

Interreligious Appropriations in the Global History of Christianity

Edited by
STANISLAU PAULAU and
PHILIP MICHAEL FORNESS

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Foreword

Many of the ideas in this volume were first tested in conversation – around a table, in Q&As, and over coffee – during a conference held from 22–24 June 2023 at the Leibniz Institute of European History (IEG) Mainz. Organized within the framework of the Leibniz Research Alliance “Value of the Past,” the gathering brought together scholars working across regional, confessional, and disciplinary boundaries to explore how Christian communities have engaged with – borrowed from, reworked, and contested – religious ideas, practices, texts, and material cultures in a wide range of historical settings.

The contributions assembled here build on those conversations. They share the conviction that “appropriation” is not a marginal phenomenon but a central dynamic in the making and remaking of Christianities through their interactions with their religious environments. By tracing moments of translation and adaptation as well as tension and boundary-making, the chapters illuminate the creative, ambivalent, and often uneven negotiations through which religious actors positioned themselves in relation to others. Taken together, they offer different perspectives which connect detailed case studies to broader questions of global history, inviting readers to rethink how interreligious contacts have shaped Christian histories – locally, transregionally, and over the *longue durée*.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Leibniz Research Alliance “Value of the Past” for its generous support of both the conference and the preparation of this publication and to the Leibniz Institute of European History for its hospitality and excellent organizational assistance. We also extend our heartfelt thanks to Prof. Dr. Hartmut Leppin and PD Dr. Manfred Sing, whose thoughtful and consistently engaged responses enriched the conference discussions and helped sharpen the questions pursued in this volume. We are equally grateful to the Open Access Publication Fund of Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg for enabling the open-access publication of this volume. Our warm thanks also go to the team at Mohr Siebeck for their professional guidance and steady support throughout the publication process. We are especially indebted to Conrad Theilemann, whose meticulous work, not least in compiling the index of names and places, was essential in bringing this project to completion. Finally, we thank all contributors for their commitment to revising their papers into chapters and for their collegial engagement.

We hope this book will stimulate further research and debate on interreligious appropriations as a key lens for the global history of Christianity.

Halle (Saale) and Leuven,
in January 2026

Stanislau Paulau and
Philip Michael Forness

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Tracing Interreligious Appropriations in the Global History of Christianity

Stanislau Paulau and Philip Michael Forness

Abstract: This chapter introduces the volume's focus on the historical phenomenon of interreligious appropriations – processes by which religious communities reinterpret and incorporate elements from other traditions – as a lens for understanding the global history of Christianity. Drawing on theoretical insights from the study of appropriation and postcolonial studies, the volume conceptualizes appropriation not merely as an act of dominance but as a complex, sometimes reciprocal process marked by negotiation, resistance, and transformation. This perspective results from the global perspective of the volume which seeks to add new facets to contemporary discussions of religious pluralism and the politicized debates surrounding cultural appropriation. The individual contributions approach appropriation as a fluid and historically situated activity that transcends rigid cultural or religious boundaries. By bringing together case studies from the second to the twentieth centuries and from both western and eastern Christian traditions, the volume demonstrates how Christianity has been shaped through dynamic encounters with other religious communities.

Keywords: global Christianity, appropriation, interreligious relations, eastern Christianity

1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, many parts of the world have witnessed unprecedented levels of religious diversity due to rapid increases in transnational mobility. As societies across the globe have grown more diverse, interactions between people of different religious backgrounds have become a regular part of life. Interreligious encounters pose a pressing challenge for religious communities' self-understanding and trigger complex processes of negotiating the past. History constitutes one of the most important cultural tools to make sense of religious plurality, to establish identity, and to define otherness. Given that most religions assert exclusivity in their interpretations of the past and often attribute them a degree of sacrality (e.g., canonical texts, sacred tradition, revelation), confrontations with other religiously informed readings of the past can become particularly contentious.

Contemporary interreligious encounters have contributed in no small part to a surge in historical investigations. One recent textbook, Marianne Moyaert's

Christian Imaginations of the Religious Other: A History of Religionization, emphasizes the importance of a historical approach as follows: “the work of historicization may help to loosen the power of the past and make the past a topic of conversation rather than an invisible and unmarked hermeneutical framework.”¹ This contemporary relevance also underlies major, multi-year, and multi-author undertakings such as *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History*, whose series description asserts that “to understand the present day dimensions of mutual perceptions between Christians and Muslims, the history of relations must be recovered and accurately mapped.”² Studying interactions between traditions from a historical perspective has also led to the development of new concepts. Katharina Heyden and David Nirenberg, for example, recently coined “religious co-production” as a term that “express[es] and stress[es] the fact that not only at their origins but at every instant of their existence, including present and future, many and varied Muslim, Jewish, and Christian communities are forming, re-forming, and transforming themselves by interacting with, thinking about, and imagining each other.”³ These and many similar efforts exhibit the potential of returning to historical sources as a means of understanding religious diversity in the present.

This volume aims to contribute to the history of relations between Christians and other religious communities by addressing practices that can be described as “interreligious appropriations.” As defined here (see especially Section 2 below), interreligious appropriations designate processes of sense-making in which communities give meaning to and reinterpret aspects of other religious traditions and in so doing incorporate them into their own tradition. Acts of interreligious appropriation have provoked much controversy and thus received increasing media attention over the past decade. The present volume brings a novel point-of-view to this debate in two ways. First, it takes a long historical view by examining acts of appropriation from the second to the twentieth centuries and thus helps historicize the contemporary discourse. Second, it assumes a global perspective by bringing western and eastern Christian sources into dialogue, thereby prompting a reevaluation of the often western-dominated discourse. By examining historical instances of interreligious appropriation across time and in lesser-known sources, this volume seeks to shed new

¹ Marianne Moyaert, *Christian Imaginations of the Religious Other: A History of Religionization* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2024), 8.

² The series description can be found at <https://brill.com/display/serial/HCMRIBP>, accessed on 17 March 2025. Published since 2009, this series now contains twenty-three volumes and covers the period from the emergence of Islam until the outbreak of World War I.

³ Katharina Heyden and David Nirenberg, “Co-Produced Religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam,” *HTR* 118, no. 1 (2025): 160–161.

light on the dynamics of interreligious encounters that may help historicize and evaluate relations between communities today.

2. Defining Terms: Interreligious Appropriations

The key concept that links the diverse contributions in the volume – interreligious appropriations – requires explication. In the following, we will discuss our understanding and use of the terms “appropriation” and “religion” in order to describe the more specific phenomenon of “interreligious appropriations.” We will highlight both the limits and the possibilities of this concept, pointing out the intersection of this collected volume and the broader discussion surrounding appropriations.

At a purely etymological level the term “appropriation” means “to make one’s own”, derived from the medieval Latin word *appropriare* (from *ad* “to” and *proprius* “own”).⁴ The term came into English with this meaning as early as the fourteenth century.⁵ So defined, appropriation assumes two things: (1) a concept of ownership, that is, that a particular activity, habit, object, practice, symbol, etc., can be possessed; and (2) that the one who appropriates and the origin of that which has been appropriated are different and identifiable. A working approximation of the concept of appropriation is as follows: the process of “turning an alien ‘thing,’ or at least a thing construed as alien, into something that come[s] across as proper, fitting, suitable and acceptable for use and valued possession within a culture.”⁶ While this broad description of appropriation serves as a starting point, we will propose a specific approximation geared to the subject matter of this volume.

The concept of appropriation, and especially cultural appropriation, has become a hotly debated topic.⁷ Academic fields as diverse as art history,⁸ commu-

⁴ Jan Frederik Niermeyer, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 53.

⁵ Oxford English Dictionary, “Appropriation, n.,” *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, April 2023), <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/4843942800>.

⁶ Christian Huck and Stefan Bauernschmidt, “Trans-Cultural Appropriation,” in *Travelling Goods, Travelling Moods: Varieties of Cultural Appropriation (1850–1950)*, ed. Christian Huck and Stefan Bauernschmidt (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2012), 247.

⁷ For a concise, insightful overview of the development of this term across disciplines, see Hans Peter Hahn, “Cultural Appropriation: Power, Transformation, and Tradition,” in *Travelling Goods, Travelling Moods: Varieties of Cultural Appropriation (1850–1950)*, ed. Christian Huck and Stefan Bauernschmidt (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2012), 15–35.

⁸ Robert S. Nelson, “Appropriation,” in *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 160–173. This and the following examples are merely intended to give a sense of the breadth of studies on cultural appropriation without any claim to comprehensiveness or representation of the most recent discourse in each field.

nication studies,⁹ consumer sciences,¹⁰ history,¹¹ law,¹² literary studies,¹³ philosophy,¹⁴ political science,¹⁵ and religious studies have all dealt with appropriation in their own ways.¹⁶ But, perhaps more than any other field, it is postcolonial studies that has shaped contemporary discourse around the term “appropriation.” One of the core themes in postcolonial discussions of appropriation is the power imbalance between cultures, particularly in the context of colonial history. Appropriation is often viewed critically because it involves elements of a marginalized or colonized culture being used by a dominant culture, potentially perpetuating the legacy of colonial exploitation and control. Hence, many authors share a concern about the ethical problems associated with appropriation given an imbalance of power: “what ultimately makes particular instances of cultural appropriation wrongful, and thus what grounds objections to them, is the way in which they manifest and/or exacerbate inequality and marginalization.”¹⁷ With these valid criticisms, the concept of appropriation has rightly been deemed “vexed.”¹⁸ At the same time, studies on appropriation generally acknowledge its ubiquity, as it “is inescapable when cultures come into contact.”¹⁹

Of special importance for our discussion of the term “appropriation” are approaches within postcolonial studies that attempt to overcome the oversimplified binary categories and essentialist understanding of cultures. At the heart of these discussions stands Homi Bhabha’s concept of “hybridity,” a pivotal intervention in understanding cultural dynamics.²⁰ While cultural appropriation

⁹ Richard A. Rogers, “From Cultural Exchange to Transculturation: A Review and Reconceptualization of Cultural Appropriation,” *Communication Theory* 16, no. 4 (2006): 474–503.

¹⁰ Angela Gracia B. Cruz, Yuri Seo, and Daiane Scaraboto, “Between Cultural Appreciation and Cultural Appropriation: Self-Authorizing the Consumption of Cultural Difference,” *Journal of Consumer Research* 50, no. 5 (2024): 962–984.

¹¹ Kathleen Ashley and Véronique Plesch, “The Cultural Processes of ‘Appropriation,’” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 32, no. 1 (2002): 1–15.

¹² Mathias Siems, “The Law and Ethics of ‘Cultural Appropriation,’” *International Journal of Law in Context* 15, no. 4 (2019): 408–423.

¹³ Julie Sanders, “Appropriation,” in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.013.1049>.

¹⁴ Erich Hatala Matthes, “The Ethics of Cultural Heritage,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Stanford, CA: Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2018), § 4, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/ethics-cultural-heritage/>.

¹⁵ Dianne Lalonde, “Does Cultural Appropriation Cause Harm?,” *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 9, no. 2 (2021): 329–346.

¹⁶ See the discussion below.

¹⁷ Erich Hatala Matthes, “Cultural Appropriation and Oppression,” *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition* 176, no. 4 (2019): 1003–1004.

¹⁸ Sanders, “Appropriation.”

¹⁹ Rogers, “From Cultural Exchange to Transculturation,” 474.

²⁰ See Andreas Ackermann, “Cultural Hybridity: Between Metaphor and Empiricism,” in *Conceptualizing Cultural Hybridization: A Transdisciplinary Approach*, ed. Philipp Wolfgang

debates frequently center on unidirectional influence, hybridity emphasizes mutual influence and the creation of new cultural forms through this interaction. Bhabha's concept of hybridity questions the idea of authentic, unaltered cultural expressions. It argues that cultural forms are always undergoing transformation, and thus the idea of an "authentic" culture is problematic. This challenges the appropriation debate, which often relies on notions of authenticity. In this way, Bhabha's hybridity provides a framework for understanding how marginalized or colonized groups can exert agency and resist dominant narratives by appropriating and altering elements from the dominant culture. This view contrasts with the appropriation debate's frequent portrayal of marginalized cultures as passive victims of cultural theft. It thus introduces perspectives that view appropriation as a form of agency and resistance. In some cases, marginalized groups may appropriate elements from dominant cultures as a way of subverting power structures, reclaiming agency, or creating new cultural expressions that reflect their hybrid identities.

One notable aspect of Bhabha's theory is the concept of "colonial mimicry," described as "almost the same, *but not quite*."²¹ Bhabha's idea of mimicry is based on Jacques Lacan's concept of camouflage, which involves disguising oneself by becoming mottled against a mottled background. According to Homi Bhabha, "mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal."²² As a result, mimicry "'appropriates' the other as it visualizes power."²³ The cultural hybridity enacted in mimicry, as best exemplified by Bhabha's notion of "third space," is hence understood as a subversive practice of resistance.²⁴ This view allows for more complex interactions than the typically adversarial framing found in cultural appropriation discussions. By recognizing the fluidity of cultural identities and the continuous interplay of intercultural interactions, Bhabha's framework challenges static and monolithic views of culture. Overall, this approach offers a way to understand the complexities of cultural and religious interactions, transcending simplistic narratives and challenging the often rigid and binary viewpoints in cultural appropriation debates.

Against this background, the concept of appropriation seems useful to us as an interpretive tool for three reasons. First, appropriation places attention on the act itself and thereby on the agent. So taken, appropriation does not necessarily entail the imposition of power by a dominant group over against a mar-

Stockhammer, *Transcultural Research – Heidelberg Studies on Asia and Europe in a Global Context* (Heidelberg: Springer, 2012), 11–14.

²¹ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 86.

²² Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 122.

²³ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 86.

²⁴ See Marwan M. Kraidy, *Hybridity, or the Cultural Logic of Globalization* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005), 58.

ginalized group; it can be “a two-way process” with agents on either side.²⁵ Appropriation can be seen in agents from marginalized communities who take something previously seen as foreign and make it understandable and useful to their culture. The global perspective of the volume offers a fresh perspective on agency, focusing on sources written in languages and by individuals not often taken into consideration in the discourse regarding appropriation.

Second, the concept of appropriation, when taken from its base meaning of “making one’s own,” is not restricted to a single historical period. The breadth of the term allows one to speak of appropriation from antiquity²⁶ to the Middle Ages²⁷ and down to modernity.²⁸ An important criticism has been raised about using the term “cultural appropriation” in a neutral way, as it “is about exploitation”²⁹ and cannot “be used for all forms of cultural exchange or all forms of cultural intersection.”³⁰ We have chosen to take a more neutral approach to appropriation so as to allow for a comparison across a long historical period. To be sure, our approach is not intended to question the association of appropriation with exploitation nor to suggest that appropriation is defensible because culture as such cannot be owned.³¹ We believe that the present volume will help historicize appropriation and thereby contribute to contemporary discussions.

Third, the word appropriation represents something of a catch-all term. In his review of a recent work on appropriation in the Roman Empire, Stephen Collins-Elliott suggests that more specific terms might be used to describe the acts of appropriation discussed throughout the volume: “use, reuse, recycling, renovation, adoption, adaptation, transmission, or also spoliation, plunder, or expropriation.”³² In this, we see the strength of the term appropriation: its ability to bring various interrelated acts into conversation with one another. The

²⁵ Ashley and Plesch, “The Cultural Processes of ‘Appropriation,’” 6.

²⁶ Matthew P. Loar, Carolyn MacDonald, and Dan-el Padilla Peralta, eds., *Rome, Empire of Plunder: The Dynamics of Cultural Appropriation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

²⁷ Ashley and Plesch, “The Cultural Processes of ‘Appropriation.’”

²⁸ Christian Huck and Stefan Bauernschmidt, eds., *Travelling Goods, Travelling Moods: Varieties of Cultural Appropriation (1850–1950)* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2012).

²⁹ Stephen A. Collins-Elliott, “Cultural Appropriation and the Roman Empire – Matthew P. Loar, Carolyn MacDonald, and Dan-el Padilla Peralta, eds., *Rome, Empire of Plunder: The Dynamics of Cultural Appropriation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017),” *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 34, no. 1 (2021): 352.

³⁰ Michelle Kuo and Gregg Bordowitz, “Cultural Appropriation: A Roundtable,” *Artforum International* 55, no. 10 (2017): 268. The quotation comes from Homi Bhabha, and it does not seem to have been contested by the other roundtable participants. Collins-Elliott, “Cultural Appropriation,” 352, pointed us to this article and quotes the same passage.

³¹ See the programmatic preface in Martin Puchner, *Culture: The Story of Us, from Cave Art to K-Pop* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2023), xi–xii.

³² Collins-Elliott, “Cultural Appropriation,” 353.

acts of appropriation examined in this volume can thus be thought of as having a Wittgensteinian “family resemblance.”³³ They have relationships to one another, but they do not all share the same characteristics. As Andreas Ackermann has pointed out, using the metaphor of appropriation, “we have to ask who appropriates what and for what purposes, and what is the logic of a choice that selects some items from a repertoire and rejects others.”³⁴

In sum, we can describe the approach taken to appropriation in this volume as follows. (1) Appropriation is a process initiated by an agent who takes something foreign or perceived as foreign and makes it proper or acceptable to herself. The agent may be a member of a dominant or a marginalized group, and acts of appropriation may go in two directions. (2) Appropriation, when viewed from its core meaning of “making one’s own,” is not merely a phenomenon known in modern times but can be found throughout recorded history. (3) Finally, the particular acts described as appropriations in this volume take a variety of forms. The appropriating agents would, in general, have used different terms to describe their acts. The term appropriation is thus an etic term that allows one to compare acts with a family resemblance to one another.

The other key term used in the volume is “religion.” Debates over the notion of religion are still among the most enduring and virulent within religious studies. Drawing on recent scholarship, challenging essentialist definitions of “religion” by emphasizing its constructed and context-dependent nature, we understand religion not as an abstract theoretical concept but as a historical phenomenon.³⁵ Thus, rather than viewing religion as a fixed, universal category, we frame it as a concept shaped by historical, cultural, and political contexts and negotiations. In other words, understandings of religion are produced and constantly negotiated. They emerge through contested demarcations from other terms such as science, philosophy, politics, or superstition. This approach enables us to explore how beliefs, practices, and institutions were categorized and understood across different historical and cultural contexts.

At the same time, our volume connects intricately with the theoretical framework of global religious history.³⁶ As Michael Bergunder points out in regard to global religious history,

³³ On the concept, its interpretation, and the references to Wittgenstein’s works, see Craig Fox, “Wittgenstein on Family Resemblance,” in *Wittgenstein: Key Concepts*, ed. Kelly Dean Jolley (Durham: Acumen, 2010), 51–62. We are thankful to Hartmut Leppin for suggesting the concept of “family resemblance” in his response to the conference.

³⁴ Ackermann, “Cultural Hybridity,” 17.

³⁵ See Michael Bergunder, “What is Religion? The Unexplained Subject Matter of Religious Studies,” *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 26, no. 3 (2014): 246–286.

³⁶ *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 33, no. 3–4 (2021): Special Issue: Global Religious History.

[t]his term articulates an approach that aims to be relevant to the whole field of religious studies, and it encompasses theoretical debates, particularly in the areas of postcolonialism and gender studies. Thus, “Global” embodies, acknowledges, and incorporates all prevalent terms of and the parameters for the global constitution of present-day academia and society. “Religious” means that it concerns religious studies. “History” denotes a genealogical critique as the central research interest.³⁷

On our view, the methodological approach of global religious history, with its genealogical and poststructuralist epistemologies, offers valuable tools for this volume. By emphasizing the fluidity of terms such as “religion” and “Christianity,” and interrogating how these concepts have been shaped through negotiations, this framework complements efforts to historicize interreligious appropriations within broader power asymmetries and global entanglements.³⁸

A significant part of this rethinking involves acknowledging the colonial and postcolonial dimensions of how religion has been conceptualized. The modern understanding of religion, as recent scholarship on global religious history highlights, emerged in the context of colonial encounters. This colonial legacy continues to influence how religion is defined and studied today, necessitating a more critical and inclusive approach.

This volume seeks to make a contribution to the perspective on religion as a constructed and context-dependent category through its focus on fluid boundaries and the hybrid nature of religious processes where elements from one religious tradition might be adopted, adapted, and transformed within the framework of another. The notion of interreligious appropriations highlights the active agency of individuals and communities in shaping their religious expressions. Rather than being passive recipients, these agents engage with what might initially appear foreign, integrating and modifying it to suit their spiritual, cultural, or practical needs. This aligns with the broader definition of appropriation as a process of “making one’s own” while simultaneously navigating power dynamics and cultural influences.

Such appropriations are not one-sided; they reflect reciprocal exchanges that result in hybridized religious practices, demonstrating the interplay of adaptation and resistance. Borrowing from postcolonial perspectives, these appropriations can be viewed as acts of negotiation within asymmetrical power structures. While dominant groups may appropriate elements from marginalized traditions to reinforce their authority, marginalized communities often use appropriation as a means of resistance, agency, or cultural revitalization.

³⁷ Michael Bergunder, “Global Religious History in Theory and Practice,” *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 33, no. 3–4 (2021): 441–462, here 441.

³⁸ Giovanni Maltese and Julian Strube, “Global Religious History,” *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 33, no. 3–4 (2021): 230–231.

In conclusion, this volume adopts a nuanced and dynamic understanding of religion as a historically constructed and context-dependent phenomenon, a perspective that resonates deeply with the methodological principles of global religious history. By moving away from static and essentialist definitions, we foreground religion as a fluid and negotiable category, shaped by ongoing cultural, political, and historical interactions. This approach allows us to trace the processes through which religious beliefs, practices, and institutions have been appropriated, transformed, and reimagined across different contexts, emphasizing both the agency of individuals and communities and the broader power dynamics at play.

The integration of interreligious appropriations into the framework of global religious history enables us to highlight the hybridity and interconnectedness of religious traditions. Far from being isolated or monolithic, religions evolve through reciprocal exchanges that reflect adaptation, resistance, and the creative negotiation of identities. Ultimately, this perspective not only deepens our understanding of Christianity's global historical development but also provides a powerful tool for rethinking the study of history of Christianity more broadly. It invites scholars to view Christianity as a dynamic construct, shaped by the interplay of local and global forces and enriched by the complexities of human agency and cultural exchange. Through this lens, we aim to contribute to a more inclusive and critically engaged historiography that reflects the pluralistic and interconnected realities of the religious past.

3. Case Studies on Interreligious Appropriations

The chapters in this volume explore interreligious appropriations across diverse historical, cultural, and geographical contexts, demonstrating the multifaceted ways in which religious traditions interact, reinterpret, and integrate elements from one another. These studies illustrate how religious groups have negotiated, adapted, and transformed aspects of other traditions – sometimes as acts of reconciliation, at other times as strategies of distinction or resistance. The following contributions, arranged in roughly chronological order, provide rich case studies of these processes, spanning from antiquity to the modern era.

Benedict Totsche opens the volume with an examination of Athenagoras of Athens, a second-century Christian apologist who engages with the pagan intellectual tradition to make Christianity comprehensible to his audience. Athenagoras tries to explain to his readers the true nature of the (nonexistent) gods and why people still believe in them but he also shows that even pagan philosophers – understood correctly – support Christian doctrine. By reinterpreting pagan myths and literature, Athenagoras allows his readers to accept Christian claims without entirely abandoning their former identity. His work foreshadows

later Christian strategies of engagement with non-Christian traditions, a theme that recurs throughout this volume.

The interreligious reworking of foundational religious stories continues in Christian Lange's chapter, which investigates the biblical narrative of Noah's Ark as a site of interreligious exchange between Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions. Drawing on late antique Jewish midrashic texts, Christian sources in Syriac, and the Qur'ān, Lange traces how each tradition appropriated elements of the Noah story, adapting them for their own theological purposes. Just as it seems likely that the author of the Jewish midrash *Genesis Rabbah* was aware of the statements in Syriac literature about who was on which deck in Noah's ark, so does the Qur'ān share the idea found in Syriac literature that Noah had a fourth son. This study highlights not only the fluidity of scriptural traditions but also the intertextual networks through which religious communities responded to and reshaped each other's narratives.

Moving into the early Islamic period, Joachim Jakob examines how Syriac Christian writers of the eighth and ninth centuries appropriated qur'ānic language – in particular, the phrase describing Jesus as God's word and spirit (Q 4:171) – to advance their own theological arguments. These authors engaged closely with the qur'ānic text, incorporating and reinterpreting its terminology as part of their apologetic efforts. The chapter thus reveals how sacred texts of one tradition can be recontextualized by another, a theme that resonates with other contributions exploring the strategic use of religious discourse across traditions.

A different mode of appropriation emerges in Li Tang's study of Buddhism, Christianity, and Manichaeism in medieval China. Focusing on Chinese translations from the Tang dynasty (seventh–tenth centuries), this chapter explores how interreligious appropriation manifests itself in loanwords, the creation of new religious terminology, and shared narrative motifs, including birth narratives of Jesus, Mani, and the Buddha. By demonstrating how translation serves as a vehicle for religious adaptation, this study provides a Chinese parallel to the textual negotiations explored in earlier chapters.

Interreligious engagement was not limited to textual borrowing; it also extended to philosophical discourse. Jonathan Stutz investigates how the Coptic encyclopedist Ibn al-Rāhib engaged with the thought of the Muslim philosopher al-Rāzī, selectively appropriating aspects of his discourse on the reality of God's attributes. While Ibn al-Rāhib sought to demonstrate Christianity's compatibility with Islamic intellectual traditions, he simultaneously inserted critical glosses, positioning himself within a Christian framework. This case study highlights appropriation as a dialectical process, where borrowing is often accompanied by efforts to assert religious distinctiveness.

Religious appropriations can also manifest themselves through acts of imagination, incorporating spatial and visual dimensions. The contribution of Jürgen

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