THE CO-PRODUCTION OF JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM

CO-PRODUCED RELIGIONS

STUDIES IN THE ENTANGLED HISTORIES
OF ISLAM, CHRISTIANITY, AND JUDAISM

VOLUME 1

The Co-production of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

Artefacts, Rituals, Communities, Narratives, Doctrines, Concepts

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Katharina Heyden and David Nirenberg
Bern and Princeton, September 2024

KATHARINA HEYDEN
and DAVID NIRENBERG

Introduction

The Co-production of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

Interactions between Muslims, Christians, and Jews have attracted much attention from historians and theologians in recent decades. Few would deny today that Jews, Muslims, and Christians who have at times lived as neighbours in parts of the late antique, medieval, and modern worlds, have shaped the societies and cultures in which they have lived together. But how did these interactions between people affect the shaping of the religious traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam themselves: their material culture, their forms of living, their ways of thinking? And how can we grasp the fact that, even when they have never encountered each other in real life, adherents of all three traditions have consistently thought about each other, 'co-producing' themselves in the imagination, so to speak? These questions are at the centre of what we call the co-production of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, to which this volume, as well as the book series it inaugurates, are dedicated. These three religions, in all their cultural and sectarian variety, have constantly formed, reformed, and transformed themselves by interacting with, thinking about, and imagining one another. Their co-production affects all dimensions of a religion: artefacts, images, rituals, laws, legends, narratives, histories, theologies.

In some sense and with enough knowledge, many aspects of diverse cultures can be perceived as co-produced. We could fruitfully connect, for example, near-contemporaneous developments in Greek geometry and Sanskrit grammar. If we add the dimension of time, the possibilities of a- or dia-chronic interconnection become overwhelming, for there is no limit to

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how a future might put the past to work: mid-twentieth-century physics, for example, sometimes found inspiration in ancient Eastern thought.[1] But within and between the cultures of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam we encounter a specific type of religious co-production, one whose temporality is distinct. These three faiths not only compete over a shared reservoir of prophetic claims and scriptural traditions, but also understand themselves as historical, in the sense that they understand their present and their future in terms of revelatory moments in the past. The Israelites' struggles against Egyptians, Assyrians, Achaemenids, and Romans, Jesus's and Muhammad's struggles against their Jewish and pagan opponents, the crucifixion of Jesus, the fall of Jerusalem, the *hijra* from Mecca to Medina or the Battle of the Ditch: these and many other events in a history that are understood as revelatory and (if properly interpreted) related to sacred history become touchstones for future believers.

Each community understands its own relationship to divine teaching (and hence also to God's favour, to salvation or damnation) in terms of a relationship to the past that is conceived of as truer than that of the others. Each imagines the future and final destiny of others in terms of their role in that salvation history. In each, believers can always interpret their world in terms of the places and peoples of that salvation history, for the figures of the scriptural past — Egypt and Israel; Edom and Ishmael; Jews, Pharisees, and hypocrites; apostles and emigrants (*muhajirun*); Jerusalem and Medina — are available to populate every present in which people make sense of their lives in terms shaped by these three faiths. Within this prophetic and eschatological temporality, co-production is not simply synchronic or diachronic, but also in a sense a-chronic, with every past potentially useable in every present, and every present producing potential implications for the future, even (for believers) unto eternity.

Often enough theologians and historians have imagined a given faith's thinking about the others as vital to the early history of these faiths, as one emerging community works to differentiate itself from others: Christianity from Judaism, for example, or Islam from Judaism and Christianity. But after an initial 'parting of ways', each religious group is imagined in these accounts as making more or less its own path through time, perhaps influenced by contact with the others on occasion, but essentially independent and stable, confident in its appropriation of sacred history, and in its capability of 'purifying' itself from the influence of, or the anxiety of influence by, the others.

We are arguing, instead, that the sectarian dynamics we call co-production shape not only the origins but the entire histories of these faiths. Precisely because Muslim, Christian, and Jewish figures peopled the exemplary prophetic histories through which these communities authorized their origins, figures

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1 Staal, 'Euclid and Pāṇini', pp. 99–116. David Bohm is among the twentieth century physicists who drew on Eastern philosophy, both ancient and modern, for example in his *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*.

of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity could also be summoned to people every future moment in which participants in these historical faiths thought about their relationship to God. This potential for co-production exists in every moment of the histories of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, whether or not there is contact between living, breathing believers of these faiths.

In fact, the dynamics we are describing are as important within each of these heterogenous traditions as between them. Within Islam, the many varieties of Sunnis and Shiites have often imagined their differences as those between Muslims and Jews, each striving to represent the other as the Jewish enemy of the Prophet. The same is true among Christians, who have routinely represented Christians of differing views and practices as Jews or Muslims. Rival Jewish authorities also drew on their interpretations of the prophetic past to criticize each other's teachings and practices as Islamizing or Christianizing, even as they were themselves influenced by the teachings and practices of the Muslim and Christian communities in which they lived. In this sense the historical hermeneutics of co-production have always been a basic tool through which these faiths have both criticized and constructed themselves and each other. They continue to do so.

Beginning with the historiographical revolution of the Enlightenment, and accelerating with the reformist, decolonializing, and deconstructive historical and theological movements of the 1960s, scholarship in the West has developed the critical potential of historical hermeneutics, focusing on religious narratives and histories often (not always) produced to establish and polemically defend boundaries between religious groups and traditions and reading these against the grain. In these critical engagements, historians of religions have shown that in many cases the boundaries between religious groups were by no means as clear as the extant texts were once thought to suggest, and that the history of the three religions is often a history of mutual influencing.

The methodological lens of co-production is meant to extend this critical ability to question narratives of the pure or linear development of these religions through time. It does so in part by broadening what can be understood as 'influence' to include the vast realm of cognitive work done with imagined rather than real figures of the other, and in part by recognizing the a-chronic as well as the synchronic nature of the phenomenon. But our methodology also recognizes that the potential of its historical hermeneutics is constructive as well as critical — a potential largely rejected by post-Enlightenment historiography. The study of co-production seeks to understand how believers thinking against and about each other have affected past transformations of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam in all their sectarian variety. In so doing, it also establishes that the indelible presence of the other in the exemplary prophetic-historical past has the potential to create new possibilities for how these religious communities transform their thought and practice in the present and future.

In other words, co-production always has the potential to do constructive work. It will retain that potential so long as the interconnected history of these religions continues to shape the possibilities of their thought, even if one community succeeds — as some have fantasized — in eliminating the others, whether by killing or expulsion or conversion. We might go so far as to say, paraphrasing Sartre on antisemitism, that co-production is so central to these religions that if any one of them disappeared, the others would have to invent it.[2]

Sometimes, as in polemical and apologetical works, dynamics of thinking with and against each other are relatively obvious within the artefacts that reach us from the past. Many such cases are well studied, even if not explicitly through the lens of co-production. But more often religious co-production is not obvious in our sources. This should not be surprising, for to each of these communities the superiority of their own teachings to those of the others was something of an article of faith, with outside influence therefore often understood as corruption. Even those scholars of one religious tradition most open to the wisdom of scholars from another would often attribute any wisdom they quoted to an 'anonymous' sage of their own faith so as to avoid any imputation of influence. Or they would present the sages of other faiths whose teachings they approved as unconscious adherents of their own religion, cleansing their wisdom of any foreignness. The authors and creators of the texts and artefacts we study from the past themselves often worked to deny co-production or repress its evidence.

The same could be said of many modern theologians and historians who have brought similar preconceptions to their own study of the history of religions, understanding it as a landscape of largely discrete and independent traditions, at least after some initial sectarian division. Such preconceptions may make it difficult for those who hold them to perceive ongoing interdependencies between traditions, or may lead them to demand far higher standards of evidence for such interdependencies than argumentation from the historical archive can bear. That archive is, after all, extremely fragmentary. What has come down to us from the past and what has not, was regulated not only by the conscious actions of historical agents, but also by uncountable accidents and contingencies of fire and flood, worm and war. The medievalist Arnold Esch once compared the work of the historian to a child who shoots a dart at a white wall, then draws a circle around it and proudly declares: 'I hit the center'.[3] The remnants of the past are so fragmented that historians seldom know what sources are 'representative', what inter-textualities are especially meaningful, and what insights should therefore be more influential than others.

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2 Sartre, 'Portrait d'l antisémite', pp. 442–70.

3 Esch, 'Überlieferungszufall und Überlieferungschance als methodisches Problem des Historikers', pp. 529–70.

'Smoking guns' of causality or influence are rare in the records of the distant past. On the other hand, *argumenta e silentio* are suspect for good reason.

It may be tempting to fill gaps in the evidence of mutual influence between and across Christianity, Judaism, and Islam with a broad concept such as co-production, making it a stopgap for our knowledge of the past — to adopt a phrase coined by Protestant theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who warned theologians in 1944 not to make God a 'Lückenbüßer' for lacunae in scientific knowledge at any given moment in time.[4] That would be just as problematic an approach as the current tendency to assume the relative independence of the faith traditions from one another. The work that co-production does in any given moment needs to be demonstrated from the archives of these three faiths. On the other hand, our methodological sensitivities matter for what we can perceive: theory determines what can then be observed, as Einstein once quipped. Hence the importance of cultivating an openness to the possibilities of co-production in the histories and practices of these three faiths. Or, to adapt another phrase of Bonhoeffer to our purposes: co-production must be recognized not only at the limits of our possibilities, but in the midst of history.[5] Our goal is not to find co-production everywhere, but to prompt historians and theologians to think more deeply and more creatively about the gaps in our knowledge and the limitations of established methodologies and concepts that we face when trying to understand the complex and ambivalent historical-hermeneutical entanglement between Judaism, Islam, and Christianity.

The essays collected here contribute to such reflection in different ways. Most present a specific case of interaction and at the same time address more general conceptual and methodological questions concerning religious co-production in Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. They are selected from the contributions to a 2023 conference in Spiez, Switzerland. The goal of the conference was to bring together scholars from different fields to think about instances, or 'moments', of religious co-production in the hope of jointly compiling some kind of a taxonomy of co-production while at the same time contributing to the refinement of the concept itself. The general notion of religious co-production was laid out in a conceptual paper entitled 'Co-produced Religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam', now published in the *Harvard Theological Review*.[6] We are thankful to our colleagues for their deep and critical engagement with the ideas and concerns outlined in that paper and for the vivid discussions in Spiez.

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4 Bonhoeffer, *Widerstand und Ergebung*, VIII, p. 454: 'Gott ist kein Lückenbüßer; nicht erst an den Grenzen unserer Möglichkeiten, sondern mitten im Leben muß Gott erkannt werden'.

5 The original German phrase is: 'not only at the limits of our possibilities, but in the midst of life must God be recognized'.

6 Heyden and Nirenberg, 'Co-produced Religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam'.

This volume does not seek to provide a coherent 'development history' of the three religions. Rather, its structure reflects our attempt to present a panorama and a taxonomy of possibilities of religious co-production. Each of the essays herein offers a specific case within a given moment in history. They are not grouped chronologically, but according to the 'product' resulting from the various kinds of mutual engagement in thought and deeds: artefacts, rituals, communities, narratives, doctrines, and concepts. This arrangement reflects a movement from material to immaterial co-production, from forms of direct collaboration that are relatively easy to recognize as co-production to forms of engagement, appropriation, rejection, or imagining that are more subtle, but just as constitutive of the possibilities of life and thought within these communities.

Artefacts: Material culture provides perhaps the most concrete and obvious evidence of religious interaction and co-production. Katrin Kogman-Appel discusses the first illustrated Passover Haggadah that was designed by Jewish printers and Christian artists for the Sephardi Community of Naples after the expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492. Paul Neuenkirchen takes mint iconography as a case of material co-production, focusing on the various ways in which Islamic coins, from their very beginnings under the Umayyads in the seventh century CE, appropriate, reshape, and give new meaning to earlier Christian designs and symbolism. Sarah Islam reads Fatimid Jewish debt acknowledgements in the Cairo Geniza as co-produced between Jewish and Muslim communities in their continuous navigation between adherence and resistance to their religious norms.

Rituals: Moving to cultic life, we gain insights into the fuzzy contact zones of religious groups from both antiquity and the present. Maureen Attali reads the *Life of Jeremiah* as a co-produced window into a Jewish cult of martyrs during the early Roman period. Andrea Bieler, in her ethnographic reconstruction of an interreligious Good Friday prayer, discusses moments of religious co-production in a super-diverse local community in Germany today.

Communities: Three contributions are dedicated to the entangled dynamics of religious group formation. Mohamad Ballan discusses how the label 'Jews of the nation' was used in the co-production of sectarian identity in the twelfth-century Fatimid Caliphate to combat chief inner-religious adversaries, the emerging Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs in Syria and Iran. Volker Leppin detects a similar strategy of polemical co-production, this time involving Islam and Christianity, in Embrico of Mainz's re-invention of Muhammad for the Christian simony controversy in the twelfth century. Wolfram Drews shows how the fifteenth-century Iberian Jewish scholar Shlomo ibn Verga deals with religion as a function of a flourishing society, and religious diversity as the foundation of social coherence.

Narratives: All these communities base their identities on a wide variety of narratives that can range from the briefest of tales to works claiming to contain the universe of knowledge. Susanne Talabardon discusses various layers of narrative and exegetical co-production in a rabbinic short story of only a few lines, which she interprets as a Jewish counter-narrative to Christian missionary endeavours in early fifteenth-century Iberia. Uri Zvi Shachar shows how the anonymous author of a late medieval Old French Mediterranean encyclopedia sought not only to chronicle the conditions that make universal knowledge possible and authoritative, but also to recognize that it is profoundly co-produced (to use our language). Anna Neumaier discusses contemporary mass media and digital media as spaces for imagining the religious other and offers reflections on the communicative aspects of religious narrations among digital communities.

Doctrines: Although theological reasoning generally presents itself as from within one tradition, whether Muslim, Christian, or Jewish, precisely because these religions are co-produced, doing theology almost inevitably involves engaging with an examination of a reservoir of beliefs shared by competing traditions. Amir Dziri explores how the two doctrines of altering and adhering to the text were co-produced through Muslim attitudes toward the Qur'an in opposition to accusations against Jews of changing the Torah. Reinhold Bernhard offers a Christology that takes seriously Jewish and Muslim theological concerns about the dogma of the incarnation of God in Jesus.

Concepts: The three religious traditions have not only co-produced their own theologies, but also overarching concepts that transcend the doctrinal boundaries of each of them. Miriam Frenkel discusses the concept of migration and alienation in twelfth-century Maghrebi Muslim and Jewish thinkers. Finally, Davide Scotto shows how the modern idea of 'Abrahamic religions' goes back to the concept of an Abrahamic Law that was co-produced by Renaissance Christian scholars in their engagement with the Qur'an.

The individual essays not only present instances and results of religious co-production. Each also addresses, sometimes explicitly, sometimes implicitly, fundamental questions that arise from the concept itself, or in its application. In what remains of this introduction, we will draw out some of these questions and signal how the essays help to raise and address them. We focus on just a few of the more challenging aspects of religious co-production: the difficulties of classification within its sectarian dynamics; questions of intentionality in religious co-production; the need to go beyond paradigms of origin, influence, and development that are standard in the history of these religions; and the ambivalent potentials that each moment of religious co-production creates for the present and future transformation of the three religions.

The Difficulties of Classification within Sectarian Dynamics

Historians and theologians often act as if it were easy to determine, at least after some originary sectarian moment, what Islam, Christianity, and Judaism are, and easy to tell who is a Jew, who is a Christian, who is a Muslim. This view of the history of the three religions makes it difficult to perceive co-production as such, and is in turn challenged by co-production once perceived. In fact, an emphasis on co-production suggests that the dynamics associated with the 'sectarian milieus' (a phrase used by John Wansbrough to understand the early Islamic community[7]) at the originary moments of these religions — such as the milieu of late antique Judaism in which Christianity originated, or the nineteenth-century Christian sectarianism from which the Latter Day Saints (Mormons) were born — should better be understood as enduring across their histories.

From their very first moments of differentiation from Jews and Christians, for example, Muslims have developed many different answers to question of 'what is Islam?' (to borrow the title from Shahab Ahmed's book on the subject[8]) and have struggled over those different answers, often by attempting to push opponents out of the category of Islam and into that of Judaism or Christianity. The same is true, *mutatis mutandis*, of Christianity and of Judaism. The evidence available to historians and theologians today that has emerged from those sectarian struggles in the past is therefore not simply Christian or Jewish or Muslim, but co-produced.

Indeed, the question of what can legitimately be considered Muslim or Jewish or Christian has led and still leads to sharp polemics. Such sectarian discourses often take place within a given religious community, but take the form of casting rivals as adherents of another (as in the Sunni saying 'the Shi'is are the Jews of our community'). These discourses often generate effects that transform group boundaries, or result in the formation of new religious groups, even if those are not always immediately perceived as such by all. It took centuries, for example, before Christian scholars ceased to regard the Prophet Muhammad as a Christian heretic and started to think about Islam as a religion in its own right. On the other hand, religious authors have often used figures of the other religion polemically to attack enemies within their own religious traditions, and in doing so have simultaneously shaped their own understandings of orthodoxy, heresy, and the religious 'other'. From this point of view, that of a never-ending sectarian dynamic of differentiation and transformation, 'heresy' and 'orthodoxy' in Judaism, Islam, and Christianity often result from co-production.

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7 Wansbrough, *The Sectarian Milieu*.

8 Ahmed, *What is Islam?*.

A few chapters in this volume richly demonstrate the point. In his study of the Fatimid Ismāʿīlī tradition, Mohamad Ballan shows not only how 'the co-production of sectarian identity was evident across many different schools of thought in medieval Islam, with similar narratives, texts and frameworks being adopted by both Shiʿis and Sunnis in their polemics' (p. 155), but also demonstrates how figures of Judaism and Islam played a key role in how Muslims articulated their own theological and religious claims within sectarian discourses. (If we focused on different sources we could easily demonstrate that figures of Christianity also played important roles in these sectarian discourses.) In the polemics against the Nizārīs, anti-Judaism was construed variously in both genealogical terms, as direct influence of Jews on Muslim thought and practice, and in hermeneutical terms, in which 'Judaism' represented a specific form of theological error and deviance from truth. Ballan makes very clear the impact of this strategy on the sectarian landscape of Islam in Fatimid Egypt and the Levant.

Looking at Western Christianity in the same time period, Volker Leppin discusses the presentation of the prophet Muhammad in the poem *Vita Mahumeti* composed by Embrico of Mainz in the early twelfth century. By retelling and 'Christianizing' the story of Muhammad which has been circulating in the East since the seventh century, the Christian cleric Embrico uses the Prophet Muhammad not only as support for the Crusades, but also to attack his Christian enemies in the simony and Investiture Controversy in the Latin Church. 'In Embrico's hands, Muhammad's story became a vehicle not only for the intellectual war against Islam, but also a means to critique a Christianity that had fallen short of its ideals' (p. 200). Leppin links this interpretation directly to the question of the author's identification as the bishop of Würzburg. In this case the identification of a specific author and his religious belonging enables a precise description of the co-production at hand: the Prophet Muhammad serves the Christian bishop as a (involuntary) supporter of the Gregorian Reform in the Western Church.

In these two cases, thinking and arguing with the religious 'other' — Judaism in the Ismāʿīlī tradition, Islam in the case of this Christian cleric — serves the goal of identifying another who is seemingly within the author's own religious tradition as in fact a dangerous enemy, alien to the community. In terms of religious co-production it is important to note not only how the religious other serves to represent the internal sectarian enemy, but also how that representation of the internal enemy simultaneously creates new possibilities for how the other religion is perceived by contemporary 'target' audiences and by the countless potential audiences who may encounter these discourses and their legacies in the future.

Wolfram Drews offers a study of an author, Shlomo ibn Verga, who was himself enmeshed in an intricate entanglement of inter- and intrareligious polemical co-production. Forced to leave his Castilian homeland for Portugal in the late fifteenth century, and there probably urged to convert to Christianity, Ibn Verga completed a work entitled *Shevet Yehuda* (*Sceptre of Judah*) while

exiled in either Italy or the Netherlands at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Drews treats this work as evidence that medieval authors themselves sometimes thought in terms of co-production, albeit without using the term. He points to what we might call Ibn Verga's sociology of religion. Ibn Verga presents religions as functions for social cohesion produced in specific social circumstances. They are passed down by upbringing and education to new generations through the ages, with loyalty to the religion of one's ancestors contributing to the stability of society. According to Ibn Verga, Christianity is the appropriate religion for the literary figure of the king to whom he addresses his argument, and Judaism is the proper religion for the king's Jewish subjects. By adhering to their respective ancestral religions, Jews and Christians jointly create the conditions for a peaceful society: an argument against the forced conversion of the Jews. We are tempted to interpret Ibn Verga's claim that thriving and stable societies are best built by adherents of different religions as a deliberate attempt to replace polemical religious co-production and forced conversion with peaceful social co-production: an argument for religious pluralism of a sort.

The Intentionality of Religious Co-production

Although in co-production the religious other is often put into the service of one's own self-affirmation in polemical, violent, or appropriative ways, there are exceptions. One of them, contemporaneous with Ibn Verga, is offered by Katrin Kogman-Appel. She discusses a concrete and explicit collaboration for book production between Jewish commissioners and Christian artists in the crafting of a Passover Haggadah in Naples in 1492. Shortly after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, the Iberian Jewish printers David and Samuel ibn Nahmias planned the printing of a Haggadah and conceived its imagery as a ritual aid for the large community of exiles that had landed in southern Italy in the summer of 1492. The images, produced in the printshop run by the Christian humanist Francesco del Tuppo, are surprisingly accurate in presenting the Jewish ritual of seder. Through careful reconstruction of the modes of communication between the Jewish commissioners and the Christian woodcutters, Kogman-Appel treats the production of this Haggadah not only as an example of interaction or collaboration, but as an interreligious communication that creates a new co-produced religious imagery capable of providing exiled Jews with an understanding of the Feast of Passover and its rituals appropriate to their new situation. This collaboration included the communication of a complex exegetical concept, careful observation of Jewish ritual acts, and the utilization of iconographic motifs already found in this Christian workshop that had earlier produced illustrations for non-Christian literature. The outcome of this collaboration between Jewish commissioners and Christian craftsmen reflects not merely influence, interaction, or collaboration, as Kogman-Appel concludes, but a co-produced religious imagery.

Another instance of deliberate and pragmatic co-production, though less explicitly collaborative, is offered by Sarah Islam in her discussion of legal documents from Fatimid Egypt. She reads Fatimid *iqrārs*, Jewish debt acknowledgements surviving in the Cairo Genizah, as 'social agents' that can help detect the dynamics of compliance and resistance in religious co-production. Like human agents, these documents are not static but part of a larger reflexive cycle in which social actors and norms produce texts, which in turn impact social norms and actors. The *iqrārs* serve here as evidence that although religious elites did not acknowledge and indeed often condemned the usage of legal institutions and instruments produced outside their community's traditions and control, lay individuals and courts nonetheless absorbed and borrowed legal norms from external legal cultures when constructing documents and practices. More generally, Muslim, Christian, and Jewish religious elites often claimed documents, practices, or legal norms as their own when these were in fact entangled with the histories and practices (both real and imagined) of other religious traditions. (The tradition of medieval Islamic *iqrārs*, for example, is itself part of a long history of diverse Christian, Greco-Roman, and provincial Mediterranean and Near Eastern notarial and judicial practices surrounding debts and their negotiation.) Documents like the Jewish *iqrārs* exhibit the tension that religious communities experienced with regard to what Sarah Islam calls 'compliance and resistance'.

But co-production need not be pursued collaboratively or peacefully. In many cases in this volume (and perhaps even in the majority of cases in the collective history of these religions, though one should be wary of quantitative judgements about the fragmentary past) it was carried out by only one religious 'actor', whether an individual or a group, and often with self-legitimizing or polemical motivation. An interesting and relatively non-violent example from this volume is the 'Livre di Sidrac', a thirteenth-century encyclopedia written in vernacular French in the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem and popular throughout late medieval and early modern Europe. Uri Zvi Shachar demonstrates how the anonymous author presents the salvific knowledge and wisdom his book offers as 'a product of the most wide-reaching and inclusive intellectual enterprise' in the world (p. 249), relating how it was first revealed to Japheth in Noahic times and then how the book circulated across many prestigious Mediterranean centres of scientific and cultural exchange — Toledo, Hafsid North Africa, Norman and Hohenstaufen Sicily, and Crusader Antioch — before being translated into French. Here knowledge is presented as co-produced, but with the goal of presenting the community of French-speaking Latin Christians in the Crusader kingdom as the culmination of a cross-cultural process of receiving and transmitting wisdom.

In other cases, the integration and appropriation of religiously foreign elements is linked to more explicit claims to superiority and supercession, as is the case with the two issues of gold coinage discussed by Paul Neuenkirchen. Though separated by six centuries, the gold *dīnār-s* of the Muslim Umayyad caliph ʿAbd al-Malik, early in the history of Islamic coinage, and the first gold

coins of the Christian kingdoms that emerged with the conquest of Iberia from Islam in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, can be understood as mirroring co-productions. The first Umayyad *dīnār*-s are not only heirs to their Byzantine predecessors in their design, but also reflect deep theological interactions with Christians, as is evident in the progressive transformation and elimination of the Byzantine cross. Similarly, the so-called '*morabetino alfonsino*' of Alfonso VIII adopts from his Muslim predecessors a standard model for gold coinage that conforms to all the specific parameters of the Islamic *dīnār* (such as the aniconic, fully epigraphic form, as well as the use of qurʾānic verses), but reshapes it into a Christian product. Both coinages produce a polemical debate with their religious rivals through the appropriation and adaptation of the other's visual language. While the propagandistic intentions of the individual rulers is relatively easy to grasp in these cases, perhaps only the historian who is attuned to the entangled dynamics of religious self-presentation will perceive it as a 'full circle of co-production', a powerful play with appropriations and re-appropriations of rival religious symbols.

This ongoing process of referentiality, of appropriations and re-appropriations both explicit and implicit, is a driving force in the religious co-production of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. It can take place simultaneously as well as sequentially, and it is not always possible to pinpoint the directions of influence or to present vertical chains of transmission, though the religious traditions themselves often and eagerly claim to do so. Miriam Frenkel's demonstration of how the concepts of migration (*hijra*) and alienation (*ghurba*) emerged simultaneously in (many) Muslim and (a few) Jewish thinkers in the twelfth-century Muwaḥḥidūn Maghreb provides an excellent example. Through many 'ways of influence, appropriation, reverberation, adaptation, or parallel development' (p. 316), these two concepts were used by various currents of thought in a particular moment in time and space, and each of these currents shaped and interpreted the concept to suit its ideologies, political interests, and possibilities of life. Such co-production helped to build the concepts of an ideal Islamic society, which the Almohads sought to instantiate in their caliphate. It also entered Jewish thought through Moses Maimonides, who adapted Almohad interpretations of migration into a very different idea: that of eternal wandering in a continual search for the ideal place, a seminal concept in the construction of diaspora Judaism. This synchronic presentation makes clear the extent to which particular historical and social contexts matter to the co-production of ideas within and across Islam, Judaism, and Christianity.

The Origin-Influence Paradigm

That point is worth stressing, because scholars within one of these religious traditions seeking to explain the development of ideas have tended to point out the long chains of their own tradition, presenting new ideas or developments

as genealogically continuous with an authoritative past, or as a rediscovery of lost or corrupted truths from that past. Modern historical criticism has challenged this idea of 'pure' traditions with the proof of how deeply Christianity, Judaism, and Islam have been informed in many ways and manifold contexts by each other, as well as by the 'paganisms' and (eventually) secularisms they created. Nevertheless, since the efforts of the Religionsgeschichtliche Schule and Oriental Studies in the nineteenth century to root the three religions in their broader cultural and cultic environments, the guiding paradigm for this endeavour remains one of original and derivative, and the historian's task the discovery of directional influence. 'Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen' (what did Muhammad take from Judaism) was Abraham Geiger's famous question in 1833.[9] Ignaz Goldziher in turn pointed to the influence Muslim scholarship had on Jewish medieval thought.[10]

Since then, many books have been written and many research projects conducted under the flags of influence, borrowing, intertextuality, reception, afterlife etc. These have contributed enormously to realizing and acknowledging how strongly the three religions are interrelated. And yet all these metaphors and notions are still committed to the idea of a more or less 'pure' original that was incorporated, rejected, or adapted by recipients, whether consciously or not. This commitment, itself derived from the historical hermeneutics of the religions in question, depends on the methodological assumption that influence and its direction of travel from one tradition to the other can be observed by comparing a given text or motif or pattern with the 'original'. This method has yielded important insights, but it comes with important caveats. The most important, and most general, is that it imports from the discourses of the faith communities themselves an already appropriative and essentialist understanding of the 'original', mirroring the place of purity and faithfulness to origins found in sectarian claims to revelation. Perhaps less general, but also important, is the fact that it is often impossible for historical analysis to identify or restore an 'original' from the archives.

Maureen Attali offers an example of the latter in her study of therapeutic tomb-pilgrimage in Late Antiquity, a phenomenon that 'can only be documented with certainty after it was already shared by Christians and Jews' (p. 110). One of the main pieces of evidence in the debate about the (Christian? Jewish? Pagan?) origins of tomb-pilgrimage is an extract from the biography of the prophet Jeremiah included in the *Lives of the Prophets*, a document that can only be described as co-produced because, while it was only handed down to us in Christian versions, it was originally a Jewish composition with most of its contents paralleled in contemporary Jewish sources. In this case, as with many so-called pseudepigraphical writings and with many other phenomena

9 Geiger, *Was hat Mohammed von dem Judenthume aufgenommen?*.

10 See Goldziher, 'Über jüdische Sitten und Gebräuche aus muhammedanischen Schriften', pp. 302–15, 335–65.

of lived religion, it is not possible to extract an 'original', assign it to one specific religion, and then trace different layers of reception in other religions. Does that mean these writings and practices cannot be considered to have been part of Jewish religious practice at all? Attali interprets the intricate source evidence as pointing to co-produced religious notions and practices, in this case concerning the relationship between mortals, the dead, and the divine, that emerged from the ritual and intellectual interactions between the several religious groups in the Roman Empire.

Such co-production not only occurred in the formative periods of Christianity and Islam as the 'younger siblings' of Judaism, but throughout the shared history of the three traditions. As interpreted by Susanne Talabardon, a short narrative included by the Iberian author Abraham ben Soloman Torrutiel (yet another contemporary of Shlomo ibn Verga's) in his *Ha-Sh'lamat Sefer ha-Qabbala* of 1510 illustrates the point in miniature. The story tells of a certain Rabbi Nathanael, who deposits a jewelled ring in a fig tree before Sabbath and forgets about it. The tree dries up, and three years later, when Rabbi Nathanael sets out to cut it down, he finds the ring again. The tree immediately revives, sprouting new blossoms and offering fruit. Allusions to the Christian Gospels can easily be identified in the story (John 1; Matthew 21; Luke 13, among other biblical references), but it is difficult or impossible today to determine what the story might have meant to its author and his intended audience (Talabardon herself offers several plausible possibilities to illustrate the challenge).

Often enough in the history of co-production we can only discern its existence, without being able to restore the sources that influenced a given text or author or audience. Yet such discernment is already revealing. In this case the story provides evidence of the engagement of an impresario of Jewish tradition with Christian material. This is one more piece of evidence in the accumulating arguments against the idea of Judaism as a self-isolating community and tradition, an idea deeply inscribed in the history of anti-Judaism in Christian and Islamic societies, as well as in some strands of Jewish thought.

The Ambivalent Potentials of Religious Co-production

This brings us to our last point, or, rather, complex of points. Every co-production contained in the vast archive of these three religions has potential implications for the past, present, and future. For the past, in that what we discover about the past has the potential to change how we interpret it, and what we imagine occurred in it. For the present, in that how we interpret the past has the potential to transform how we perceive the present. And for the future, in that every co-production in the past has the potential to be put to use in future co-productions. These potentials need never be actualized, nor is it possible to determine what the valence of any actualization might be.

What we can say with certitude is that through their competitively shared histories, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity have not only created their own archives, but also a conjoint one, which offers endless possibilities for discovery and reinterpretation, ambivalent possibilities each capable of transforming each of these religions and the relations between them. If this sounds mysterious, consider the case studies thus far discussed. Mohammad Ballan showed how Fatimid inner-sectarian polemics created possibilities for the future classification and condemnation of particular theological errors as 'Jewish' in the Islamic world. Volker Leppin pointed to a potential offered by the retelling of Muhammad's life: the creation of a rhetorical weapon for Latin clerics to wield against Christian rivals. The religious symbols on the early Umayyad coins presented by Paul Neuenkirchen became models for later Christian rulers in their endeavours to propagate their claims to economic power and religious superiority. And Katrin Kogman-Appel taught us how Renaissance engagements of Christian woodcutters with pagan mythological material shaped possibilities for transforming the meaning and imagery of Passover rituals among Jews in Naples.

The case studies collected here also make clear the ambivalence of co-production. Every moment within the shared history of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam is laden with potentials whose many valences cannot be determined or reduced to one. A co-production that seems irenic in one context or moment can in the future be put to the work of exclusion and even extermination. And seemingly conflictual, competitive, and even violent moments can serve the future as stimuli to more irenic possibilities. The 'Livre de Sidrac' presents its encyclopedic knowledge as a multicultural Mediterranean co-production while serving the propaganda of French-speaking Western Christians in the Crusader dominions (Uri Zvi Shachar). Even the pluralist view of a Shlomo ibn Verga, who sees all religions as products of human imagination, is combined with a blow against Christianity, said to be the product of 'human intervention'. Hence, Christians are easily seduced, and 'their religious convictions were open to contingent influence from outside' (Wolfram Drews, p. 209) — another example of how the accusation of co-production and the assertion of the relative purity of one's own tradition often go hand-in-hand.

These examples illustrate how religious thinkers and communities in the past made use of some of the potentials produced by their own historical hermeneutics, in their efforts to live their faiths in their own times. But what about the present? What would making use of the potentials contained in past moments of co-production entail for our current age?

Amir Dziri and Reinhold Bernhard take up this question within the context of contemporary Western Islamic and Christian theology. Amir Dziri undertakes a critical rereading of the history of the notion of adherence to Islamic revelation (*tamassuk bi-l-dīn*), which remains a focus of religious debate in Islamic thought today. Reviewing texts from the seventh century to the present, he demonstrates how closely the idea of adherence is linked to the polemical accusation of the alteration or corruption of the revelation

(*taḥrīf*) levelled against Jews and Christians. 'Mixing', which he considers a version of co-production, is one of the five clusters that make up the narrative of *taḥrīf* by Jews and Christians, along with distorting, hiding, writing, and forgetting. Through the close epistemological connection of the two concepts of adherence and alteration, Jews and Christians accused of intentionally or unintentionally distorting the words of God serve as a template for evaluating the qualifications of Muslim theologians. The concept of *taḥrīf* becomes 'a mirror that shapes the self-perception of Islamic exegesis', insofar as 'the criteria used by Muslim scholars to deconstruct the legitimacy of other religious traditions are the same that help to validate an intra-Muslim system of argumentative plausibility' (p. 287). However, this dual dynamic also enables a constructive twist, because it shows that *taḥrīf* as a juncture allows for both dissociation and association. Dziri argues for an effort to reshape the concept of *taḥrīf* into an instrument that can enhance the appreciation of other traditions by formulating 'a realm of common questions', such as the assertion of a divine essence that reveals itself to all humans (p. 289).

The question of divine revelation to humanity is also the theological realm in which Reinhold Bernhard places his rethinking of the Christian doctrine of Incarnation. 'A Christology, sensitive to Jewish and Muslim concerns' attempts to engage seriously with some of the objections Jewish and Muslim authors have historically posed to the doctrine of divine incarnation in Jesus Christ. Bernhard recognizes that these objections were made for good theological-philosophical reasons — in this case the concern to save the distinction between the divine and the human — that are also central to Christianity and can therefore help Christian theology to express its own concerns more accurately. His re-evaluation of various ways to determine 'unity in difference' leads Bernhard to replace the traditional language of Incarnation with that of representation. According to this understanding, Jesus Christ is the representative of God towards humans and of humans towards God. With this, Bernhard not only proposes a new type of Christology, but also offers a vision of what consciously and peacefully intended co-produced theologies can look like. Within this vision, engagement with the criticism posed by religious others to one's own religion is not meant to convince or convert the other (as in traditional missionary strategies) but to refine and reform one's own tradition in view of the other's critique, thereby making one's own tradition more convincing for fellow co-religionists.

These two essays offer important examples of a constructive theology of co-production. But constructive religious reasoning, or systematic theology, does not begin to exhaust the many uses to which religious actors today put the manifold potentials of co-production.

Anna Neumaier's reflections on interreligious communication in mass and social media offer insights from an actor-centred perspective. Based on qualitative interviews with Muslims and Christians in Germany, Neumaier argues that the depiction of other religious traditions and their adherents in mass media is an example of religious co-production taking place *in absentia*

and through imagination, lacking any real interaction, which nevertheless does have consequences for religion and religiosity. Adherents of the religions portrayed in the mass media, in this case mainly Muslims in Germany, tend to adopt aspects of the narratives produced about them, perceiving themselves and behaving accordingly. In other words, asymmetrically imagined co-productions can powerfully affect the social sphere for minority and majority alike.

Whereas mass media (re)produce limited top-down narratives about religion, social media allow for more bottom-up and therefore more diverse, even contradictory narratives about religion. But even in social media religious co-production is not limited to direct interaction. Quite the contrary, social media amplifies what was already the case in premodern communication: when two or more people interact, an unknown number of other people might be affected or involved, and they also participate in co-production. Mass media and social media reinforce the ambivalent dynamics religious co-production has always had.

Rituals too are a communicative medium, and they too have always been capable of creating 'fuzzy contact zones', as Andrea Bieler puts it (p. 150), not only between religious identities, but also between the past, the present, and the future. She traces and analyses from an ethnographic perspective an interreligious Good Friday Prayer of Peace held in the German city of Hamburg in 2022 involving Muslims and Christians of various denominations as well as a Tibetan Buddhist representative. Traditionally, Good Friday commemorates and re-enacts Jesus's death, to which Christianity attributes a universal salvific significance rejected in both Judaism and Islam. Indeed, Christian attacks against Jews on Good Friday have a long history which is itself a form of co-production, with Christians performing the truth-claims of their saviour through violence against the people understood within the tradition as his enemies and killers. How do interreligious actors manage to transform a ritual so burdened by history into a common prayer for peace? Bieler detects a strategy of foregrounding and backgrounding of specific traditional elements in the making and performance of the ritual. By backgrounding the sacrificial meaning of the cross and foregrounding divine solidarity with all who suffer, Good Friday is transformed into a trans-temporal symbol for God's solidarity with humanity. This interpretation opens up space for the Muslim partners to participate, and at the same time reframes the tradition of Good Friday for the Christian participants. In view of the historical legacy, it is striking how Judaism is absent in this co-produced Good Friday in two different ways. First, the local Jewish community was not present, perhaps because Passover fell on the same date as Good Friday that year. Second, in the scriptural readings the speakers left out the biblical details about the shouting crowd demanding the crucifixion of Jesus (Luke 23. 21). Whatever the intentions, the historical aspects of Good Friday are concealed in the attempt to create a common space for Muslims and Christians.

This is yet another role for the historian or theologian of religious co-production: to call critical attention to those moments in which religious

actors today justify their claims and yearnings for the future with recourse to the past. Davide Scotto does just this in the concluding essay, devoted to the history of the now-popular notion of 'Abrahamic religions'. Within the Roman Catholic Church, the phrase received its highest authorization by its first papal public use in an address of John Paul II to the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem Sheikh Ekrima Sa'id Sabri in the year 2000. Scotto traces the history of the idea of Abrahamic religions backward in time: beyond the early twentieth-century scholar Louis Massignon and Lessing's eighteenth century back to 'Nathan der Weise', to the two fifteenth-century theologians, Juan de Segovia and Nicholas of Cusa. Faced with the Turkish threat to Europe, these two Christian scholars developed the idea of the 'Abrahamic law' (*lex Abrahae*) from their studies of the Qur'an as the shared fundament of Christianity and Islam. Scotto shows, however, that they developed this notion by drawing on three hermeneutical debts: the reworking of the Jewish Bible by the apostle Paul in his letter to the Galatians, the impact of the Qur'anic concept of *millatu ʾIbrāhīm*, translated in the twelfth century by Robert of Ketton as *lex Abrahae*, and the medieval Christian interest in a potentially shareable but in fact jealously safeguarded and harshly contended perspective on salvation (cf. p. 360).

These historical layers and potentials, in all their ambivalence, can resonate whenever a pope, a scholar, or anyone else invokes 'Abrahamic religions', regardless of awareness or intentions. It is the place of historians of religion and historical theologians attuned to co-production to hear those resonances and give them voice. Only thus can we become aware of the continuous interplay between the religious and the historical in these three faiths and approach with critical sensibility the endlessly ambivalent potentials for the transformation of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and the relations between them that this co-production creates.

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