

The Oriental Institute Library



Czech Academy
of Sciences



**Oriental
Institute**
The Czech Academy
of Sciences

Places
of
common
memory

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Oriental Institute

The primary mission of The Oriental Institute of Czech Academy of Sciences is to conduct systematic research on the history, culture, religions and languages of the countries and peoples of Asia and North Africa. In its infancy, the study of Asia and the non-Western world (especially in the region of Central Europe) was mainly through philology, with a strong emphasis on the ancient developmental phases of Asian civilizations. However, in more than one hundred years, approaches within Asian and Middle Eastern Studies has expanded in various ways. Due to the growing importance of Asian superpowers, today's scholarly disciplines also foreground contemporary Asian societies, including not only socio-political approaches but also anthropological analysis. By using the methodology and knowledge of various disciplines, such as history, religious studies, ethnography, sociology and linguistics, scholars are encouraged to undertake interdisciplinary work. The main task of the Oriental Institute is to reflect this disciplinary development and to establish a dialogue with the international academic community. The aim of the analysis and interpretation of Asian cultures, however, is not only to create new knowledge, but also to make the significance, structures and dynamics of the researched areas accessible to Westerners. This process also serves as a critical reflection on our own society. Given the enormous contemporary interest in Asia, well-established research institutes such as the Oriental Institute, mostly funded by public funds and serving the public interest, remains highly relevant. Specialized public institutions can guarantee a balance of information, a scholarly approach that includes appropriate historical and cultural contextualization. Another important task of the Oriental Institute is to support key topics and methodologies of research, which are not given enough academic space at Czech universities where the traditional philological focus prevails. While supporting work on ancient language and cultures, the Oriental Institute also encourages the study of social issues relevant to today's society, such as comparing religious and philosophical systems, modern history, Euro-Asian relations, or the transformation of Asian societies. The Oriental Institute also runs a public-access library with more than 270,000 volumes, which is one of the largest collections within the Academy of Science of the Czech Republic. The Institute publishes two journals: a public-facing magazine in Czech (*Nový Orient*) and a peer-reviewed scholarly journal (*Archiv orientální*). The Oriental Institute has joint accreditation with the doctoral program of the Faculty of Arts of Charles University where many of our staff give lectures. In addition to scientific activities, the Oriental Institute also provides services to the public and various state institutions (including language teaching, professional and advisory activities, etc.). In this way, the Oriental Institute follows the founding idea of T. G. Masaryk on linking theoretical and scientific activities as well as making use of knowledge in practice.

Overview of the Oriental Institute

The Oriental Institute (OI) is a public non-university research institution. Established in 1922, the institute stands as one of the oldest centres dedicated to the comprehensive study of the cultures of Asia and the Middle East in Central and Eastern Europe. Since 1993, OI has been administratively under the Czech Academy of Sciences (CAS), an umbrella research institution akin to its European counterparts, such as the Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS) in France. The CAS, established in 1992 as the Czech successor to the former Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, encompasses a network of 54 public research institutions. Carrying out fundamental research across natural, technical, and social sciences, as well as the humanities, is at the very heart of its mission.

The OI's research interest in Asia and the Middle East stems not only from a profound respect for the cultural and linguistic heritage of ancient civilizations but also through pure intellectual curiosity. As scholars within Czech lands emerged from periods of political suppression or deprivation, their perception of "the other" diverged from that of the West, forging a unique bond with Asia. Founded under Act No. 27/1922, approved by the Czechoslovak parliament on January 25, 1922, the Oriental Institute became an independent and autonomous entity. Its primary objective was to cultivate and promote scientific and economic relations with the East. The founding of the institute received immense support from the first Czechoslovak President, the esteemed T. G. Masaryk, who provided both moral and financial backing. President Masaryk, himself a former student of Arabic at the Vienna Oriental Academy, had traversed Siberia, Manchuria, and Korea en route to Japan in 1918. His East Asian travel reinforced the significance of cultural and economic ties between Europe and Asia, ultimately inspiring his vision of establishing an Oriental Institute in his own country. The President's vision materialized in conjunction with Professor Alois Musil's proposal to strengthen cultural and economic relations with the East. Musil belonged to the first generation of university educated Czech orientalist who became one of the first appointed fellows of the institute. After the establishment of independent Czechoslovakia in 1918, he returned from Vienna. In line with President Masaryk's vision, he helped establish OI, which aimed to foster cultural, economic, and scientific relations with Asian countries. From the very beginning, it also focused on supporting business ventures in the Middle East and Asia, a mission that fully shifted towards a scientific focus after World War II and 1948.

Prior to the institute's establishment, various research, translation, and publication activities had already been underway within high schools, universities, and state administration. However, scholars within the newly formed Czechoslovakia recognized the pressing need for a coordinating body that would professionalize, financially support and sustain Czechoslovak Oriental research on Asia and the Middle East. The proposals put forth by Czech scholars found favor among representatives of cultural and business circles in Czechoslovakia. The establishment of the institute was made possible through funds dedicated to commemorating President Masaryk's 70th birthday in 1920. On the occasion of his 80th birthday in 1930, Masaryk was unanimously elected as the institute's first Honorary Member.

Additionally, two financial trusts bearing his name were created to support publications and aid young businessmen operating in countries within Asia and the Middle East. The Ministry of Commerce also contributed by donating half a million crowns for the establishment of the library.

Brief History of the Library of the Oriental Institute

The Library is and has always been an important part of the functionality and history of Oriental Institute. Although the library started to take shape as early as 1929, it only had one reading room which was insufficient for the ever-increasing collection. Thus, expansion of the space has been made and the library became fully functional after the modification of the rooms on May 4, 1931. As the collection expanded over the years, this became a place to find scholarly materials for the study of Asian, African and Middle Eastern cultures (ancient and contemporary). From the start, one of the key functions of the library was to build a collection that consisted of language-learning materials, dictionaries, key texts in indigenous languages as well as informative reports, manuals, and other practical aids to the study of Asian and Middle Eastern cultures. These diverse specialized collections were acquired through the efforts of scholars linked to the institute and generous donors.

To this day, the Library is committed to providing the public with a rich repository of knowledge about the history, cultures, religious systems and languages of the countries of Asia, Africa and the Middle East. The Library's unique collection is organized into different sections: The General Library stands as a gateway to a plethora of references and contemporary works. The Lu Xun Library is a reservoir of Chinese literary treasures which immerses seekers in a world of profound cultural heritage. The Fairbank Library is a collection of scholarly English-language acquisitions by the eminent Modern Chinese Studies scholar, Professor John King Fairbank. Moreover, the Korean Library is a source of information about North and South Korea. Lastly, the Taiwan Resource Center for Chinese Studies provides critical sources for the study of Chinese and Taiwanese cultures.

The General Library

The General library was officially inaugurated in May 1931 and since then it is continuously expanded. During its early days, the Research Section of the Library housed a modest collection of 289 catalogued works, comprising 459 volumes. By 1937, the library had witnessed a remarkable surge, with its collection growing to 4,161 works encompassing an impressive 6,573 volumes. The library's growth continued unabated, even amidst the challenges of World War II. By the war's end, the library's stock had exceeded 10,000 volumes, showcasing its commitment to preserving and disseminating knowledge. The late 1960s marked a milestone as the library's collection surpassed a staggering 140,000 volumes, becoming one of the largest libraries within the Czech Academy of Sciences.

While the library's vast collection of books and publications is awe-inspiring, its allure extends beyond the written word. The library's repositories house an array of rare treasures, including original pieces of papyrus, maps dating back to the 1700s, and a wealth of audio-visual materials. These artifacts offer glimpses into different



The General Library

cultures and civilizations, providing valuable insights into their history, geography, and customs. This diverse range of manuscripts spans multiple languages, including Burmese, Tibetan, Persian, Turkish, Arabic and more. These invaluable manuscripts offer unique perspectives on the literature, philosophy, and the cultural heritage of the regions they represent. The General Library fosters cultural exchange through its acquisition of over 600 specialized periodicals from nearly 80 countries. This unique collection of scholarly publications enables the dissemination of scholarly research, facilitating a deeper understanding of Asian and African cultures.

The Lu Xun Library

In addition to the general collection, the library houses an extensive collection of Chinese resources in a separate library, the Lu Xun Library. Established in 1952, it was named in honor of a leading figure of modern Chinese literature, Lu Xun (1881–1936). It houses a rare collection of almost 70,000 Chinese sources. The library benefited greatly 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 Republican period. The library maintained close links with the Beijing National Library, the Academia Sinica Library and other important institutions.

At that time, its holdings of contemporary Chinese literature 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



The Lu Xun Library
(Photo from Zhang Jingyu
Rotterová archíve)

Xun Library and its Chinese counterparts practically ceased. The only valuable acquisition 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 almost removed from the premises of the Institute and scattered in various depositories. This was eventually prevented due to the joint efforts of a group of eminent Sinologists.

The core collection comprises of modern Chinese literature (1919–1949), literary criticism and history. It provides an almost 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 qing-nian* (1915–1926). A remarkable part of the collection is made up of 224 titles of local gazetteers (*difangzhi*). These are local chronicles arranged in a peculiar style with encyclopaedic or theme-related chapters. 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*, which are

(sometimes private) collections of books, texts, textual elements, or selected paragraphs related to themes, creating early encyclopaedias. The Lu Xun Library has the series published in the first half of the 20th century, and 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* (chujī, erjī, sanjī, sijī, jiujī), *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 Korean Library

The Korean Library was established in 1958 when it received a generous gift of several hundred books and periodicals from the Academy of Sciences of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). Most of these books were published in the 1950s, after the Korean War. Similar specimens are also found in other post-communist countries of Europe, which at one time also maintained relations only with North Korea. At the time of its establishment, the Korean Library of OI had the largest number of Korean books in Czechoslovakia. These books mainly served the needs of Koreanists working at the institute and students of Korean studies at the Faculty of Arts at Charles University. In addition, the libraries were used by several North Korean students who, as was common in the 1950s, studied at various Czech schools and borrowed Korean literature, translations of classic Russian literature and other world-famous works. Most of the other additions were acquired by the Korean library in exchange with the Academy of Sciences of the DPRK or as gifts that were often exchanged with Koreanist institutions in Western Europe for monographs published in the Republic of Korea. Some books were also bought. Periodicals published in the DPRK, including those that have already disappeared, served as a valuable source of information at a time when Czech Koreanists had access only to North Korean sources. It is worth noting the fact that the Korean library of the Czech Academy of Sciences is one of the few in Europe that owns almost all copies of the newspaper *Nodong sinmun* (Labour Newspaper) from 1960 to 1984.

The first South Korean books entered the Korean library in the early 1960s via the Basic Library of the Czech Academy of Sciences through the aforementioned exchanges. In the 1970s, the number of books of South Korean provenance increased with the help of donations from various South Korean foundations, which sent them despite the unfavorable political situation and the non-existence of diplomatic relations between Czechoslovakia and the Republic of Korea. The Korean library has grown with two donations from South Korean foundations, which it received through the Korean Embassy in Prague. In autumn 1997, the Czech Academy of Sciences received 140 volumes as a gift from the Korea Foundation. In December of the same year, the director of the institute Josef Kolmaš, and deputy head of the Institute of the Far East at the Faculty of Arts at Charles University, Assoc. Prof. Vladimír Pucek, were gifted another 883 volumes from the Korean ambassador in the Czech Republic. The first employee of the Korean library was



Korean books

PhDr. Zdeňka Klöslová, who started working after completing her studies in Korean language and history of the Far East in 1958. PhDr. Miriam Löwensteinová, also became Korean Library's administrator. In 1993, she left the library. After five years when no one took care of the library, PhDr. Zdeňka Klöslová took over in 1997. Later, Mgr. Štěpánka Horáková, joined as full-time staff. PhDr. Klöslová and Mgr. Horáková played a role in the construction of the new library, which officially opened in May 1999. The Korean Library currently contains more than 3,500 volumes of books and copies of periodicals.

The Tibetan Collection

The Tibetan Collection was established in 1958, in response to the interest of the Oriental Institute in Tibetan language, culture, and history. At the core of the Tibetan collection lies a treasure trove of unparalleled significance – the complete Tibetan Buddhist canon, known as the *Kanjur* and *Tanjur*. These sacred scriptures, meticulously crafted in the historic town of Derge in eastern Tibet, serve as pillars of Tibetan spirituality and philosophical wisdom. However, the collection extends beyond the *Kanjur* and *Tanjur*. It also houses other unique materials that offer glimpses into the diverse aspects of Tibetan culture, like xylographs, manuscripts, rare texts and historical documents that unveil the richness of Tibetan history, art, and language.



Tibetan Buddhist canon – *Tanjur* (left) and *Kanjur* (right)

The Tibetan Collection beckons scholars and researchers around the world to explore its depths. Supported by a team of experts, the collection is meticulously preserved, catalogued and made accessible for further study. Carefully preserved by the library, the collection fosters a deeper understanding of Tibetan culture.

The John King Fairbank Library

The John King Fairbank Library was established as a legacy library of an American historian of China and United States–China relations, John King Fairbank (1907–1991). Dr. Fairbank was a professor of history at Harvard University and was the founder of modern Chinese 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. While executing the bequest of her late husband, Mrs. Wilma Fairbank recalled the memory of Professor Jaroslav Průšek (1906–1980), 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 eventually reached 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 honour. The JKF Library consists of about 1,600 titles concerned with history, culture, economics, and US-Chinese relations, among other items.



The John King Fairbank Library

Taiwan Resource Center for Chinese Studies

The Taiwan Resource Center for Chinese Studies (TRCCS) is the most recent addition to the special collections, which came from the Taiwan Center for Sinological Information Resources, a special project run by the National Central Library (NCL). It serves not only the needs of Czech Sinologists, but also for Czech Sinological education and the popularization of knowledge about China among the general Czech public. TRCCS can be also used in international projects and networking activities, as the unique funds and information resources available at TRCCS are only available at a few Sinology sites in the world. In addition to the Sinological dimension of TRCCS, cooperation with NCL can serve the entire Czech Academy of Sciences in the development of digital humanities and e-science.

Library Services

The OI Library has a special collection where most of the resources are of archival value. The OI Library offers a wide range of services, including (but not limited to) the following:

- **Book Lending:** The Library continues to provide access to a wide range of books, including fiction, non-fiction and reference materials, which patrons can borrow for a specific period.

- **Interlibrary Loan and Document Delivery:** Interlibrary Loan (ILL) is one of the services provided by the OI Library to obtain resources that are not available in the library. Under the Czech Republic regulations, only specified libraries can facilitate the ILL. For OI, this is through the Czech Academy of Sciences. There are also Demand Driven Acquisition (DDA) Services provided through by the Library of the Academy of Sciences (LCAS).
- **Research Support:** A team of librarians who specialize in a particular subject provide dedicated support to scholars in accessing and utilizing library resources effectively for their research. Librarians collaborate with researchers to understand their specific information needs, conduct literature searches and locate relevant resources. They can also help scholars to identify specialized databases, archives, and repositories by curating information sources.
- **Assisting in maintaining the scholarly profile for evaluation:** The library is involved in the development and management of digital platforms or repositories of CAS dedicated to scholarly publications, research outputs, or academic journals. By providing an assistance, training and advise, the librarian-in-charge facilitates the dissemination and accessibility of scholarly works in the OI, enabling OI scholars to publish their findings and share them with the wider academic community.
- **Scholarly Communication and Open Access:** The librarians promote open access initiatives, advocating for open scholarly publishing models, and providing support for authors to comply with open access policies and mandates. In 2023, the OI library joined the Czech Elib Consortium to support open access publishing of scholars.
- **Collection Development:** The Library team acquires and curates relevant scholarly resources, including books, journals, databases, and other materials in various formats to support research needs. Moreover, in collaboration with OI scholars, the library acquires legacy libraries, such as specialist collections from scholars.
- **Digital Resources:** One of the initiatives of the OI is to make rare collections accessible to the public. The digitized collection continues to grow. Some of the completed and publicly accessible digitized materials include:
 - Rare books, including notable works such as *Xiyou zhenquan*, an edition of the renowned Chinese novel *Journey to the West* (also known as *The Monkey King*) featuring beautiful illustrations, as well as *Tai'an fu zhi*, a chronicle documenting the history of Tai'an in Shandong Province, dating back to 1760. Additionally, the collection includes *Peng xian zhi*, a revised version of the Peng District Chronicle in Sichuan Province originally published in 1813, with the revised edition dating from 1878.
 - *Archiv Orientální*, an esteemed international peer-reviewed journal that has been published since 1929. As one of the oldest academic journals, dedicated to the regions of Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, its digitized collection provides a treasure trove of scholarly research and insights.
 - *Nový Orient*, a Czech-language magazine, has been published by the Oriental institute since 1945. Originally, it provided the Czech public with well-founded facts from countries and traditions far beyond the Iron Curtain. The digital

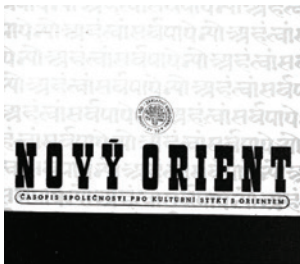


Peng xian zhi



Xiyou zhenquan

Nový Orient and Archiv orientální



Archiv orientální



library of the Academy of Sciences provides free access to all back issues excluding the most recent ones.

The Collections: Built on Long Enduring Relationships

The collections of the OI Library are silent witnesses of the long enduring relationship of the OI and countries such as China, India, Japan and Korea. There are different ways the OI Library built its collections. In the earlier days, unique collections were acquired by scholars through collaboration with key institutions and foreign colleagues. For example, the early Chinese collections were acquired through friendly political relations between Czechoslovakia and People's Republic of China, as well as from personal contacts with Chinese scholars. The library maintained close links with the Beijing National Library, the *Academia Sinica* Library, and other important institutions. The most common way of acquisition was by OI scholars, who would purchase various items during their trips or request the library to do so. The current library team continues the legacy by providing a more inclusive practice of managing the collections. The mode of acquisitions was largely from gifts, purchases, or international collaborations. The librarians also strive to source from Asia and the Middle East, such as through small bookshops or rare booksellers or acquiring from reputable authors themselves. Donations from scholars and private individuals were also acquired in recent years such as the grants/donation secured by Dr. Nobuko Toyosawa through Japan Foundation, Read Japan and Toshiba Foundation. Dr. Jaroslav Strnad was able to acquire the collections of Jan Marek, Dr. Jakub Hrubý and Dr. Jarmila Ptáková were able to acquire 160 boxes of diapositives from Andreas Gruschke's photos of Tibet. In 2022, Japanologist Dr. Irmela Hijiya-Kirshnereit also donated her library comprised of resources in Japanese studies and Mr. Fleissig handed over Prof. Felix Tauer's memorabilia. The current acquisition practices strive to be more open to different angles and perspectives that encompasses the various political, economic, cultural and social dimensions where views both in the periphery and in the metropolis are presented.

Exploring the Unique Collections at the OI

There is a vast array of resources available at the OI library, spanning over 140 languages. The OI library offers a unique opportunity to explore and delve into knowledge beyond borders. Here's a list of languages represented at the library:

- Abasa
- Acehnese
- Albanian
- Amharic
- Arabic
- Aramaic
- Armenian
- Avestan
- Azerbaijani
- Bahasa Indonesia/
Bahasa Malayu
- Balinese
- Bartangi
- Bashkir
- Belarusian
- Bengali
- Bosnian
- Bulgarian
- Burmese
- Buryat
- Cambodian
- Chuvash
- Chinese – classical
- Chinese – modern
- Chuvash
- Circassian
- Comorian
- Croatian
- Czech



श्रीमदबाल्मीकीय

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PHILIPPINE
COMPLAINT

FLORANTE AT LAURA

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40871 I

50611 I

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Basil Davidson
Objekt
stare Afriky

Basil Davidson
Objekt
stare Afriky

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- Danish
- Dargwa
- Dari
- Dunsyan
- Dutch
- Egyptian
- English
- Filipino
- Finnish
- French
- Georgian
- German
- Gilaki
- Greek
- Gujarati
- Hausa
- Hebrew
- Hindi
- Hittite
- Hungarian
- Ingush
- Italian
- Japanese
- Javanese
- Kabardian
- Kalmyk Oirat
- Kannada
- Karachay-Baikal
- Karalpak
- Karelian
- Kashmiri
- Kazakh
- Ket
- Khanty
- Khwarezmian
- Kokborok
- Komi
- Korean
- Kuchean
- Kumyk
- Kurdish
- Kurumba
- Kyrgyz
- Larestani
- Latin
- Lezgian
- Luba
- Luwian
- Luxembourgish
- Macedonian
- Madurese
- Malayam
- Manchu
- Marathi
- Mari
- Mongolian
- Nepali
- Nogai
- Norwegian
- Odia
- Oromo
- Ossetian
- Ottoman-Turkish
- Palaic
- Pali
- Pashto
- Persian
- Polish
- Portuguese
- Prakrit
- Punjabi
- Rade
- Rajasthani
- Raluana
- Romani
- Romanian
- Russian
- Samoan
- Sandawi
- Sanskrit
- Serbian
- Shona
- Shughni
- Sindhi
- Sinhala
- Slovak
- Spanish
- Sumerian
- Sundanese
- Swahili
- Swedish
- Syriac
- Tajik
- Tamashik
- Tamil
- Tangut
- Tatar
- Telugu
- Thai
- Tibetan
- Tofa
- Turkish
- Turkmen
- Tzeltal
- Ukrainian
- Urdu
- Uyghur
- Uzbek
- Vietnamese
- Yakut
- Zan
- Zulu

A Glimpse at the Unique and Rare Collections

The OI Library takes pride of the remarkable selection of manuscripts collections which offer unique insights into various cultures and historical periods. These collections represent a mere fraction of the extensive treasures housed as archives. Each collection is a distinct realm of knowledge, providing valuable resources for researchers, scholars, and enthusiasts alike.

- **“Papyri-Wessely” collection.** One group of these manuscripts identified as “Papyri-Wessely” collection was acquired by the OI in July 1934 through Dr. Theodor Hopfner. As described by Prof. Grohmann (1938) in a 1938 article in *Archiv orientální*, the collection includes 1,150 Oriental papyri and papers made up of 897 manuscripts and fragments of manuscripts which are in Arabic and other languages. According to Prof. Grohmann, this collection was acquired by Dr. Wessely through an Armenian trader.
- **Tibetan Buddhist canon – *Kanjur* and *Tanjur*,** produced in the East Tibetan town of Derge, now administered as a county in Garzê Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in far northwestern Sichuan province, China, bordering the Tibet Autonomous Region to the west. These are rare print collections acquired by Sinologist/Tibetologist Prof. Josef Kolmaš during his travels through the Tibetan Book Fund from the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. The Derge edition in OI has 102 volumes of *Kanjur* and 212 volumes of *Tanjur*.
- ***Kammavaca* from Myanmar/ Burma.** This old wood-covered manuscript, historically traced from Mainland Southeast Asia, is a remarkable artefact housed in the OI. Written in the Pali language, an Old Burmese dialect, the manuscript features an intricately designed wooden cover. Inside, copper plates are used and adorned with a gold base and black lacquer-coated text. The narrative unfolds through a combination of pictures and texts, depicting slender and sinuous human figures, reflecting the aesthetics of Southeast Asia. This *Kammavaca* is the *Vessantara Jātaka*, recounting the story of Prince Vessantara, known for his compassion and generosity, who selflessly gives away all his possessions. *Jātaka* tales, notably, depict the didactic previous lives of the Buddha. The manuscript features tamarind seed script, with six lines of text per folio and decorative elements such as leaves, birds, *ywe-dan* (circles), and *chin-thei* (lion) at the top,



Burmese Kammavaca



bottom, and both ends, serving as text separators. (*Description from Kammavaca collector Dr. Pedro Marques-Vidal*)

- **Islamic manuscript from West Africa.**

The OI's acquisition of this manuscript, *Sirāj al-mulūk* by al-Ṭurṭūšī, is notable due to its rarity. Al-Ṭurṭūšī is an Andalusian author from the 11th and 12th centuries. This manuscript serves as evidence that this widely known and widely circulated work found its way to West Africa. The author of the main work is identified as Muḥammad b. al-Walid b. Muḥammad b. Jalaf b. Sulaymān b. Ayyūb, known as Abū Bakr, Ibn Abī Randaqa, or Abū Bakr al-Ṭurṭūšī. He was a member of the al-Qurašī al-Fihri al-Ṭurṭūšī al-Mālikī (1059–1126) lineage. The main work itself is titled *Sirāj al-mulūk wa-l-khulafā' wa-minhāḡ al-wulāt wa-l-umarā'* and is accompanied by three additional folia at the end of the manuscript, which contain excerpts from *Sirāj al-mulūk wa-l-khulafā'*. The additional texts provide further insights or supplementary information related to the main work. Although it does not contain the place of copying, nor is the name of the copyist clear, the binding, paper, and handwriting are typical examples of surviving sub-Saharan manuscripts in Arabic script. It is worth noting that Usman Dan Fodio (1754–1817), the founder of the Sokoto Caliphate, which encompassed areas of present-day Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Nigeria, drew heavily on *Siraj al-Muluk* in his work *Bayān Wujūb al-Ḥijra 'alā al-'Ubbād*. (*Description from PhDr. Josef Ženka, Ph.D., Department of Middle Eastern Studies Faculty of Arts, Charles University*)

- **Maps.** There are 540 maps in the library collection which dates back as early as 1750. Some representative maps include:
 - 1800 map of Japan (Kaei era) about [60+ cm] × [55 cm]. This map marks places of interests for travellers including the beautiful sceneries, historical sites, places of poetic associations, hot springs, shrines and temples, gardens and other locations. Travelers used this map for measuring the distance, obtaining information about locations, and broader orientation.
 - Geographer Heinrich Kiepert (1818–1899) is generally regarded as one of the more important scholarly cartographers of the second half of the 19th century. One of his works is an ethnographic overview of the “European Orient.” The map comes with a twelve-page description written by Kiepert himself.
 - The early 20th century map (1909) of a city in West Java. This city (aka Cheribon or Tjirebon) has for centuries been a centre of Indonesian Islam and generated much of the opposition to Dutch colonial rule.
 - 1873 Wyld's map of Khiva and the surrounding countries in Central Asia. Khiva is an old city in Uzbekistan known for its historic Islamic architecture. This map was made to provide practical information for the general public.

Future Direction: Preserving and Keeping the Vast Knowledge of the Orient

The Oriental Institute Library maintains a unique identity as a specialist library, serving as both an archival repository and a research library. The OI has undertaken preservation efforts and digitization projects to ensure the accessibility of its vast



Map of Asia

collection. This ongoing initiative extends beyond the OI's collection mentioned above and includes valuable materials of archival value such as films, photos, diapositives, and more. To ensure the long-term preservation and accessibility of these materials, the Oriental Institute has been converting rare collections into digital formats. By digitizing these materials, the OI aims to safeguard them from physical deterioration while providing researchers, scholars, and the general public with convenient access to their contents. To achieve this, the library is developing a platform that will serve as a gateway to provide access to these digitized collections as well as a range of electronic resources.

The OI Library aims to create an environment where it is easy for scholars and the public to navigate and access its wealth of resources. By implementing user-friendly organizational systems, adopting modern technologies, and providing clear expert guidance, the library aims to ensure that library users can maximize the benefits of the library's collections. Ultimately, the OI Library contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage and facilitates scholarly engagement with the Oriental Institute's diverse and valuable archival holdings.

Conclusion

Libraries play an important role in our globalized and multicultural world, as they serve diverse interests and communities and function as learning, research, cultural and information centres. The OI Library works within the framework of the Institute collecting, providing and preserving resources for flexible and open-ended

approaches to research related to the Middle East and Asia. Its mission stemmed, in the local context, from pure intellectual curiosity and a profound respect for the cultural heritage of ancient civilizations.

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OI Library Resources Online

- I. Chinese prints from the 18th and 19th centuries publicly available:
 - *Xiu xiang di yi caizi shu*
 - *Peng xianzhi*. An edited version of the *Chronicle of Peng County, Sichuan Province*, originally published in 1813. The edited version is from 1878.
 - *Xiyou zhenquan*. A complete edition of one of the most famous Chinese novels, *Journey to the West*, also known as *The Monkey King*.
 - *Yuci xianzhi*. A partially restored edition of a mid-18th-century chronicle of Yuci County, Shaanxi Province.
 - *Taian fu zhi*. Chronicle of Taian in Shandong Province, dated 1760.



- II. Fulltexts of *Archiv orientální* Volumes 1 (1929) to 78 (2010):



- III. Fulltexts of *Nový Orient* Volumes 1 (1945) to 71 (2016):



- IV. Digitized books, periodicals, and monographs authored by scholars from the Oriental Institute, primarily encompassing scholarly works within the field of Oriental studies (available after log-in):



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The Oriental Institute Library, established in 1931, is a dynamic knowledge institution housing over 270,000 volumes and a wealth of historical artifacts and scholarly information. It provides a rich repository of knowledge, fostering the exchange of wisdom, and preserving the diverse resources about the history, cultures, religious systems and languages of the countries of Asia and Africa. Beyond being a place for finding reliable information, it offers a wide range of services, ensuring its invaluable resources are accessible to scholars and the public alike. The library's commitment to fostering interdisciplinary research and its vision for a user-friendly digital platform highlight its crucial role in promoting cultural diversity and global understanding.

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