

Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts  
Kala Kosa(EAP Unit)

Concept Note

Title: **International Conference on “MARC Aurel Stein with special reference to South and Central Asian Legacy: Recent Discoveries and Research” from 25<sup>th</sup> March to 26<sup>th</sup> March 2015**

**Objective /Concept Note of Stein seminar**

This Conference aims to focus on the life and legacy of Aurel Stein who like, Xuanzang- the traveller and scholar travelled through the inhospitable Silk Road, encircling the Taklamakan Desert, and unearthed a great civilization which remained hidden in the sand dunes for centuries. Sir Owen Lattimore described him as “the most prodigious combination of scholar, explorer, archaeologist and geographer.” Laurence Sickman’s adjective for Stein was “Unforgettable.”

“ Small pebbles often create large ripples in life. One of these events occurred in the life of young Aurel when in Dresden one of his teachers gave him a copy of *The Campaigns of Alexander* by Arrian. From that moment, according to his biographer Annabel Walker, Aurel “began to read of the great Macedonian conqueror and his exploits in the East, [and] he was gripped by a fascination that lasted all his life and inspired many of his happiest excursions into the mountains and deserts of Asia.” Recognizing it as more than just the story of Alexander’s battles, he became interested in what had happened to the Greeks – and to Greek culture – as Alexander’s army penetrated into Afghanistan, then Turkestan, and eventually into India”.

Stein was the first among Europeans to understand the ethos of Kashmir’s culture. This great savant explored the inner essence and beauty of Sanskrit literature especially the *Rajatarangini* of Kalhana. Stein proved his utmost dedication and devotion by editing and translating Kalhana’s chronicle and made his debut as a historical topographer.

Stein was not the first westerner to reach Dunhuang, China but he was the first to reach the sealed library (library 17 of Dunhuang Caves, Gansu, NW of China) and to acquire a large part of its contents from this library.

Stein was a meticulous record-keeper and took notebooks and field diaries to record all aspects of his expeditions. And his record keeping has been invaluable for the study of the sites he explored and the excavated artefacts.

This Conference will provide opportunity for scholars and students to know about this great personality who devoted his life in understanding the great civilization i.e. India, Central Asia and China.

This august occasion will give an opportunity to know more about Stein and his collection, meet scholar's engaged in research on his collection, initiate collaborative research on analogous collection and bring out research publication on collaborative basis. This above mentioned conference will be a tribute to a legendary figure in the annals of oriental study. We are proud to have Stein's collection in the National Museum, New Delhi.

**Tentative theme of the seminar:**

1. Stein's spiritual journey and fascination for Orient
2. Stein and Hungary
3. Stein and South Asian legacy including textual, archaeological and visual Material-New Research
4. Special session on Stein and Kashmir
5. Stein and Dunhung- Manuscripts, Inscriptions and paintings
6. Stein and Silk Road- Recent Archaeological Discoveries and research
7. Art of Central Asia
8. Stein and its collection world wide
9. Digitization and IDP: Ongoing and recent project/works
10. Travel and Trade in the Indian Ocean

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