

PART TWO
CONTACTS BETWEEN THE MAJOR RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS
DURING THEIR EXPANSION

CONTACTS BETWEEN THE MAJOR RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS DURING THEIR EXPANSION. AN INTRODUCTION

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At first glance, the contributions assembled in the second section of these proceedings might appear to be a chronological continuation of the first section's papers. But closer scrutiny should reveal that the articles not only advance in time, but also treat other issues than those dealt with in section one. Research in this block – and in the corresponding research field within the Käte-Hamburger Consortium “Dynamics in the History of Religions between Asia and Europe” – is geared towards observing and comparing phenomena within the religious field that are affected by processes of expansion or that themselves have an impact upon such processes. The term expansion is hereby understood in the widest sense of the word, thus not only comprising political and military, but also economic or cognitive processes. Peaceful and antagonistic forms of interaction can and often do occur simultaneously, and developments are neither teleological nor as clear-cut as hindsight might suggest. Military, economic or intellectual expansion could and more often than not did have an effect on religious traditions: mission could bring about religious expansion; contact with hitherto unknown religions could lead to religious transfer. All such developments represented challenges to existing religious traditions, challenges which could meet with a diversity of responses: the consolidation of canonical texts, the establishment of orthodoxy, the emergence of deviance and heresy, of hermetical or popular religion. Such reactions, diversifications or condensations are the subject of the analyses that follow.

The papers assembled here have a wide geographical and chronological spectrum: the subjects addressed range from the ancient Near and Middle East to the medieval Mediterranean all the way to early modern Far East Asia. They study the impact expansionistic movements had in a series of fields: the first block concentrates on the social and intellectual effects of military expansion, the second on the consequences that economic expansion could have on the intellectual field of political philosophy; and finally, our third block will be closely centred