

Alois Musil



**Oriental
Institute**
The Center for
Czech Studies
of Sciences



**Czech Academy
of Sciences**

Science 99
around
US
Personalities

The Oriental Institute of The Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic's primary mission is to systematically research history, culture, religions and languages in the countries of Asia and North Africa. Thanks to the knowledge of oriental languages, its staff uses source material. Equipped with detailed knowledge of local facts, they also take into consideration relevant historical and cultural contexts. In its infancy, oriental studies (especially in the region of Central Europe) were focused mainly on philology, with a strong emphasis on research of the more ancient development phases of Asian civilisations. However, in more than one hundred years the contents of oriental studies has expanded; similarly to other disciplines of social sciences, the definition of the research scope has been narrowed. Today, not only the concept of oriental studies itself is almost too general, to the point of being vague, but also the original geographical fields of research such as sinology, indology or arabistics are increasingly becoming an overarching term for professionals of various specialisations whose common denominator is knowledge of the language, context and facts of the region. Due to the growing importance of Asian superpowers, today's orientalist disciplines are more and more focused on contemporary Asian societies and the roots of their development. By using the methodology and knowledge of various disciplines such as history, religion, sociology or linguistics they gain considerable interdisciplinary potential.

The main task of the Oriental Institute is to reflect this development and establish a dialogue with the international academic community at a highly professional and specialised level. The aim of the analysis and interpretation of Asian cultures, however, is not only to create new knowledge and new forms of knowledge through multidisciplinary overlaps between the social sciences, but also to systematically make the significance, structures and dynamics of the researched areas available as well as accessible to Westerners. This process also serves as a critical reflection on our own society. Naturally, the current enormous interest in Asia does not exclude the possibility of research funded mainly from private sources, such as think-tanks, but the need for well-established research institutes such as the Oriental Institute, mostly funded by public funds and serving the public interest, remains highly relevant. Specialised public institutions can guarantee a balance of information, an impartial approach and appropriate contextualisation. Another important task of the Oriental Institute is to support some key areas. Those are not given enough space at Czech universities where the traditional philological focus prevails.

In contrast, the Oriental Institute intends to focus more and more on topical 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 hails as one of the largest collections within the Academy of Science of the Czech Republic. The Institute publishes two journals: one in Czech (Nový Orient) and a foreign-language one (Oriental Archive). It is the only peer-reviewed periodical concerned with the Orient that is published in the Czech Republic. The Oriental Institute has a joint accreditation with the doctoral programme with the Faculty of Arts of Charles University. Our staff members give lectures at the Faculty of Arts, Charles University. With other university departments, such as the Faculty of Arts of the University of West Bohemia and the Hussite Theological Faculty of Charles University, they collaborate on grant projects. In addition to scientific activities, the Oriental Institute also provides service 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.

Professor Alois Musil, D.Th. (1868–1944)

In his homeland, the public awareness of the name and work of the most important Czech orientalist, Alois Musil, is slowly rising. As a catholic priest, he had close ties with the last Austro-Hungarian imperial couple and the First Czechoslovak Republic. For that reason, the communist regime condemned him to oblivion and Musil remained known mostly to the world of scholars as one of the leading orientalists. Musil's scope was enormous: a poor boy from a small farm near Vyškov in Moravia, he left behind a wealth of scientific materials in the fields of Oriental and Biblical Studies, Cartography, Archaeology, Ethnography, and Cultural and Social Anthropology. He wrote about 70 books and more than 1400 expert and popular articles. During the First Republic under Masaryk's leadership, he shaped Oriental Studies and significantly contributed to the establishment of the Oriental Institute in Czechoslovakia.

The Priest and Teacher

He was born as the eldest of five children on June 30, 1868 in Rychtářov, a village 120 km north of Vienna. At the age of eleven, Alois was a top student in his local primary school, but the entrance exams for the grammar school did not go well for him. Even though the examiner called him a “dopey”, Musil managed to bring around the headmaster, and by the end of October 1879 Alois was already one of the best students. During his grammar school studies in Kroměříž, Brno and Vysoké Mýto, he decided to alleviate the suffering of his family, burdened with a debt-ridden farmhouse, and join the theological seminar in Olomouc. For poor but gifted boys, the priesthood was a common solution for economic survival. As the first-born son, he had always supported his parents and siblings in every possible way.

The future scientist in Olomouc was directed towards the unexpected career path mainly by the professor of biblical history, Melchior Mlčoch (1833–1917), a respected and linguistically-endowed expert. The young theologian became fond of the Old Testament biblical studies and history while also showing a great linguistic talent: he worked hard on refining his Greek, Latin and Hebrew. During his summer vacations in 1889, twenty-one year old Musil and two of his fellow students set out on a trip to Slovakia. In Turčianský Svätý Martin (today's Martin), they accidentally met Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (1850–1937), and the young theologians were strongly impressed by the meeting. Musil later recalled that Professor Masaryk emphasised the need to form one's own firm opinion in scientific work.

In 1891 Musil passed his final exams with distinction and was ordained a priest. Straight after this, he was sent by the church as a catechist (teacher of religion) and co-operator (assistant priest) to a parish in Moravian Ostrava. At the same time, he intended to pursue further studies and pass his doctorate in theology.

Twenty-three year old Alois Musil took up his work duties in the academic year 1891/1892. The main duty was to teach religion at the Czech primary (and middle) boys' school and girls' primary school. Additionally, he had to cope with the workload of assistant priest (attending baptisms, funerals and other ceremonies).

In his pastoral care for young people, Musil did not limit himself to teaching religion, which was compulsory for Catholic children. For his pupils, he served mass

every Sunday with an additional religious lecture, also mandatory to attend according to the regulations of the time. Aside from them, he also served other masses on various occasions (religious holidays, birthdays, and name days of the members of the royal family). In all likelihood, he was also involved in other ceremonies and tasks, concerning pupils as well as teachers, in particular holy communion and confessions.

After his arrival in Ostrava, Musil was lucky to experience the doyen of the local Czech education, Jan Pobial (1823–1892). Pobial worked in Moravian Ostrava from 1859, and in 1883 he became a headmaster of a mixed boys' and girls' primary school. It was probably soon after his teaching career commenced, when he started organising a choir from his pupils, performing church singing. He was very successful at it.

Alois Musil during his stay in Moravian Ostrava
(photo family archive)



Soon after his arrival in Moravian Ostrava, he also joined a number of public activities within the Czech national community, connected with the Church, such as teaching and lecturing on history for free for the association of the Catholic journeymen. At the beginning of the summer 1892, he also took part in the miners' celebrations organised on the Feast of St. Procopius (4th of July). In his limited capacity, Musil supported the national awakening movement in the form of charitable donations in support of poor pupils in Czech schools. During his stay in Ostrava, he began his work as a journalist when his first articles got published in the newspapers *Práce* and *Ostravice*. He even became a co-founder of this nationalistic newspaper in 1893, together with a renowned lawyer of Ostrava, Edmund Palkovský (1858–1930).

At the end of June 1894 outstanding politician F. L. Rieger (1818–1903) visited Ostrava. Accompanied by local Czech patriots of significance, he headed to the recently-opened Národní dům (National House). It was then when he met Alois Musil, and perhaps thanks to this meeting, Musil later dared to ask Rieger for help.

Shortly after he commenced his work in Ostrava, Musil started complaining about his work overload which prevented him from focusing on his doctoral studies. Hard work in the service of the Church represented a big obstacle in preparation for his D. Th. viva (oral exam) – he was only able to study at night. He gained time to study by shortening his sleep. He went to bed in the evening, woke up before midnight and began to study. He refreshed himself with strong tea or coffee and stayed at his books until four in the morning. After a brief rest, he rushed to church before six.

At the end of 1893, Musil unsuccessfully applied to be transferred to a less prominent parish, which he justified with the lack of study and poor health. However, these were not sufficient arguments for the apparatus of the Catholic Church. In his reply, Archbishop Theodor Kohn (1845–1915) indirectly made the accusation that his desire to improve his education was a manifestation of selfishness towards the Church.

Although Musil had not succeeded in being transferred to the less demanding parish until he obtained his doctorate, at least, in his fight with archbishop consistory, he gained permission to leave the parish common dormitory and move to private accommodation.

Musil was exhausted from all his activities both time-wise and physically. The recurrence of consumption in early spring of 1894, prompted him for a second health stay in Wörishofen in Bavaria, with the famous priest, Sebastian Kneipp (1821–1897), who specialised in hydrotherapy and founded a local spa. Musil spent his holidays there already in 1890.

Thanks to his immense vigor and perseverance, Musil was able to obtain a doctorate in theology. During his studies, he passed four vivas in Olomouc (the first one in March 1892, the second in April 1893, the third in May 1894 and fourth in February 1895). The graduation ceremony took place on June 20, 1895, with the participation of representatives of the archbishopric, teaching staff and many other local personalities, as well as a large group of Musil's friends and colleagues from Ostrava.

The successful completion of doctoral studies crowned Musil's work in Moravian Ostrava, but at the same time heralded his departure from the city. His original intention was to continue his research into religious life in Bohemia and Moravia after 1650 by examining documents kept in the Land Archives in Brno. However, in 1893

Pope Leo XIII issued the Encyclical *Providentissimus Deus* and the Apostolic Letter *Vigilantiae*. Biblical studies were to become a discipline with strict rules. Moreover, when during his studies, Musil learned about the opening of the Dominican L'École pratique d'études bibliques (today's L'École biblique et archéologique française) in Jerusalem, he changed his plans and decided to go to the Middle East to explore why faith in one God has such firm roots there. Thus, his long-standing interest in the Orient and Eastern languages, which he grew fond of during his theological studies, prevailed.

He introduced his intention to go to Palestine for two years during an audience with Archbishop Kohn of Olomouc, but it took nearly two months to finally get his approval and financial support.

The Traveller and Explorer

The first of Musil's dreamed of faraway lands that he saw, were the shores of Egypt, when aboard of the Österreichischer Lloyd liner. He sailed from Trieste to Alexandria and then continued on board another ship to Jaffa. He arrived in Jerusalem on 21 November 1895.

According to his later recollections, the Jerusalem school brought him disappointment. The professional as well as language level was weaker than his own. Therefore, he learned Arabic from a local typesetter and perfected his Hebrew with a local rabbi. He walked around with a copy of the Hebrew Bible and rode on horseback to explore the surrounding areas of Jerusalem.

In early February 1896 he set out on a school trip to Egypt. The expedition followed the hypothetical route of the Israeli exodus through St. Catherine's monastery in Sinai. Musil later complained that the trip was too touristy but the preserved sources show that at the time he was enthusiastic about traveling.

A scholarship of 1300 guldens per annum from Archbishop Kohn proved to be inadequate; the high financial cost of living in Palestine could only be covered by Musil taking loans. He turned for help to the well-known patron, F. L. Rieger, whom he knew personally from Ostrava. He returned from the school expedition without a single penny, moreover, he borrowed more money to purchase photographic equipment. He offered to send articles on Oriental topics which would enrich the knowledge of Czech readers. He would cover his debts with royalties paid in advance. Rieger granted his wish and Musil had the first articles about the Orient in his career published.

The college expedition to Egypt gave Musil an important impetus and the young explorer began to make short trips to both near and distant surroundings. Full of enthusiasm for travelling, he set out across the Jordan River during his vacations in 1896, to explore regions from the second part of Exodus. During this, as well as all the other journeys, he systematically gathered topographic data alongside ethnographical, biblical and archeological findings.

The Jerusalem L'École biblique soon was not enough for the ambitious young man, so from 23 February 1897 he continued his studies at the Jesuite Université St. Joseph in Beirut. Here, he found himself in a supportive environment among teachers and colleagues. The Jerusalem Dominicans, however, took Musil's transfer very hard and in a letter to archbishop Kohn, they described their former student in an unfavourable light. He had not removed Musil from Beirut only thanks to the intervention of the Jesuit Provincial, but he stopped any financial support for the young rebel. Desperate,

Musil turned for help to the secretary of the Czech Academy of Sciences and Arts in Prague, Professor Rudolf Dvořák (1860–1920) recommended by Rieger, and to the Orientalist prof. David Heinrich Müller (1846–1912) from the University of Vienna. Both institutions enabled Musil to continue his studies and travels in Arabia.

For Musil, this started a period of exploration expeditions crowned with significant discoveries. Gradually, he became a co-chief of two Bedouin tribes. He brought hundreds of copied Nabatean and Greek inscriptions, sketches, photographs, as well as a wealth of biblical, topographical, ethnographical, folklore and botanical findings. He also brought ill health – malaria and scars from repeated, life-threatening robberies and fights with Arab nomads.

Only a few weeks after his transfer to Beirut, Musil set out on another trip (from 10 May 1897 to 14 July 1897) to southern Palestine and the Gulf of Aqaba with an explicitly cartographic goal. Despite the noticeable progress, he felt his work was incomplete: the mapping of Wadi Musa (the rock city of Petra) was unfinished and part of the territory of the Sinai Peninsula remained unexplored, which worried hyperactive Musil. He therefore tried to undertake the follow-up expedition in November of the same year. But south of Gaza, he was ambushed by a group of forty Bedouin raiders, and was forced to return immediately by the unfavourable circumstances.

One year after arriving in Beirut – in March 1898 – he set out on the most important expedition of his career, during which he mainly wanted to complete his cartographic records. With the help of the Bedouins of the Banū Sakhr tribe, he visited the Umayyad desert castles, Qasr Tuba, Qasr Mshatta, Qasr Muwaqqar and Kharanah.

Desert chateaux or castles refer to about twenty structures from the period of the Umayyad dynasty (661–750 AD), built on the edge of the Syrian Desert between the Euphrates and eastern parts of today's Syria and Jordan. The name was frequently criticised because at the time of their conception, as the local environment was not entirely in a desert climate.

Qusayr ʿAmra

From the Bedouin tales, Musil had previously learnt about the unexplored castle Qusayr ʿAmra. However, he did not get to it until 8 June 1898, when he took part in the raid of the Banū Sakhr tribe. His group was soon ambushed by warriors from the Ruwallah tribe, which prevented Musil from documenting the construction thoroughly.

Although the time needed to explore the castle Qusayr ʿAmra properly was not granted to Musil, he discovered that the building was made up of a reception hall and a spa bath. However, the biggest surprise awaited the young explorer inside. The walls were covered with unique figurative art – depicting crafts, hunting scenes, male and even naked female figures! Next to the southern window of the reception hall, there were three Greek-style clad female figures: *Historia*, *Skepsis* and *Poesis*. The main image showed the Caliph himself on the throne. In the same room, there were images of the Byzantine Emperor, the King of Persia and the last king of Visigoths in Spain as well as the ruler of Abyssinia. The vaulted ceiling of the bath was decorated with the figurative zodiac.

Qusayr ʿAmra
(photo by Petr Přebinda)



Restored figurative paintings in Qusayr ʿAmra

(photo by Barbora Černá)

Qusayr ʿAmra is one of the gems of early Islamic architecture. The interior of this building is richly decorated by figurative paintings, which makes it absolutely exceptional. Since 1985, Qusayr ʿAmra is therefore rightly included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. Until 1898 it stood abandoned and unknown to the Western world. It was only known to the nomads of the desert, the Bedouins, who would pass it with fear because they were afraid of the evil spirits living in it. Today it is visited by crowds of tourists brought in by travel agents from all over the world.

The premises consist of a reception hall, spa, well and water storage tank. The main building consists of a three-nave structure with a barrel vault ceiling, with two adjacent semicircular apses. It served as a reception hall. From there, it led to the room with benches, then to the tepidarium (a room where warm air radiated through the heated floor) and to the caldarium (a room with hot water) with a dome roof with ventilation holes. A boiler room with furnace used to be adjacent to the spa but it is demolished today. The whole complex was surrounded by a low wall with an entrance near the well. The floors of all rooms were tiled with cut marble slabs. They also lined the lower parts of the walls but unfortunately have not been preserved there.

There are many speculations and various expert theories about what led the Umayyad ruling elite to decorate their leisure home. Perhaps the most acceptable one is that in the early days of Islam, the ban on portraying human figures was not strictly enforced or demanded. Naturally, there was also the surviving influence of the original Byzantine culture, which manifested itself in fine arts. It is also likely that the images were created by the artists who knew the style and were familiar with the technique of painting. A certain daring of the concept of depicted scenes may be also explained by the fact that the premises were used only by a very narrow ruling class: ʿAmra could be considered a private property of Caliph al-Walid II (ruling 743-744), who at the time was the absolute ruler of a vast empire encompassing most of North Africa and the entire Middle East. In 2011, remediation of ʿAmra was launched in co-operation with the World Monuments Fund (WMF), Italian Institute for Conservation and Restoration (ISCR) and Department of Antiquities of Jordan (DoA). Restoration of the famous interior paintings unexpectedly revealed hitherto unknown scenes.

Another surprise, this time negative, came after Musil's arrival in Vienna in the summer of 1898 – the scientific community called him a liar. Musil was branded by respected authorities a dreamer, who was deluded, even a trickster who had never been in the desert and, without any documentation, pretended to have made a major discovery, in order to cover the fact that for the financial support of 2,000 guildens, he did not purchase the required antique objects. It took Musil another two years before he managed to visit the castle again, photograph the paintings and bring evidence to Vienna. They were, as he wrote, two years of “great moral suffering” but eventually he went from being a fraudster to become a renowned scientist.

Shaken by the mistrust towards him, in 1898 Musil began to teach as an interim catechist at a real grammar school in Olomouc. But for the school year 1899/1900 he received a study sabbatical with financial support, and from August to October 1899 he studied at the British Museum and London libraries as well as the Library of the University of Cambridge. In November 1899 he moved to Berlin where he spent the remainder of his study leave. In the spring of 1900 he travelled through Greece, Istanbul, Beirut and Damascus to ʿAmra to obtain the photographic evidence. He reached it at the

Petra, al-Khazna ("The Treasury")
(photo by Petr Přebinda)



beginning of July, staying only seven days and took 110 images. Exploration and taking photographs were not easy; he was constantly threatened by potential raids.

On the roof, his companions constantly took turns to be on guard. They did not want to enter the castle because they were afraid of ghosts who, according to Bedouin legends, were supposed to live there.

The Viennese Academy of Sciences finally understood how exceptional Musil's discovery was; at its invitation, he travelled to 'Amra in 1901 for the third time, this time accompanied by the academic painter Alfons Leopold Mielich (1863–1929), whose task was to copy the paintings. There was still an issue of dating and interpretation of the building. Islam forbade figurative art and representation, and in the available literature there was no mention about similar decorations in the Caliph's dwelling. Thus Musil began to change the general view of the beginnings of Islamic fine art.

A Respected Expert

In 1901, Professor Rudolf Ernst Brünnow (1858–1917), working at the time in Vevey, Switzerland, turned to the Viennese Academy of Sciences for help. He asked Professor Müller if it was possible for Musil to check the attached map of Kerak's surroundings. Musil took up the job and thus commenced a long-term collaboration. The following year, Brünnow suggested to Vienna that Musil ought to publish his results in Germany, together with the local scholars. The Academy sent Musil to Vevey to familiarise himself with the plans for the intended publication based on Brünnow's expedition in 1897, and asked him to report on it. Musil was willing to participate and collaborate with Brünnow, but the Academy finally decided to publish Musil's work separately.

Musil worked hard on preparation of his maps. In order to gather the missing data, he set out on another journey in the summer of 1902, this time to the Sinai Peninsula in the region southwest of Gaza. In mid-November 1902 he boarded a ship to Trieste and returned to Olomouc where he continued in his cartographic work with his newly acquired data.

Musil determined the position of individual places from a sketch, in which he had recorded ruins, springs, mountains and valleys. He would hire indigenous tribesmen as guides. He had them repeat the local names several times to make sure they were correct, or had them written down. He would use a measuring table, a compass, a height pressure gauge, thermometer and photographic apparatus. The map was based on landmarks, visible from long distances.

On his travels, Musil gradually worked with professional cartographers from Vienna, Rudolf Lendl, Karl Waldmann and Rudolf Thomasberger. The position of the so-called skeleton (or geographical co-ordinates) was determined by the astronomical measuring of the stars and the sun; while the Earth's longitude was established with the help of a quality chronometer (an instrument for accurate time measurement). They measured the altitude with an aneroid (a pressure gauge), while always recording the temperature with an accuracy of half a degree Celsius. To measure altitudes, they had three different aneroids from different manufacturers and they made their readings from them simultaneously, to be on the safe side. In addition, they kept a journal where they recorded the date, time, place of measurement, strength of the wind and cloud cover as well as pressure three times, and at the end of the journal the final determined altitude.

More detailed measurements were carried out at the previously specified points, using a measuring table and cartographer's rulers. On sturdy sheets of paper, they recorded directions to the significant points in the vicinity (even those more distant ones) – mainly peaks of hills and various ruins – for the future possibility of intersection to determine the location. Theodolites were mainly used to determine the height of distant points; its calculation could be done after intersecting trajectories and ascertaining the distances. Everything was recorded on individual sheets of sturdy paper that followed from each other and were numbered. In them they drew the entire route of their journey, and in addition to the directions, they recorded a detailed situation of the surroundings as they advanced forward – schematic drawings of individual hills, rocks, valleys, names of the places etc. In the evenings, Musil probably made adjustments to the sketches and important data was re-written with ink.

At the request of the Viennese Academy of Sciences, the Austro-Hungarian Ministry of War sent a specialist, with whom Musil worked on the maps. The result was sent to the military geographic institute in Vienna. Musil was granted a special leave for 1904 from Olomouc, and relocated to Vienna to supervise the work. The resulting maps were extraordinary for the times.

Alois Musil, although a clergyman himself, often encountered disapproval from the conservative church circles. It mainly concerned his work in the field of biblical studies. Therefore, after 1904, he shifted his main focus from biblical studies to “historical topography and ethnography”.



Austro-hungarian military-political mission to the Ottoman Empire in 1917, Jerusalem; in the front row in the middle archduke Hubert Salvator Habsburg-Lothringen, Alois Musil in the uniform first from the left (photo archive ASAM)

In 1906 the border line between Egypt, ruled by the British, and the Ottoman Empire was being defined. Musil, who was already internationally renowned, was approached by the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey (1862–1933), with request for assistance. Musil provided both parties with valuable information and above all, proofs of his map that was about to be published. The agreement between Great Britain and the Ottoman Empire was signed in Rafah on 1 October 1906.

In the 1980s, this 1906 agreement served in negotiation between Israel and Egypt, after both countries signed a peace treaty in Camp David in March 1979. It committed the State of Israel to withdraw its military and civilians from the Sinai Peninsula. It had occupied it since the Six-Day War in 1967. The demarcation of the borderline between Egypt and Israel was complicated, among other things, by the discussions surrounding the resort Taba, which devolved to Egypt as late as 1989. The decision was based on the Separating Administrative Line between Great Britain and the Ottoman Empire in 1906.

The results of Musil's travels from the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries were published in Vienna. In 1906, the most detailed map of the former Roman province of Arabia Petraea was published. It covered the area of 95,000 square kilometers at a scale of 1 : 300 000 and corresponded largely with today's Jordan. It was immediately followed with a map of Wādī Mūsā at a scale of 1 : 20 000, which included the famous Rock City of Petra, the former capital of the above-mentioned province. In 1907–1908 Musil published a detailed description of the area, its monuments and life of the local Bedouins, in four volumes under the unified name *Arabia Petraea*. His most important discovery was also analysed in detail in the spectacular two-volume publication *Kusejr Amra*, accompanied with Mielich's illustrations. Emperor Franz Joseph I awarded Musil with the Order of the Iron Crown, Third Class.

In 1908–1909, after successful publication of his discoveries and findings Musil went back to the Orient, this time it was a year-long journey with a focus on topographical exploration of northern Arabia between Palestine and Mesopotamia, combined with ethnographic research. He lived with the Ruwallah Bedouins under the leadership of the chief Nouri who had previously accepted him as his brother and made him one of the Sheiks of the tribe.

In 1909 Musil left the provincial city of Olomouc for good. As early as 1908, the Rector of the Czech Charles-Ferdinand University in Prague Professor Jaroslav Goll (1846–1929) and Professor František Kordač (1852–1934) from the Theological Faculty with the support of Dr. Josef Hlávka (1831–1908), President of the Czech Academy of Emperor Franz Joseph I for Sciences, Literature and Arts in Prague, tried to lure Musil to Prague. However, Musil decided to go to Vienna because the university there offered him much better conditions for work. He was invited to join the Department of Auxiliary Sciences for Biblical and Arabic studies, and on top of that, it was much closer to Rychtářov than from Prague. Although he went to Vienna for work, whenever possible, he returned home to help on the family farm.

In 1909 he completed the building of his family house in Rychtářov which he named Vila Mūsā. Its name was derived from the name under which Musil was known amongst the Bedouins – according to the Banū Ruwallah tribe – Mūsā ar-Ruwailī (Mūsā means Moses in Arabic, which could relate to Musil's interest in the history of the

Old Testament as well as the garbled version of his surname). He gradually equipped the house with oriental furniture and planted hundreds of fruit trees in the garden and the surrounding area.

In 1910, Musil was invited by the Ottoman government to map the region alongside the newly-built Hijazi Railway, i.e. the northwest part of today's Saudi Arabia. On this expedition, he was accompanied by non-commissioned officer Rudolf Thomasberger from the Military Geographical Institute in Vienna and geologist Leopold Kober (1883–1970). The expedition helped to forget all the hardships, yet its most important discovery came unexpectedly on the 2nd of July 1910.

For a long time, Musil had known that the biblical Mount Moses could not, despite the tradition, be identical to today's tourist destination of Jebel Musa in Sinai. During his expedition to Hijaz, he came suddenly to the conclusion that his search had been successfully completed and all his deliberations had gained a concrete shape: the holy mountain was supposed to be Hala'l Badr, an active volcano at the time of Moses. However, Musil's locating of the Mount Moses was not final. In the 1920s, he moved the searched-for mountain to the northwest, in the vicinity of the al-Bad' oasis, without matching it to any particular peak.

In early January 1912, Sixtus of Bourbon and Parma (1886–1934), a brother of Archduchess and the future Empress Zita (1892–1989) visited Musil at the court library in Vienna. He offered to accompany him on the journey to northeast Syria and West Mesopotamia. Initially, it was supposed to be a hunting trip but it eventually changed into a scientific expedition, so Musil promised to take part. The expedition, full of dangerous situations, lasted four months, during which the two men became firm friends. They reached as far as Baghdad. Like on the previous occasions, the journey did not avoid an ambush, and just before its completion they were robbed of all their possessions by the Bedouin raiders. Musil and Prince Sixtus arrived in Aleppo in their underwear only and without any personal belongings and valuable records.

The adventurous trip brought Musil closer to the court in Vienna and meant close friendship with the Archduke and future Emperor Charles (1887–1922) and his wife Zita.

In the Orient during the “Great War”

The court's confidence brought Musil a new, political role. At the beginning of the First World War, at the turn of 1914 and 1915, he travelled to the Orient as an imperial court counsel. The aim of the expedition was to unite the warring Arab tribes and shift them towards supporting the unpopular government in Istanbul in the fight against the Triple Entente, alongside Germany and Austria-Hungary. The fight was to be declared a holy war (jihad) of Muslims against infidels. From the start, Musil understood the absurdity of his task and during his mission reported to Vienna that nothing would come from the holy war. Not only did the Bedouins hate the Ottoman government, but also their specific, lukewarm attitude towards Islam, did not offer, unlike the British gold, a sufficient galvanizing potential for the holy war.

The expedition was commenced in early November of 1914 when Musil left Vienna; a month later he left Damascus for the inner Arabia. According to his eyewitness account, he had never found that many people in the desert like back then. There, thousands of young men sought refuge from military service as well as hiding their entire herds

of sheep and goats from military requisition. There was considerable tension between the Bedouins. The younger chieftains wanted to fight against the Ottoman Turks and Brits. But, according to Musil, the situation gradually changed with the help of British gold and unfounded promises, handed out in fistfuls in the name of Great Britain by Thomas Edward Lawrence (1888–1935), known as Lawrence of Arabia. From the autumn of 1917, the British had the Bedouins completely on their side.

At the end of his hardest expedition in the summer of 1915, down with fever in Baghdad, the ill and exhausted Alois Musil was convinced that he would never travel to the East again. Two years later, however, he was appointed by the Emperor Charles I as leader of the Austro-Hungarian Oriental Mission.

The expedition was carried out in the autumn of 1917 with military and diplomatic aims to support the influence of Austria-Hungary and Germany in the Ottoman Empire towards the end of the war. It was also Musil's eighth and last journey to the Middle East, during which he completed his political tasks in Istanbul, and at the same time approached the British-Ottoman front in southern Palestine. One of the paradoxes of Musil's life was that, as a priest, he dressed in an officer's uniform, in which he participated in the mission.

Close ties to the new ruling couple who sat on the throne in November 1916, helped Musil to intercede on behalf of the Czech politicians Karel Kramář (1860–1937) and Alois Rašín (1867–1923), condemned to death in 1916 for "high treason". Musil, however, did not intercede only on behalf of politicians but also many young army recruits so they could avoid being enlisted. Later, he put in a good word for the rebelling Czech sailors in the Bay of Kotor.

During the First World War, Musil had to take part in very confidential tasks at the court in Vienna. According to some historians, he probably had his hand in the so-called Sixtus Affair. In December 1916, only a few weeks after his accession to the throne, the emperor Charles I attempted to end the war but his efforts failed because of the attitude of Germany. He decided to conduct further peace talks in secret; they should have been mediated in France by his wife Zita's brother, Sixtus of Bourbon and Parma, Musil's friend and travel companion from 1912. Details of the possible post-war arrangements, stated in two letters sent to Sixtus during the spring of 1917, became public knowledge a year later, in the spring of 1918. The revelation of Charles's efforts behind the back of Germany meant the end of hopes for a swift end to the war. After this, peace and reformation of the Habsburg Empire could not be expected – post Sixtus Affair, Austria-Hungary was completely in tow of Germany and the war could only be ended with weapons. The affair aided the efforts of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk and Edvard Beneš (1884–1948), who had been working towards destroying the monarchy. The Allies then recognised the Czechoslovak National Council as the supreme body of the "Czechoslovak nation", and its future government. Later, during his time in Czechoslovakia, Alois Musil, who is often suspected to have co-authored both letters to Sixtus, admitted only to have been aware of their contents.

From Vienna to Prague

The First World War ended with the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Czechoslovak Republic was declared on the 28th of October 1918, and after

the secession of other nations, from the remains of the Habsburg Empire arose the Republic of German Austria (Deutsch-Österreich). In November 1918, the German-Austrian government adopted a resolution that people of non-German origin would not be employed in the state service. The University of Vienna thus dismissed all employees, associate professors and professors who were not Austrian Germans. Among them was also Bedřich Hrozný (1879–1952), but Vienna was interested in keeping Musil. He received an offer to stay, provided he could prove he was German. Alois Musil, a relative of prominent Austrian writer Robert Musil (1880–1942), completely disagreed and considered it an insult. He did not hesitate to ask for his pension and began to prepare to leave for the University of Prague.

Czech nationalist circles were headed by Professor Otakar Srdínko (1875–1930), a deputy who was strongly against him in the Parliament. They attacked Musil indiscriminately. There were articles in the press that blamed Musil for his involvement in Austro-Hungarian services and his close relationship with the last imperial couple when he in fact worked against allies of Czechoslovakia.

Although the first man of the young republic, President T. G. Masaryk cared to engage Musil, his journey to the Prague University was unexpectedly long and trying. The political campaign against Musil did not quieten down, and eventually the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Czechoslovakia turned to the French and British governments to see if they had any objections against Musil's appointment given his activity during the First World War. It was not until the autumn 1919, when the Brits announced they had no information of Musil's activities during the war that would be considered objectionable.

The proposal to appoint Musil professor of the Prague University was approved on 17th of December 1919 and presented to the President Masaryk, who confirmed it a week later, and on the 21st of January 1920 Alois Musil was officially appointed regular Professor of Auxiliary Oriental Sciences and Modern Arabic at the Faculty of Arts of the Prague University. So called *Lex Mareš* (135/1920 of the Legal Code), by which the oldest local alma mater returned to its original name of the Charles University, was not passed until 19th of February 1920.

Musil's inaugural lecture took place in the hall of the Institute of Sciences at the Charles University on the 11th of February 1920 in the presence of journalists and politicians led by Minister of Foreign Affairs Edvard Beneš. Musil commenced by thanking the gathered professors of the Faculty of Arts, Ministry of Education and President Masaryk to enable his return to Czech academia.

After a complicated transfer from Vienna to Prague, Alois Musil started working immediately as a founding figure of his field in the new state of Czechoslovakia. Supported by President Masaryk, he introduced his programme for experts as well as political and economic circles, including the establishment of the Oriental Institute, and began teaching at the University and writing articles for many periodicals. Musil frequently published articles with oriental, political as well as agricultural topics, most often in *Národní listy*, *Venkov* and *Prager Presse*.

Musil also described relations with the Orient as of the utmost importance from an economic point of view. Czechoslovakia could not become a colonial superpower but it had a skilled workforce and developed industry. The Orient could offer raw materials as well as markets for manufactured products and many work opportunities. Musil

also offered a large number of personal contacts that could be key. Thus, Czechoslovak Oriental Studies were to become a discipline that would benefit society as a whole. It should not be a matter of a few specialised experts but it should extend beyond the Faculty of Arts, for example to technical or business colleges.

Musil presented completely concrete proposals of steps that should gradually lead to the set goals. In the first place was the establishment of a school for living Oriental languages. He was inspired by the Viennese K. K. öffentliche Lehranstalt für orientalischen Sprachen. Its gates were to open in the evenings to all literate candidates on two levels or in two departments. The general department would offer language proficiency on the basic communication level, whereas the special department would teach students how to master reading and grammar and spelling. This would also include brief lectures on geography, history, literature, Islam, oriental Christian churches as well as political parties, economic and social facts of the Eastern countries. It should have benefited graduates in the widest spectrum of disciplines: craftsmen, tradesmen, industrialists, engineers and doctors.

An even more significant deed, again modelled on the Austrian concept, should have been the foundation of an oriental society (later Musil stuck to the name of the Oriental Institute). The new institution should have been built on the same principle like the similar Austrian Imperial Oriental and Overseas Society (K. K. österreichische Orient- und Überseegesellschaft), also co-founded by Musil. In it, he actively worked as the head of the cultural section. The society was supposed to secure trips to the Orient for various experts but also artists and businesspeople, look after the expatriates who live in the region, support publishing and lecturing, archaeological excavations and ethnographical research.

Another item on the agenda was to set up an Oriental Library within the next five years that was to contain at least 20,000 volumes. He wanted to associate its structure with the University library that would provide the already acquired books. Last but not least, according to Musil it was necessary to establish an oriental department at the Prague University with its own library of about 1,000 most important volumes.

Musil also planned to publish a magazine and acquire a collection of “light images” as slides made of glass were called back then, to animate lectures. In this regard, he set an example for the others. Furthermore, Musil said it was necessary to obtain a number of instruments for exploration expeditions and excavations in the Orient. Simultaneously, he estimated the financial cost of setting up the individual institutions.

Beyond the Big Pond

In addition to teaching and writing articles, Musil also worked for Foreign Secretary Edvard Beneš, reporting on the situation in the Middle East and his contacts with foreign diplomats. Musil, however, had not forgotten about his expert work. Since 1908 he had been preparing to publish his new findings from the expeditions carried out until 1917. Originally, it was supposed to be published in German in Vienna as a follow up with two maps and six volumes of *Arabia Petraea* (1907–1908) and *Kusejr Amra* (1907), which he created there with the support of the Imperial Academy of Sciences. When, after ten years of preparations, he left Vienna for Prague, he assumed that he would publish his work in Czech under the auspices

of the Czech Academy of Sciences and Arts. At the same time, however, he was painfully aware that Czech language would prevent him from international recognition. Yet again, the future steps of Musil were determined by President Masaryk, and two years after joining the university, Musil's hopes were raised anew: in May 1922 Masaryk acquainted him with the patron Charles Richard Crane (1858–1939); he sponsored the publication of the six volumes from Musil's travels in the period 1908–1917, calling the omnibus books *Oriental Explorations and Studies*.

Masaryk's influence on Musil's work after 1918 was fundamental. First, Musil went through an intensive English course to be able to oversee the proofreading. Simultaneously, foreign libraries, full of volumes and source materials unavailable in Czechoslovakia, opened their doors to him. A number of additional studies, annexed by Musil to the individual volumes of the American work, were created overseas from the newly acquired detailed notes and citations. However, the idea of a historical-political series of books on the current Orient began to emerge from his talks with Masaryk.

In June 1923 Musil travelled to the USA via London. Crane first hosted him in his residence in Cape Cod, and then in the summer months Musil studied at the holiday English language course at Harvard. As well as perfecting his English, he immersed himself in thorough research and began to gather an extensive collection of notes about the history of the Orient and Islam.

After the summer course and key negotiations with publishers and Crane, Musil sailed to London in October 1923. There, he immersed himself in adding materials and proofreading of the English translation for the upcoming American series.

The London Royal Geographical Society elected Musil as its member, and on the 14th of January 1924 he was invited by its president to comment on the lecture by Alexander Kennedy (1947–1928) *Rocks and Monuments of Petra* at Aeolian Hall as well as to take part in the following celebratory reception. In his lecture, Kennedy mentioned that Musil was “the first real explorer around the city of Petra”. Musil's subsequent twenty-minute speech to the crowded hall was received with a great response.

Musil completed the basic editing of his English manuscripts by the end of May 1924, and his secretary, Anna Blechová, then shipped the last mail to the American Geographical Society in New York, which, after complicated rigmaroles, took charge of publishing the series of *Oriental Explorations and Studies*.

Musil returned home from London in August 1924 and stayed till the beginning of the autumn in his home in Rychtářov where he tried to recuperate. Musil did not want to travel abroad again; he gave lectures, wrote articles and was preparing for publication a Czech version of popular travelogues, an amended remake of American volumes and his German-written work *Arabia Petraea* (1907–1908), originally published in Vienna. Thus, before his return to the USA, the seed of the future historical-political edition of *Dnešní Orient* (The Orient Today) was sown.

Musil also supervised typesetting of English books, prepared by the State Print Works “Státní tiskárna”. However, the proofreading work was much longer than intended. Editor of the American Geographical Society, John Kirtland Wright (1891–1969), had all the manuscripts in New York since June 1924; he discussed and agreed all amendments and changes with Musil by post.

It was not until January 1926 when Musil began to prepare changes to the methods of publication of the American collection because he finally understood that it

would be better to work with Wright directly in New York. At that time, the first American volume of his works, titled *The Northern Hegaz*, was published at long last. He returned to the United States on the 1st of November 1926. Even there, he continued to gather materials at the New York Public Library, the library of Columbia University and at the local museums.

Musil was given space in the office of the American Geographical Society on the very busy Broadway. He also complained about an unbearable level of noise in the place of his residence – at night he hid from it in the garden, and in the winter he sought refuge in the attic. Under constant stress, he gradually became heavily neurotic, having to deal with the consequences of it (together with his closest family and friends) for the rest of his life.

He had been preparing Czech-written popularisation travelogues since 1924. They were supposed to be published simultaneously in English in the USA. The publication there was managed by Katherine McGiffert Wright (1894–1986), the wife of J. K. Wright of the American Geographical Society, for the Horace Liveright Publishers. In the end, however, due to the global economic crisis only one volume was published: the English version of the book *Under the Protection of Nouri (Pod ochranou Nuriho)*, titled *In the Arabian Desert* (1930).

Musil's presence accelerated the work but his stay in the USA had to be prolonged further by another academic year. In the winter of 1927, work on his last, sixth volume of the *Oriental Explorations and Studies* collection was coming to an end. According to numerous notes and mentions, Musil valued the last book most, the work full of ethnographical facts and titled *The Manners and Customs of the Rwala Bedouins*. For that reason, he decided to dedicate it to T. G. Masaryk.

Masaryk supported Musil not only in publishing his valuable scientific works but also as a representative of the young republic. He achieved the greatest success in the field in February 1928. The American Geographical Society awarded Musil with Charles P. Daly golden medal, the founder of the tradition to recognize “valuable or distinguished services”. Musil's name was also added to the plaque of honour. No other Czech has achieved such success since. The award ceremony, connected with Musil's lecture “Desert Life in Northern Arabia” took place on the 21st of February 1928. The prestigious magazine *Science* also reported the event as well as Musil and his work. The lecture hall of 800 people was first addressed by the Chairman of the American Geographical Society. He briefly highlighted the significance of the work and personality of the scholar who came from the same country as Comenius and Masaryk. Then, while applauded, Musil was given the medal. He gave his thanks and followed on with his lecture on life in desert. A few weeks later, he repeated it in Washington, where in his honour the Czechoslovak embassy gave a gala reception. Musil returned to his homeland in early April 1928.

■ Musil's Publication Finishing Line

His periods of labour in England and America took their toll on Musil's health. After his return, he had to limit his activities for the time being.

In the early 1920s, Masaryk envisaged a much more prominent position for Musil within the Oriental Institute, whose actual establishment was being significantly

delayed. On 25th of January 1922, the National Assembly passed the “Establishment of the Oriental Institute Act”, No. 27/1922 of the Legal Code. The Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Education and Business should have carried out its fulfillment. Nevertheless, because of the organisational complications, the President appointed 34 regular members of the Institute, however, Musil was only appointed on 25th of November 1927 (the founding general meeting was held just before his return from the USA, on the 1st of March 1928). Alongside Musil, there were other prominent figures of the Czechoslovak Oriental studies, such as Bedřich Hrozný, Vincenc Lesný (1882–1953), František Lexa (1876–1960) and Jan Rypka (1886–1968).

The establishment of a scientific oriental journal was one of the priorities on the agenda of the Cultural Department of the Oriental Institute. Hrozný appointed an editor; he also asked Musil to contribute to the first issue of the magazine *Archiv orientální*, which came out in the spring of 1929.

Although Musil was continually informed of the situation surrounding the establishment of the Institute, occasionally intervening, he spent most of those years abroad. When he finally recovered most of his health after his return, he had other priorities: lecturing; writing and publishing extensively and financially securing his family.

After his return from the USA, Musil filled the remaining 15 years of his life with the rapid publication sprint towards the finishing line, during which he managed to produce tens of manuscripts. While Musil's works *Oriental Explorations and Studies* (all together six volumes: *The Northern Hegaz* 1926, *Arabia Deserta* 1927, *The Middle Euphrates* 1928, *Palmyrena* 1928, *Northern Negd* 1928 and *The Manners and Customs of the Rwala Bedouins* 1928 as well as three maps: A Map of Northern Arabia 1 : 1 000 000, 1926; A Map of Northern Hegaz 1 : 500 000, 1926 and a map of Southern Mezopotamia 1 : 1 000 000, 1927) was published in English in New York in 1926–1928. For his Czech readers he described his expeditions, together with those originally printed in German in *Arabia Petraea*, in eight popular travelogues. They were published by the publishing house Novina in the years 1929–1932 (*Pod ochranou Nuriho* 1929, *V posvátném Hedžázu* 1929, *V zemi královny Zenobie* 1930, *V biblickém ráji* 1930, *Mezi Šammary* 1931, *Za Mrtvým mořem* 1931, *V roklích edomských* 1932 and *Tajemná Amra* 1932). According to his secretary Anna Blechová, Musil was also toying with the idea of writing adventure books for young adults as early as in 1929. Between 1932 and 1944 he wrote a total of 33 young adult books but only 19 were published.

At the same time, he wrote hundreds of articles on the Orient, as well as other topics, especially politics, economy and agriculture. He assembled them thematically into 17 volumes under the title *Výhledy do světa* (World Views) but they would never be published. In addition to his teaching at the Faculty of Arts, he also organised lectures for the general public, so-called university extensions, and performed often on the radio.

The most important publication achievement of that period was the economic-political series *Dnešní Orient* (The Orient Today). National awakening and political development of individual states was presented in twelve volumes (in Czech – Desert and Oasis. New Arabia 1934; The Lion of the Judah Tribe, New Abyssinia 1934; Between the Euphrates and Tigris, New Iraq 1935; The Gift of the Nile, New Egypt 1935, Under the Himalayas. New India 1936; The Land of the Aryans, New Iran; New Afghanistan 1936; The Promised Land, New Palestine 1937; From Lebanon to the Tigris, New Syria 1938; Italy in Africa, New Libya. Italian East Africa 1939,

The Bridge to Asia. New Turkey 1940, Ancient Ethiopia. New Sudan 1941). The last part, African France, Today's Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco, however did not see the light of the day under the Protectorate regime. The edition was released by the Melantrich publishing house in 1934, and Musil had to update it for the second editions to keep up with the latest research. However, these plans were ruined by World War II, similarly his hopes to get the series published in German and French. The same fate awaited Musil's pivotal work *Ze světa islámu* (From the World of Islam). A counterpoint to the work on Islam is a book on Christian Churches of Today's Orient, published in Olomouc in 1939.

When the army established a military training zone near Musil's home in Rychtářov in 1935, he lost a peaceful environment to relax and work. Towards the end of his life, he therefore started looking for a place to settle. At first in 1935 he attempted to become rooted in Kosova Hora by Sedlčany where he had a villa built, but eventually he stayed with both of his nephews who lived next to each other. He stayed from 1936 in Nový dvůr and from 1940 in Otryby near Český Šternberk.

Musil finished his lecturing in April 1937 but even after that he continued with writing and publishing both scientific and popular articles and works. Even in his old age, he did not know how to rest, he spent his time working on the farms of his nephews as well as writing. He served his last holy mass in the Otryby church of St Havel one month before his death.

Professor Alois Musil died in Otryby on the 12th of April 1944. He was layed to rest in the cemetery in Český Šternberk, after a simple ceremony. In 1968, his remains were transferred to the family tomb in Rychtářov.

In 2009 the Academic Society of Alois Musil placed a memorial plaque on the Otryby farmstead.

Musil's estate is now scattered across a number of archives in the Czech Republic (namely the Literary Archive of the Museum of Czech Literature) as well as abroad (mainly in Vienna) and his extended family. However, its core is stored in the Museum of the Vyškov Region in Vyškov. Part of the Vyškov estate has been digitalised, so Musil's unpublished works are now accessible online at <http://aloismusil.htf.cuni.cz>. An edited work *From the World of Islam with commentary* was published in 2014.

In the text of 'From Childhood to Life: The Anthology for Adolescents' from 1936, Musil left a legacy to young people with a fascinating urgency: "Talent is a great thing but it tempts the student to sin. Better, because it is more useful, is perseverance because only this leads you to your goal (...) It is misery, young man, that no one teaches you how to think. We live too fast. We believe that the deputies, government, journalists and radio care about us. Don't rely on the others, learn how to think independently! Only a thinking person uses his reason and lives like a human. (...) I have never done good for gratitude. Gratitude is debt and the borrower never likes the lender. Do, young man, some good for goodness sake and you will avoid human pettiness! Value the character, not learning! Knowledge is limited, human nature infinite..."

In 2012, it was ninety years since the Oriental Institute in Prague was founded at the initiative of prominent Czech orientalist and President T. G. Masaryk. It happened on the 25th of January 1922 when the National Assembly of Czechoslovakia passed the Act No. 27 of the Code about establishing The Slavic and Oriental Institutes. In Article 2 of the law it is stated that “The Oriental Institute is an independent and self-governing body with the seat in Prague. Its purpose is to cultivate and build scientific and economic relations with the Orient.” The Institute was indebted to Masaryk for the initial financial boost and other sums of money provided by various official institutions. It is understandable that the creation of the organisational structure and beginning of regular work took some time. It was only in November 1927 when the President could appoint the first 34 members of the Institute, amongst them Hittite expert Bedřich Hrozný, indologist Vincenc Lesný, egyptologist František Lexa, arabist Alois Musil, iranistics expert Jan Rypka and others.

Its own scientific activity was launched in 1929 by publishing the first issue of *Archiv orientální*, a scientific journal quarterly that is being published to-date in many world languages and which quickly achieved international recognition as well as its significant contribution to spreading the good name of Czechoslovak orientalistics. The Oriental Institute back then had two ‘branches’: cultural and economic. Mainly the latter one created many ties with various economic institutions that were mutually beneficial. Experts followed the economic situation in individual oriental countries and the trade relations with Czechoslovakia. As a result, a considerable help with establishing these contacts, scholarships to study in the Orient etc. The activities of the Cultural Department included producing publications, organising lectures and managing language courses.

Mainly as a result of the closure of universities during World War II, the tuition of oriental languages was expanded. Since the institute was not part of the university before the war, it could, albeit in a limited capacity, offer this service during the occupation. In 1944, it had to evacuate from the Lobkowitz Palace because it became occupied by the SS military administration, and it was moved to the confined space in Budečská st. 6 in Vinohrady where it survived till the end of the war. As early as on the 18th of May the Institute was given, by the Ministry of Education decree, new premises in the nationalised monastery of the Maltese Knights Order in Lázeňská str. 4, instead of the unsuitable building in Budečská str. In September 1945, the first issue of the popular scientific journal monthly *Nový Orient* came out, which is still being published. As a result of post-revolutionary changes (1989) and changes in property rights, the building of the Oriental Institute in Lázeňská str. unfortunately became a subject of restitution. It was given back to the Sovereign Order of the Maltese Knights and the Institute moved to the academic campus “Mazanka” in Prague 8 where it resides to this day.

The Academic Society of Alois Musil (ASAM) – ASAM unites researchers interested in the work of orientalist Professor Alois Musil. It extensively generates publications, exhibitions and organises lectures with the aim of popularising the personality of Professor Musil and his work. The Society also analyses Musil's scholarly works in the context of research activities of his contemporaries as well as the latest findings. It is also aided by studying and researching locations in the Middle East, known to and travelled to by Alois Musil, including film and photo-documentation. An important goal is to digitalise documents connected with the scientific work and life of Alois Musil. More at www.aloismusil.cz.

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