



Ignatius Sichelbart's Baojiu, Taipei National Palace Museum (source: Wikipedia)

**Ignatius Sichelbart** (Ai Qi Meng 艾启蒙, 1708–1780) was a Jesuit missionary in China, a painter and a musician. He studied theology in Olomouc and was selected for the China mission in 1745 with two more painters: Giuseppe Castiglione and Jean Denis Attiret. All three served as artists at the Imperial court and combined Chinese and western painting techniques. He was named a mandarin in 1777 by the Qianlong Emperor and given a state funeral. Only about 25 of his paintings are preserved.

**Christian Schneider** (1742–1824) was a Franciscan missionary and an orientalist. He studied theology in Olomouc but following the example of his uncle, Herculanus Schneider, a Franciscan missionary to China (石若翰, or 石耐德, d. 1747), Christian decided on missionary work.<sup>4</sup> In 1772 he departed on a mission to Egypt and Ethiopia which lasted seven years. Although the mission failed to establish a missionary base, Schneider gained direct experience with the area which influenced his later work about the history and anthropology of Egypt.

**Jan Koffler** (1711–1780) studied philosophy and theology in Olomouc. In 1738 he travelled to Lisbon to join the next Jesuit voyage to China, arriving in Macau in 1740. He was sent to the city of Sin-hoa (present-day Hué) in Cochinchina, where he served as a mathematician and a medical doctor at the court of the Nguyễn Lord Nguyễn Phúc Khoát (1714–1765). In 1755 Koffler was expelled from Cochinchina and returned to Macau until 1759 when he was transferred to Paraguay. In 1762 he was arrested and deported to Portugal and imprisoned. Upon the intervention of the Empress Maria Theresia, Koffler was released and returned home. He briefly worked as a prefect in the Jesuit college in Litoměřice before leaving again as a missionary to Transylvania where he died.

During the reign of Queen Maria Theresia of Austria, tertiary education in the Habsburg monarchy underwent a reform that escalated into a conflict between the monarch and the Jesuit order. Maria Theresia took away the Jesuit monopoly to appoint the rector and appointed her secular favourite. She turned



Above: Alois Musil (1868–1944) in 1901 as a chief of the Beni-Sacher tribe (source: Wikipedia)



Right: Alois Musil (1868–1944) in 1901 as a chief of the Beni-Sacher tribe (source: Wikipedia)

Olomouc into a fortress to counter the Prussian expansion in Silesia. Her son, Joseph II pressured Pope Clement XIV to dissolve the Jesuit Order and in 1773 the Pope obliged. Several university buildings were assigned to the Habsburg army, leaving the university with a single building. Finally, in 1777 the university was downgraded to a lyceum. The Habsburgs decided to centralise the tertiary education in their monarchy to Prague, Vienna and Lviv. Olomouc regained its university status after half a century, in 1827. Only a few remarkable Orientalists are known from this period.

**Johann Martin Jahn** (1750–1816) was a theologian and orientalist. After studying philosophy and theology in Olomouc he was recruited to teach exegesis and oriental languages in 1784. In 1789 he moved to Vienna where he taught oriental languages, biblical archaeology and dogmatics until 1806. He published a Hebrew grammar and works on Chaldean, Aramaic, Syrian, and Arabic. He was forced to give up his position and accept cannonry at St. Stephan's cathedral.

**Alois Musil** (1868–1944) was a theologian, orientalist, and explorer. In Olomouc he studied theology and obtained his doctoral degree in 1895. He continued his studies in Jerusalem, Beirut, London, Cambridge and Berlin. He is known for his discovery of the 8th-century desert castle Qusayr 'Amra in Jordan. In 1902 he was appointed professor of theology in Olomouc and in 1909 professor of Biblical studies and Arabic at Vienna University. After WWI he became a professor at Charles University in Prague. He was one of the founders of the Oriental Institute of the Academy of Sciences.

### 1946: University rebuilt

The first independent sinology program in Czechoslovakia was opened in 1946 at the newly reopened University, which was named in honour of the 19th century Czech historian and politician František Palacký (1798–1876). The initiative to open sinology and indology came directly from the rector Josef Ludvík Fischer (1894–1973), a sociologist and philosopher interested in both Chinese and Indian philosophy. Oriental Studies at Palacký University flourished especially thanks to guest lecturers invited from Prague, including indologist Vincenc Lesný and sinologist Jaroslav Průšek, who was replaced in 1948 by his student Augustin Palát. In the turmoil of 1950s the Oriental Studies in Olomouc was closed and the faculty and students transferred to Prague.

**Vincenc Lesný** (1882–1953) was a scholar in indology and Iranian studies. After completing classical philology, Sanskrit, and Old Indian culture at Charles University of Prague, he continued his studies of modern Indian and Iranian languages in Bonn and Oxford. In 1924 he was appointed professor in indology at Charles University and served from 1937 until the dissolution of Czech universities as the Dean of the Faculty of Arts. After WWII Lesný was recruited by Fischer to teach in Olomouc. At the same time, he served as the director of the Oriental Institute in Prague. Lesný was one of the founding members of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. He is known for his translations of the Bengali writer Rabindranath Tagore. Lesný published on Marathi grammar and various topics linked to Buddhism. Lesný and Průšek, who will be discussed next, translated *The Analects of Confucius*.



## Sinophone Borderlands Project

In 2018, the European Structural and Investment funds (ESIF), through its *Operational Programme Research, Development, and Education*, funded the Sinophone Borderlands project at Palacký University Olomouc. It is a 5 year project the aim of which is to introduce a new interdisciplinary approach towards rising China. The project leader is Ondřej Kučera.

The approach is grounded in the dialogue between key regions bordering

Above: Sinophone borderlands team.

on China and methodologies in humanities and social sciences. The key regions are Mainland and Insular Southeast Asia, Tibet, Central Asia, Russian Far East, and Taiwan. Each of these key regions is investigated by a number of researchers who are organised in disciplinary clusters: literature and linguistics, international relations and political science, material culture, anthropology, and socioeconomics. Investigated topics include international relations and conflict in the South-China Sea, Belt and Road Initiative, cross-border Chinese economic engagement in Russian

Far East, changes to traditional production networks and taste in Central Asia, narrations of identity in Tibet and Taiwan, language contact and linguistic history of Taiwan and South China and others.

The project develops means to gauge China's global impact and disseminates its findings to the public, scientific audiences, as well as national and EU policy makers. The international team conducts research on cultures and societies in the Chinese borderlands, Taiwan, Russia, Mongolia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Vietnam and beyond.

The funding allows a substantial upgrade of the infrastructure of the research centre. Laboratories are being built for instrumental study of language, material culture, and statistical analysis of society. Once completed, these laboratories will enable the team to measure trends in language change, manufacturing competition, public opinion, or migration between China and its neighbours.

It is our long-term ambition to develop a permanent Research Centre for Asian studies in Olomouc and this project is an important milestone to that goal. The project brings an opportunity to host a number of important events in the near future which may bring you to Olomouc:

- 25-27 September 2020: 11th International Conference of the European Association of Chinese Linguistics, (EACL-11) <https://sites.google.com/view/eacl-11/home>
- 28 June-2 July 2021: 15th International Conference on Austronesian Linguistics (ICAL15)
- September 2021: The European Association for Southeast Asian Studies (EuroSEAS 2021)

Detailed information about the project can be found at its website and social media: <http://sinofon.cz>