

## **Bi-Annual Conference of the European Society for Central Asian Studies**

8-11 October 2015 in Zurich, Switzerland

Organized by the Halle-Zurich Centre for the Anthropological Study of Central Asia (CASCA) in cooperation with the University of Konstanz

Call for Pre-organized Panels and Papers  
Deadline MARCH 16, 2015

**Central Asia in the XXI Century:**  
Historical Trajectories, Contemporary Challenges and Everyday Encounters

The past is not only a “foreign country” where people “do things differently” (Hartley 1953), it is also the source of inspiration to which people in Central Asia turn to, looking for guidance in how to shape their own future. A concurrent trend in all Central Asian countries since the break-up of the Soviet Union has been the actualization of history for contemporary challenges. Such utilizations are occurring whenever claims about a historical past are successfully established in a new setting, imbuing contemporary institutions and practices with the spirit of history.

These utilizations often take the character of re-traditionalizations. During the conference we want to look at these processes and their meaning for new social and cultural configurations. What do, for example, the recurrence of pastoral nomadism, the instigation of councils and local courts, the renewed interest in spiritual practices or the turn towards certain food-products, medicines, literary forms or musical instruments tell us about the role of history in contemporary everyday encounters? Visiting shaiks or going to mosque, drinking kymyz, gathering in a kurultai, designing garments, raising animals, going on a pilgrimage, watching movies of historical figures are all manifestations of a new type of self-consciousness as well as novel expressions of regional and national identification.

For the 14<sup>th</sup> ESCAS Conference in Zurich, Switzerland, we invite panels and papers that investigate how re-traditionalization becomes manifest in different fields ranging from economy, law, language, religion, politics or culture in the broadest sense. We encourage investigations that trace how these processes happen, and by whom they are carried out. What are their reasons, purposes and effects of existence? We encourage participants to rethink the concept of re-traditionalization in the context of wider transformation processes that are taking place simultaneously in Central Asia, materializing in modernization projects, joint ventures, custom unions, labor migration, military cooperation or educational reform. We also encourage papers that critically analyse the implications of these re-traditionalizations: What are the intended and unintended consequences? Who benefits, who loses and who is left out?

Prof. Dr. Peter Finke (CASCA), Prof. Dr. Judith Beyer (University of Konstanz, Board Member of ESCAS)