

Dr. Rosie Llewellyn to speak at BRAC University

Press release

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BRAC University in association with Bangladesh Forum for Heritage Studies invited Dr. Rosie Llewellyn-Jones MBE, to give a Public Lecture on “A Fatal Friendship: the Nawabs, the British and the city of Lucknow.” on 10th October at BRAC Centre Inn. Dr. Llewellyn-Jones, an acclaimed scholar, specializes in the history of colonial India of the 18th and 19th centuries. Her books on Lucknow, including *A Fatal Friendship: the Nawabs, the British and the city of Lucknow*, as well as her interest in the culture and literature of the city, have given her the status of a ‘Lucknowite’. She has written prolifically on Lucknow, and her books include *The Lucknow Omnibus*; *Lucknow: City of Illusion*; *Lucknow: Then and Now*; *Engaging Scoundrels: True tales of old Lucknow* as well as *The Last King in India: Wajid Ali Shah 1822-1887*. This was her first trip to Bangladesh.

In her talk Dr. Rosie Llewellyn-Jones elaborated on the nature of the friendship between the East India Company officers and the Nawabs as one that cost the Nawabs a lot. By pointing to the architecture itself and buildings of European origin, the author, discussed the Nawabi Lucknow and the colonial mind in its relation to 18th century India. She mentioned how in the 1720s the Mughal Empire started breaking down, and that the East India Company had always been a punitive company. The Nawabs had a financial dependency on the East Indian Company. She went on to mention that Tilly Kettle, a prominent English portrait painter painted Shuja-ud-

Daula, the Subedar Nawab of Oudh. Kettle was also the first prominent English painter to work in India and had blazed the trail for other foreign painters to work in India. She continued, by saying that Asaf -ud -Doula , son of Shuja-ud-Daula became Nawab after his father died. He had many wives but did not leave behind any heir .Warren Hesting, the first governor general of India hated Lucknow. There was a conflict between Hesting and Asaf– ud-Doula. She mentioned the fact that Wajid Ali Shah, who came from the same line of the Nawabs had 370 wives. He preferred everything in Persian. Dr. Jones also wrote a book on him titled, The Last King In India: Wajid Ali Shah.

Dr. Jones also mentioned that during the early 18th century the English assimilated with the Indian Nawabs' tradition. Lucknow was created after the fashion of Calcutta where the English spent their formative years. When these East India Company officers went back to England, they bought estates and led lives like the Indian Nawabs. When the East India Company officers were in India, a kind of fraternity was established between the East India Company officers. Power had been stripped from the Nawabs and they were left with very little power in 1858. The Nawabs built lavish palaces and spent money and time by amusing themselves, thus they went even further away from power.

The audience enjoyed the talk tremendously, and a very lively question answer session followed the talk.