

Caren Dreyer. *Abenteuer Seidenstraße: die Berliner Turfan-Expeditionen 1902–1914 / mit einem Geleitwort von Hermann Parzinger*; Museum für Asiatische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. Leipzig: E. A. Seemann, 2015. 271 pages. ISBN 978-3-86502-366-7.

The purpose of this book is to give future visitors to the new Humboldt-Forum in Berlin, which will exhibit the collection of the Museum of Asian Art, background information about how the world famous murals and all the other splendid artifacts came from Xinjiang to Berlin. The opening of the Humboldt-Forum in the rebuilt Castle of Berlin in the center of the city is scheduled for 2019.

From 1902 to 1914 four expeditions traveled from Berlin via Russia to the Turfan region and explored ruins along the northern rim of the Taklamakan Desert, that is, the northern part of the Silk Road. Caren Dreyer, an Indologist, who is staff member of the Museum of Asian Art in Berlin since 2001, had full access to the archives of the expeditions and also to some private archives. She uses these rich sources to describe the itinerary and to illustrate the ancient sites, to introduce the people living in the Turfan area, to document the activities of the expedition members, to portray the towns and oases, the local partners and their families and the living conditions of the expedition members in local houses. Quotations from letters sent home by the leaders of the expeditions Albert Grünwedel (1856–1935) and Albert von Le Coq (1860–1930) draw a vivid picture of the exertion of work and travel. All I miss is a modern map of the region with all the place names. It would make it a lot easier to follow the route of the researchers. This book is not an analysis of the Buddhist paintings or the manuscripts unearthed in the Turfan region.

The first expedition started in Berlin, 11 August 1902, led by Albert Grünwedel, accompanied by the Indologist Georg Huth (1867–1906) and Theodor Bartus (1858–1941), a former captain and now handyman in the Museum of Ethnology in Berlin. The expedition ended 5 July 1903 in Berlin. They needed about 15 weeks to get to the Turfan region. This and the following journeys were supported by Wilhelm Radloff and the Russian Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg, who bought the tickets, organized all necessary permissions, provided a letter of protection (*Otkrytyi list*), and arranged for the luggage to be sent custom-free. The Russian researchers had difficulties in getting an expedition of their own funded and were very keen to obtain more information about this region. The Berlin and the St. Petersburg researchers agreed to respect each other's area of interest.

The second and the third expedition belong together. They are only counted as two expeditions because the first one was led by Albert von Le Coq and the third by Albert Grünwedel, who wanted to publish the results of his expedition first before starting a new one (!). Therefore Albert von Le Coq was charged with the second expedition, which started in Berlin 12 September 1904; Grünwedel followed him one year later, 17 September 1905, after his

book was in print. Le Coq returned to Berlin via India on 7 December 1906 and Grünwedel on 9 June 1907.

The last expedition started in Berlin 31 March 1913, but Albert von Le Coq and Theodor Bartus had to travel at their own risk, since otherwise the foreign ministry would not sanction the trip. After the revolution in China in 1911 the region was still in uproar, old hosts and friends were killed, and during the stay in Turfan Albert von Le Coq realized that foreigners hunting for antiquities were no longer welcome by the new government. Le Coq used this expedition to ship as many murals as possible to Berlin, and the harvest of murals was much larger than before. They returned to Berlin on 13 March 1914, about four months before the start of World War I. But it was during World War II that parts of the collection suffered from bombing and looting with the result that very large murals in particular were destroyed forever, and other pieces are on display or in the storage of the Hermitage in St. Petersburg.

The two main actors were of quite different character. Following the arguments of Caren Dreyer one gets the impression that Albert Grünwedel was more a responsible scholar interested in research and rescued only threatened murals, whereas Albert von Le Coq behaved more like an explorer and trophy hunter seeking fame.

Caren Dreyer's lavishly illustrated book makes a lot of sources available in excellent printing quality. For readers or visitors to the upcoming exhibition who are interested in more, there is a complete database of the 1188 expedition photos available online (<<http://www.smb-digital.de/eMuseumPlus>>, Museum für Asiatische Kunst, Fotoarchiv) and the same is true for the discovered manuscripts, more than 44.000 pieces in more than 20 scripts and languages, the world's most comprehensive and varied collection (<turfan.bbaw.de/dta/>). The Museum of Asian Art has done an outstanding job of opening their collections to scholars and enthusiasts of the Silk Road.

The idea behind the book is quite similar to the one published for the new China exhibition in the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities in Stockholm (Magnus Fiskesjö and Chen Xingcan. *China before China*. Stockholm: Östasiatiska museet Corporation, 2004) with one important difference: our colleagues in Sweden published one book in their native language and a second one in English and Chinese. The Humboldt-Forum will be a major tourist attraction, and the shop in the museum should offer this useful guidebook in English and Chinese too.

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