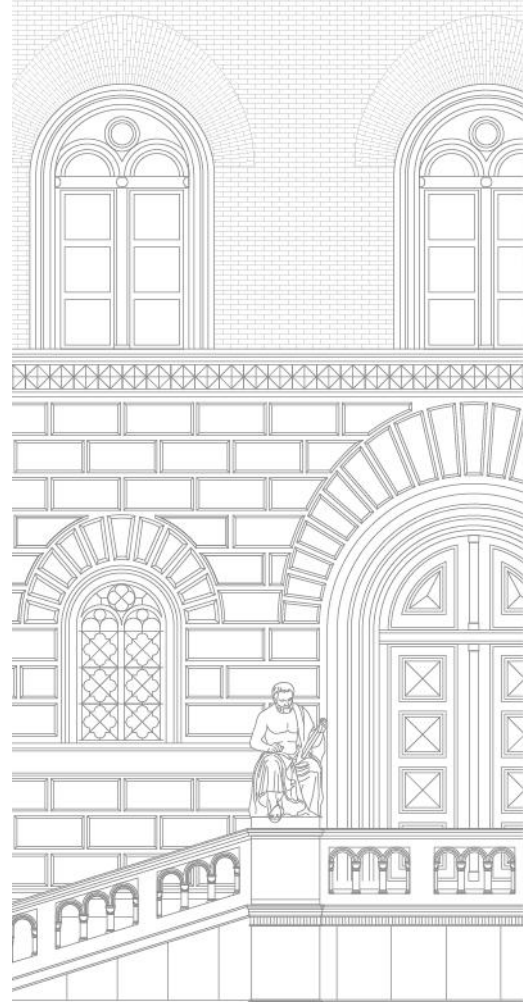


Research of possible  
colonial collection contexts  
at the  
Bavarian State Library, Munich



# Oriental and Asian collections of the Bavarian State Library

## Numbers:

- 600,000 printed volumes in the original language
- 20,000 manuscripts
- from North Africa, the Near and Middle East, Central, South, Southeast and East Asia

## History:

- 1558: Purchase of the private library of the Orientalist Johann Albrecht Widmanstetter (1506–1557)
- 17th century: books reached Europe via traders, travellers and Christian missionaries
- Abolition of the Jesuit order in 1773 and secularisation of the Bavarian monasteries in 1803
- 19th century: systematic expansion of the Oriental and Asian collections

# Provenance research

Search for items disowned or looted during the time of the Nazi regime

Since 2021:

**Research on the collections' history was expanded to include the Oriental and Asian collections**

- Purpose: identify and document possible colonial collection context
- Focus rather on entire collection segments

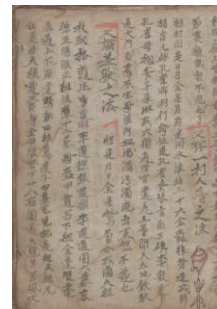
## Sub-collections in focus

- Tibetan collection of the zoologist Ernst Schäfer (1910–1992), brought from central Asia to Munich by the German Tibet expedition of 1938/39
- Oriental manuscripts collected by the head of the acquisition department of the Bavarian State Library, Emil Gratzl (1877–1957), during his journey to the Near and Middle East in 1913/14
- Convolute of Yemeni manuscripts from the collection of the Italian voyager Giuseppe Caprotti (1862–1919) purchased in 1902 through the agency of the Orientalist Eduard Glaser (1855–1908)

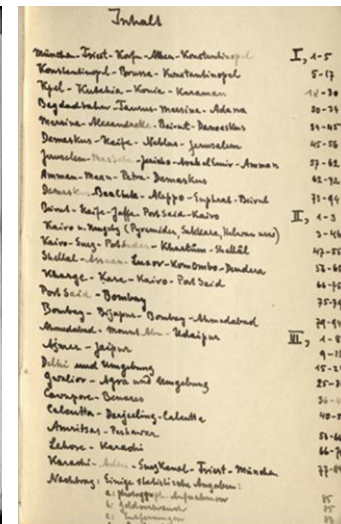
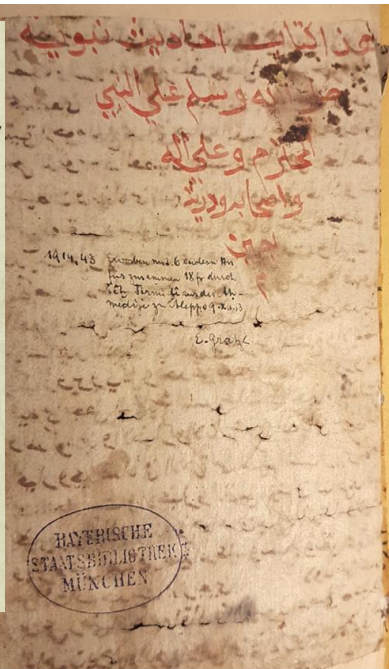
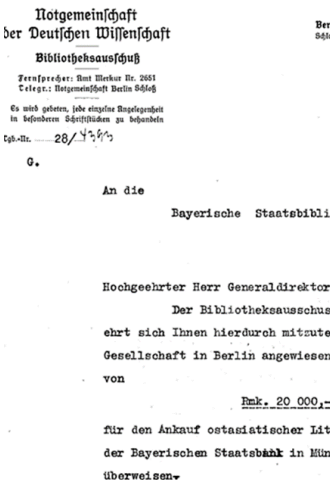


## Sub-collections in focus

- Acquisitions of around 2,800 manuscripts of the Yao ethnicity, included in the library's holdings only starting in the 1980s
- Several hundred Old South Arabic minuscule inscriptions on wood sticks in the Sabaeen language from the time up to the sixth century AD
- Acquisition journey of Georg Reismüller (1882–1936) to China, Japan and Korea in 1928/29



- Evaluation of available records and documents, e.g. personal papers and other archival sources, repertories ...
- Material available at our library or at other institutions, like State Archives ...



## Reismüller's journey to East Asia (1928/29)

Bavarian State Library's task should be „to ensure the temporary provision of the study materials, especially books, necessary for the operation of Chinese studies in Munich.“

(from: Reismüller, Georg (1927), 'Vorschläge zur Förderung der Chinakunde, als ein Teil der Auslandskunde, in Bayern, zunächst durch Ausbau der chinesischen Büchersammlung der Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek', undated (approx. late 1927/early 1928), in Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, GDion Bibliotheken, 11, Nr. 1941 (Personalakt Reismüller), fol. 1v)

*Georg Reismüller,  
Bildarchiv der Bayerischen  
Staatsbibliothek, Porträt- und  
Ansichtensammlung*



*Stuckert*

V o r s c h l ä g e

zur Förderung der Chinakunde, als eines Teiles der Auslandkunde, in

Bayern, zunächst durch Ausbau der chinesischen Büchersammlung der

Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek.

Geschichtliches Die Chinakunde in Bayern blickt auf eine zwar lange aber verhältnismässig wenig aktive Geschichte zurück. Im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert waren verschiedene bayerische Jesuiten im Dienste der katholischen Mission in China tätig und vermittelten Kenntnisse über Ostasien sowie Bücher und kunstgewerblich-ethnographische Gegenstände nach München, wo sie noch heute in den einschlägigen Sammlungen aufbewahrt werden. Vor 100 Jahren begann der bayerische Gymnasiallehrer und spätere Professor des Chinesischen und Armenischen an der Universität München, Karl Friedrich Neumann, seine chinesischen Studien, die ihn schliesslich zu einer wissenschaftlichen Reise nach Süchina (Macao und Kanton) führten, wo er für die Staatsbibliotheken in München und Berlin eine Büchersammlung erwarb, die heute noch den Grundstock für die chinesischen Abteilungen der beiden Bibliotheken bildet.

Unterbrochene Entwicklung Während aber in Berlin die chinesischen Sammlungen und in Zusammenhang damit die Chinakunde im Lauf der vergangenen 100 Jahre sich kräftig entwickelten, blieben sie in München, von einigen bemerkenswerten Anläufen und Erwerbungen abgesehen, in der Entwicklung stecken. Erst neuerdings schien sich eine Wendung zum Besseren anzubahnen, als der Herr Staatsminister für Unterricht und Kultus Dr. Matt gelegentlich des Deutschen Orientalistentages in München im Oktober 1925 erklärte, dass in absehbarer Zeit die sinologischen Studien, an die alte Tradition anknüpfend, auch an der Uni-

In the mid-1920s, Reismüller submitted concrete plans to the library management and the Bavarian Ministry for Education to expand the library's Chinese collection:

„... to expand the Chinese collection of the Bavarian State Library, a considerable sum should be made available by the state or from another source to purchase the necessary additions, 2. the additional purchases should be made locally, i.e. in East Asia (China and possibly Japan), 3. the necessary trip there lasting several months is undertaken and financially secured.“

Notgemeinschaft  
der Deutschen Wissenschaft

Bibliotheksauschuß

Fernsprecher: Amt Merkur Nr. 2651  
Telegr.: Notgemeinschaft Berlin Schloß

Es wird gebeten, jede einzelne Angelegenheit  
in besonderen Schriftstücken zu behandeln

Egb.-Nr. 28/4743

G.

An die

Bayerische Staatsbibliothek

M ü n c h e n

Hochgeehrter Herr Generaldirektor !

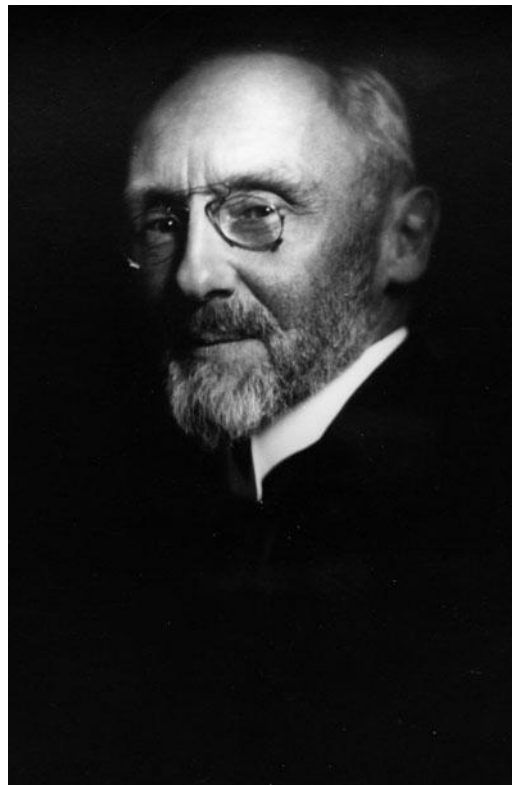
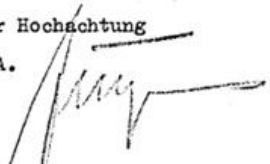
Der Bibliotheksausschuß der Notgemeinschaft be-  
ehrt sich Ihnen hierdurch mitzuteilen, dass die Disconto-  
Gesellschaft in Berlin angewiesen ist, Ihnen den Betrag  
von

Rmk. 20 000,—

für den Ankauf ostasiatischer Literatur auf Ihr Konto bei  
der Bayerischen Staatsbank in München, Konto Nr. 55222 zu  
überweisen.

In geüsster Hochachtung

I.A.



*Hans Schnorr von  
Carolsfeld (1862-1935)*



*Burton Holmes: Peking street scene  
(1920s)*

„This morning I went on my first book hunt in the antiquarian quarter and immediately caught a book that I had been looking for in vain years ago, namely an old Chinese Jesuit print.“

(from Reismüller to Hartig, 20.10.1928, 2; Hartig 1917)

Japanica.  
Beuthenkaufe in Japan

Brüderankämpfe in Japan

|                                          |        |
|------------------------------------------|--------|
| 1. Kunits und Akutimes                   | Yen    |
| 1. Horyu-ji ōkagami. 64 vol.             | 220.-  |
| 2. Shichidai-ji ōkagami 77 "             | 346.50 |
| 3. Kokuhō jenshu 35 "                    | 153.-  |
| 4. Katalog der Sammlung Kawasaka. 1 vol. | 9.-    |
| 5. " " " Inauye 2 "                      | 12.-   |
| 6. Sekins, Rakurogin j'idai- no ischi    | 90.-   |
| 7. Kōka fufu, vol. 1-5                   | 118.-  |
| 8. Kōhanka Shina meigwasen 2 vol.        | 24.-   |
| 9. Hanōha kaitkan 1 "                    | 45.-   |
| 10. Mosonobugwasen                       | 50.-   |

Y 1067.50

II. Aus der Völkerkunde Seite 1

|                                      |      |
|--------------------------------------|------|
| 1. Hara, Katsuo, Sekai taishen shi   | 5.-  |
| 2. Ikemichi, Hiroshi, Tayōshi' ransō | 4.50 |
| 3. Torii, Ryūzō, Tsyokuto minpoku    | 5.-  |
| 4. Yanagida, Hideo, Kaimen shōki     | 2.50 |
| 5. Yano, Tamiaki, Himolai shōko shi. | 3.70 |

$$\begin{array}{r}
 y \ 20.90 \\
 y \ 1067.50 \\
 \hline
 1088.40 \text{ Yen} \\
 = 2176.80 \text{ Mark}
 \end{array}$$

*List of  
acquisitions  
in Japan*



# AUCTION!

## 24. Ma Ta Jen Hutung

(North of Tung Ssu Pai Loy, Opposite to Wu Tiao Hutung)

8th to 17th December 1928, 2 P. M. Daily

Curios, Bronzes, Old Shanhsi Lacquer Ware, Potteries, Ivory, Jade & Agate Ornaments, Old Chinese Handwritings & Paintings, Carved Ebony Furniture, Embroideries, Cloisonne Ware, Coral, & Pearls.

ON VIEW FROM 6TH

Auction mart will be in The Warmed Rooms.

F. WANGENHEIM & CO.

TEL 3483 E. O.

Auctioneers, 324 Hatamen Street

## NOTE

Goods proven not genuine before delivery, money paid down will be refunded, this holds good only for 24 hours. If goods taken away before 24 Hours and not proven genuine, Wangeaheim & Co. are not responsible

[illegible]

*Auction  
Wangenheim,  
Hatamen Street,  
Beijing,  
8.-17. Dez. 1928  
(aus Reismüllers  
Nachlass)*



*Shanghai, Nanjing Road,  
1930s*

„Based on the experience gained on the spot and on the basis of the list of desiderata I brought from Europe and supplemented during the trip, the book purchases began on a large scale, for which the Shanghainese supplied the material in well-equipped old book stores, although not as knowledgeable as in Beijing.“ (Reismüller 1930)

„I rummaged around the bookstores, having the works selected from the catalogs presented to me in order to examine them for content and appearance, a laborious and time-consuming task as one had to leaf through volume after volume to make sure that there were no leaves missing, that the individual pages are well printed in wood block printing and that the bookworm, who seems to particularly enjoy the beautiful, soft Chinese paper, has not caused any havoc. Since there were many hundreds of volumes, I sat over this work for many hours. In addition, there were different prices in individual bookstores for one and the same work, where there could be a difference of up to 50%. So I ran from one store to the other, checked and compared the price and quality of the items I wanted, left again, came back until I finally finished the deal.“

(from a letter to a friend, 20. Februar 1929)

„Finally, to touch on the numerical result of my East Asian book acquisitions, I was able to collect a total of around 18,500 books, a figure that I myself had not expected. This means an increase in the East Asian department of the State Library by more than 150%. It therefore reaches an impressive number of around 30,000 volumes.“ (from a letter to Generaldirektor Schnorr von Carolsfeld, 2. Juni 1929)

Reismüller made use of

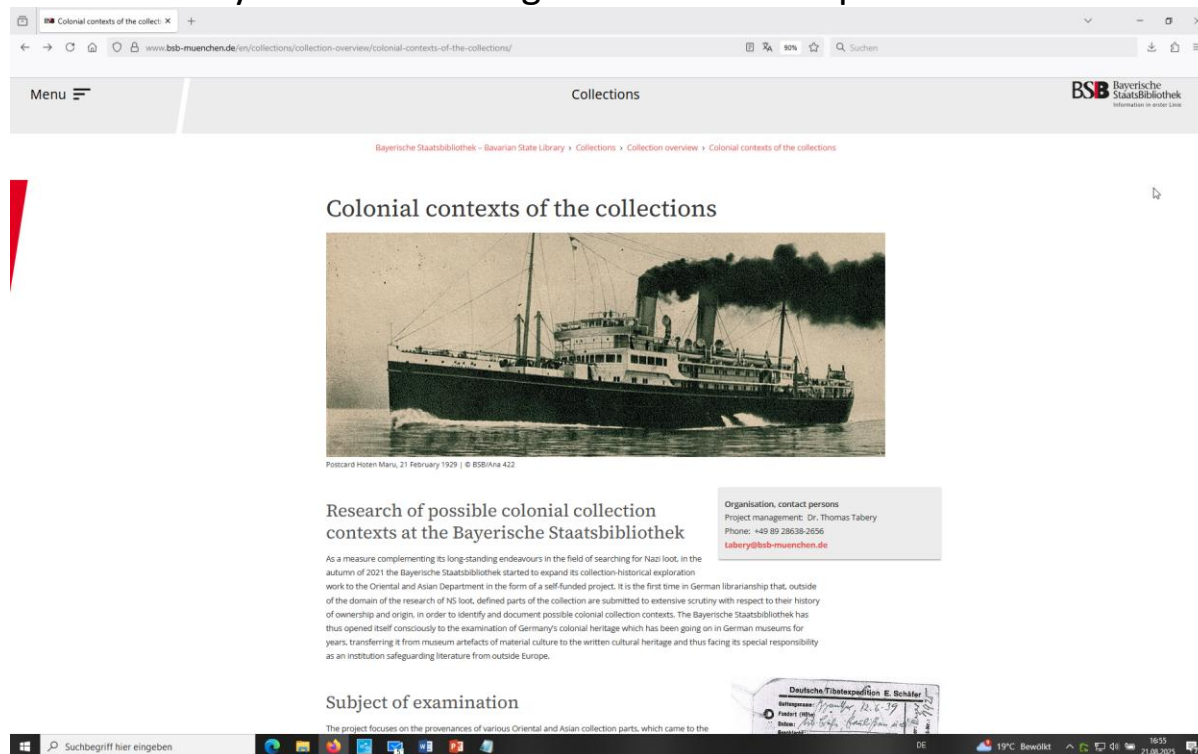
- bookstores and antiquarian bookshops
- presumably also auction houses
- a wide range of local contacts

Freely accessible Chinese book market -> Reismüller was able to expand the Munich collection in a considerate and comprehensive manner.

# Results

Search for information and evaluation: very time-consuming and sometimes quite fruitless.

However: There are results.



Colonial contexts of the collections

Postcard Hosen Mary, 21 February 1920 | © BSB/Ina 422

Research of possible colonial collection contexts at the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek

As a measure complementing its long-standing endeavours in the field of searching for Nazi loot, in the autumn of 2021 the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek started to expand its collection-historical exploration work to the Oriental and Asian Department in the form of a self-funded project. It is the first time in German librarianship that, outside of the domain of the research of NS loot, defined parts of the collection are submitted to extensive scrutiny with respect to their history of ownership and origin, in order to identify and document possible colonial collection contexts. The Bayerische Staatsbibliothek has thus opened itself consciously to the examination of Germany's colonial heritage which has been going on in German museums for years, transferring it from museum artefacts of material culture to the written cultural heritage and thus facing its special responsibility as an institution safeguarding literature from outside Europe.

Organisation, contact persons  
Project management: Dr. Thomas Tabery  
Phone: +49 89 28638-2656  
Tabery@bsb-muenchen.de

Subject of examination

The project focuses on the provenances of various Oriental and Asian collection parts, which came to the

Deutsche Tibetexpedition E. Schäfer  
Sitzungsprotokoll  
Festtag: 11. Januar 1920  
Betreff: Tibet  
Dr. E. Schäfer

# Results

- Investigation of several sub-collections completed:  
provenances of the examined collections unsuspicious on the basis of the available material
- Regarding the provenances and acquisition contexts of the books purchased in East Asia by Reismüller:  
unsuspicious picture, free from relationship of dependency that might characterise acquisitions in colonial contexts (-> no significant power imbalance between seller and buyer)

Thank you.

[tabery@bsb-muenchen.de](mailto:tabery@bsb-muenchen.de)

