Jaroslav Průšek (1923–2016) was a sinologist. He graduated from Charles University in 1947 in classical East Asian studies and continued his Chinese in private before continuing his studies under Bernhard Karlgren (1889–1978) and Gustav Holoub (1908–1995) First in Göteborg and later in Halla, where he finished his doctoral degree in 1950. Průšek was employed by the Oriental Institute and in 1952 sent to China and Japan. He returned to Czechoslovakia in 1957 and taught Chinese and Japanese. In 1965 Průšek started the Department of East Asian Studies at Charles University and was one of the founders of the journal Nový Orient (New Orient). Průšek was a close friend of Fischer and between 1964–1968 taught in Olomouc. He developed the Olomouc sinology program and trained Augustin Palát, who replaced Průšek in 1948. In 1952 Průšek became the director of the Oriental Institute in Prague. He was forced out in 1971 during the Normalisation that followed the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia of 1968. He is known for his work on mediaeval and modern Chinese literature, oral tradition and history of Chinese civilization.

Augustin Palát (1988–1978) was a sinologist. He repatriated from China in 1968. He is known for his work on medieval Chinese medieval history. He is known for his translations of Tang poetry.

Karel Werner (1925–2019) was an indologist and religious studies scholar. He belonged to the circle around Josef Loutfi Fischer who attracted him to Olomouc. He studied philosophy and classical Chinese with Jaroslav Průšek. Privately he learned Sanskrit and modern Chinese. Later he pursued the studies of Chinese under Vincenc Lesjník and became an assistant in the Indology section. He defended his PhD in comparative linguistics and appointed to teach Sanskrit and Indian History. After the Oriental Studies in Olomouc were closed down in the autumn of 1951, Werner became one of the early victims of Communist prosecution. He lost his academic position, despite the appeals of his students and published about it in seminaries. His appeal for rehabilitation in 1968 was turned down and he left to exile two days after the Soviet occupation in August 1968. He became a Cambridge University librarian and was appointed as a supervisor of Sanskrit in Churchill College. In 1969 Werner was appointed Lecturer in Indian Philosophy and Religion in the University of Durham where he remained for the rest of his career.

1991: Asian studies starts for the third time

In 1991 the rector of UP Josef Jařab initiated the reopening of Chinese philology. This academic contribution to Jiří Cejna, Head of the Department of Romance languages. The Far East Section was established and scholars were relocated to prepare the Chinese and Japanese programmes. In the pre-Bologna system, these were five-year double-degree programs initially in combination with English philology. Both programmes admitted their first students in September 1993. The Chinese programme was developed by Lucie Olová (1956, presently at Masaryk University in Brno) and Oldřich Švarný (1920–2011). The Japanese programme was developed by Alice Krašmerová (1950) and Pavel Fanderko (1942). The Far East Section became the Department of Asian Studies. The department was led between 2002–2014 by David Uher (https://kas.upol.cz/en/academics-research/journals/dalny-vychod-news-from-the-european-alliance-for-asian-studies) and a Summer School for graduate students.

Contacts to current students.
While we still face various challenges, we believe that we are becoming a mature member of the European Alliance of Asian Studies that facilitates the further growth of Czech Asian scholars and offers a distinct view on Asian cultures and peoples worthy of our attention.

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Notes
1 Litterae indipectae (short for Litterae ad Indianum petentem) are petitionary letters by Jesuits sent to their generals asking for foreign missions. Only a fraction were granted their wish; for example, out of 114 such petitions in Poland, only 4 were granted (see Masák-Machočáry, M., 2018. ‘Pohled Jesuits a Their Dreams about Missions in China,’ according to the Litterae indipectae,’ Journal of Jesuit Studies 5:4),405–420. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1179/174032211X12997032264468