Missionaries as Museum Suppliers: Peter Baptist Turk (OFM) and His Collection in the Rudolfinum Museum in Ljubljana

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Introduction[1]

In the early decades of Slovenian museum institutions, collecting non-European objects was part of the agenda, but compared to their role models, the state institutions in Vienna, the 1821 established Estate Museum of Carniola[2] in Ljubljana had no means of systematically purchasing such collections. For the first hundred years of its existence, the museum relied on outside help in procuring its non-European collections, with missionaries in North America, Africa, and Asia turning out to be the most convenient source for them. In the 19th century, the first two extensive non-European collections were sent to the museum by missionaries Friderik Baraga (1797–1868) from North America[3] and Ignacij Knoblehar (1819–1858) from Sudan,[4] while the first extensive collection of East Asian objects was supplied to the museum by the Franciscan Peter Baptist Turk (1874–1944) in 1912 and 1913.

This chapter presents an analysis of recently discovered correspondence between this last missionary and the director of the Provincial Museum of Carniola – Rudolfinum, which reveals an example of the complex relationship between missionaries as suppliers of artefacts and the museum trying to become a representative provincial institution. The chapter is organised into three parts. In the first part, I present Turk's life and writings to illustrate the intellectual background in which his collecting practices were based. In the second part, I analyse the correspondence between Turk and Josip Mantuani (1860–1933), the director of the Rudolfinum. In the third part, I match the correspondence with the outcome, based on the inventory lists and the collections in their current state as kept by the Slovene Ethnographic Museum in Ljubljana. I try to compare the Turk collection with similar Franciscan missionary collections in Slovenia and today's neighbouring countries to determine whether it is possible to pinpoint the difference between collections constructed based on the agenda of a civil state institution and those collected by Franciscan missionaries for the purposes of missionary work and propaganda. Finally, the results of this analysis will be explored in order to identify some possible approaches to analysing missionary collections and their relation to secular institutions.

1 The research for this paper was carried out as part of the projects *Orphaned Objects: Examining East Asian Objects outside Organised Collecting Practices in Slovenia* (2021–2024) (J6-3133) and *Between a Mission and a Museum: Missionary Collections in Slovenia and their Significance Today* (2025–2027) (J6-60114), both funded by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency.

2 The museum subsequently changed its name several times, became Provincial Museum of Carniola – Rudolfinum in 1882 and then National Museum in 1921. In 1923, the Ethnographic Museum separated from the National Museum and became its own institution. Today, the former is named the National Museum of Slovenia, while the latter is the Slovene Ethnographic Museum.

3 Cf. Frelih (2010).

4 Cf. Frelih (2009).

Peter Baptist Turk and His Writings

Peter Baptist Turk was born as Martin Turk on 29 October 1874 in the small village of Toplice in what is today southeastern Slovenia (at the time part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire). He joined the Franciscan order[5] at the age of 21 and spent his noviciate year in Trsat (today part of the Croatian port town of Rijeka).[6] He was vested and given the name of Peter Baptist[7] in 1895. In 1901, during the third year of his subsequent theology studies in Ljubljana, he met the visiting bishop from China.[8] Vincenzo Epifanio Carlassare (1884–1909)[9], at the time a missionary bishop in Hubei, made a stop at the Franciscan monastery in Ljubljana on his way to Venice and Rome. Meeting with Carlassare had a deciding impact on Turk, convincing him to finish his studies in only three more months so as to depart for China as soon as possible. In early December 1901, he travelled to Genova together with the lay brother Urban Žele.[10] After a few days, they sailed off to Asia and reached China a month later. Turk was appointed to the vicariate of East Hubei with three key centres: Wuchang 武昌, Hankou 漢口, and Hanyang 漢陽 (today all merged into the city of Wuhan). Within a few months, he was sent to a missionary outpost in the Qizhou 蘄州 prefecture on the northern banks of the Yangzi River. In the following years, he moved several times to various smaller missionary stations east and southeast of Hankou.[11] He never returned to Slovenia and died in Hankou in 1944, where he is also buried.

Having been a missionary in and around Hankou in the first half of the 20th century also contributed to the complex and turbulent experience Turk had as a foreign missionary there. Arriving in China in the aftermath of the Boxer Rebellion, he witnessed the revolutionary movement and the events during the Wuchang uprising,[12] the battles of the Northern Expedition, the fights between the Guomindang and the Communist units, and the events during WWII. In the autumn of 1931, he was even kidnapped by a communist group, held for ransom, and then released after the sum of "1000 Chinese dollars" was paid by the diocese.[13]

The turbulent times Peter Baptist Turk personally lived through unfortunately also contribute to the difficulties in researching the details of his life and work in China today. Reconstructing his biography is a challenge due to an almost virtual absence of archival material. Because he died in China during the Second World War, his personal belongings as well as any of his documents seem to have never reached the Ljubljana Franciscan monastery, as was the common practice following the death of missionaries.[14] On the other hand, Turk

5 By Turk's time, the Franciscan mission in China already had a long history. The first attempts at launching a mission to Chinese lands spanned back to the times of the Yuan dynasty, and organised mission started forming in the early Qing (17th century) and became the largest Roman Catholic missionary enterprise in China in the 19th century (cf. Tiedemann 2016, 1–46). The Slovenian Franciscans' 20th-century missionary presence in China began with Peter Baptist Turk (departed in 1901 to Hankou) and Veselko Kovač (departed in 1902 to Shandong province).

6 P. Angelik 1934, 306–07.

7 Unfortunately, no records on Martin Turk's decision on his monastic name are preserved, but the choice of "Peter Baptist" seems by no means to be a random one: St. Peter the Baptist was a Spanish-born Franciscan who ended his life as a martyr crucified near Nagasaki and is considered part of the so-called "Martyrs of Japan" (see https://www.saintbenedict.com/catholic-resources/the-japanese-martyrs/).

8 P. Angelik 1934, 306.

9 The news about Carlassare's visit were published in daily newspapers (*Slovenec* 1901). More information on Carlassare cf. Catholic Hierarchy n.d.

10 P. Angelik 1934, 306.

11 He reports on these in his letters, published in *Cvetje z vrtov sv. Frančiška*. Unfortunately, many place names are undecipherable from his rather vague phonetic transcriptions into Slovenian. He does seem to mention Luotian county, Xishui county, etc., so he must have stayed mostly in smaller towns and villages on the northern side of the Yangzi River, downstream from today's Wuhan.

12 The Wuchang uprising was a rebellion against the Qing dynasty that happened in Wuchang, today a part of Wuhan, in October 1911 and began the revolution that overtrew the last Chinese imperial dynasty.

13 *Cvetje z vrtov sv. Frančiška* 1932, 15–16.

14 For example, the belongings of fellow missionary in Hubei, Engelhard Avbelj, who died in 1928, arrived back in

was a prolific writer and a regular correspondent of the Slovenian Catholic press. Most of his contributions, mainly in the form of letters, were published in the *Flowers from the Garden of Saint Francis* (*Cvetje z vrtov sv. Frančiška*), a Franciscan journal that was issued monthly from 1890 to 1944. Not only Turk, but other Slovenian Franciscan missionaries published their letters and texts there, and missionary topics made an important part of the journal. His letters began being published in 1906 and went on almost until his death, with the last one published in 1942. The publication practice, which is evident from other similar published missionary letters and texts,[15] was that the editors cut the missionaries' longer letters into several parts and then published them in consecutive journal issues, which sometimes caused a considerable gap between the time the letters were written and the time they were published. Some of the long delays and the anachronistic publication of newer letters before older ones could also be attributed to problems of long-distance postal delivery. Turk's first letter, published in 1906, for example, dates to February 1902, the first winter of his arrival to China. He was most prolific in his writings in the first decade of his missionary work, and then again in the late 1920s and early 1930s, which coincided with the turbulent historical events. Otherwise, he mostly kept to the standard longer letters sent once per year, often in December or January, as some kind of a yearly report for the journal's readers, some of whom were also his donors.

Not at all surprisingly, he mostly focuses on a detailed description of the practicalities of his missionary work. He keeps the reader informed about his travels from one missionary post to the other, presenting in detail the hardships of such travel—the long distances he had to traverse on foot,[16] the dangerous storms when travelling by boat, and the hazardous mountain travels in a sedan,[17] where he was almost killed by his opium-smoking carriers. He talks about the conversions and the lives of the converts, the methods he used when working with the common people and when dealing with the "mandarins" or officials, and the difficulties he faced when trying to spread the gospel. He frequently refers to an example of an especially troublesome mountainous missionary outpost of "Lo-tien" (probably 羅田 in northeastern Hubei province), virtually abandoned by the missionaries since the local people killed two missionaries there.[18] Andrew "Šu",[19] one of his most loyal Chinese converts, is mentioned as the first missionary who dared to return there after a long time. The name Andrew Šu can later also be seen in relation to Turk's collection, since he is personally listed as the donor of a few important pieces.[20] It is also interesting that Andrew Šu is mentioned in relation to one of Turk's fairly common topics: the relation of Catholic missionaries to other religions. He allegedly transformed the pagoda in "Tun-san-chun" into a Catholic missionary outpost.[21] Criticism of the corruption and debauchery among Buddhist monks (he uses the term "bonci", i.e. "bonzes") is quite common in his writings as well.[22] Turk does not fail to mention the Catholic missionaries' competition, namely Protestant missionaries, and criticizes their rigidity to and distance from the common people, which Turk saw as a result of their wealth and aloof manners.[23] The turbulent times are also reflected in his writing, in which he combines documentary style—trying to inform the Slovenian reader about the developments in China—with some strategic reflections. These reflections

Ljubljana after his death and are now kept by the Franciscan monastery.

15 Cf. Jelnikar and Motoh (2021).

16 The published letter of 24 January 1906. The letters are referred to by dating provided in the letters. For bibliographical information and the date of publication please refer to the bibliography list.

17 The published letter of the New Year 1907.

18 The published letter of 24 January 1906.

19 In the Slovenian text "Andrej Šu"; probably the Chinese surname was "Shu" or "Xu".

20 Cf. 1912/13 entries from the Inventory book of Rudolfinum (kept in the Archive of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana).

21 The published letter of 8 January 1909.

22 See for example the published letter of 8 January 1909.

23 See for example the published letter of 8 January 1909.

can be seen most clearly in his assessments of the reform movement in China—the movement of Chinese intellectuals who advocated for political and societal reforms and wanted to modernise Chinese society. Turk praises this movement for having a common enemy in Confucianism and other traditional religions, but is also sceptical of their critical attitude towards religion in general.[24]

Turk's writing interestingly reflects the composition of his collection. The collection consists of two large groups of objects: religious (Turk often simply calls them "idols") and ethnographic. Despite dealing with non-Christian religions daily, apart from the above-mentioned criticism of Buddhism, he rarely explores the original religions of the communities he works with. When speaking of Buddhists, he interestingly mentions, that "they pray for long hours, immobile like a stone".[25] Interested in non-Christian religions mostly *per negationem*, he often describes how successful he and his fellow missionaries are in convincing the locals to get rid of their "idols". He even goes further to explain how the missionaries demonstratively "throw the idols in the fire"[26] if they caught their converts turning back to their worship in the time between two of the missionary's visits. One can only speculate as to whether some of the numerous religious figurines amassed in the Turk collection may have originated from these punitive displays of ideological power. Compared to scarce remarks about religious practices and objects, the ethnographic material, which is also well represented in his collection, is described in more detail in Turk's writing. He writes extensively about the practices and habits of the Chinese. The ethnographic content is more prevalent in his early letters, while in the latter ones it is overshadowed by the political situation and the war.

His descriptions of the particular aspects of Chinese culture are often related to the practical challenges he encountered. He goes, for example, into great length in explaining why it was so difficult to procure the necessary amounts of the sacramental wine, the reason being that the Chinese did not grow a lot of fruit-bearing trees and preferred to plant tea and grain crops.[27] As part of the explanation, he mentions the terrace system of rice growing as one of the typical agricultural practices in China.[28] Similarly, he mentions Chinese rituals and habits especially when contradicting the Christian ones, but nevertheless explains them rather precisely. He talks, for example, about the standards of polite communication—how to meet and greet people of different ranks, what etiquette and seating arrangements are followed at banquets, how the Chinese say the New Year's greetings, and what presents were customary.[29] He also explains in some detail the calendar system and the difference between the European and the Chinese New Year, and presents some of the traditional activities related to the New Year's celebrations (carrying the dragon, fireworks, firecrackers, etc.).[30] The funerary rites are also mentioned along with the mourning practices, again comparing them to Christian traditions.[31] In this and many other instances, Turk also focuses on a historically and anthropologically interesting topic of the hybrid practices of Chinese converts, e.g. by describing how they celebrate Christmas, how they bury their dead, etc. Some other characteristics of the Chinese culture are also mentioned, such as the insignia for official ranking (with the mandarin hat buttons),[32] the practice of foot binding,[33] and the street theatre shows.[34] Turk also goes into detail in describing the opium smoking practices[35] and it is evident from his writing that in his missionary work he had first-hand experience with the detrimental effects that opium use had on Chinese families and individuals.

24 The published letter of 19 January 1908.

25 The published letter of 4 February 1902.

26 The published letter of 27 July 1905.

27 The published letter of 1 May 1926.

28 The published letter of 8 March 1903.

29 See ibid. and published letter of 25 August 1902.

30 The published letter of 7 February 1903.

31 The published letter of 25 August 1902.

32 The published letter of 8 March 1903.

33 The published letter of 4 February 1902.

34 The published letter of 7 February 1903.

35 The published letter of 24 January 1906.

Correspondence between the Missionary and the Museum Director

The distinction between ethnographic and religious topics also played an important part in the correspondence between Turk and the director of the Provincial Museum of Carniola, Josip Mantuani. The surviving correspondence available to this day consists of six letters, kept by the Slovenian National Museum.[36] Only one letter draft by director Josip Mantuani is preserved (dated 23 September 1912), along with five letters received from Turk (dated 31 May, 3 September, 8 September, and 9 November 1912, and 21 January 1913). There must have been several letters sent by Mantuani to Turk, but their drafts (or the letters received by the missionary) are unfortunately lost. In the first preserved letter by Turk, we see that the previous correspondence in one or more letters by Mantuani (or via some other way of communication, possibly a common correspondent) obviously revolved around Mantuani's expressed wish for the missionary to help him by sending "several idols and other things used by the Chinese pagans, for the museum", or at least this was how Turk summarized Mantuani's wish in his earliest preserved letter. This wish can be seen in light of the director's general efforts to build up a comprehensive collection for the Rudolfinum.

Josip Mantuani, himself an art and music historian, took up the position of the director of the central museum institution of Carniola in 1909 and set upon completing its rather small collections by organising and sponsoring several similar undertakings.[37] He was most active in building an archaeological collection—which can be traced throughout the first years of his director's mandate—by establishing connections with a large number of local priests and other lay archaeology enthusiasts who started providing him with archaeological discoveries found all over the territory of Carniola. He did the same for the natural history collection by collecting specimens of local flora and fauna, establishing an in-house taxidermy workshop and joining the regional initiative to catch poisonous snakes.

The Carniolian ethnographical collection also grew under his lead, as he built up a small network of local suppliers who went around their villages to buy up examples of old traditional clothing, tools, furniture, etc.[38] Mantuani's reform of the museum largely followed Max Dvořák's guidelines for provincial museums and therefore emphasized the presentation of local history, ethnography, and natural environment.[39] On the other hand, his approach to the non-European collections and objects was much less systematic. In the early 20th century, Rudolfinum already had a few non-European collections: most notably the larger collections given to the museum by two prominent missionaries. Friderik Baraga's North American collection, which was first exhibited at the museum in 1837, was followed in 1850 by a collection of objects from Sudan, sent by Ignacij Knoblehar. East Asia was underrepresented, with only a smaller number of individual porcelain pieces, which came to the museum through private owners in Ljubljana.[40] Interestingly, his decision to commission a Chinese ethnographical collection was a unique exception to his collecting policies, since it was virtually omitted in his official plans and reports for the museum[41] and was not followed by any similar attempts to procure non-European collections.[42]

36 A short article on this correspondence was published by Mitja Potočnik (see Potočnik 2013).

37 For more information on Mantuani's career as museum director, cf. Stele (1933), and Höfler and Cerkovnik (2012).

38 A large number of letters documenting this phase of Mantuani's work at the museum can be found in the archive of the National Museum of Slovenia, as part of unsorted documents folders (labeled "Muzejski arhiv") for the period from 1909 onwards.

39 Mahnič 2016, 199–200.

40 Cf. Berdajs (2020).

41 Cf. Archive of the Republic of Slovenia. Mantuani, Josip (1912; 1922).

42 Understanding Mantuani's rather ambiguous actions in this period would require further research, but his interest for East Asian objects, which did not fit with the general agenda he followed, might have also been influenced by his personal experience of museum institutions in Vienna, where he started his studies shortly after the Vienna World's Fair and where he then spent almost three decades of his life. The archival documents have so far unfortunately not revealed any explicit information on this connection.

His correspondence with Turk quickly goes beyond the simple task of providing "several idols and other things". In his letter of 31 May 1912,[43] Turk already responds with a demand for clearer instructions, reminding Mantuani that "there are countless types of idols" in China. The missionary proposes that they both buy Henri Doré's *Recherches sur les superstitions en Chine,* a recently published book series[44] on the topic, that they could then use in their communication, so that Mantuani could point out which types of "idols" he wanted and Turk could then find the correct ones. In addition to that, Turk proposes providing "other Chinese things that could serve you and the other folklorists to better understand this weird Chinese nation", as well as geological and natural history objects. In the closing part of the letter, he also asks for a clarification on how much the museum is willing to spend for the "idols", reminding Mantuani that the price greatly varies according to the objects' "artistic quality, material, and rarity". He added that wooden idols could also be acquired very cheap or even for free, but he doubted "that you would be satisfied with such wooden stuff of low artistic quality". Judging from the collection acquired, as will be seen later, they must have achieved some type of compromise, since the collection of "idols" contains both a larger number of rudimentary wooden statues as well as a few higher quality bronze and porcelain sculptures.

From the following two letters (a longer one on 3 pages and a very short one on 8 September 1912), we see that Turk obviously soon sent out a smaller box of "idols and some other things", as he says in his letter of 3 September, where he enquires as to whether the museum received the package from July that year. Along with these, he notes that he had sent an official's hat, "used in summer by the officials during the imperial times". A remark is of course included on the historical shift that was happening right in front of the missionary's eyes. After having witnessed the events of the Wuchang uprising, Turk penned this letter just half year after the last emperor abdicated. He notes that these types of hats "in use by the previous rulers, are completely rejected by the republican party". At the end of the letter, Turk apologizes for the lower quality everyday objects he sent by saying that "to fully understand the Chinese habits and Chinese life, both the good and the bad should be observed".

By the end of the same month, on 23 September 1912, Mantuani, refers to the early September letter by Turk, and responds that he had "unfortunately not yet received the package". He continues by expressing his wishes for the Chinese collection. "Anything will be very welcome", he adds, "since we have nothing but a few broken parasols". Most importantly, he continues, the museum was eager for "folkloristic objects, either of religious or profane-cultural nature, e.g. idols, sacrificial vessels, images and woodcuts, amulets; then tools, perhaps some original weapons, ornaments, bones and stones, cast images, clothes, etc.".

Turk's reply of 9 November 1912 again confirms his attempt to "willingly, out of gratitude for the dear homeland, respond to his [Mantuani's] wishes and the noble enthusiasm for the museum's scientific development". Turk announces that he will, together with his fellow missionary, also a Slovenian, Engelhard Avbelj (1887–1928), send a larger shipment of objects at the beginning of the following year. In this letter, apart from Avbelj, Turk also mentions the other fellow missionary in Hankou, the Chinese convert Andrew Šu, who owned a luxurious silk carpet and several honorary officials' baldachins. These objects, says Turk, could also be a great addition to the museum collection.

The last document in the archive, written by Turk on 21 January 1913, is a list of twelve sent objects (including Andrew Šu's silk carpet and

43 All correspondence between Turk and Mantuani is kept as part of unsorted documents in the folders "Muzejski arhiv" from 1912/2 and 1913/1 in the archive of the National Museum of Slovenia.

44 The multiple part book series (Doré 1911) started to be published just the year before in the Jesuit workshops of Zikawei (Xujiahui) in Shanghai. The Xujiahui Jesuit missionary centre had workshops that were connected to their orphanage and served as training facilities for the orphans to obtain professional skills in woodcarving, painting, sculpture, printing, metal work, etc. (cf. Ma 2018; Motoh 2020a; De Caro 2023).

two baldachins, along with "approx. 15 idols", 2 swords, an incense burner, chopsticks, a pipe, and some other smaller objects). The old Rudolfinum inventory book, however, lists many more objects received from Peter Baptist Turk, so we can suppose that the other items were either contained in the first mentioned shipment sent in the summer of 1912, or were sent later, but the correspondence about them has not survived.

Between the Wish List and the Collection

Based on the Rudolfinum inventory book entries from 1912 and 1913, Turk sent back approximately 120 objects, of which approximately 100 can still be identified today.[45] If tentatively looking for logic as to which objects went missing, we can see that these were mostly smaller objects (jewellery, hairpins, chains) and fabric items (clothing, home textiles), maybe due to the different systems of labelling these types of objects (often the inventory numbers were not written on the objects themselves). The objects that remain in the collection are otherwise easy to recognize by the dual inventory numbers[46] clearly written on them, while many also have an attached cardboard tag with an attribution to Peter Baptist Turk.

Despite the missing part of the collection, the existing array of objects still gives a very clear image of the result of Turk's and Mantuani's attempts. The initial desired typology of items, suggested by Turk and then more explicitly listed by Mantuani, is clearly reflected in the preserved collection and obviously even more in the Rudolfinum's old inventory list.

The number of religious sculptures, those that might be classified by Turk and Mantuani as "idols", is considerable: altogether 34 are listed in the 1912/13 inventory list, and 30 can still be found in the museum today. They vary greatly in quality and artistic expression, which attests to Turk's previously quoted explanation in one of his letters. By material, wooden sculptures prevail, and these are mostly—but not exclusively—also more crudely shaped. Three of the religious sculptures are made in bronze[47] and are cast and shaped with more precision. All of them are also Buddhist, one depicting Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara/Guanyin (fig. 3), one depicting Śākyamuni Buddha, and the third one probably depicting Buddha Amitabha.

On the other hand, the larger array of wooden figurines is much more diverse. There are several Buddhist figurines, but also typical characters of Daoist provenance and those venerated in folk religion. We find for example, several examples of Wenchang 文昌, the deity representing culture and literature (fig. 4), two examples of Songzi Niangniang 送子娘娘, (a female fertility deity, often merged with the Guanyin image), a figure of an alleged "deity of the Yangzi River", etc. How Turk labelled the sculptures tells us a lot about his understanding of Chinese religion. On one hand, he wrote the names of the deities on the objects themselves or even pasted pieces of paper with handwritten explanations onto them. This museum-intended approach also tells us that he was interested in the names and the use of those "idols". On the wooden image of Songzi Niangniang for example, he writes, "Goddess Sun-cè-njan-njan. Pagan women go to her for marital happiness". Similarly, a wooden board relief of the Buddhist guardian Weituo 韋馱 with a jewelled sword (figs. 5 and 6) is explained as "the idol Wei-t'ung (vejthun). Carved into a wooden board, it is carried on the back of bonzes to chase the evil spirits out of the pagan houses, they do this three times every year: in their first, seventh, and tenth month, on the full moon".

45 Approximate numbers are due to the differences in inventory registrations—sometimes the same objects seem to be grouped and sometimes listed separately, which, along with their very vague descriptions, makes the exact number almost impossible to reconstruct.

46 Most of the objects bear two inventory numbers: the original Rudolfinum number and the new inventarisation number they got after 1923 in the newly established Ethnographic Museum.

47 Two more bronze "Buddha idols" are mentioned by the inventory, but are now missing.

Fig. 1: Coal burner with inventory numbers and Turk's explanation. Photo: Slovene Etnographic Museum.

Fig. 2: An attached tag marking objects from Turk's collection (the name is written wrong, Jan.(ez) instead of Peter). Photo: Slovene Etnographic Museum.

Fig. 3: Cast bronze sculpture of Avalokiteśvara/Guanyin. Photo: Slovene Etnographic Museum.

Fig. 4: Wooden sculpture of Wenchang. Photo: Slovene Etnographic Museum.

From his writing, however, it seems like the distinction between the Buddhist and the Daoist religious practices—and their "idols" was not an important one for Turk. It is difficult to say whether he distinguished between different traditions, while it does seem that for him the entirety of the pagan practices was seen more as a continuum, also perhaps reflecting the fluid co-existence of different religious traditions and syncretic religious practices he encountered. He does identify Buddhist sculptures to represent "idol Buda" (Buddha) and he names "Kvan-in" (Guanyin) figurines, but they seem to be subsumed to the general category of "idols". He talks about "bonci" (a Slovene derivative of "bonzes") both in his explanations of the objects themselves as well as in his published writings,[48] but it is unclear whether this only means Buddhist monks or also the dignitaries of Daoist and Confucian temples.

Porcelain is also present in Turk's collection of "idols". Two porcelain figures were listed and are still in the collection. One is a vividly coloured *famille rose* figure of a seated Guandi 關帝, the other is an image of Guanyin 觀音 (fig. 7). The latter, labelled as "Cou-se" by Turk, is made in what seems to be *dehua* style milky white porcelain and shows the remains of gilding and lacquer decoration.[49] One of the other curious pieces Turk collected is a wooden tablet (figs. 8 and 9), used, according to Turk's pasted explanation on the back of the board, as a symbolic means of protecting the shop and its owners, ensuring the blessing of "Čao-kun-min". His transcription most probably refers to Zhao Gongming 趙公明, one of the historical identifications of the deity of Wealth, Caishen 財神, to whom the text on the wooden tablet also refers.[50]

From the listed examples, we can see that Turk put a lot of effort into presenting in at least some detail China's religious landscape as he knew it in the region where he worked. The initial plan to use Doré's book as a common guideline for purchase between Mantuani and Turk seems not to have been realized or perhaps it was only Turk who was using it in his descriptions of the statues. The book is never mentioned again in their correspondence. Another aspect of Turk's collection of religious objects is however significant. As often the case with missionary collections, Turk's selection of objects—inadvertently—preserves the religious reality of the people he was working amongst, including the new converts who refused to completely give up their previous venerative practices. We can only speculate whether some of these "idols" could be the same he mentions to have repeatedly confiscated from the non-conforming Chinese converts, but from the quality and style of the pieces, many of them could be items in use by common countryside families.

In the collection, we also see that Turk perhaps tried to go in the direction of Mantuani's wishes to send him "sacrificial vessels" by adding several other religious objects related to the practices of incense burning. Two incense burners are listed in the inventory, of which one tin incense burner is still in the collection today, accompanied by a number of candles, incense sticks, and an elaborate *bagua* 八卦[51] and *taijitu* 太極圖[52] decorated tin box for incense (fig. 10), which was labelled as having been donated by Andrew Šu. Several rudimentary iron temple bells are also included in the collection. Perhaps a victim of the unmatching taxonomies, the desired category of "amulets" remained empty, although some previously mentioned objects could be interpreted to have protective and auspicious properties. The category of "images and

48 See for example the published letter of 4 February 1902.

49 An interesting element of this figurine, one that Turk was probably not aware of, is that the decoration on her chest is shaped as a cross-shaped arrangement of five dots, connected with a heart-shaped pendant. These could point to the figurine actually representing a cryptic image of Mother Mary (cf. Turnbull 1998). This claim, however, as well as the possible source of this figurine and its relation to the cryptic Christianity in Japan, would require extensive further research.

50 The central text reads: *ben dian hu Fucai* 本店護福財 (This shop is protected by the God of Fortune and Wealth), this message confirmed by the side text using the two components of the phrase *zhao cai jin bao* 招財進寶 (attract wealth).

51 *Bagua* is an arrangement of eight trigrams, based on the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing* 易经).

52 *Taijitu*, i.e. the "diagram of The Great Ultimate", is the graphic representation of the complementary dynamics of *yin* and *yang*.

Fig. 5: Carved image of Weituo on wooden board. Photo: Slovene Etnographic Museum.

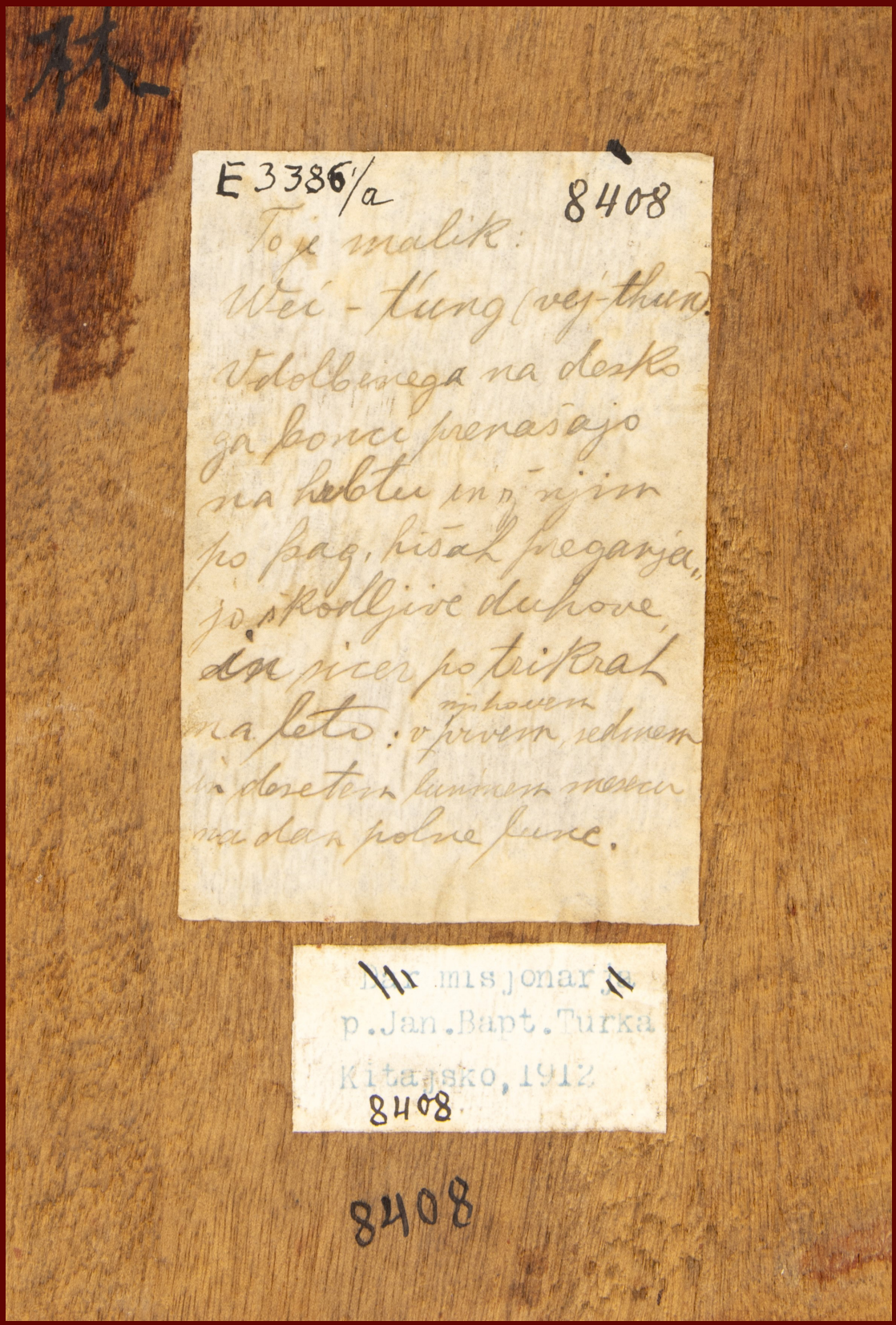

Fig. 6: Turk's explanation on the back of the Weituo image. Photo: Slovene Etnographic Museum.

Fig. 7: Porcelain sculpture of Guanyin. Photo: Slovene Etnographic Museum.

Figs. 8 and 9: Wooden tablet ensuring Zhao Gongming's protection, front and back. Photo: Slovene Etnographic Museum.

woodcuts" from Mantuani's wish list is represented in Turk's collection by a set of 12 scrolls, of which 8 are brush paintings and 4 are calligraphies.

In the more ethnographic (or in Mantuani's terminology, "profane-cultural folkloristic objects") category, Turk deviated more from what the museum director wished for, also providing a lot of objects upon his own initiative. He collected none of the desired tools and only two examples of weapons: a sword and a double sword. These two swords, judging from the rudimentary shape and very low quality of production, both seem to be mock weapons, maybe used for theatrical performances (also partly hinted at in the missionaries' shipping list[53]). Of the other types of objects that Mantuani wanted the missionary to provide, we only find a substantial number in the broad category of "clothing", where Turk sent smaller silk items (purses, embroidered ornaments, attachments), shoes, and the before-mentioned official's hat. In addition to these, the original inventory also lists two fans, silver jewellery (earrings, rings, etc.), and a pair of glasses. The 1912/13 inventory also lists an object interestingly defined as a "rectangular hat of the Chinese dignitaries". In fact, the object (fig. 11) is a *jijin* 祭巾[54], a ceremonial hat worn by

53 In the "List of the things sent these days to Rudolfinum Museum", dated January 1913 and signed by Peter Baptist Turk and Engelhard Avbelj, two swords are mentioned, namely "an antique sword" and "a sword to be used in both hands for war plays, but also useful to scare off thieves and robbers" (Archive of the National Museum of Slovenia, Ljubljana. Correspondence between Turk and Mantuani).

54 The invention of this special cermonial hat is usually ascribed to Giulio Aleni (cf. Badea et al. 2020).

Fig. 10: Incense box. Photo: Slovene Etnographic Museum.

the Catholic priests in China, used by the Jesuits as well as the Franciscans. The presence of *jijin* in missionary collections in Europe is remarkably common, and there is a similar object even in the related collection by Turk's fellow missionary Engelhard Avbelj,[55] which probably was worn by Avbelj himself. It is difficult to assess whether the rectangular hat in Turk's collection could be a hat that was in personal use by Peter Baptist Turk, but, along with his fellow missionary priests, he must have used a *jijin* in his daily work as well. What might have been the cause for a partly misleading description is of course difficult to claim.

Turk's collection, however, is especially interesting in the array of objects that were obviously acquired at his own initiative. Already among the textile objects, we find some very interesting items; the most notable is a pair of *wanminsan* 萬民傘, honorary umbrellas or baldachins.[56] Turk himself writes about these two pieces in his letters to Mantuani:

> He [Andrew Šu] also owns several honorary official's umbrellas called wan-min-san that he received in different places by the Christians and the pagans for his contributions.[57]

55 The Avbelj collection kept by the Franciscan monanstery in Ljubljana is much smaller than Turk's collection and mostly consists of his personal belongings, i.e. the *jijin* and liturgical books in Chinese, but also two incense burners, some coins, and a pair of female silk slippers.

56 Gao and Weightman 2012, 207.

57 Letter of 9 November 1912 (Archive of the National Museum of Slovenia, Ljubljana. Correspondence between Turk and Mantuani).

Fig. 11: *Jijin*. Photo: Slovene Etnographic Museum.

In addition to two ceremonial baldachins, Turk also sent the accompanying top pieces, ornate metal decorations that were put on top of the bamboo stick holding the baldechin. One (fig. 12) depicts a crane standing among lotus flowers; the other (fig. 13) is shaped as a vessel and decorated with dragons and other ornaments. A similar *wanminsan* crane-shaped ornament is kept by the Weltmuseum in Vienna (in the collection of J. J. Henningsen).[58]

Among Turk's most interesting additions to the collection are the many varieties of paper money, even strings of paper "coins". Of the other unique items of Chinese culture, Turk sent several chopsticks and two brass hand/feet warmers, an unusual object we often find in similar collections.[59] Only one wooden lacquer object is included in the collection, a nicely decorated red lacquer box. The box is decorated with a gold drawing of a phoenix and a peony, and other flower shrubs, symbolizing happiness and joy.[60] A few pieces of smoking paraphernalia are also included, including a slender tobacco pipe and a decorated leather tobacco pouch.

It is difficult to track the sources of the objects Turk collected for the museum, but most of these are not of high artistic quality nor do they demonstrate elaborate craftsmanship. Many of the objects are very rudimentary; such is the case for the metal vessels and bells, while the collection of paintings is also of very low artistic quality. The ethnographic material as well as the religious statues seem like they were obtained through local sources and were not intended for foreigners' export purchase, which matches well with Turk's itineraries as we know them so far—he spent most of his time in the village and small town settings around Hankou. The religious statues and objects, however, are mostly crudely designed and show wear related to their previous extensive use in home or village temple settings, which makes this type of collection significantly different from those of wealthier and more socially distinguished collectors of the time, where the religious statues are mostly from urban settings and/or were bought either newly made or carefully preserved.

58 See https://www.weltmuseumwien.at/object/?detailID=448607 (Accessed December 1, 2023).

59 See for example, the early 20th century collection of Ivan Skušek Jr. in the same museum (Slovene Ethnographic Museum in Ljubljana).

60 Bjaaland Welch 2008, 83.

Figs. 12: Metal decoration for the top of the *wanminsan* baldachins. Photo: Slovene Etnographic Museum.

Figs. 13: Metal decoration for the top of the *wanminsan* baldachins. Photo: Slovene Etnographic Museum.

Museification of missionary collections

The term "missionary collection" is not unequivocal, as Turk's case shows: it can mean both a collection assembled by a missionary and/or a collection assembled in the missionary context for missionary purposes. It can also originate in the missionary setting of the missions or not, as "missionary exhibitions" sometimes also included locally produced craftwork, which was then sold to collect money for the missions. For Turk's collection, the term "missionary" is limited to mean a collection that originated in the missions and was collected by a missionary, but was not collected for missionary purposes. Not only in this, but also in its content Turk's collection differs from previous missionary collections in Slovenia. As is evident from the short review, the variety of objects in Turk's collection is considerable, with a balance of religious and ethnological objects. Previous large missionary collections in Slovenia included very few religious objects[61] and the same holds for the—much smaller—collection of Turk's missionary colleague Engelhard Avbelj (see above). Judging from the correspondence, and the comparison between the museum director's wishes and the resulting collection, it becomes evident that the presence of the collection's religious content was largely motivated by the director's wishes, while the missionary collector took much more initiative in the domain of the "profane" ethnographic items. In a seemingly paradoxical twist, the missionary collected more religious objects because he was trying to serve the needs and wishes of a secular institution. The repulsion felt by active missionaries such as Turk toward the "idols" could of course be one of the reasons why they would not collect them at their own initiative and only did so when following the agenda of a museum institution.

The complex character of Turk's collection and his inclusion of religious objects, though, seem to also be based on a related historical phenomenon, namely, the trend of the museification of missionary collections. The 1910s and 1920s were a period when the previously heterogeneous practices of gathering random objects from the missions became an organized and well-structured undertaking. These collections were not only used for promotional purposes and as a tool to collect resources for the missions, but started to take on an educational role for the general public. Among the backdrop of trade fairs, World's Fairs, and finally the influential Vatican Missionary exhibition in 1925,[62] missionary collections gradually followed the trend of presenting their destination countries in a comprehensive fashion.[63] We see this trend in the Slovenian territory in the establishment of several "missionary museums", which then followed the structural standards of other museum institutions: including the comprehensive typology of objects, ranging from naturalia through ethnographic materials to religious objects.[64] When describing the making of a similar collection by Italian Franciscans in Hubei (now kept in the convent of St. Roch in Rovereto), Federica Bosio mentions a similar transitional situation.[65] The Franciscan missionary collector in Hubei, Father Ruggero Covi (1877–1925), initially focused on collecting minerals of China, only to be motivated to start collecting cultural items, especially those representing Chinese religions by his provincial, so that the collection could be used for museum purposes. The resulting Franciscan collection in Rovereto is structurally surprisingly similar to Turk's collection in Ljubljana, presenting the rich local

61 Cf. Frelih (2009; 2010).

62 The Vatican Missionary Exhibition of 1925, (officially "Pontifical Missionary Exhibition") was organized in the Lateran Palace under Pope Pius XI to show the missionary efforts of the Catholic Church worldwide, while also presenting the variety of World's cultures and religions. In the presentation of the latter, an important influence was that of Wilhelm Schmidt, who was invited by Pius XI to put together the ethnological exhibition, since in Schmidt's views many world religions exhibited traits of common original monotheism, *Urmonotheismus* (cf. Dries 2016; Howes, Jones and Spriggs 2022, 347)

63 Cf. Gasparotto (2017) and Sánchez Gómez (2006).

64 Motoh 2020b.

65 Bosio et al. 2023, 45.

ethnographical material along with what seem to be locally sourced (and used) rudimentary religious figurines. The museification and institutionalization of missionary collections therefore seem to have introduced a shift in typology: from the types of objects that would present the everyday reality of the missionary work to those that represented the destination cultures in general. After the shift, the role of missionaries was seen also as that of educator and informer—a view especially stressed after the Vatican 1925 exhibition – and the propaganda goal, while still very present, was then underplayed. Due to the special situation in which it was assembled, Turk's collection can therefore be seen as an earlier precursor of the trend that prevailed in the missionary collecting practices from the late 1920s onwards.

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