

# Chinese Iconography Thesaurus



DCMI NKOS Workshop November 9, 2023

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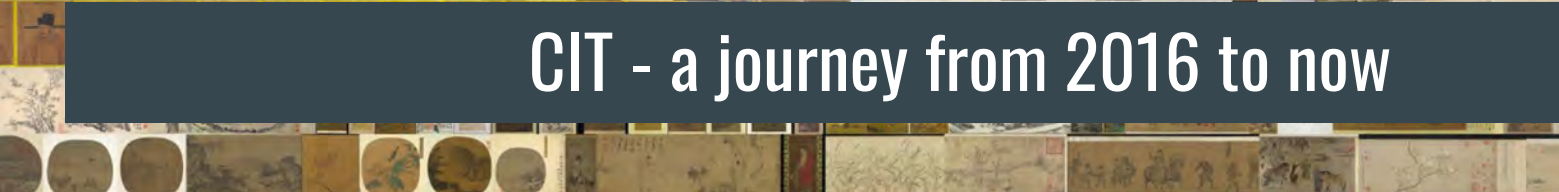


# CIT - a journey from 2016 to now

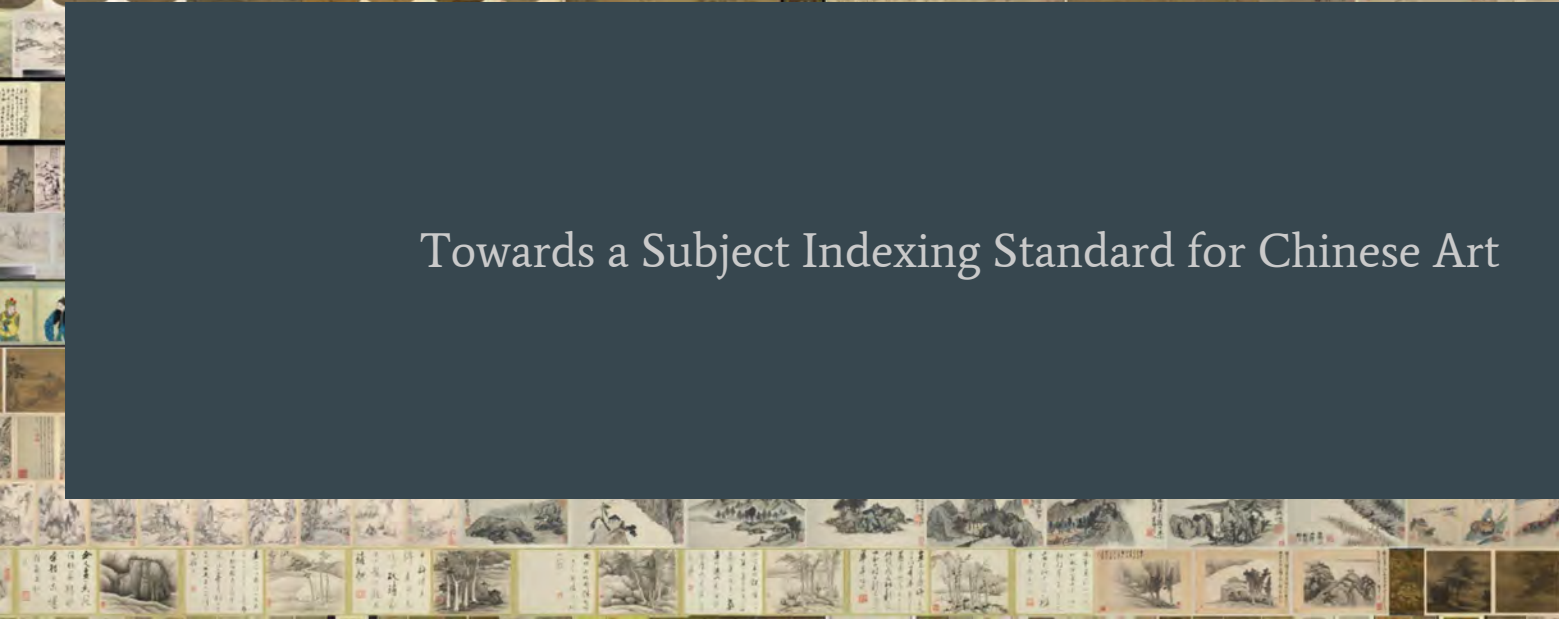




# CIT - a journey from 2016 to now

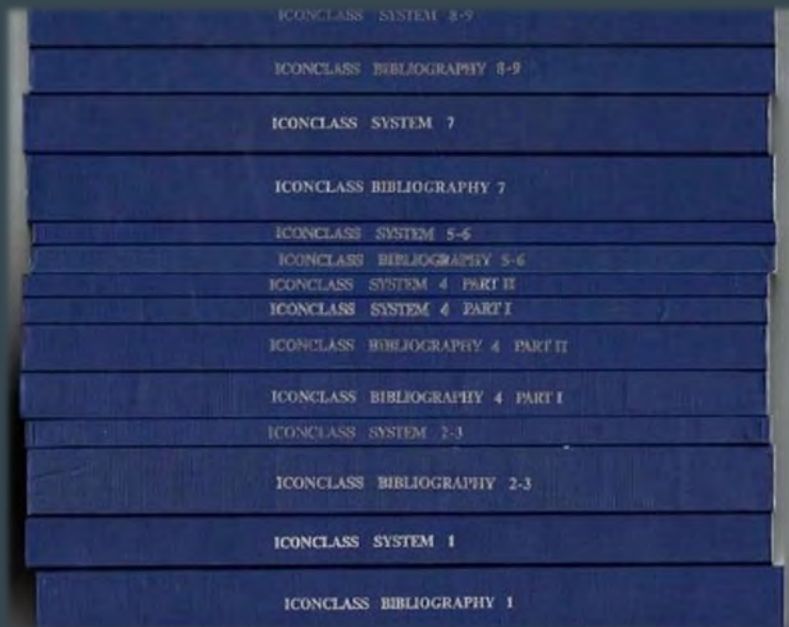


Towards a Subject Indexing Standard for Chinese Art



# Inspired by ICONCLASS

The comprehensive classification system for the content of images.



<https://iconclass.org/>

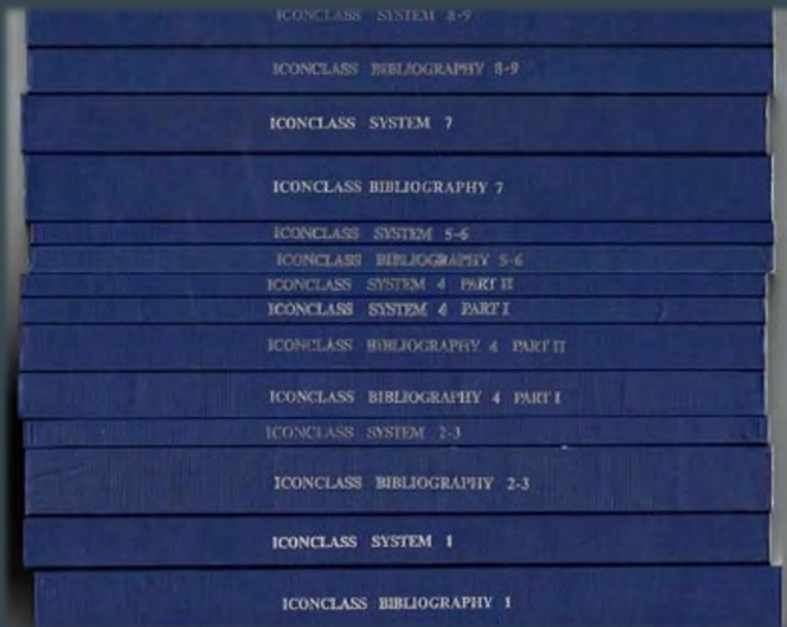
# Inspired by ICONCLASS

The comprehensive classification system for the content of images.

First published in 1972-1985  
as 17 volumes of printed books.

Online since 1999

<https://iconclass.org/>



# The importance of controlled vocabularies

Linking collections, making cross-collection search and analysis feasible.



# The importance of controlled vocabularies

Used in semantic web and AI research.

Invaluable source of quality training data.

<https://iconclass.org/testset/>



# V&A Research project

To create a subject indexing  
standard for Chinese art



V&A Research Projects

**Chinese Iconography Thesaurus  
(CIT)**

A taxonomic vehicle to explore the Chinese visual culture



# Where we began...

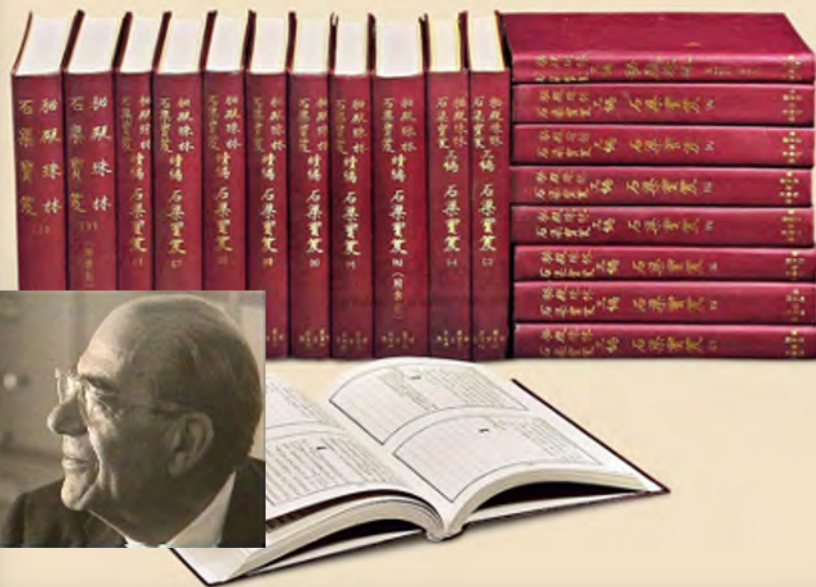
Selected one of the most representative historical catalogues as the core raw data to build the terminology

Midian zhulin 秘殿珠林 and Shiqu baoji 石渠寶笈



# Where we began...

Modelled on ICONCLASS principles devised by Henri van de Waal, which in turn was built on Erwin Panofsky's classic theory of 3-tier iconographic meanings



# On the road...



<https://chineseiconography.org/>

# CIT - has two parts

Terminology

- ▶ Nature
- ▶ Human Being
- ▶ Society and Culture
- ▶ Religion
- ▶ Myths and Legends
- ▶ History and Geography
- ▶ Literary Works

# CIT - has two main parts

## Terminology

- ▶ Nature
- ▼ Human Being
  - ▶ human body
  - ▶ soul
  - ▼ senses
    - ▶ sight
    - ▶ sense of hearing
    - ▶ sense of taste
    - ▶ sense of smell
    - sense of touch
    - hallucination
  - ▶ consciousness
  - ▶ reasoning
  - ▶ speaking
  - ▶ emotion
  - ▶ desire
  - ▶ temperament
  - ▶ conduct of life
  - ▶ human life
  - ▶ human figure
  - ▶ types of admired people
- ▶ Society and Culture
- ▶ Religion
- ▶ Myths and Legends
- ▶ History and Geography
- ▶ Literary Works

# CIT - has two main parts

## Terminology

CIT288726 Jre

- ▶ Human Being
  - ▶ human body
  - ▶ soul
  - ▶ senses
    - ▶ sight
    - ▶ sense of hearing
    - ▶ sense of taste
      - sweetness
      - ▶ sourness and astringency
    - ▶ sense of smell
    - sense of touch
    - hallucination
  - ▶ consciousness
  - ▶ reasoning
  - ▶ speaking
  - ▶ emotion
  - ▶ desire
  - ▶ temperament
  - ▶ conduct of life
  - ▶ human life
  - ▶ human figure
    - ▶ types of admired people
- ▶ Society and Culture
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- ▶ Myths and Legends
- ▶ History and Geography
- ▶ Literary Works

# CIT - has two main parts

...and the application of the terminology

(the visual sources)

The screenshot displays the CIT interface with the following components:

- Used by 20:** A list of institutions including National Palace Museum, Taipei (25), Victoria and Albert Museum (1), and Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland (1).
- Filters:** A search bar with the text "Type here to start searching" and a "Search" button. Below it, a filter dropdown is set to "Include" with "fruits and vegetables" selected.
- Terms Used:** A vertical list of botanical terms with checkboxes, including "fruits and vegetables" (checked), "leaf", "maturation (fruit)", "fruit", "snapped twig", "stem", "branch", "pomegranate", "peach", "eggplant", "Asian persimmon", "petal", "blooming of flowers", "litchi", "vine", "table", "holding something", "grass", "lotus root", "plate", "cloud", "water chestnut", "flower bud", "Chinese chestnut", "bitter citron", "blossom", "pak choi", "withered branch", "bayberry", and "grape vine".
- 27 Items:** A grid of 27 search results, each featuring a thumbnail image of a painting or sketch and a caption. The captions include the artist's name, the work's title, and a translation, such as "宋 法常 寫生 卷 | Sketches from Nature" and "明 孫龍 寫生 冊 石榴 | Sketches from Life".



# Use as a controlled vocabulary

[https://chineseiconography.org/id/...](https://chineseiconography.org/id/)

Each term is a SKOS concept

```
@prefix cit: <https://chineseiconography.org/id/> .
@prefix skos: <http://www.w3.org/2004/02/skos/core#> .

cit:CIT284490 a <http://www.cidoc-crm.org/cidoc-crm/E55_Type>,
  skos:Concept ;
  skos:inScheme <https://chineseiconography.org/rdf/2021/10/> ;
  skos:narrower cit:CIT286958,
  cit:CIT286959,
  cit:CIT286960,
  cit:CIT286961,
  cit:CIT286963,
  cit:CIT287802,
  cit:CIT289138 ;
  skos:notation "CIT284490" ;
  skos:prefLabel "<CIT>"@zh .|
```

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  cit:CIT286963,
  cit:CIT287802,
  cit:CIT289138 ;
  skos:notation "CIT284490" ;
  skos:prefLabel "<CIT>"@zh .|
```

# Use as a controlled vocabulary

<https://chineseiconography.org/id/CIT284490.jskos>

```
{
  "notation": "CIT282383",
  "uri": "https://chineseiconography.org/id/CIT282383",
  "type": [
    "http://www.w3.org/2004/02/skos/core#Concept"
  ],
  "prefLabel": {
    "en": [
      "storied building and pavilion"
    ],
    "zh": [
      "樓閣"
    ]
  },
  "altLabel": {
    "zh": [
      "lou ge"
    ]
  },
  "narrower": [
    "https://chineseiconography.org/id/CIT282461",
    "https://chineseiconography.org/id/CIT283451"
  ],
  "broader": [
    "https://chineseiconography.org/id/CIT288183"
  ]
}
```

# Queryable : <https://chineseiconography.org/sparql>

The screenshot shows a web-based SPARQL query interface. At the top, there is a text area containing a SPARQL query:

```
1 PREFIX rdf: <http://www.w3.org/1999/02/22-rdf-syntax-ns#>
2 PREFIX rdfs: <http://www.w3.org/2000/01/rdf-schema#>
3 SELECT * WHERE {
4   ?sub ?pred ?obj .
5 } LIMIT 10
```

Below the query area, the interface displays the results in a table format. The table has three columns: **obj**, **pred**, and **sub**. The results are as follows:

obj	pred	sub
<http://www.w3.org/2004/02/skos/core#Concept>	rdf:type	<https://chineseiconography.org/id/CIT281021>
<http://www.cidoc-crm.org/cidoc-crm/E55_Type>	rdf:type	<https://chineseiconography.org/id/CIT281021>
"can shan jian bi qiu"@zh-latin	<http://www.w3.org/2004/02/skos/core#altLabel>	<https://chineseiconography.org/id/CIT281021>
<https://chineseiconography.org/id/CIT287092>	<http://www.w3.org/2004/02/skos/core#broader>	<https://chineseiconography.org/id/CIT281021>
"參善見比丘"@zh	<http://www.w3.org/2004/02/skos/core#prefLabel>	<https://chineseiconography.org/id/CIT281021>
"encounter with Sudarśana bhikṣu"@en	<http://www.w3.org/2004/02/skos/core#prefLabel>	<https://chineseiconography.org/id/CIT281021>
"參善現比丘"@zh	<http://purl.org/dc/terms/subject>	<https://chineseiconography.org/id/CIT281021>
"參善見比丘"@zh	<http://purl.org/dc/terms/subject>	<https://chineseiconography.org/id/CIT281021>
"參妙見比丘"@zh	<http://purl.org/dc/terms/subject>	<https://chineseiconography.org/id/CIT281021>
"參善現比丘"@zh	<http://purl.org/dc/terms/subject>	<https://chineseiconography.org/id/CIT281021>

At the bottom left, it says "Showing 1 to 10 of 10 entries". At the bottom right, there are navigation controls including a page number "1" and arrows.

## Future work:

Alternative modellings, including image resources as Linked Open Data

Considering mapping to <https://linked.art/>

<https://github.com/iconclass/cit>

