

Call for Papers

Conference

Multiethnic Societies of Central Asia and Siberia Represented in Indigenous Oral and Written Literature – The Role of Private Collections, Archives and Libraries 3. – 6. November 2020

Organizers: Johannes Reckel and Merle Schatz

Venue: State and University Library of Goettingen University, Germany

Dear colleagues,

We are pleased to invite you to our conference on collections, archives and libraries that hold material on the indigenous peoples of Central Asia, their languages and cultures. Its focus lies on the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries, though of course older archive material may connect directly to living languages and literatures. It also includes the important role of internet archives for the documentation and preservation of literature that is available online only temporarily. Furthermore, we want to build a forum for ongoing research in this field of study.

Since 2019 the “Specialized Information Service for Central Asia and Siberia/ Fachinformationsdienst (FID)” is part of a funding programme by the German Research Foundation (DFG) („Specialised Information Services”). The State and University Library of Goettingen has the largest collection of literature from Central Asia in Germany, which it will expand continuously. The focus lies on literature in the autochthonous languages of Central Asia and Siberia. Our main goal is to develop services, which improve access to specialist literature and information for all researchers working on languages, oral and written traditions and cultures of the indigenous peoples of these large regions.

The conference brings together researchers to explore and discuss the current and future role of written, oral and digital literature, and to proceed with building jointly a Center for Central Asian Literature. This literature currently is stored in different libraries, archives or private collections; therefore, we aim at centralizing information and providing databases through direct links in the Specialized Information Service for Central Asia and Siberia.

Background:

Central Asia and Siberia consist of multiethnic societies with larger and smaller indigenous ethnic groups living in close contact with each other. These indigenous cultures and languages exist against the background of dominating cultures and languages of China and Russia. Interactions between the different ethnic groups change the speaker’s attitude towards the own indigenous language and culture constantly. The speakers often use their own mother tongue to communicate with each other, but have to converse in official dominant languages as well when participating in institutional frame of the dominant society. Because of the multitude of languages used in a multiethnic society, it is of high importance for local speakers to be multilingual to facilitate communication between the different ethnic groups - without any language loss.

Still, speakers of languages with a small speaker group tend to give up their own mother tongue in favor of the dominant language such as Chinese or Russian but also larger national languages like

Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Mongolian etc. within the respective independent republics of Central Asia. Additional to language practice, smaller ethnic groups often find it difficult to publish or broadcast in their own language. Printed material needs a distribution network like bookshops or internet platforms, which often are not available or supported. Thus, their literature if published at all is rarely available in libraries, bookshops, on the bazar or markets, but is often distributed in small numbers based on personal relationships and networks. In Central Asia, it is difficult to find literature in smaller indigenous languages in public libraries. This includes Kazakh or Tuva literature from Mongolia, Dungan, Uzbek or Uyghur literature from Kyrgyzstan or Kazakhstan, to give but a few examples. The situation is even worse in the case of newspapers or schoolbooks in such languages.

The relevance of language with regard to national and ethnic identity is a widely discussed subject within regional disciplines as well as among linguist and social anthropologists.

We invite contributions relating (but not limited) to the following interconnected themes and questions:

- The relevance of literature in small, often endangered languages of Central Asia/Siberia
- What is the role of the collections and archives with regard to the preservation of endangered languages?
- Which digitization projects are planned or in progress?
- Network of libraries and collections that care for such literatures and related topics
- Platforms for Middle Eastern and Central Asian librarians and scholars
- New mediated forms of data distribution and related possibilities or problems
- How to collect and preserve literature of the indigenous languages of Central Asia and Siberia
- How to make such collections better known and accessible to the research community
- How to build a network of institutions or private scholars that care for such collections in archives, in private and public libraries, museums and private homes
- Giving the data back to the indigenous communities: How do the local communities profit from the FID Central Asia
- How does the FID Central Asia interact with the indigenous communities

If you are interested in participating, please send you English proposal (300 words) to reckel@sub.uni-goettingen.de and schatz@sub.uni-goettingen.de.

Submission deadline: April 2, 2020.

Notification of acceptance: April 15, 2020.

The working language of this conference is English.

In exceptional circumstances Russian, Mongolian or Chinese may be acceptable.

We look forward to receiving your proposal.

Johannes Reckel and Merle Schatz