

Albert von le Coq
1860–1930
Explorer and Orientalist



Albert von le Coq was born into a wealthy brewery and wine-trading family in Berlin, Germany. After studying medicine in Britain and the United States, he returned to Germany and joined the family business. Following his father's death in 1900, he sold the business and moved to Berlin, where he studied Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and Sanskrit. In 1902 he joined the Indian section of the Berlin Ethnological Museum (Museum für Völkerkunde) as a volunteer under Professor Albert Grünwedel.

From 1904 to 1914 von le Coq helped to organize three of the four German Central Asian expeditions to Turfan, in China's Xinjiang province, under the leadership of Grünwedel. Von le Coq served as the leader of the second and fourth expeditions. Thousands of Buddhist and Manichean paintings, manuscripts, and objects were shipped back to Berlin, where von le Coq undertook the enormous task of translating, cataloguing, and publishing these works. His account of the second and third expeditions was published in English in 1928 as *Buried Treasures of Chinese Turkestan*.

Von le Coq was appointed curator at the Berlin Ethnological Museum in 1914 and head of the Indian Department in 1923.

Literature

Writings by von le Coq:

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Buried Treasures of Chinese Turkestan (London, 1928).

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Peter Hopkirk, *Foreign Devils on the Silk Road: The Search for Lost Cities and Treasures of Chinese Central Asia* (Oxford, England, 1985).

Catrin Cost, "'Yours ever so sincerely': Albert von le Coq seen through his correspondence with Aurel Stein"; see https://www.britishmuseum.org/pdf/8_Kost.pdf