

The Central Eurasian Culture Complex, the set of cultural features typical of peoples in Central Eurasia well into the Middle Ages, is focused around the God of 'Heaven, the sky' (in Proto-Indo-European 'Sky-Father', or 'Heavenly Father'); a shared 'national' foundation myth in which the founder-hero prince is the son of this 'Heavenly God'; belief in the prince's heavenly or 'divine' blood; a hierarchical 'feudal' social structure binding everyone ultimately to the God of Heaven, including the ruler; and the belief that the ruler went to Heaven after his life on earth, and that the ruler's oathsworn comitatus warriors, his 'friends', went to Heaven with him. It is hypothesized that when migrating Central Eurasians introduced their culture, including their socioreligious belief system, into the homelands of peripheral peoples, they contributed to the formation or development of some of the most dominant and widespread philosophical-religious systems of Eurasia. Besides Confucianism and Zoroastrianism, which are to some extent accepted cases, the systems in question include Buddhism, Taoism, Brahmanism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Traditional approaches to the origins of these belief systems rest on the assumption that they have arisen locally and independently without significant influence from elsewhere, the main exceptions being Christianity and Islam. This forces anyone studying one system either to deny the existence of 'influences' proposed by the adventurous few or to argue that the systems are similar because of some universal teleology, e.g. the idea that Central Eurasian-type monotheism (a system with one overwhelmingly dominant God in Heaven) is more 'advanced' than other belief systems, and therefore it is natural for humans to adopt monotheism as they become more 'advanced'. In addition, it is a normal academic approach to argue that identifiable similarities, no matter how unusual, are merely universals, but in these cases it must be asked if the impression of universality is not actually an unexamined assumption arising out of the domination of the developed world by the very same 'world religions'. In order to look into these and other questions, it will be necessary to 'think outside the box' and call into question many received views. While doing so, we hope to discover unexpected things both about the 'world religions' and about Early Central Eurasians' beliefs.

Tuesday, April 24, 2012

09.00	WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION Georgios Halkias, Bochum and Christopher I. Beckwith, Bochum
	SECTION I: MONOTHEISM AND JUDAISM (Chair: Alexandra Cuffel, Bochum)
09.45	On Conceptualizing 'Monotheism': Some Remarks and Questions Christian Frevel, Bochum
10.45	Coffee Break
11.00	The Figure of Moses in Recent Hebrew Bible Research Beate Ego, Bochum
	SECTION II: BUDDHISM AND CENTRAL EURASIA (Chair: Sven Bretfeld, Bochum)
12.00	All that Glitters is Gold: The Place of the Yellow Metal in the Brahmanic and Early Buddhist Traditions Michael L. Walter, Bloomington
13.00	Lunch
14.30	Does Buddhism Have Central Eurasian Roots? Johannes Bronkhorst, Lausanne
15.30	The Monotheistic Tradition of Buddhism: Pure Land and Central Eurasia Georgios Halkias, Bochum
16.30	Coffee Break
17.00	GENERAL DISCUSSION (Chair: Christopher I. Beckwith, Bochum)
19.00	Dinner

Wednesday, April 25, 2012

	SECTION III: THE MIDDLE EAST (Chair: Adam Knobler, Bochum)
09.45	The Origin of the Avesta and the Spread of Mazdaism in the 'Axial Age' Christopher I. Beckwith, Bochum
10.45	Coffee Break
11.00	The Hero and His Friends in the Gospel of John Peter Wick, Bochum
12.00	The Central Eurasian Culture Complex and the Emergence of Islam Anna Akasoy, Bochum
13.00	Lunch
	SECTION IV: EARLY CHINA (Chair: Carmen Meinert, Bochum)
14.30	The Early Confucian Notion of Heaven Heiner Roetz, Bochum
15.30	Contact with Insiders versus Contact with Outsiders: Pantheons in Han China (206 BCE–220 CE) Licia Di Giacinto, Bochum
16.30	Coffee Break
17.00	GENERAL DISCUSSION (Chair: Georgios Halkias, Bochum)
19.00	Dinner

CONFERENCE ORGANISATION

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DIRECTIONS

With Public Transportation:

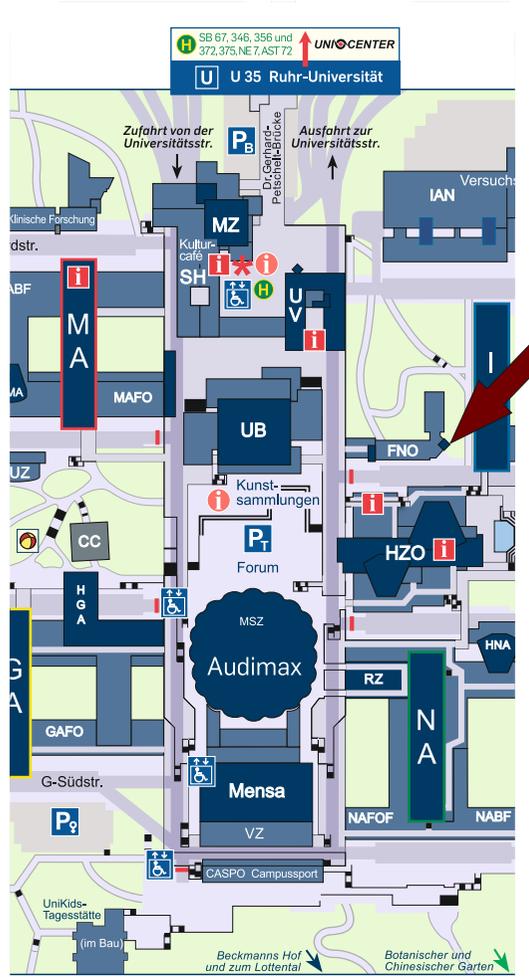
Take the U35 towards *Bochum Querenburg (Hustadt)* from Bochum Hauptbahnhof (Central Station) and get off at the stop »Ruhr-Universität«. From there you turn right and cross the pedestrian bridge keeping left while you pass the university library. The FNO building is on your left-hand side.

By Car:

The quickest route is via the motorway junction Bochum/Witten, where the A43 and A44 meet. Simply take the exit Bochum-Querenburg, follow the signs "Ruhr-Universität" and then the (electronic) information boards.

LOCATION

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DYNAMICS IN THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS

between
Asia and Europe

THE INFLUENCE OF CENTRAL EURASIAN RELIGIOUS BELIEFS ON THE CULTURES OF THE PERIPHERY



Vairocana Buddha in His Heaven

24.-25. April 2012

Conference
Ruhr-Universität Bochum
FNO 02/40-46

