



03 October 2017, 20:00

The University of Central Asia is pleased to announce the book launch lecture held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, organized in partnership with the Centre for Development Studies - Geographic Sciences, Free University of Berlin. This lecture will be conducted in the framework of developing inter-disciplinary discourse between intellectuals, academics and students in disciplines of humanities and the sciences.

Book Launch

“Wakhan Quadrangle: Exploration and Espionage During and After the Great Game” by Dr Hermann Kreutzmann

with presentation by

Dr. Hermann Kreutzmann

Professor

Centre for Development Studies - Geographic Sciences

Free University of Berlin

Book Abstract

The Wakhan Quadrangle became an arena of colonial competition and international interest when four powers – Afghanistan, China, Great Britain and Russia – struggled for dominance in a remote mountain region where only scattered communities lived in a challenging environment. At the end of the ‘Great Game’ international boundaries were agreed upon and established on the ground. Prior to this, half a century of exploration and reconnaissance had augmented and enhanced the ethnographical, geographical and linguistic knowledge about the people living there by sending various international travellers commissioned to record routes, military details and strategic information for the respective parties in the contest. Among the diverse explorers were so-called indigenous intermediaries who were trained in measuring geodetic parameters and who noted down their observations about the customs, culture and economy of the people. They were expected to be knowledgeable in terms of linguistic skills and cultural practices; they were less likely than their colonial masters to arouse suspicion. Munshi Abdul Rahim was an explorer who was sent to Wakhan and Badakhshan in 1879-1880 by the first British Political Agent in Gilgit, John Biddulph. Hard to find and long-disregarded, his report is the centrepiece of this book and is reprinted in facsimile. This authentic and informative report was written during a crucial period for Wakhan that resulted in the imperial division of the formerly independent principality into two parts and the flight and migration of a large share of its inhabitants to neighbouring countries. His account is preceded by an introduction to the Great Game and its implications for the Central Asian interface and especially Badakhshan and the Pamirs, an elaboration of the context in which exploration and reconnaissance took place, and a presentation of the actors from the perspective of ‘native explorers’. Munshi Abdul Rahim’s narrative is a case in point to discuss the function of

providers of 'political' and 'non-political' information, i.e. the distinction between exploration and espionage from colonial times to the present day. The comments and interpretations are embedded in archival research and fieldwork in the region; within a span of 40 years, the author has retraced all the steps of Munshi Abdul Rahim.

Author's Biography

Hermann Kreutzmann has been Chair of Human Geography and Director of the Centre for Development Studies at the Freie Universität Berlin since 2005. Previously he held the Chair of Cultural Geography and Development Studies, and was the Director of the Institute of Geography at the Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nuernberg since 1996. He studied physics, geography and anthropology at the universities of Hannover and Freiburg/Brsg., received his Dr. rer. nat. in 1989 from the Freie Universität Berlin, acted afterwards as the field director of the DFG-funded special research programme "Culture Area Karakorum", was awarded postdoctoral habilitation degree from Bonn University in 1994 and became a visiting professor at the Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies at the University of Washington in Seattle in 1995. He received a Heisenberg Fellowship in 1995 and was awarded the Tianshan Prize China in 2010. Empirical research was conducted in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, India, Nepal, Tibet and Xinjiang since 1977 and spanning a fieldwork period of nearly a decade resulting in more than 200 publications including more than twenty authored and edited books. Principle Investigator in the Berlin Graduate School "Muslim Culture and Societies" and board member of the BMBF programme "Crossroads Asia".

Moderator

Marc Foggin, Acting Director, Mountain Societies Research Institute, UCA

Language

The presentation will be conducted in English

Location

Serena Hotel, Dushanbe
Rudaki Avenue 14,
Dushanbe, Tajikistan

Registration

Please RSVP to elnura.omurbekova@ucentralasia.org with your name and affiliation.

** Ideas presented in this lecture reflect the personal opinion of the speaker and do not necessarily represent the views of the University of Central Asia and/or its employees.*

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