

ONLINE Conference

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

18.2.2022 + 19.2.2022

9 am-1 pm.

Organisers: Johannes Reckel and Merle Schatz, Göttingen University

Dear colleagues,

We are pleased to invite you to our online conference that focuses on collections, archives, 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 Göttingen has the largest collection of literature from Central Asia in Germany. 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 and providing these databases as well as the herewith-related research projects 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 (low variety) in favor of the dominant language (high variety) 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:

- the relevance of literature in small, often endangered languages of Central Asia/Siberia
- research projects related to these fields of study
- 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

If you are interested in participating, please send your full paper to reckel@sub.uni-goettingen.de **AND** schatz@sub.uni-goettingen.de **latest by Christmas 2021.**

Paper requirements: Word format, ENGLISH, Times New Roman 12pt, line spacing 1,5, footnotes (but NO ENDNOTES etc.), bibliography at end of paper, references in line (NAME: YEAR).

Please add in the paper header: Copyright with the author. Do not quote this paper without written permission from the author.

We will circulate the papers as one PDF file among all participants one month prior to the conference date to give you the possibility to read the papers in advance. On the conference date, those, who have submitted a full paper, will have 5 minutes to present the essence of their research, followed by a Q&A and discussion round with all participants.

We intend to publish the papers after the conference in a volume of proceedings.

Working language of the online event ENGLISH.