

Below: Current premises of the Department of Asian Studies at Křížkovského 12 & 14 in Olomouc.



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# A Moravian view of Asia

## Oriental and Asian Studies at Palacký University Olomouc

Olomouc, the historical capital of Moravia, is home to the second-oldest Czech university. The history of Oriental and Asian Studies at this institution spans three periods of bloom upset by periods of political gloom. The first period (1573–1773) coincides with the founding of the Bohemian province of the Jesuit order. Jesuits opened their college in Olomouc and recruited the brightest minds for missionary work in Asia and the New World. Shortly after the suppression of the Jesuit order, Olomouc lost its university status for fifty years, only to be restored in 1826. The institution changed its status several times: diocesan, public, imperial and royal, before being reduced to the Faculty of Theology, which alone survived until 1939, when the Nazi regime closed all Czech universities. The university was reopened in 1946 but the brief bloom period for Oriental Studies (1946–1951) ended with their transfer to Prague. When in 1991 the Rector Josef Jařab initiated the reopening of Asian studies in Olomouc, the current period started (<https://kas.upol.cz/en>).

### Jesuit college (1573–1762)

“shedding own blood in  
the vineyard of the Lord”

So characterises Bochuwaldus Carolus Ledniczkus (born in 1623), in his *litterae indipetae*, his own desire to join the mission in Asia.<sup>1</sup> His poetic tone and missionary zeal were triggered by the visit of the future missionary B. Diestel, who sailed to China in 1659. Ledniczkus mentions the death of 52 martyrs in Japan and his strong desire to follow in their steps.

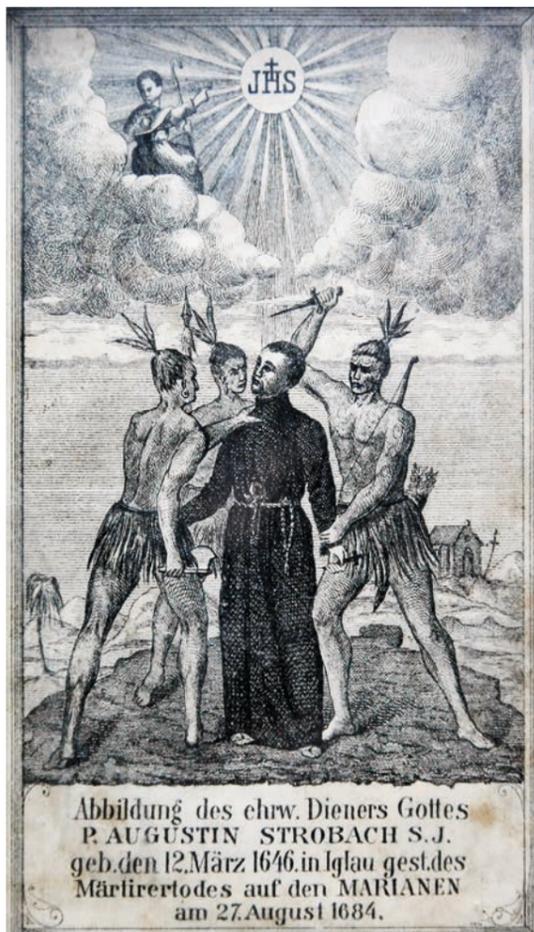
Palacký University was founded in 1573 by the Jesuit order as a public university in the historical seat of Moravian bishops. Theology was soon accompanied by other fields: philosophy, law, medicine, astronomy and languages. The Jesuit college educated scores of missionaries who travelled to Asia and the New World, and who contributed to various sciences. Although the detailed history of the Czech Jesuit mission remains to be written, the most significant Olomouc alumni certainly include the following.

Wenceslas Pantaleon Kirwitzer (Qi Weicai, 祁維材, 1588–1626), was an astronomer and among the second wave of Jesuit missionaries to China, brought together by Nicolas Trigault (1577–1628), who himself was sent from China back to Europe by Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), one of the founders of the Jesuit mission in China. The Kirwitzer's group sailed from Lisbon in 1618 and included other well-known astronomers such as

Johann Schreck (1576–1630), Giacomo Rho (1593–1638) and Johann Adam Schall von Bell (1591–1666), who later became the president of the Astronomical Office in Beijing. Kirwitzer published his astronomical observations of comets and wrote about the history of the Jesuit missions in China and Japan.

Valentin Ignác Stansel (also Estansel, 1621–1705) was a Jesuit missionary. He studied in Olomouc and later also taught rhetoric and mathematics in Olomouc and Prague. He requested a mission appointment and travelled to Portugal to wait for the boat to take him to India. Unable to travel to Asia he was sent to Brazil. He is known for his astronomical work: in 1668 he discovered a comet whose position was confirmed by Jesuit F. de Gottignies in Goa. The comet is named after both: the Estancel-Gottignies Comet.<sup>2</sup>

Augustin Strobach (1646–1684) studied theology and philosophy in Olomouc and in 1681 departed via Mexico to the Mariana Islands. He described the local Chamorro customs, with special focus on funerary rites and documented local fauna and flora. He documented the abuses of the Spanish administration but ironically died during an uprising against the Spanish in 1684. He is considered a martyr.<sup>3</sup>

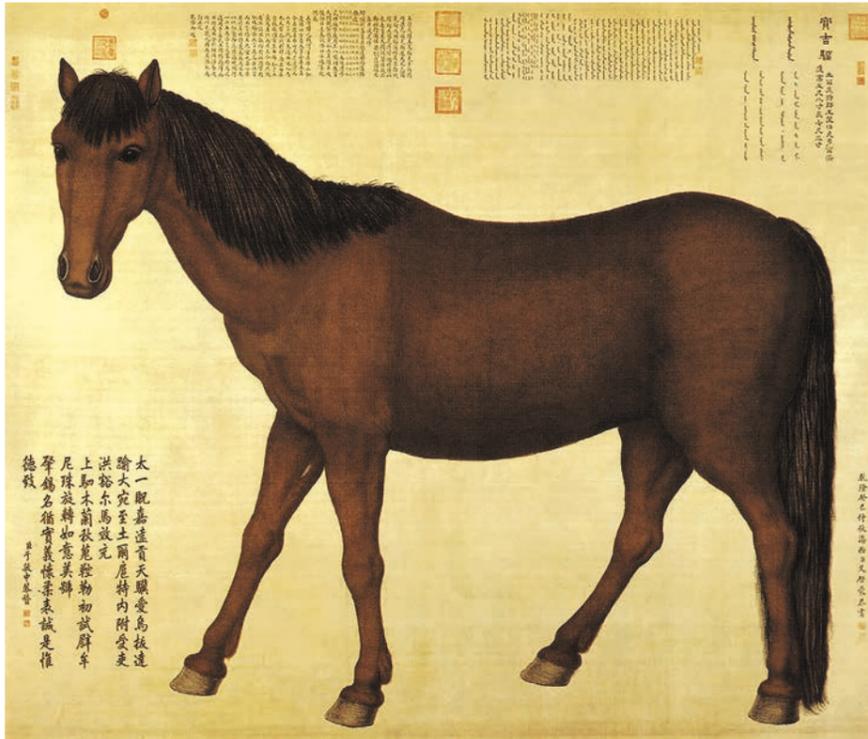


Unknown author, memorial print of Augustin Strobach, kept with the martyr's relic at St. Ignatius of Loyola Church, Jihlava, Czech Republic (foto courtesy of Tomáš Blažek).

Matěj Kukulín (Mathias Cuculinus, 1641–1696) finished a doctoral degree in philosophy in Olomouc and joined Strobach on the mission to the Marianas. He described the local revolt against the Spanish colonial government. His letters documented the local culture. Kukulín is also known for his reports, copied from a knowledgeable source, on Tonkin (*Relatio continens quaedam de statu Christianitatis in Regno Tunquin*), Cochinchina (*De Cochinchina*), Cambodia (*De Camboya*), and Siam (*De Regno Siam*). He described in detail the Siam kingdom, the local custom and the position and treatment of Christians. He praised the Siam king for his benevolent attitude towards Christianity. The autograph of the report is kept in the Moravian Provincial Archive in Brno.

Pavel Klein (also Pablo Clain, 1652–1717) joined the fourth mission from Bohemia and Moravia to the Philippines in 1678. The company, consisting of medics and pharmacists, sailed from Spain via Mexico (1681) and arrived in the Philippines in 1682. Klein became the Jesuit Provincial Superior, a professor at the Jesuit college and later the rector of Colegio de Cavite and Colegio de San José. He is known for his linguistic work: he compiled the first substantial Tagalog dictionary which was published after his death in Manila in 1754 as *Vocabulario de la Lengua Tagala*. Building on his pharmaceutical training, Klein compiled a herbarium of medicinal plants of the Philippines. Besides their medicinal use, he collected the local names in Tagalog, Visayan and Kapampangan, and added Latin and Spanish names. Finally, Klein is associated with the Spanish discovery of Palau Islands in 1697, when he interviewed a group of shipwrecked Palauans in the Philippine island of Samar.

Karel Slaviček (嚴嘉樂, 1678–1735) studied theology and philosophy in Olomouc. In 1713 he was appointed professor of mathematics and Hebrew. Slaviček came from a family of organ builders and had a keen interest in music, astronomy, mathematics and linguistics. He joined the Jesuit order and for his knowledge of mathematics and astronomy was selected to be sent to China. In 1716 he travelled to China from Portugal. After his arrival in Macau in 1717 he was sent to the Beijing court and was introduced to the Kangxi Emperor. Slaviček learned Chinese and is considered to be the first Czech sinologist. The Emperor ordered Slaviček to make a map of Beijing. It was the first precise map of Beijing and Slaviček clarified the exact latitude of the city and its landmarks. Slaviček compiled a treatise on Chinese music but it did not survive. His stay in Beijing is described in his many letters to various European scientists. After he passed away in 1735, he was succeeded in the position of the Court musician by another Czech Jesuit, Jan Xaver Walter (1708–1759), about whom much less is known.



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:

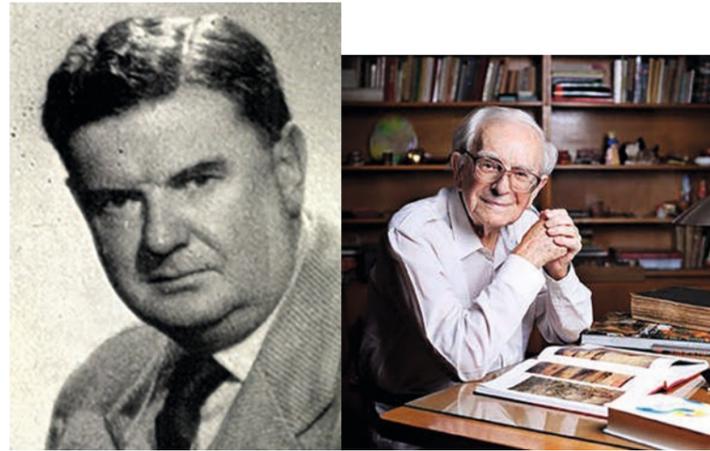
- 25-27 September 2020: 11th International Conference of the European Association of Chinese Linguistics, (EACL-11) <https://sites.google.com/view/eacl-11/home>
- 28 June-2 July 2021: 15th International Conference on Austronesian Linguistics (ICAL15)
- September 2021: The European Association for Southeast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

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

Jaroslav Průšek (普實克, 1906–1980) was a sinologist. He graduated from Charles University in Classic history. He learned Chinese in private before continuing his studies under Bernard Karlgren (1889–1978) and Gustav Haloun (1908–1951) first in Göteborg and later in Halle, where he finished his doctoral degree in 1930. Průšek was employed by the Oriental Institute and in 1932 sent to China and Japan. He returned to Czechoslovakia in 1937 and taught Chinese and Japanese. In 1945 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 1946–1948 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 civilisation.

Augustin Palát (1923–2016) was a student of Průšek and replaced him in Olomouc in 1948, when Průšek could no longer fulfil his commitments in both Prague and Olomouc. Palát taught in Olomouc until 1951, when the Oriental Studies were closed. After several years in the diplomatic services he returned to the Oriental Institute until his forced retirement in 1973, under similar circumstances as Průšek. He produced a number of language textbooks and works on 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 Ludvík 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 Lesný 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



Far left: Jaroslav Průšek (普實克, 1906–1980) Source: Czech Academy of Sciences.

Near left: Augustin Palát (1923–2016). Source: Lu Xun Library, Oriental Institute Prague.

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 by Lesný and Fischer. During the 1950s he worked as a clerk. Privately he continued his studies and published in academic journals in the UK, Germany, India and Sri Lanka, which led the Secret Police to bring spying charges against him. He was sent to work in coal mines, worked as a plumber and a tram driver during the 1960s.

During the same period Werner turned his attention to hatha yoga and led a secret circle of practitioners and published about it in samizdat. 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.

under similar circumstances as Průšek and Palát in 1976. He returned to the academic life in 1990s and taught in Olomouc from 1994. His life-work is a prosodic description of spoken Chinese, based on a large transcribed corpus of recordings accompanied by a grammatical description. A research cluster led by David Uher continues Švarný's work on Chinese prosody.

The department publishes its own journal *Dálný východ* [Far East]; its editor-in-chief is David Uher (<https://kas.upol.cz/en/academics-research/journals/dalny-vychod-far-east/>) Its most recent issue is dedicated to Švarný's work on the prosody of Spoken Chinese that appeared in English or German and summarises his work published in Czech.

Research interests of the department members cover a wide range of topics from linguistics to international relations and history. Recent titles published in English are:

- *On 'doing friendship' in and through talk: Exploring conversational interactions of Japanese young people* (H. Zawiszová, 2018),
- *Koreans in Central Europe: To Yu-ho, Han Hüng-su, and Others* (A. Schirmer, 2018),
- *Japanese Given Names: A Window Into Contemporary Japanese Society* (I. Barešová, 2016),
- *The exotic other and negotiation of Tibetan self: representation of Tibet in Chinese and Tibetan fiction of the 1980s* (K. Hladíková, 2013).

The Department also organises an Annual Conference of Asian Studies (<http://acas.upol.cz>) and a Summer School for graduate students.

While we still face various challenges, we believe that we are becoming a mature member of the European Alliance of Asian Studies that can educate the next generation of Czech Asia scholars and offer a distinct view on Asian cultures and peoples worthy of our predecessors.

Contributors to article:

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Notes

- 1 *Litterae indipetae* (short for *litterae ad Indiam petentes*) 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 Miazek-Męczyńska, M. 2018. 'Polish Jesuits and Their Dreams about Missions in China, According to the *Litterae indipetae*', *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 5(3):404–420. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1163/22141332-00503004>
- 2 Camenietzki, C.Z. 2003. 'The Celestial Pilgrimages of Valentin Stansel (1621–1705), Jesuit Astronomer and Missionary in Brazil', in Feingold M. (ed.) *The New Science and Jesuit Science: Seventeenth Century Perspectives*. Springer.
- 3 Boye, E. de. 1691. *Vita et Obitus venerabilis patris Augustini Strobach à Societate Iesu ex Provincia Bohemiae pro insulis Marianis electi Missionarii, et à Rebellibus Sanctae Fidei in iisdem insulis barbarè trucidati Anno 1684. Mense Augusto*. Olomucii: Typis Joannis Josephi Kylvian. E-book: <http://ead.vkol.cz/34415>
- 4 Liščák, V. 2014. 'Franciscan Missions to China and the Czech Crown Lands (from the 16th to the 18th Century)', *Archiv Orientální* 82:829–841.



## Central European Institute of Asian Studies

The Central European Institute of Asian Studies (CEIAS) <https://ceias.eu> is an independent think tank with branches in the cities of Bratislava (Slovakia), Olomouc (Czech Republic), and Vienna (Austria). Building upon the activities of the Institute of Asian Studies in Bratislava, CEIAS is a joint venture of the Institute of Asian Studies, Palacký University's project 'Sinophone Borderlands – Interaction at the edges', the Austrian Institute for European and Security Policy, and the Department of East Asian Studies at Comenius University.

The main purpose of CEIAS is to spread knowledge about Asia among scholars, experts and professionals in Central Europe and beyond, while at the same time to inform the wider world about Central European engagements with Asia.

To meet our aims, we conduct and publish our own research, organize public seminars and conferences, support education about relevant Asian topics, and communicate with the media. Our activities focus mainly on international relations and security studies in the geographical regions of East, Southeast, South, and Central Asia. CEIAS cooperates with similar organizations and like-minded individuals in the region and beyond to help achieve our goals. CEIAS researchers are regularly quoted and contacted by media in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and beyond on a wide range of issues, especially related to China and international relations.

Some of the notable CEIAS publications include:

- Monthly briefing about most important policy-related news from Asia (in Slovak/Czech language): <https://ceias.eu/sk/asia-briefing-2>
- Bi-monthly briefing about Central and Eastern Europe's relations with Asia (in English, starting from January 2020).
- Chinese Media Watch: overview of Chinese media discourse of various policy-related issues with the connection to (Central) Europe: <https://ceias.eu/chinese-media-watch-2>
- CEIAS Insights: our op-ed section covering broad range of topics: <https://ceias.eu/sk/ias-insights>
- Research papers: Some recent ones discussed issues related to (Central) Europe's relations with China and East Asia, domestic issues in China, or other aspects of Chinese international relations including soft power or Belt and Road Initiative: <https://ceias.eu/policy-papers-2>

CEIAS participates in international projects and initiatives. Most recently these have included:

- ChinfluencE: Research and public awareness project mapping Chinese influence in Central Europe: [www.chinfluence.eu](http://www.chinfluence.eu)
- CHOICE: An initiative grouping researchers and 'China watchers' from Central and Eastern Europe: [www.chinaobservers.eu](http://www.chinaobservers.eu)
- ETNC: European Think Tank Network on China as of 2019 and participates in all the activities of the network, including workshops, publications, and presentations of the findings to the public.