Fourth, the encounter of geographically **separated factions of the same religious tradition** [5] embedded in different cultural contexts can trigger forms of intra-religious contact. This was the case, for example, when the Theravada-Buddhist movement of laypersons' meditation was imported from Burma to Sri Lanka, causing not just an upsurge in spiritualised religiosity, but also discomfort and radical rejection of the imported practice.²

Synchronic Inter-Religious Contact³

1. Identifying alien elements with elements of one's own religion

As an illustration, let me cite the following example from Israelite religious history: El, the [6] god equated with the clan gods, was thus conceived as a prior revelation of the god who later made himself known as Yahweh. The way was thus paved for Yahweh to take over much from El (Fohrer 1969, 95; quoted in Berner 1982, 103).

2. Innovative use of alien elements in the established religion

The innovative use of alien elements in one's own tradition has a mimetic character in terms of [7] its outer form. The meaning and function of the elements used however vary from the original context. Whilst the Christians in Jerusalem observe the Holy Week with great ceremony every year, at the same time, the Muslims themselves hold a great celebration in honour of the Prophet Moses, in order to place an equivalent Islamic celebration alongside the Christian Easter celebrations (Kawerau 1972, 199; quoted in Berner 1982, 105).

2 I owe this example to Sven Bretfeld.

3 The following typological deliberations are thanks to ideas from Zürcher (2007), Berner (1982), and Lanczkowski (1971).

3. Institutional restructuring of a religious tradition through the influence of another

This type of contact is connected with what is described as institutional isomorphism in the social sciences and can be observed, for example, in the Japanese policy on religion around 1900. The criteria for recognising religious communities are developed on the basis of the model of the Christian churches. [8]

4. Amalgamation of elements of different religious traditions

One would assume that this type of contact must be one of the most common in the history of religions. Here, I would like to highlight just one example from Indian religious history. The tantric deities (*devatā*) are (from a historical point of view) in many ways mixtures of Buddhas/Bodhisattvas and Hindu deities or aspects/apparitions thereof (Herrmann-Pfandt 1992, 66 ff.).⁴ [9]

5. Internal Developments triggered by alien elements

Here, with reference to Günter Lanczkowski, I would like to mention *affinities, eclectic elective affinities and idealised projections*. The *Renaissance and the classical period* are characterised by their affinity to antiquity, its gods and myths. But neither epoch reinstated paganism. They remained Christian for all intents and purposes. The use of ancient mythology has been most common, in parts besides the Christian faith, and in parts through transferring mythological names to Christian issues of faith itself (Wernle 1912, 66). [10]

6. Rejection of circulating elements by the established religion for the purpose of enhancing its own standing

In general, this type of contact stands for the fact that differentiation is also part of the modes and impacts of religious contact, because the refusal to accept alien elements does change the existing religion. For instance, up until 1938 one could recognise orthodox synagogues in Germany by the “lack” of the organ, a musical development that had slowly found its way into liberal synagogues since 1830, although there were discussions in liberal circles, too, as to whether the organ was a ‘Christian element’ (Frühauf 2009).⁵ [11]

Relevant *Entangled Religions* Articles

- Chen, Ruixuan. 2021. “Lurching Towards a Canon: Mahāyāna Sūtras in Khotanese Garb.” *Entangled Religions* 11 (6). <https://doi.org/10.46586/er.11.2020.8774>.
- Gamliel, Ophira. 2018. “Ásu the Convert: A Slave Girl or a Nāyar Land Owner?” *Entangled Religions* 6: 201–46. <https://doi.org/10.46586/er.v6.2018.201-246>.
- Pyschny, Katharina. 2021. “On Deserted Landscapes and Divine Iconography: Iconographic Perspectives on the Origins of YHWH.” *Entangled Religions* 12 (2). <https://doi.org/10.46586/er.12.2021.9263>.

4 I owe this example and the source reference to Sven Bretfeld.

5 I owe this example and the reference to Elisabeth Hollender.

Rezania, Kianoosh. 2020. "‘Religion’ in Late Antique Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism: Developing a Term in Counterpoint." *Entangled Religions* 11 (2). <https://doi.org/10.46586/er.11.2020.8556>.

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