“Locating Religions”: The title of this collection of essays is ambiguous, because the term “religions” can be both subject and object. Do the following articles deal with religions that locate – for example their places of worship, the graves of venerated men or women etc.? Or are the people dealing with religion (the scholars who have contributed articles to this volume) those who are locating them – within realms, within ecclesiastic, economic, political or intellectual frameworks, within cultural or semantic mindsets? The title thus simultaneously points at spacing religious traditions and at analysing how religions employ space to their needs. This ambiguity is intended, and in fact both aspects will be dealt with in the articles that follow. The volume’s subtitle – “Contact, Diversity and Translocality” – is similarly programmatic and seems no less enigmatic. The notion of translocality in particular demands some words of explanation. The editors would therefore like to lay out some general thoughts on the three terms that comprise the subtitle of this volume.

“Contact” is a notion of paramount importance to the research consortium (Käte-Hamburger-Kolleg) “Dynamics in the History of Religions between Asia and Europe”. This long-term project financed by the German Ministry of Education and Research and located at the University of Bochum provided the logistics and intellectual framework for the conference (held in February 2012) which has given rise to this collection of essays. One of the Kolleg’s core assumptions is that from its very beginnings and throughout its history, any religious tradition has been marked by transfer processes which were the result of contacts with other belief systems. The scholars working in this consortium or attached to it are united by their conviction that understanding religious traditions as dynamic and relational bodies which are constituted and constantly changed by multiple forms of interreligious contact helps de-essentialize our notions of religions.

More in need of explanation than the idea of religious contact and transfer are the concepts of diversity and translocality. In particular, the latter term may raise some questions. Therefore, we first concentrate on the meaning of

translocality applied in this volume. The subject of religious translocality is set within a wider semantic framework heavily indebted to the so-called spatial turn within the humanities. In fact, this volume is an attempt to apply questions and methods tied to notions of space and developed within recent cultural studies to the religious field. During the past two decades, scholarly attention has once again been drawn to space and its effect on the history of human societies and religions. Spatial terms have successfully been applied to religious studies: Michel Foucault’s “heterotopias” or Arjun Appadurai’s “religioscapes” are only cases in point. Modern cultural studies have understood space in a much wider sense of the word than previous research, transcending the purely physical or material understanding of the term in order to include a wide array of spaces – imagined, ascribed, mental, textual, corporeal, literary spaces and many more.

Particular emphasis had recently been laid on understanding how such spaces are structured and held together. Network theory or even social network analysis is often considered one means of solving this question. Even though the dearth of sources might often impede social network analysis in the strict sense of the word, the network paradigm has in fact proven useful, not least because it helps us re-materialize religious studies and because it has drawn our attention to nodes and hubs of religious contact – that is both to simple linkages and to high density linkages within such networks.

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4 Foucault, “Of Other Spaces, Heterotopias”; on the reception of this concept see: Chlada, Heterotopie und Erfahrung; Tafazoli, Außenraum – Mitraum – Innenraum.

5 Appadurai, Modernity at Large, 33; on the reception of this concept see: Hayden, Intersecting Religioscapes.

6 Construction de l’espace au Moyen Age; Warf/Arias, The Spatial Turn; Csáky/Leitgeb, Kommunikation – Gedächtnis – Raum; Günzel/Kümmerling, Raum: ein interdisziplinäres Handbuch; Rau, Räume.


8 Cowan, Nodes, “Networks and Hinterlands”; Höh/Jaspert/Oesterle, “Courts, Brokers and Brokerage”, 15–18; Jaspert, “Contacts between the Major Religious Traditions”.