

[CfP „Heinrich Friedrich von Diez \(1751-1817\) - Diplomat, Orientalist, and Collector“ \(Berlin 7-8 Sept. 2017\)](#)

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Call for Papers

Symposium „Heinrich Friedrich von Diez (1751-1817) - Diplomat, Orientalist, and Collector“

Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, 7./8. September 2017

In 2017 we will commemorate the 200th anniversary of the death of Heinrich Friedrich von Diez (2.9.1751-7.4.1817). He was a profound and belligerent expert of the languages and cultures of the Middle East and a passionate book-collector. A fresh look on him and his almost forgotten works can contribute to a better understanding of the development of Oriental studies in Germany between the period of Enlightenment and the emergence of Oriental philology.

As a young man Diez was a committed freemason and published some essays on social and political issues that make him appear as a typical representative of the *Sturm und Drang* era. Between 1784 and 1790 he was the Prussian envoy at the Ottoman Sublime Porte in Constantinople. During these years he intensified his studies of Oriental languages and became a widely acknowledged scholar and connoisseur of the Middle and Near East. After his premature dismissal in 1790 he settled down near Berlin and devoted himself to studying the books and manuscripts he had brought from Turkey. He made German readers aware of the Turkish national epic of *Dede Qorqūd* and the Persian mirror for princes *Qābūs-nāma*. In his *Denkwürdigkeiten of Asien*, published in two volumes in 1811 and 1815, he dealt with many geographical, linguistic, literary and ethnographic topics based on sources in his manuscript collection. His impact on Goethe's *West-östlichen Divan* and his heavy dispute with Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall are well known. In the last years of his life Diez became a devout Christian. He died in 1817 while working on an Ottoman edition of the Bible.

Diez bequeathed his outstanding personal library comprising about 17,000 printed books and more than 850 Oriental and Western manuscripts to the Royal Library in Berlin, where it is preserved to this day as one of its most important collections.

We invite contributions in German, English and French to the following themes:

- Aspects dealing with Heinrich Friedrich von Diez' career, works, scholarly correspondance, and the

perception of his works

- Investigations into Diez' manuscript and book collection
- Political relations and cultural transfer between Europe (especially Prussia) and the Ottoman Empire in that period
- Development of Oriental and particularly Turkish studies (especially but not exclusively in Germany) in the 18th/early 19th century

Interested participants are invited to submit a proposal (by email only) with a title, abstract (max. 400 words) and short CV by 27 November 2016 to christoph.rauch@sbb.spk-berlin.de.

Travel expenses of successful applicants will be most probably covered, provided that external funding is granted.