

While increasing attention has been given in recent years to the role of long-distance trade in the cross-pollination of cultures and ideas in Central Asia, little work has been done in identifying contact zones and transfer processes between the multifarious religious cultures and practices in Central Asia. This lacuna is in part due to difficulties in the historiography of Central Asia stemming from the diversity of the languages, polities, and cultures connected by the transcontinental trading routes. Within the field, some scholars have been able to overcome linguistic barriers and examine a broad selection of material, but even so they rarely focus on contact, appropriation, exchange and opposition within Central Asian religious traditions. For example, religious specialists working on Nestorian Christian documents discovered in the Mogao caves in Dunhuang often have little expertise or collaboration with scholars working on Buddhist texts and images found in the same cave complex, despite the striking implications for cultural and religious relations between Nestorians and Buddhists that this juxtaposition and practice raise. Scholars of Manichaeism in Central Asia may examine Manichaean appropriation and transformation of forms of Buddhism, and Buddhist reactions to Manichaeans, yet be unfamiliar with substantial discussion of Manichaeans in Islamic texts, let alone with the different threads of religious ideas from Christianity, Buddhism and Zoroastrianism interwoven in the peculiar syncretism of Manichaeism. Even within a single religious thread, like Buddhism, there are distinct traditions.

Tuesday, 5 June 2012

- 10.00 **Introduction**
Adam Knobler (Bochum)
- ENCOUNTERS IN TURFAN, DUNHUANG & TIBET**
Chair: Carmen Meinert (Bochum)
- 10.15 **Manichaeism, Buddhism and Christianity in Turfan**
Desmond Durkin-Meisterernst, (Berlin)
- 11.00 **The Meeting of Buddhist and Daoist divinities in Dunhuang and Turfan during the fifth century CE**
Frederick Chen, (Oxford)
- 11.45 **Coffee Break**
- 12.00 **"Who is Gesar's Heavenly Father?" Reflections on central Asian syncretism in the 'heavens above' of the Tibetan Epic Tradition**
S. George Fitzherbert, (Oxford)
- 12.45 **Lunch**

TRANSMISSION OF IDEAS ALONG THE SILK ROADS

Chair: Alexandra Cuffel (Bochum)

- 14.30 **Transmission of knowledge along the Silk-Roads: Can the medical material help us understand the religious questions?**
Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim, (London)
- 15.15 **'Tengri, nature or no religion at all. Central Eurasian native religion in medieval Islamic literature'**
Anna Akasoy (Bochum)
- 16.00 **Coffee Break**
- 16.15 **Discussion**
- 19.00 **Dinner**

Wednesday, 6 June 2012

CULTURAL TRANSFER AND BUDDHISM

Chair: Georgios Halkias (Bochum)

- 10.00 **The iconographic construction of Gandhāran great departure scenes: a case of inter-religious inspiration**
Jessie Pons (Bochum)
- 10.45 **Transfer and Conversion in Buddhism: Narratives, Metaphors, and Depictions**
Christoph Anderl (Bochum)
- 11.30 **Coffee Break**
- 11.45 **The Importance of Being Circular: Logic in Buddhism, Pyrrhonism, and Hume's Neo-Pyrrhonism**
Christopher Beckwith (Bochum)
- 12.30 **Lunch**

COMPARISONS WITH "WESTERN" LANDS

Chair: Adam Knobler (Bochum)

- 14.30 **"Military conversion": soldier-slaves, elite troops and change of religious allegiances in the Central Asian borders of Islam in a comparative perspective.**
Ana Echevarria, (Madrid)
- 15.15 **'Without Religion but Following the Law of Nature': the Armenian Encounter with the Mongols and Reflections on their Religion**
Zara Pogossian (Bochum)
- 16.00 **Coffee Break**
- 16.15 **Discussion**
- 19.00 **Dinner**

DIRECTIONS

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.



Between Imagination and Encounter: Religious Cultures in Contact in Pre-Modern Central Asia and its Borders



Workshop Organization

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