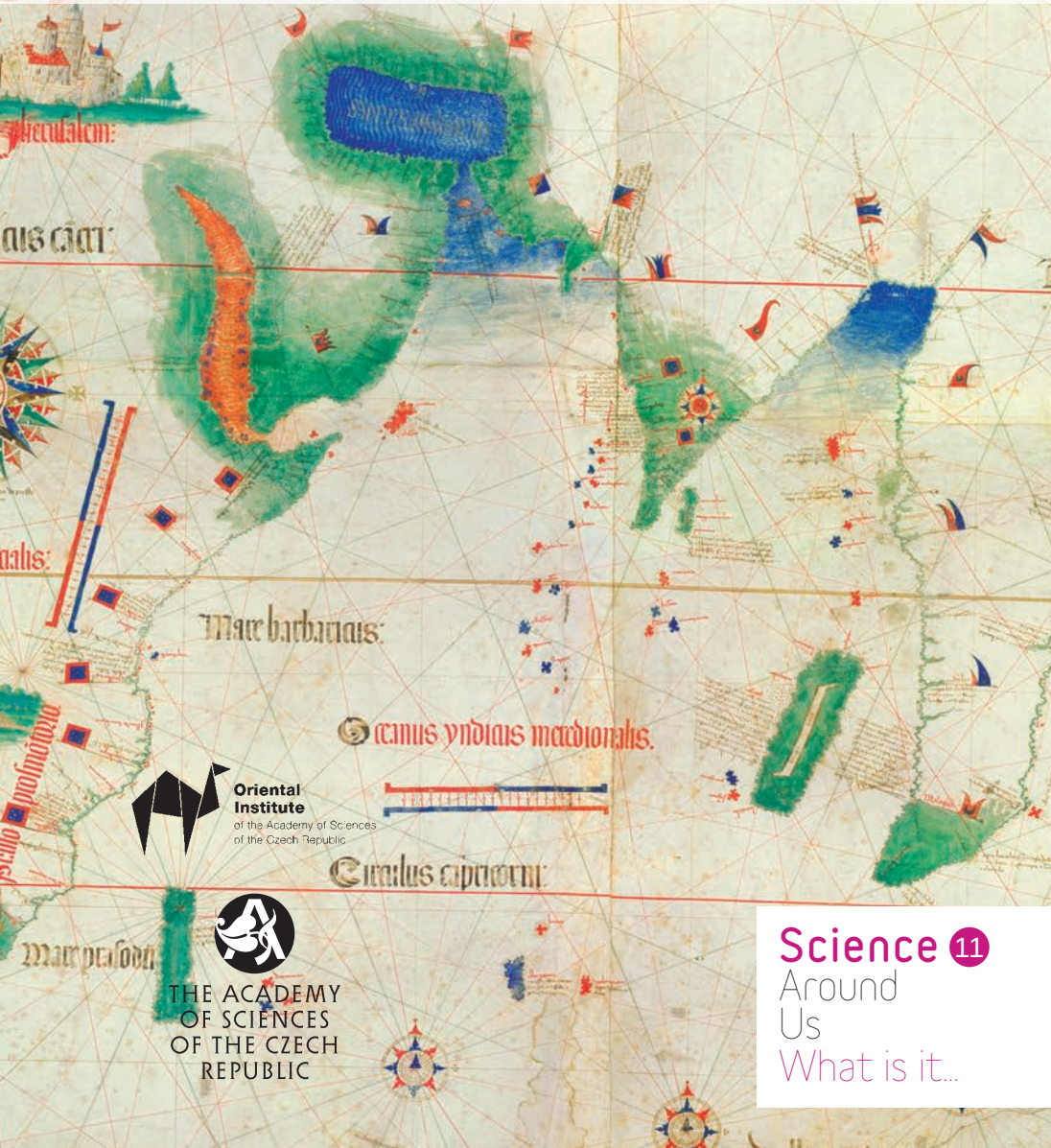
English edition

Oriental Institute



Oriental Institute
of the Academy of Sciences
of the Czech Republic

THE ACADEMY OF SCIENCES OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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What is it...

Oriental Institute

The Oriental Institute (www.orient.cas.cz) is a public non-university research institution. Formally established in 1922, just six years after SOAS in London, the Oriental Institute is one of the oldest institutions dedicated to the study of Oriental cultures in Central and Eastern Europe. Since 1993, it has fallen administratively under the auspices of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic (AS CR), an umbrella research institution similar in function to its counterparts in continental Europe, such as the CNRS in France. The AS CR was established in 1992 as the Czech successor to the former Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. It is set up as a complex of 54 public research institutions. The primary mission of the AS CR and its institutes is to conduct basic research in a broad spectrum of the natural, technical and social sciences and the humanities. This research, whether highly specialized or interdisciplinary in nature, aims to advance developments in scientific knowledge at the international level, while also taking into account the specific needs of both Czech society and national culture.

In a country such as the Czech Republic, where university departments dealing with Oriental studies tend to be small and understaffed, the structure of non-university research bodies with permanent research positions brings numerous benefits. Among other things, scholars are enabled to pursue their specializations according to the needs of relevant fields of study, aiming correspondingly at the highest levels of research quality. The framework of the Institute allows for a flexible and open-ended approach to research initiatives in Asia-related topics, creating, in effect, an ideal environment for interdisciplinary research. The research quality is guaranteed by the Council of the Institute, composed of both internal and external members, and regular – both Czech and international – peer-review evaluations. Currently, the work of our researchers is mainly focused on the Arab world, Israel, India, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, China, and the ancient Near East.

The Oriental Institute is divided into three departments on a geographical basis. This division makes it possible for specialists devoted to the study of a particular region to maintain close contact with their colleagues working on the same or similar problems within a given field. In addition, in order to provide opportunities for extending a specific methodological approach to the study of individual regions, working groups are frequently established independently of the geographical divisions. These teams are not only open to staff members from the different departments of the Institute, but also to scholars from other research bodies.

Who We Are

In most cases, Oriental studies in Central and Eastern Europe emanate from a different origin than their counterparts in the West, unrelated as they are to (the legacy of) colonialist expansion. The interest in the Orient stemmed, in the local context, primarily from a pure intellectual curiosity and a profound respect for the cultural heritage of ancient civilizations. As local scholars recruited themselves from among those who had been either suppressed or deprived of political independence, often for centuries, the perception of "the other" diverged from that of the West and a unique bond with Asia was forged. To enlist some examples, the call for India's independence fell on attentive ears in interwar Czechoslovakia (and not exclusively among the India specialists). In a similar vein, the prominent Indian statesman Jawaharlal Nehru unreservedly denounced the Munich Pact of 1938.

Free of any form of post-colonial complex, the Oriental Institute actively seeks to promote research excellence that reflects European academic traditions and contemporary needs. We are convinced that neither the indigenous narrative nor the view of outsiders can or should supersede each other in the global community of today. As such, the European perspective has its legitimate place and a non-personal connection to the subject matter can also be an advantage. The Institute aims to bring together scholars and graduate/doctoral students by hosting lectures, workshops and

J. Nehru with his daughter Indira in the company of V. Lesný in Prague, August 9, 1938 (OI Archive)

Damascus
(Miroslav Melčák)

conferences. The Institute has always maintained close relations with other universities and research facilities in which Oriental matters are addressed. The connection with the Faculty of Arts of Prague's Charles University, in which a number of the Oriental Institute's scholars teach and which, in fact, has traditionally supplied most of its staff, is particularly intimate. The Institute also holds a joint Ph.D. program in Oriental disciplines with the same Faculty. Simultaneously, members of our staff are engaged in teaching at other universities in the Czech Republic. In addition to facilitating research activities, the Institute provides various services to the state administration and general public, such as expert advice and consulting, translations, interpreting facilities, information service and lectures. The Institute is also engaged in many international activities such as conferences, long-term exchanges, teaching, lecturing, and publishing abroad. Furthermore, the Institute continues to actively engage with international partners, with whom it seeks to reach research cooperation.

Who We Were

A brief history of the Oriental Institute

It is perhaps true to say that no other research discipline has either faced or experienced the range of challenges during the past century that have faced the field of Oriental studies. Although the Czechs and Slovaks have always lived in the very heart of Europe and for long periods under foreign domination, constantly struggling to maintain their national identity, they have always shown great interest in the distant lands of the Orient. From as early as the Middle Ages, Oriental thinking and literature were influential in the Czech and Slovak cultural sphere. The deeper interest of the Czech and Slovak scholars in Oriental cultures was initially directed towards the Indian subcontinent. Indian philology as a science began to develop a close relationship with Indo-European comparative linguistics, and its origins are closely linked with the national cultural and political revival in the country. Despite the fact that Oriental research in Czech countries had such a long tradition and produced many results that commanded international respect (e.g. the works of professor Alois Musil, Jan Rypka or Bedřich Hrozný – well known for deciphering the ancient Hittite language), the backing for its academic achievements was rather limited. The underprivileged position of the Czech and Slovak nations within the Austro-Hungarian state naturally had an impact on the development of Oriental studies. The Czech University was not re-opened in Bohemia until after 1882; in Bratislava, the Slovak University was founded only after 1918. Compared to the Orientalists at the University of Vienna, with their rich tradition of Oriental studies, the Czechoslovak counterparts led a meager existence with the establishment of only one chair. Thus, the first Czech Orientalist in the academic sense, Rudolf Dvořák (1860–1920), professor of Oriental languages, was required to cover a wide range of Oriental fields, from Hebrew and Persian to Chinese. Other fields were studied only as subsidiary disciplines within the context of comparative Indo-European philology, Biblical studies, etc. The result of this was that the first generation of Czech scholars, represented by such names as B. Hrozný, A. Musil, and J. Rypka, established themselves in Vienna and it was only after the independence in 1918 that they felt able to return to their homeland.

Bedřich Hrozný (OI Archive)

Alois Musil (OI Archive)

Jan Rypka (OI Archive)

Moriz Winternitz (OI Archive)

In particular, the following scholars constituted the driving force behind the establishment of the Oriental Institute and contributed significantly in their roles as members, advisors and patrons during the early period of development:

Bedřich Hrozný (1879-1952) was one of the world's leading authorities in the field of Oriental studies. After studying in Berlin and London, and being well versed in Semitic languages, he devoted his attention to Assyriology. In 1914, Hrozný was engaged by the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft to publish texts found in the course of the German excavations near the Turkish village of Bogazköy. They were written in a thus-far unknown language, which seemed to have been the official language of the Hittite rulers. In 1917 he published his *Die Sprache der Hethiter* - a discovery of worldwide importance, for in it Hrozný deciphered the Hittite script and demonstrated the Indo-European character of the Hittite language. He also greatly contributed to the understanding of the whole historical development of the ancient Near East in the 2nd millennium B.C. Thus, Hrozný's discovery became one of the greatest pre-war achievements of Czech science.

Alois Musil (1868-1944) was one of the first Czech Orientalists engaged in field research, and he brought back remarkable findings and materials from his travels in Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula. Among his many interests, geography and ethnology gradually gained sway, as indicated by the first of his monumental works, *Arabia Petraea* (1907-1908). Under the auspices of the Viennese Academy, Alfred Hölder published Musil's four-volume, 1,633-page study, which contained ethnological observations, hundreds of illustrations, an extensive bibliography and a map supplement. In 1907, he also published his monumental two-volume *Kuseir Amra*, which deals with his epochal discovery of the Amra palace, built in the Transjordan Desert in the 8th century B.C. Between 1923 and 1929, Musil made several trans-Atlantic trips to New York while preparing his six-volume *Oriental Exploration and Studies*, published between 1926 and 1928 by the American Geographical Society (AGS), the oldest nationwide geographical organization in the US. Besides a detailed description of the explored areas, these books contain many passages dealing with historical geography, history, the political situation, etc. In 1927, the AGS awarded Musil its Charles P. Daly Medal for "valuable or distinguished geographical services or labors." Its first recipient had been the polar explorer Ronald Peary, whose contribution was acknowledged in 1902.

Jan Rypka (1886-1968) was a prominent Czech Orientalist and professor of Iranology and Turkology at Charles University, Prague. He studied at the University of Vienna. After focusing his scholarly work on classical Turkish poets, he shifted his attention to Iranian literature. In this field, note should be taken of his edition of Nizami's work *Heft peiker*, which he published jointly with Hellmut Ritter in 1934, and, primarily, of the voluminous *History of Persian and Tajik Literature*, a work to which he contributed a monumental survey of classical modern Persian literature.

Moriz Winternitz (1863-1937) received the degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Vienna in 1886. At Oxford, he assisted Max Müller in the preparation of the *Rig Veda* (4 vols., Oxford 1890-1892). In 1902 he was appointed to the professorship of Sanskrit and ethnology in Prague. Winternitz was one of a few Indologists in the world who succeeded in mastering the whole range of ancient Indian literature and in depicting its development in a monumental synthetic work - *Geschichte der indischen Literatur* (3 vols., Leipzig 1905-1922, English version: Calcutta University 1927, 1933 and 1959).

B. Hrozný working on a Hittite inscription, Ankara
(Masaryk Institute and Archive of the AS CR,
personal collection of Bohumil Vavroušek, inventory no. 4265)

It was the independent Czechoslovak Republic that set about addressing the neglect that characterized the field of Oriental studies. An event that was to be of the utmost importance for the future development of Czech Oriental studies was the foundation of the Oriental Institute of Prague, which was to establish itself as an organizational and intellectual center. The Institute was founded under Act No. 27/1922, passed by the Czechoslovak parliament on January 25, 1922. According to the act, the Institute was to be "an independent and autonomous institute, with its seat in Praha," and its aim was "to cultivate and promote scientific and economic relations with the Orient." The establishment of the Institute was greatly supported by the first Czechoslovak President, T. G. Masaryk, who provided it with both moral and financial backing. Masaryk was himself a former student of Arabic at the Vienna Oriental Academy. In addition, the war-Odyssey of Masaryk was to take him through Siberia, Manchuria and Korea on his way to Japan, arriving there in 1918. During his short stay in Tokyo and Yokohama his interest was attracted to the cultural and economic activities of the country. His travels through the Far East served to remind him of the manifest importance of the existing cultural and economic relations between Europe and the Orient, and, in all probability, led to the desire to establish an Oriental Institute in his own country. The dream was to be realized when the President's interest coincided with Professor Musil's suggestion that a Society for the promotion of cultural and economic relations with the Orient should be created.

Until the establishment of the Institute, various research, translation and publication activities had already been developed within several independent institutions, largely in high schools and universities, but also within the field of state administration. In the newly established state, however, Orientalists expressed the urgent need to establish a body which would have a coordinating function, one which would simultaneously represent Czechoslovak Oriental research while providing the necessary professional and financial background for future research activities. The same motivation for founding such an institution was also expressed in business circles within the new state. Consequently, the proposals set forth and elaborated by Czech Orientalists were favorably accepted by the representatives of cultural and business circles in Czechoslovakia. Expenditure requirements connected with the foundation of the Institute were met by the fund created for the purposes of commemorating President Masaryk's 70th birthday in 1920. In 1930, on the occasion of his 80th birthday, Masaryk was unanimously elected the first Honorary Member of the Institute. Simultaneously, two financial trusts bearing his name were created, one to facilitate the publication of Oriental works, the other to provide support for young businessmen working in Oriental countries. In addition to this, the provision of a sum of four million crowns facilitated the full development of the Institute's activities. A further half million designated for the library was donated by the Ministry of Commerce, and finally the Ministry of Education assigned the amount of three million from its budget for the purchase of a building, as well as an annual subsidy of 300,000 crowns for basic capital requirements. The monumental Baroque Lobkowicz Palace in Malá Strana was thus purchased.

Indologist V. Lesný (1882–1953), director of the Oriental Institute in 1945–1952, visiting the Bengali poet and Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore in Santiniketan
(Masaryk Institute and Archive of the AS CR, personal collection of Vincenc Lesný, box 15, inventory no. 562)

The early activities of the Institute were largely devoted to general preparation, owing to the technical difficulties and debates within various ministerial bodies as to the exact nature of its mandate. This involved the identification of the ways and means necessary for interpreting and realizing the program prescribed by the statutes. It also required the establishment of an organizational structure and the appointment of supplementary Active and Corresponding members, as well as the development of relations with other foreign organizations. On November 25, 1927, the President of the Republic nominated the first 34 fellows of the Institute. The most well-known Orientalists were professors Ján Bakoš (Old Testament), Adolf Grohman (Semitic Philology), Max Grünert (Arabic, Turkish and Persian Philology), Bedřich Hrozný (Cuneiform Research and Ancient Oriental History), Vincenc Lesný (Indology), František Lexa (Egyptology), Alois Musil (Arabic), Otakar Pertold (Comparative Religion), Rudolf Růžička (Semitic Philology), Jan Rypka (Turkish and Iranian Philology), and Moriz Winternitz (Indology and Comparative Linguistics). The first Grand Session at which the members of the Oriental Institute met was held on March 1, 1928. In May 1929, the administrative board, consisting of nine members, was appointed, and it immediately took over responsibility for the administration of the property. This preparatory process culminated in the spring of 1931 with the transfer of the secretariat and the library to the restored Lobkowicz Palace.

The focus on economic issues proved to be very profitable for the Institute. Its specialists monitored the economic conditions in various eastern countries and their relations with Czechoslovakia. As a result, the Institute was afforded considerable assistance in establishing and developing cultural relations, and was in receipt of study scholarships to the Orient, along with a variety of other grants. The Research Section concentrated above all on the publishing of books, on holding scholarly lectures and on organizing language courses. The central tasks of the Research Department, still valid today, were set as follows:

- to publish a scientific Oriental journal in order to introduce Czechoslovak Oriental studies to wider circles of Orientalists abroad;
- to issue other scientific publications on the East in world languages;
- to publish a series of popular books on the Orient in Czechoslovakia;
- to arrange courses and publish textbooks of Oriental languages;
- to arrange popular lectures on Oriental subjects;
- to promote journeys to the Orient for the purposes of research;
- to found an Oriental library and purchase books for it, especially such works as are not obtainable in any other library in Czechoslovakia;
- to create territorial sections covering various regions of the Orient.

Between 1929 and 1931 more Orientalists joined the staff of the Institute, among them Jaroslav Černý and Otto Stein. Many additional specialists were elected as active members (Josef Aul, Antonín Salač, and Lubor Matouš, among others). In 1929 the Institute began to publish its own Oriental journal, *Archiv orientální*. This periodical, printed in a variety of world languages, soon gained recognition abroad. Among its contributors were both Czechoslovak and foreign Orientalists. In addition, the Institute published scientific publications in its Monograph series, under the editing of Jan Rypka, and textbooks of Oriental languages and handbooks for visitors travelling to Oriental countries.

A Buddha statue
in Borobudur, Indonesia
(Ondřej Beránek)

R. Hotowetz, who served as the president of the Institute from 1928 to 1938, was followed by Bedřich Hrozný who became president of the Oriental Institute in 1938. At the end of 1937 there were 212 members of the Institute (including Fellows and Active Members of both the Research and Economic sections, as well as Corresponding Members). The promising early developments in the field of Czechoslovak Oriental research was forcefully interrupted by the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia in March 1939. Shortly afterwards, the universities, the chief work places of Institute members, were closed. The activities of the Institute were restricted considerably and some members of its staff were forced to leave. Leading posts were taken over by German Orientalists. However, Bedřich Hrozný, by virtue of his authority, retained the presidency until 1943. In the summer of that year the Institute was affiliated to the so-called Reinhard-Heydrich-Stiftung, which was to operate between 1942 and 1945. The closing of the university and high schools had a damaging effect on Oriental studies in general as study materials deposited in their libraries were rendered inaccessible. The only permitted activity of the Institute during this period was the teaching of Oriental languages in the much frequented evening courses.

After the liberation of Czechoslovakia in 1945 the Institute moved into the building of the former Prague Convent belonging to the Order of Malta. The Indologist Vincenc Lesný was appointed director (1945–1952) of the Institute and the Economic Section was closed. Under Lesný's direction the Institute started publishing the Czech language journal *Nový Orient*. The language courses organized by the Institute continued in the independent School of Oriental languages established by the Institute, with more than a dozen Oriental languages being taught there. It was at this time that a new generation of Orientalists, led by a prominent Sinologist, Jaroslav Průšek (1906–1980), formulated a revised program which represented an important watershed in the history of the Institute: from that point on it was to acquire the character of a scholarly institution and to intensify its publishing activities for the benefit of the general public. Moreover, the previous focus on historical and philological disciplines was to be changed to the study of living languages and current issues in the region.

However, it was historical developments – i.e. the 1948 February coup d'état, in which the Soviet-backed Communist Party of Czechoslovakia assumed power – that once again influenced the status of the Institute. In spite of the many restrictions, the first twenty years of the socialist state witnessed the maintenance of high standards of scholarly work in the field of Czechoslovak Oriental studies. In October 29, 1952, the Oriental Institute was incorporated into the newly formed Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. It was only then that the foundations were laid for the establishment of the Institute as a fully-fledged research body. Afterwards, there followed a period of about fifteen years when, under the leadership of J. Průšek (1952–1971), Oriental Studies burgeoned and established a good name for itself abroad. Průšek himself was a member of the Bavarian Academy of Sciences, the Saxon Academy of Sciences, and Honorary Doctor of the Humboldt University in Berlin and the University of Stockholm. The existing branches of study continued to flourish and many new ones were established (African, Burmese, Caucasology, Dravidology, Indonesian, Korean, Mongolian, Philippine,

Religious festival of the goddess Mariyamman in Tamil Nadu (Pavel Hons)

Siamese, Tibetan, Vietnamese studies, among others). Despite the fact that the ruling regime occasionally interfered unduly in the area of scholarly research, the Institute witnessed significant achievements. The international political context (the creation of numerous independent states in Asia and Africa) led to a gradual shift in the center of gravity of the research focus from classical disciplines to the study of modern languages, sociolinguistics, lexicography, and the development of research in the fields of modern history and literature. The events of August 1968 – the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia – along with the subsequent "normalization" period, once again resulted in harsh consequences for Czechoslovak Oriental studies. In the years 1969–1989 classical and traditional research was limited due to political circumstances. Much space was dedicated to predominantly unprofessional, ideologically oriented economic and politological research of the so-called Third World countries, applied in terms of communist ideology. After the Soviet occupation of 1968 about a dozen outstanding scholars left the Republic and chose the status of political exile (among them were S. Segert, L. Zgusta, and K. V. Zvelebil). The reputations they have since built in their specialist fields as professors at well-known universities testifies to the high level of Czechoslovak Oriental studies; some of them were to take up posts as heads of specialized departments.

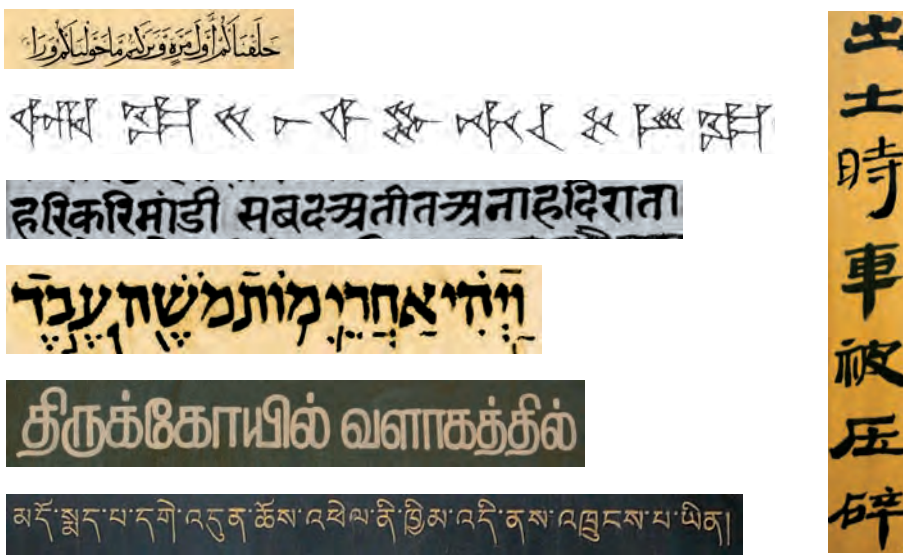
Stanislav Segert (1921–2005) was a prominent scholar of Semitic languages and one of the foremost authorities on North-West Semitic languages. After the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, he left for the US and became a professor at the University of California, Los Angeles. He is the author of, among others, the following publications: *A Grammar of Phoenician and Punic* (Munich: Beck, 1976) and *A Basic Grammar of Ugaritic Language* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).
Ladislav Zgusta (1924–2007) was an historical linguist and lexicographer (see, especially, his *Manual of Lexicography*, De Gruyter 1971). Originally, he studied Ossetic language and literature and also made a methodologically important contribution to the onomastic survey of the Northern Black Sea coast. After his forced exile, he became a professor of linguistics and classics at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. In 1992, he was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.
Kamil V. Zvelebil (1927–2009) was a prominent Czech scholar of Indian literature and linguistics, notably Tamil, Sanskrit and Dravidian linguistics. He was Vice-President of the Academy of Tamil Culture in Madras and introduced Tamil, Malayalam and Telugu literature to Czechoslovak readers in numerous translations. In the mid-1960s he was a temporary professor in Dravidian studies at the University of Chicago and a visiting professor at the University of Heidelberg. In the 1970s, he became professor of Dravidian linguistics and South Indian literature and culture at the University of Utrecht.

J. Průšek was dismissed and his post was taken over by V. Opluštil (1971–1973), under whose direction a great number of researchers were forced to leave the Institute, some of whom were required to undertake less qualified work, with incompetent political protégés being engaged in their stead. Václav Opluštil became one of the executors of the political purges that were carried out by the post-occupation government in the name of the "normalization" of public life; the main criterion establishing "reliability" being a willingness to approve the Soviet occupation of 1968. Particularly in the fields of social sciences and humanities the resultant exodus of scholars from academic institutions into menial jobs or exile was massive and the resulting devastation of professional capacity within Oriental studies was equally damaging. In 1973, V. Opluštil was replaced by Jaroslav Cesar (1973–1990), an historian by training, whose intention was to change the Institute into a branch of the Historical Institute. The immediate result of his actions in the field of Oriental research was that many specializations (such as Caucasian, Armenian, and Semitic studies) ceased to exist. Around 40 members of the Institute staff, almost half, were dismissed. Foreign contacts were strongly restricted, foreign books and periodicals were not available and many Orientalists were forced to refrain from publishing their work. The remaining scholars were forced into following a new, ideologically oriented, approach to research, with a focus on the "study of revolutionary process in Asia and Africa" and "international communist and workers' movements." Another institutional product of the normalization policy was the inorganic establishment of a Latin American department and, ultimately, of a department for the study of Imperialism and the US. Naturally, both these departments were closed shortly after the 1989 revolution.

However, even during this sad period in the Institute's history numerous valuable monographs, lexicographic works and above all translations from Oriental

languages appeared, all of which helped to perpetuate an awareness of Asian and African cultures among the general public. It was primarily due to the relentless effort of several scholars who maintained contacts with their specializations that the continuation of Oriental studies has been preserved since the fall of communism in 1989. These scholars were barred from entering libraries and were sometimes forced to secretly borrow, with the help of their colleagues, the very same publications which they had previously donated to these libraries. After 1989 the Institute rid itself of all researchers who had been employed for political reasons, i.e. those who did not possess the necessary skills and training. The Institute returned to its roots in respect of traditional Oriental Studies; library stock was restored, as were links with foreign partners. Both individual researchers and whole areas of specialization were subjected to a process of rehabilitation. The cooperation with Charles University, in which many scholars had been engaged as external lecturers, was also reestablished. In 1992, shortly before the partition of Czechoslovakia, the Institute became a constituent part of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. Due to drastic cuts in the Academy's budget, however, the Institute had to reduce its staff from more than 100 in 1990 to fewer than 30 employees in 1994. In addition, within the framework of the restitution law, the ownership of the building was reassigned to the Knights of Malta and the Institute was forced to leave the centrally located building and move to its current location in the northeastern outskirts of Prague.

The first elected post-revolution director, Zdeněk Müller (January 1990–October 1991), was followed by Svetozár Pantůček (October 1991–May 1993), Jana Pečírková (May 1993–January 1994), Petr Charvát (interim appointment, February–May



Examples of Oriental scripts: Arabic, Cuneiform, Devanagari, Hebrew, Tamil and Tibetan (from top to bottom), Chinese (right)

1994), Josef Kolmaš (May 1994–May 2002), Jiří Prosecký (interim appointment, May 2002–January 2003), Stanislava Vavroušková (February 2003–May 2012), Jaroslav Heřmánek (interim appointment, June 2012–January 2013), and Ondřej Beránek (February 2013–).

What We Do

The Institute regularly offers one- or two-year fellowships to foreign scholars of the history and cultures of Oriental countries in order to enable them to stay at the Institute for research purposes. These positions are usually open to recent PhDs (as a post-doctoral position). The Institute receives several dozen applications each year, which emanate from graduates from across the world, many of whom have been educated at top universities (Harvard University, Princeton University, SOAS, and The Sorbonne, among many others). This is an especially important way in which the Institute helps to develop fields of research which have been, for various reasons, neglected in the Czech Republic, thus enhancing the entire Czech academic environment. Within the Academy of Sciences, the Institute boasts the highest percentage of foreign scholars.

EXAMPLES OF SOME CURRENT RESEARCH PROJECTS

The Department of the Middle East

- Death, Graves, and the Hereafter in Islam: the Muslim Perception of the Last Things in the Middle Ages and Today;
- The Medieval Urban Landscape in Northeastern Mesopotamia;
- The Foreign Policy of the Czech Republic in the Middle East and North Africa.

The Department of South Asia

- The Political, Social and Economic History of India after Independence;
- The Morphology and syntax of old Hindi.

The Department of East Asia

- The Multi-disciplinary Study of Chinese Textual Culture;
- Minorities in Greater China;
- Ideology and Language: A Corpus of Early Post-war Taiwanese Writings.

What We Publish

Besides regularly publishing research results in the form of monographs or peer-reviewed articles (for a more comprehensive list, visit the Institute's webpages), we also publish two **academic journals**:

- ***Archiv orientální*** (ISSN 0044 8699, www.aror.orient.cas.cz), which was established in 1929 at the Oriental Institute as a scholarly periodical devoted to Oriental studies and open to all Czechoslovak and international scholars dealing with any subject of Oriental interest. The first issue, edited by Bedřich Hrozný, introduced articles from Egyptology, Assyriology, Arabic studies and Indology. Since then, the topical scope has been broadened to embrace Sinology and African studies, among others. Unlike other specialized journals, *Archiv orientální* has opted for geographic and thematic diversity, with only one prerequisite, i.e.

that all contributions have to be based on original sources. The periodical has introduced original research articles, reviews and review articles. The general philosophy of the journal has been maintained for the more than eight decades of its existence (with a gap of three war years – 1940, 1944 and 1945 – when the publication of the journal was temporarily discontinued) and *Archiv orientální* is rightfully regarded as the crown jewels of the Oriental Institute.

Currently *Archiv orientální* also provides an international forum for the publication of innovative research focused on the cultures and societies of the Near East, Asia, and Africa, both past and present. It especially welcomes articles dedicated to the histories, religions, languages, and literatures of these regions, but it also gladly accepts articles of distinction by social and political scientists. The editors are especially interested in novel approaches and fresh ideas that promise to make a substantial contribution to developments in their respective fields. While English is the preferred language of publication, we also publish articles, book reviews, and review articles in French and German. For authors writing in other than their native languages, the journal provides a proofreading service, free of charge.

Archiv orientální also welcomes suggestions regarding special issues with a specific thematic focus, which are prepared by invited guest-editors from the international scholarly community. Furthermore, the journal publishes a series of *Supplementa* which serve as a platform for edited volumes and monographs, the topics of which fall into the thematic range of the journal. Content appearing in *Archiv orientální* is indexed in both Thomson Reuter's Art & Humanities Citation Index (AHCI) and Elsevier's Scopus. It is also accessible via EBSCO and ProQuest.

- ***Nový Orient*** (New Orient, ISSN 0029-5302) is a Czech language journal founded in 1945. The journal addresses the needs and interests of the academic world, as well as the general reading public and follows diverse subjects, seeking to present unbiased and well-founded information on Asian and African countries, their cultures, histories and contemporary affairs. The journal also publishes book reviews and translations of short stories from Oriental languages.

What We Provide

Library

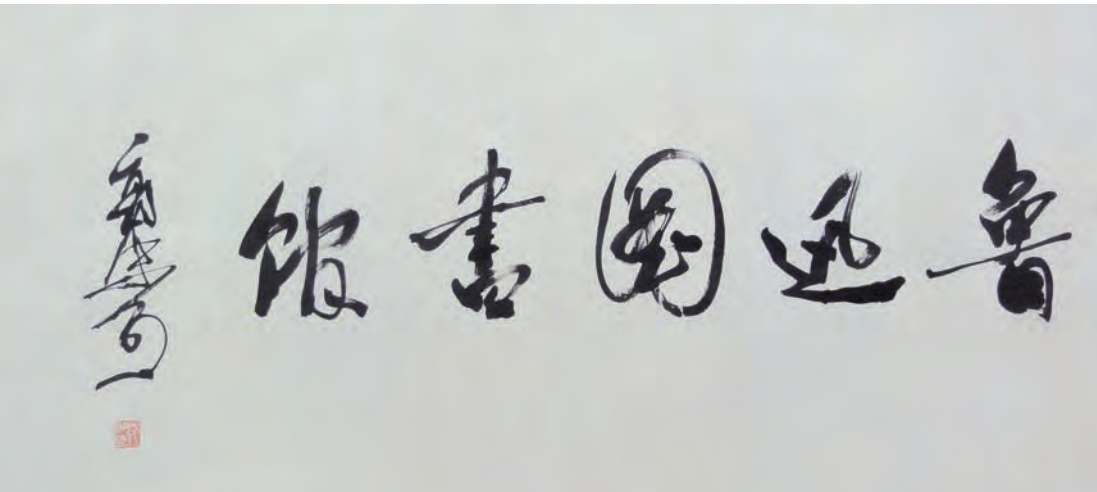
The library, officially inaugurated in May 1931, is and has always been a very significant component of the Oriental Institute. On the 30th June 1931 the Research Section of the Library contained only 289 catalogued works, consisting of 459 volumes. In 1937 this figure had already risen to 4,161 works in 6,573 volumes. By the end of WWII the library stock had reached ten thousand items and was still increasing so that by the late 1960s it consisted of more than 140,000 volumes. At the same time, the library was receiving more than 600 Orientalist periodicals from almost 80 countries. Today, with almost 300,000 volumes (including periodicals and manuscripts), the Oriental Institute's library, which is open both to researchers and the general public, is one of the largest libraries within the Academy of Sciences. The general library collections include mainly publications on the his-

tories, literatures, languages, religions, and cultures of the countries of Asia and Africa. Moreover, its depositories also hold rare collections of ostraca, hieroglyphic prints, papyri, Old Egyptian flint instruments and many Persian, Turkish, and Arab manuscripts.

In addition to the general collection, the library houses:

The **Lu Xun Library**, which was named in honor of a leading figure of modern Chinese literature, Lu Xun (1881–1936), and houses a rare collection of almost 70,000 Chinese sources. The library was founded in 1952 and benefited greatly, at that time, from the friendly political relations between Czechoslovakia and People's Republic of China, as well as from personal contacts with Chinese scholars. The library grew significantly in the 1950s, and by the early 1960s held about 55,000 volumes and over 300 serial titles, mainly contemporary but also from the pre-liberation period. The library maintained close links with the Beijing National Library, the Academia Sinica Library and other important institutions. Its holdings of contemporary Chinese literature, at that time, were among the finest in Europe. Due to the unfavorable political relations that existed between China and the USSR (and Czechoslovakia) in the 1960s, contacts between the Lu Xun Library and its Chinese counterparts practically ceased. The only valuable accession in the 1960s was a collection of Red Guard publications. The collection comprises more than 200 newspaper and periodical titles. The 1970s saw a rapid decline in the activity of the library. After the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968 Chinese studies were, for the most part, suspended, contacts with China were not restored to their original level and contacts with western countries were broken off. Access to the library was denied to politically "undesirable" Czech and Slovak Sinologists, and was possible only with considerable difficulty for researchers from western countries. The library itself was close to being removed from the premises of the Institute and being scattered in various depositories. This was eventually prevented due to the joint efforts of a group of eminent Sinologists.

Calligraphic inscription of the Lu Xun Library by Guo Moruo, important Chinese writer and once a minister of Culture of the PRC



The core of the library comprises a unique collection of modern Chinese literature (1919–1949), literary criticism and history. It provides almost a complete record of literary production for the period 1919–1949, including literary theory and criticism and various serial titles, including complete runs of *Xiaoshuo yuebao* (1910–1926) and *Xin qingnian* (1915–1926). A remarkable part of the collection is made up of 224 titles of local gazetteers (*difangzhi*). The most valuable prints include the Duan Yucai gazetteer of Fushun district from 1882, the Wu Yi gazetteer of Anyang district from 1799 and the Zheng Chen & Mo Youzhi gazetteer of Zunli prefecture from 1841. The library also contains an excellent range of *congshu*, mainly consisting of reprints published in the first half of the 20th century, but also including some prints dating back to the late 18th and 19th centuries, the oldest being *Han Wei congshu* (1791). Other basic *congshu* in the library include *Sibu beiyao*, *Ershi si shi*, *Siku quanshu* and *Zhibuzu zhai congshu*. *Congshu* concerning Chinese drama include *Sanqu congkan*, *Shengming zaju ershi zhong*, *Guben xiqu congkan* (*chuji*, *erji*, *sanji*, *siji*, *jiuji*), *Yuan qu bai zhong qu* and *Qing ren zaju erji*. Among religious *congshu* can be found *Daozang* (11,220 vols., Taipei 1963) and *Pinqie jingshe jiaokan da zang jing* (1,916 titles in 414 vols., Shanghai 1909–1913).

The **John King Fairbank Library** – John King Fairbank (1907–1991), Professor of history at Harvard University, is considered to be a founder of modern Chi-

Tibetan nomads - from horse to motorcycle (Jarmila Ptáčková)

nese historical studies in the US. In the days preceding his death he made known his desire that the English part of his library should be donated to a non-Anglophone country. In the course of executing the bequest of her late husband, Mrs. Wilma Fairbank recalled the memory of Professor Průšek, whom she and Professor Fairbank had known well, and with whom they had been friendly since the 1960s. This fact prompted Mrs. Fairbank's decision to offer the English part of her late husband's library to the Oriental Institute. Professor Augustin Palát (Průšek's long-term collaborator) became the mediator between Mrs. Fairbank and the Oriental Institute. The entire project materialized after correspondence had continued over several years. The process of negotiation had received significant support from the US-based "American Czech-and-Slovak Education Fund", especially in the person of its then Executive Director, Irina Rybacek. The Fund took care of both organizing the transportation of the books and the securing of the required financial means. The generous gift was eventually to reach Prague in August 1994. In November of the same year, the library was opened in the presence of Mrs. Wilma Fairbank and other guests of honor. The JKF Library contains books on China in English, consisting altogether of about 1,600 titles concerned with history, culture, economics, and US-Chinese relations, among other items.

The **Korean Library** holds more than 3,500 volumes. Older items are mostly of North Korean origin. In 1996 and 1997, its collections were considerably enriched by South Korean publications, thanks to generous gifts made by the Korea Foundation.

The **Tibetan Library**, established in 1958, houses the complete Tibetan Buddhist canon, Kanjur and Tanjur, produced in the East Tibetan town of Derge, as well as other unique materials.

The historical section is based, in particular, on the following sources:

Bulletin of the Czechoslovak Oriental Institute, no. 1, August 1931, Prague; *Bulletin of the Czechoslovak Oriental Institute*, no. 2, August 1938, Prague; *Oriental Institute: Annual Report 1999*. Available at: http://orient.avcr.cz/miranda2/export/sitesavcr/data.avcr.cz/humansci/orient/o-nas/Vxroxnx_zprxvy/zprava1999.pdf; Miroslav Oplt (ed.). *Asian and African Studies in Czechoslovakia*. Moscow: "Nauka" Publishing House 1967; Jiří Prosecký (ed.). *Ex Pede Pontis: Papers presented on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the foundation of the Oriental Institute*. Prague 1992. Collections of items regarding the Oriental Institute, which are held at the Masaryk Institute and the Archive of the AS CR. This material was prepared through reference to internally available documents of the Institute and as a result of the considerable contributions made by many colleagues.

Damascus, Mosque of Repentance
(Jami al-Tawba) built in 1231–1234
(Miroslav Melčák)

Currently, the three departments of the Oriental Institute focus on the following areas of research:

THE DEPARTMENT OF THE MIDDLE EAST

- The modern and contemporary history of the Middle East (the Arab states, Israel, Turkey, the Ottoman Empire);
- Islam in its many forms (including medieval, modern, political, mystical etc.); Islam in the Czech Republic;
- The social and cultural history of the pre-modern Middle East;
- Akkadian (Assyro-Babylonian) literature; the cultural history of the Ancient Near East.

THE DEPARTMENT OF SOUTH ASIA

- The political and cultural history of India; history and ethnical relations in Sri Lanka;
- Buddhism and Buddhist philosophy; Hindu mythology;
- Indo-Aryan languages (Sanskrit and Hindi); the Tamil language and Tamil literature;
- The political and cultural history and ethnography of Central Asia (especially Afghanistan) and Southeast Asia (especially Indonesia and Malaysia).

THE DEPARTMENT OF EAST ASIA

- The politics and history of modern China, Sino-Tibetan relations;
- The history of Medieval China; the history of religion in China;
- The ancient Chinese language, literature, and thought; the phonetics and phonology of Mandarin;
- The history, culture and postwar literature of Taiwan.

"This Institute is indebted to President Masaryk not only for its existence and its very origin, but also for the financial basis, with which he endowed it, as well as for the warm interest which was so often manifested by him. Without his initiative there would have been no center of Oriental studies in Czechoslovakia, its development would not have proceeded so favorably, nor would the Institute have enjoyed such a high reputation at home and abroad as it does."

From the address of the first President of the Oriental Institute and a former Minister of Foreign Trade, Dr. Rudolf Hotowetz (1865–1945), on the occasion of the commemorative ceremony in honor of the President T. G. Masaryk, on October 12, 1938.

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