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Originality in the Study of Religion
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ABSTRACT

The term "remix" emerged during the mid-twentieth century among Jamaican dub

artists. While the practice of *re*-mixing music might still come to mind for most when the

term is mentioned today, the emergent "remix culture" of the latter part of the twentieth

century started to change that. Characterized by its association with DIY, participatory

politics, and open-source movements, remix culture began to reflect a metaphorical

extension of the term that led to a cultural awareness of the way people repurpose

artifacts in realms outside of music, through either material sampling, cultural citation, or

both. As remix moved out of music-specific contexts and took on a rhetorical function in

technical production and digital culture at large, it became a way to think about creative

practices that utilized resources from productions preceding them. "Remix studies"

emerged as a new paradigm within the past decade as remix theorists sought to better

understand how the cultural recognition of processes of (re)production have continued to

evolve in the wake of a growing application of the metaphors emphasized and developed

as part of "remix culture." That is effectively the starting point for this dissertation as

well: employing remix as a metaphor to analyze cultural constructs. More specifically,

this dissertation argues that the metaphorical extension of remix can be implemented to

critically analyze how religious traditions develop and evolve over time and place.

The application of remix to the study of religion demonstrated here has also been

significantly limited, and thus, this dissertation fills that gap by asking how such a shift in

conceptual and terminological framing might help scholars understand religiosity differently, and what sorts of meanings, implications, or assumptions might accompany this. A crucial feature of this project, however, is the model I propose that encapsulates the metaphorical correspondences upon which my argument rests – in particular, RELIGIONS ARE REMIXES. I term this Remix+/- and indicate that it can be more generally utilized for studying the ways in which cultural constructs develop – of which religion is one among many. The chapters throughout specifically demonstrate how notions of authority, authenticity, and originality are problematized and challenged from the perspective modeled by Remix+/-. Buddhist thought and practice occupies a significant role in this dissertation; in particular, Stephen Batchelor's "secular Buddhism" and Osamu Tezuka's *Buddha* manga series serve as main examples. Within this framework, I more broadly argue that the application of tools from remix studies to religious studies can assist in the recognition that cultural traditions are inherently in dialogue with each other and not absolutely distinct, dissolving exclusivist perspectives and amplifying the evolutionary processes underlying cultural interaction and development.