

The Influence of World's Fairs on the Formation of Japanese and Chinese Collections in Bohemia and Moravia in the Late 19th Century

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Introduction¹

The World's Fairs were an important milestone in the development of industry and society as a whole, as they inspired many industries and crafts around the world to develop rapidly. This was also the case in Bohemia and Moravia, in the lands of the Czech Crown, part of the Habsburg Monarchy. The exhibitions also prompted the creation of the first industrial museums aimed at improving the standards of art and design education with regard to their applicability in industry. The first institution of this type, the South Kensington Museum, founded in 1852, served as an example of good practice, presenting not only historical objects but also contemporary innovative products. The development of these activities and the search for new and unusual approaches stimulated an increased interest in distant regions, particularly East and Southeast Asia. India, China and Japan and the products they presented received unprecedented attention at world's fairs from the beginning. Visitors to these exhibitions from Central Europe also noticed other innovative approaches in the production and decoration of handicrafts and works of art from East Asia, further deepening their interest in gaining a better understanding of

these distant lands. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 shortened travel times to remote areas of Asia, creating new opportunities for exploration.

Travel was in vogue, and journeys to distant China and Japan, formerly within the reach of none but the wealthiest noble families, were becoming more accessible, thanks to the introduction of direct shipping connections by the Austrian Lloyd Company. Indeed, Lloyd demonstrated its success by erecting a stand-alone pavilion at the World's Fair in Vienna with a sailing-ship mast on the roof, which was certainly impossible to overlook. Closely linked to this period was the development of the Austro-Hungarian navy, which had the ambition to regularly "show its flag" in all the world's major ports, including those in East Asia. Members of the navy played a very important role in the promotion of foreign cultures, bringing back from their voyages not only various souvenirs but also important works of art, which later became part of the emerging collections of many new museums. It is surprising how many such collections were created in Bohemia and Moravia, even though this part of Cisleithania had no direct access to the sea.

The aim of this paper is to present the specific responses to the First World's Fair in Bohemia and Moravia, and to show how they helped to establish the first museum institutions there and what role objects of non-European origin played in these activities. We will also focus on the specific role of the newly emerging museums in mediating the

1 The present research was supported by the Czech Science Foundation Project: Circulation of knowledge as a basis for multiculturalism and its role in a transformation of the Czech art Industry in the 1850s–1920s. Project No. 23-05248S.

knowledge of distant cultures in Czech territory at the end of the 19th century.

Vojta Náprstek and His Circle: Establishment of the First Public Asian Collection in the Czech Lands

Even in the case of the Czech lands, the World's Fairs played a significant role in introducing the culture of distant countries. The first exhibitions, at the Crystal Palace in London in 1851 and the Palais d'Industrie in Paris four years later, did not yet have a direct impact on the development of Central Europe. However, the knowledge they made available led to significant innovations in the products of many Czech and Moravian traditional producers.² However, the International Exhibition of 1862 in London certainly played a pivotal role in the thirst for new knowledge in the Czech environment. It was his visit to London and the International Exhibition there that greatly influenced the Czech ethnographer and patriot Vojta Náprstek (1826–1894) and strengthened his interest in creating an institution similar to the Kensington Museum in Prague. After his return, he therefore organised the Industrial Exhibition on Střelecký Island in Prague at the end of the same year, where he and his companions, especially Antonín Frič (1832–1913), exhibited some of the innovative objects he had collected during his previous trip. The exhibition was a great success, attracting 9,992 visitors.³

The exhibition on the Střelecký Island mainly presented objects brought by Vojta Náprstek directly from London. In the photographs preserved in the Náprstek Museum, we can identify, for example, a Chinese inlaid table with an architectural motif and a group of figures, porcelain vessels and

vases probably of Chinese (Japanese) origin, a Chinese lantern, a fan or framed woodblocks of Japanese beauties.⁴ Even after the end of the exhibition, Náprstek kept up his educational activities, with a view to introducing various industrial innovations to a wide audience. In May 1863, he even held a special lecture on Japan on Střelecký Island, which he illustrated with real examples of Japanese arts and crafts production.⁵ The success of the lecture was reported by *Národní listy*, the most important Czech periodical, whose editor described the atmosphere in the hall as follows:

Then he [Náprstek] showed various objects – brought from Japan and donated to the Czech Industrial Museum, such as: metal mirrors, various kinds of money, pipes from which even the ladies smoke, very fine tobacco, which was immediately stuffed and smoked around the hall for the purpose of demonstrative teaching, to the general amusement of the audience.

And he continues:

The beautiful porcelain vessels, the tea in a solid cube, the exquisite yet cheap cloth for the dresses, the artful embroidery on the frames, the flowers of Japan, lent by the kindness of Mr. Fiala,⁶ the gardener, attracted universal attention ... While Mr. Náprstek and his numerous assistants were presenting the articles, many visitors were still looking at the stereoscopes and at pictures of Japan and China, exhibited and displayed under the great gallery; these were from the collection of the scholar Siebold...⁷

2 Czech manufacturers had been successfully presenting themselves at world's fairs since the Great Exhibition in London in 1851, where, for example, 14 Czech companies participated in the glass sector alone. Knowledge gained from other exhibitors was soon integrated into their own production. See Mergl (2012, 149).

3 Kodym 1955, 58.

4 See inscription on the Náprstek museum photo coll. No. 176.114.

5 *Národní listy* 1863.

6 This is very likely to be Josef Fiala (1817–1884) or his brother Eduard Fiala the Elder (dates unknown), both artistic gardeners active in Prague in the 3rd quarter of the 19th century.

7 *Národní listy* 1863.

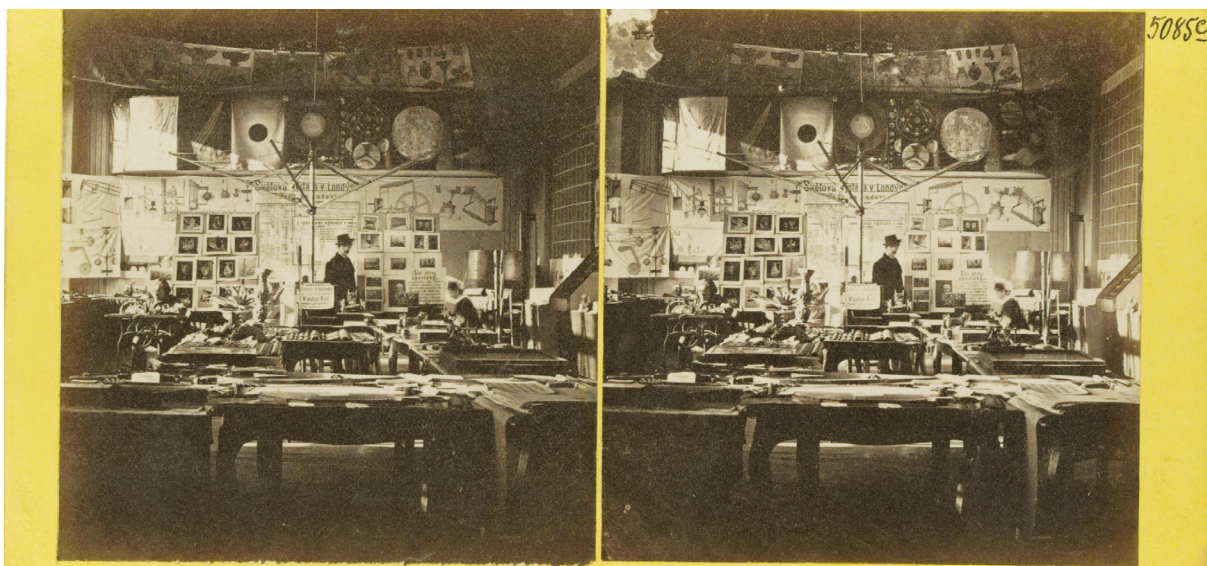


Fig. 1: Unknown photographer. Industrial Exhibition on Střelecký Island in Prague in 1862. Stereoscopic card, albumen print, 1862. Private collection.

Náprstek did not hesitate to enliven the lecture with the use of older pictorial material, which came from the works of the German traveller and physician Philip Franz Siebold (1796–1866), who resided as a doctor of the Factory on the Dejima Island in Nagasaki in the 1820s.⁸

The success of the first exhibition convinced Náprstek and his friends to organise a second Industrial Exhibition in the same place a year later, where, in addition to technical achievements such as sewing machines or refrigerators, they also displayed a number of exhibits representing the production of distant countries, including East Asia, which he had acquired through his educational activities, especially from among his compatriots.

As can be seen in the photo, this exhibition included examples of Japanese lacquer work and East Asian porcelain. The exhibition catalogue contains a list of 4,019 items, including several from areas outside Europe.⁹ The Chinese and Japanese products exhibited were not only from the collection of Vojta Náprstek, but were also supplied by other contributors and donors—František Mráček

(1828–1896), Otakar Breuer (1835–1893) or František Všecká (1819–1903). Mentioned here are, for example, a Japanese umbrella; a Chinese table inlaid with mother-of-pearl, a Chinese salon chandelier, Chinese trays, a Chinese box, a junk cage, Chinese vases, a lamp, porcelain plates, cups, a white and black pagoda, Chinese clay figures, Chinese ivory vases, Chinese fans, Chinese soap, baskets and others. A large collection of 60 mostly Chinese (but according to the photographs also Japanese) objects including baskets, fans, porcelain dishes, lacquerware, etc. was presented at the exhibition by V. J. Löschner (?–?), a court merchant in decorative goods and lamps whose shop was located in the U Sixtů House on Prague's Old Town Square.¹⁰

The exhibits from these two exhibitions became the basis for the establishment of the Industrial Museum, now the Náprstek Museum in Prague. The first steps towards its foundation were taken as early as 1862, but the whole process of establishing the museum took a long time. Its originally industrial character also changed later on, when Náprstek increasingly turned his attention to objects from non-European countries,

8 Siebold 1832–1852.

9 Katalog 1863.

10 Woitschová 2018, 54



Fig. 2: Unknown photographer. The Second Industrial and School Exhibition on Střelecký Island in Prague in 1863. Albumen print, 1862. Private collection.

including East Asia. Although Náprstek and his friends sought to officially establish the museum as early as 1863, they did not receive permission from Vienna, and so their activities focused mainly on collecting objects.¹¹ Initially, it was contacts with Czech compatriots abroad that helped build the collection. Among the first exhibits recorded in the museum's inventories were also Japanese and Chinese goods, often examples of arts and crafts or ethnographic material. One of the important donors in this area, for example, was František Mráček, a native of Central Moravia who visited far eastern Siberia and the Amur

region around 1860, on which occasion, it seems, he also went to Japan, probably visiting Hakodate. He handed over the objects from this trip to Náprstek in 1863, thus laying the foundations of the Japanese collection.¹² Of the goods he collected, we can mention, for example, the Nagasaki medicine box decorated with lacquer and mother-of-pearl, which has survived to the present day (see fig. 3). Other Japanese goods soon followed. These included not only Japanese woodblock

¹¹ Ibid., 38.

¹² The collection of František Mráček was exhibited in Olomouc in April 1863. It was probably one of the first specialised exhibitions of Japanese and Chinese objects in Moravia. See Hánová (2008, 178).



Fig. 3: Case for porcelain medicine flasks. Wood covered in natural lacquer decorated in *aogai*, *hiramakie*, *takamakie* and *nashiji* techniques. Japan 1850s. Donated by František Mráček in 1863. Courtesy of the Náprstek Museum in Prague.

prints—mostly of the period—but also examples of lacquer-decorated objects, fans, porcelain and contemporary ethnographical material.

Since the official establishment of the museum was still pending, Náprstek supported the education of the museum curator Alois Studnička (1842–1927), whom he sent in 1865 to study the exhibition strategies of British museums. Two years later he also sent him to the World's Fair in Paris.¹³ The museum did not at first have a permanent seat, and it was not until 1872 that Náprstek managed to exhibit the objects collected so far in the premises of the family brewery in Prague on

the Betlémské Square. It is known that Náprstek also visited the World's Fair in Vienna in September 1873, but unfortunately we do not know if he was impressed by it, although Klára Wotschová mentions that he was shopping there.¹⁴ Only a year later, on 16 May 1874, Náprstek finally managed to expand the temporary premises of the museum and open them to the public for the first time on special days. The exhibitions were divided according to the geographical areas of origin of the objects into three units called America, Africa, and China and Japan.¹⁵

¹⁴ Ibid., 44.

¹⁵ Ibid., 46.

¹³ Woitschová 2018, 42.

Náprstek was a proponent of innovation and novelty and his aim was primarily to enlighten Czech thinking in the social, economic and political sense. That is why, in 1865, he was one of the founders of the American Ladies' Club,¹⁶ one of the first Czech associations ever, through which he created a platform for the promotion of emancipation, including the mediation of information from abroad, including from the Far East. Náprstek's fascination with East Asian cultures deepened over the years, and his collections of objects of Japanese and Chinese provenance grew rapidly, thanks also to the travellers whom Náprstek personally supported and whose activities he regularly followed and promoted. In the premises of his house U Halánků in Prague's Old Town, representatives of the young Czech intelligentsia, such as František Ladislav Rieger (1818–1903), František Palacký (1798–1876), Jan Evangelista Purkyně (1787–1869) and Karolína Světlá (1830–1899), met, while the first Czech travellers Emil Holub (1847–1902), Enrique Stanko Vráz (1860–1932), Otokar Feistmantel (1848–1891), Pavel Durdík (1843–1903), Václav Stejskal (1851–1934) and Josef Kořenský (1847–1938) often joined the company. It is thanks to their activities that the museum's collections grew, although compromise was sometimes unavoidable. In the 1880s, Náprstek was finally able to build a special museum building to display all the exhibits that had been collected up to that point, and in 1891, after all the collections had been moved in, the Náprstek Industrial Museum was opened to the public.¹⁷ Thanks to the foresight of Náprstek, who set up a foundation to finance the museum, to which he contributed part of his fortune, the museum was able to continue its activities after his death in 1894 and expand its collections. His wife, Josefa Náprstková (1838–1907), also contributed significantly. She took over the management of the museum and library after her husband's death, and had the museum building rebuilt and enlarged and its surroundings landscaped.

A very important group among the people interested in Japanese and Chinese art who belonged to Vojta Náprstek's circle of friends consisted of artists, who had usually first encountered Japanese and Chinese products during their stays in western metropolises, mostly in Paris. They met regularly and often in Náprstek's museum and in this way, a society with a deep interest in foreign art, including that of Japan and China, was naturally created.¹⁸ Zdenka Braunerová (1858–1934), who lived in Paris, stands out among the Japanophile artists, as does her friend, Julius Zeyer (1841–1901), a representative of poetic japonisme in Czech literature, who also surrounded himself with dozens of Japanese and Chinese artworks. Braunerová was influenced by her visit to the World's Fairs in Paris in 1878 and 1889.¹⁹ From her letter to Mrs. Náprstková written in February 1891 we learn that she regularly visited the store of Samuel Bing.²⁰ "I finally went to Bing's a few days ago. He is known to have the most beautiful art, even though it is very expensive. I was there once with Mr. Zeyer and we admired the whole two-storey building crammed from top to bottom with Japanese objects."²¹ Braunerová's love for Japanese art was born after her visit to the World's Fair in Paris in 1878, when she was able to admire the successful Japanese presentation, and her interest in Japanese painting and woodblock prints continued later on.²² From the above note in Braunerová's letter, however, we can deduce that for middle-class Czech collectors, Japanese products offered in specialised stores were often too expensive, so that they probably had to settle for a cheaper alternative.

18 Let us mention at least the painters Antonín Chittussi (1847–1891) and Zdenka Braunerová, who were regular guests at Náprstek's house since 1880s.

19 Šášinková 2013, 13.

20 Bing's first store, called *L'Art japonais*, at 19 rue Chauchat, Paris, opened in 1884 and closed in 1894, being replaced by *Maison de l' Art Nouveau* in December 1895, in the same location but with entry from 22 rue de Provence. It is therefore clear that Braunerová visited the *L'Art japonais* store. See Hánová (2008, 129).

21 See Hánová (2008, 12).

22 Šášinková 2013, 13.

16 Secká 2012.

17 Woitschová 2018, 48.

World's Fair in Vienna and Reflection of Asian Presentations in Bohemia and Moravia

The circle of Vojta Náprstek's friends was undoubtedly one of the main sources of information about distant lands and their cultures, but during the last third of the 19th century, information about the East also filtered through by other means. The most important of these is undoubtedly the World's Fair in Vienna in 1873, the resonance of which reverberated throughout Austria-Hungary, including the Czech lands. Let me quote an article published on 9 June 1873 in *Národní listy*, one of the most important Czech daily newspapers at the time.

Not only Europe is represented here, but also America and Australia ... more important is the representation of Asia and Africa, or those countries, partly European, which we include under the name of 'Orient' or East. ... But what is particularly outstanding is what has been sent from Japan and China; Japan in particular has taken pains to be represented as fully and worthily as possible. To this end the Emperor of Japan arranged for a special preliminary exhibition in his capital, 'Jeddah' last year. This, then, or an abundant selection of it, is to be found in Vienna, brought by sea by a journey of several thousand miles ...²³

With these words, in a column devoted to the World's Fair in Vienna in June 1873, a newspaper correspondent recorded his impression of the representation of China, and especially Japan, in lavishly conceived national presentations, which were unprecedented in Europe up to that time.

It would seem, therefore, that a month after the official opening of the exhibition, this part of the Fair became one of the highlights of the whole exhibition enterprise, known not only in the capital of the monarchy but also in provincial Prague. The successful attractive presentation of novelties and

world conveniences made up for the somewhat constrained impression of the first opening day, 1 May 1873, whose ceremony took place in a somewhat complicated atmosphere. The day before, the city had been paralysed by a strike of fiacres and the metropolis thrown into traffic chaos.²⁴ Moreover, although the magnificent exhibition grounds were completed on time, many of the exhibits failed to be finally installed by 1 May, remaining packed in crates as the goods were delivered late. Thus, a First of May feature from the same periodical mentions that "... even the one hundredth (100th) piece is not finished inside to this day and that ... what is finished so far is not worth an eye roll"²⁵ This fortunately did not apply to the Japanese exhibits, which were set up on time despite some difficulties.

Moreover, just a few days after the opening of the exhibition, Austria-Hungary had to deal with another cruel problem, namely, the crash of the Vienna Stock Exchange on 9 May 1873. The bubble of false expansion, insolvencies and strange manipulations could no longer be sustained, and this distressing situation caused the collapse of several Viennese banks, causing a shortage of money on the financial markets. Although the beginning of the spectacular event was somewhat embarrassing, the situation soon changed, because the exhibition, after its final completion, offered visitors a truly extraordinary experience, among which we can undoubtedly include the Chinese and especially the Japanese section. These national presentations became very popular among visitors, thanks to the successful attractive exhibition concept. Soon, therefore, the abashed impressions from the first days of the exhibition were completely obliterated by new information about a unique exhibition experience, which had so far been unprecedented in the Habsburg Monarchy.²⁶

The Czech media space was soon flooded with a number of new articles about these distant lands, their history, culture, and art. It was Japan that attracted the most attention with its spectacular

23 *Národní listy* 1873a.

24 *Národní listy* 1873b.

25 Ibid.

26 *Národní listy* 1873a.

presentation. In *Národní listy*, the prominent Czech writer Jan Neruda (1834–1891)²⁷ published a collection of six feuilletons titled simply “From Japan”,²⁸ in which he reported extensively on Japanese history, customs and culture, and described in detail even parts of the Japanese exhibition itself. It is thanks to Neruda that we can better understand how the Central Europeans were impressed not only by the presentation of Japanese realities that were completely unknown to them until then, including unique examples of traditional buildings giving the impression of a Japanese city, and by the characteristic Japanese garden, which was one of the most admired parts of the exterior exhibition, but also by their first meeting with the Japanese craftsmen who built and prepared the exhibition project in Vienna.

The exhibition section dedicated to traditional merchants’ buildings was also used for the actual sale of souvenirs of Japanese origin, which were among the most important items sold at the World’s Fair. It was in this way that the first items from the exhibition found their way into Czech and Moravian collections. Neruda, in the aforementioned set of articles, notes that in these spaces intended for the sale of souvenirs,

the exhibition visitors are now a teeming crowd. They are buying Japanese relics, porcelain plates and buttons, bronze jugs of strange forms, or at least an oval fan with a bamboo hoop and woven with bast fibre ... They have had to wait quite a long time. The merchant had already opened once, but our committee came and closed it again. He hadn’t paid the duty, and the poor man didn’t even know what the duty was²⁹

27 Neruda was a prominent writer, pioneer of Czech critical realism, publicist, prose writer and poet. The most extensive part of his work is connected with journalistic activities; he wrote more than 2,000 columns, including travel notes from abroad.

28 Neruda 1873a; Neruda 1873b; Neruda 1873c; Neruda 1873d; Neruda 1873e; Neruda 1873f.

29 Neruda 1873c.

The famous bazaar, at which original Japanese items could be purchased at affordable prices, was located within the Japanese national presentation in the exterior part of the complex. This particular venue played an important part in promoting knowledge of Japanese culture, as the goods on offer allowed visitors to own a piece of the “real Japan”, thus spreading awareness of unique products, including the more common mass-produced ones, to a wide range of buyers. It was here that items which would later become part of newly built art collections were purchased.

Establishment of Museums and Acquisition of Objects from the Vienna World’s Fair in the Czech Lands

It is quite obvious that their visit to the World’s Fair triggered the need for important industrialists from Brno and Liberec to create an institution that would help spread innovative ideas in their region as well. It is therefore no coincidence that the first steps towards establishing museum institutions in both cities were taken just a few days after the opening of the event in Vienna. From the outset, the strategy of both institutions was to document good practice not only in European craftsmanship but also in works from distant countries, including China and Japan. In terms of Japanese craft, for example, purchases from the bazaar mentioned above were undoubtedly significant among the initial acquisitions, since they did not ruin the buyers financially and, on the contrary, allowed interesting non-traditional production methods to be shown.³⁰

Although these exhibits were still few in number in the first and second years after these two museums were founded, it appears that the presentation of the East Asian countries at the Fair had an important influence on the direction of their collecting activities. It is undoubtedly worth noting the fact that the members of the museum

30 Suchomel and Palata 2000, 99–109; Suchomel 2024.



Fig. 4: Wan rice bowl with a lid. Wood covered in natural lacquer decorated in makie techniques. Japan 1850–1870. Courtesy of the North Bohemian Museum in Liberec.

curatorial staff who were involved in the selection of objects for the newly established institutions at the World's Fair focused in great detail on objects of non-European provenance, especially, of course, from Japan and, to some extent, from China and India. For example, according to contemporary records, in 1873 the collections of the Liberec Museum reportedly included, in addition to a large number of objects of European

provenance, at least 17 Japanese objects, the same number of Chinese objects and 3 Indian exhibits.³¹ However, in reality, even the items classified as Chinese in the records were actually of Japanese

31 See Purchases by the Board of Directors of the North Bohemian Industrial Museum in Liberec at the World Exhibition in Vienna 1873 /for oriental collections/Inv. no. KŠ 26 – 39, Š 180, 454, D 965, Š 383–385, Š 388, Š 390, Š 432–434, KC 988, D 913, D 915, D 918, D 920–D924, D 912, D 919, D 967.



| Fig. 5: Baskets. Bamboo splits. Japan and China, early 1870s. Courtesy of the North Bohemian Museum in Liberec.



Fig. 6: Slim two-level vase. Stoneware. Japan, Kyoto, third quarter of the 19th century. Courtesy of the North Bohemian Museum in Liberec.

provenance. Although these were not exceptional or unique works, but rather small examples of craft production, their inclusion in the newly formed collections was still of great importance for their direction in the following years. In the case of

Liberec, the inventory included eight examples of small lacquer works, among which, for example, were a wan-type bowl with a lid decorated with *makie* techniques, (see fig. 4) several bowls, mostly of the *kōgo* type, and smaller trays and saucers, most of them again decorated with the *makie* technique. Japanese hair pins were also part of this set, and an object of particular importance was a *tsubo* jar with a lid made of tin for storing tea, which was donated to the museum directly by the Japanese exhibition committee.³² The first purchase included a Japanese bronze washbasin with silver inlay, and a case embellished with bright-coloured paper.³³

The products classified as Chinese but in reality, mostly Japanese, were mainly examples of smaller handicrafts made of bamboo or straw in the form of various boxes, bowls and baskets (see fig. 5). The collection of Asian art in Liberec grew rapidly in the following years and was one of the most interesting in Bohemia at the time. In terms of the Japanese collections alone, the museum acquired over 200 exhibits during its first 30 years of existence.³⁴ This became the core of the Asian collection, representing a very comprehensive collection of examples of contemporary material in particular, which was however also supplemented with the acquisition of older wares. The curators of the museums purchased the wares at western markets, most commonly by shopping from Samuel Bing in Paris, Holme and Co. in London or C. Smitz and Co. in Berlin. Among all the interesting acquisitions, we should point out at least a few, for example a deep bowl which was bought in London in 1884, decorated with enamel glaze with chrysanthemum patterns in the Kutani style, a four-sided vase or a lotus flower-shaped vase, all purchased from Samuel Bing in Paris a year earlier (see fig. 6).³⁵

³² Suchomel and Palata 2000, 76.

³³ Ibid., 101.

³⁴ For descriptions of Japanese objects in the North Bohemian Museum in Liberec, see Suchomel and Palata (2000, 119–40).

³⁵ Suchomel and Palata 2000.

Many exhibits were loaned to the collections by Heinrich Liebieg (1839–1904), an important local businessman who played a significant role in the foundation of the museum. Liebieg was also a significant collector of arts and crafts from all over the world, who left his entire collection to the museum in 1904. As early as 1882, the collection was enriched by the addition of Japanese cloisonné of Nagoya production, including examples of more modern Japanese ware produced by the Ozeki manufactory (fig. 7). Bronze wares and other metal work were also seminal to the collection-creating process. The museum obtained examples of work by Kōmai, a Kyoto company, and a number of bronzes, mostly from the collection of Heinrich Liebieg himself, who also bought these works in Paris. Since Liberec was the centre of the textile and fashion jewellery industries, it is understandable that fabric samples and swatches and various small items of jewellery such as hair accessories were also among the wares obtained, as they could give new impulses for innovation to local companies. A collection of sword guards, most of which were also collected before the end of the 19th century, might have also served as an inspiration.³⁶

In addition to the creation of its own collection, the North Bohemian Museum has made the staging of special exhibitions, including presentations of East Asian arts and crafts, central to its activities from the beginning. As early as 1883, for example, the museum presented a collection of Oriental arts and crafts on loan from the Oriental Museum in Vienna, which was headed by Heinrich Liebieg's brother-in-law Arthur von Scala (1845–1909). The exhibition featured Japanese porcelain, lacquer work, bamboo baskets, and leather products, among other Asian items, while various silk embroideries, filigree jewellery, metal objects, pewter utensils and ceramics were presented from China. Throughout the period 1884–1886 the Liberec museum organised a series of displays of its partial collection of Japanese (and sometimes Chinese) bronzes, pottery, porcelain, lacquerware, carved ivory sculptures, hair pins, bamboo baskets, pattern

books, weapons and their fittings and paintings on paper and silk. The museum curator at that time, Wilhelm Daniel Vivié (1848–1919), took a great interest in Asia and purposefully expanded the collections with Asian exhibits. He was aware of their potential for the development of the local industry in Liberec and even offered these objects as an inspiration to various interested local entrepreneurs. The objects of greatest interest were Japanese and Chinese bronzes, porcelain and, significantly, various fabrics, given the importance of textile production to the Liberec region. The interest in Japanese textiles is evidenced by the fact that the next major display of Japanese art was the exhibition of Japanese *katagami* stencils opened in Liberec in 1893 by Gustav Pazaurek (1865–1935) who had taken over as curator of the museum.³⁷

The development of the museum's Asian collections continued into the very early 20th century, but began to decline after World War I. Sadly, in the 1920s, a severe financial crisis forced the museum to say goodbye to some of the exhibits from its collection. The board of trustees attempted to resolve the complex situation by a way of a lottery in which some of the collection items served as prizes. (For example, a Japanese bronze washbasin with non-ferrous metal inlays, also acquired in Vienna in 1873.) Moreover, in 1969, a large part of the collection gathered from 1873 to the end of the 19th century (over 200 exhibits) which had been on long-term loan to the Oriental Collection of the National Gallery in Prague after World War II, with the aim of uniting the most important Asian items under one institution, was destroyed in a fire at the Benešov nad Ploučnicí castle. The objects that survived the fire remained permanently in the National Gallery's collections, including several objects acquired in Vienna.

As at the Liberec museum, representatives of the newly established Brno Industrial Museum also purchased several Asian works at the World's Fair in Vienna; from inventory records, it is possible to identify a total of 8 Japanese and 3 Indian artefacts acquired in Vienna (see figs. 8 and 9), which were

36 Suchomel 2019, 323.

37 Suchomel and Palata 2000, 103.



Fig. 7: Three-legged incense burner with openwork body. Silver decorated with transparent and translucent enamels. Japan ca. 1885. Courtesy of the North Bohemian Museum in Liberec.



Fig. 8: Japanese objects acquired for the Museum of Applied Arts in Brno from the World Exhibition in Vienna in 1873. Courtesy of the Moravian Gallery in Brno.

intended to document the development of crafts in distant destinations and help the further development of craft production in Moravia, as the newly established Gewerbe Museum had as its main goal the promotion of new forms in the art industry.³⁸ Even in this small collection, the largest component consisted of examples of lacquer work, especially small bowls and jars of a similar character to those in the Liberec museum. These objects were complemented by several ceramic vessels, presenting new trends in the decoration of stoneware and porcelain in Japan. Although these Asian products were relatively modest in number, they formed the basis of the Asian collection in the Brno industrial museum, which continued to expand in the following years.

However, objects from the world's fairs were also acquired for the museum's collections from other

sources. Among the important donors of the first Chinese and Japanese objects in Brno, Karl von Offermann (1820–1894), owner of textile factories and court supplier of military uniforms, who regularly participated in world exhibitions in London, Paris and Vienna, as a member of the expert juries, appears repeatedly in the inventory records.³⁹ Offermann undoubtedly qualified as a progressive entrepreneur of the time, as he swiftly recognised the significance of regular exhibition presentations in the context of the further development of industrial production, and therefore actively participated in both Austrian and later Austro-Hungarian exhibition ventures.⁴⁰

³⁹ Suchomel 2024.

⁴⁰ Karl Julius Josef von Offermann (1820–1894) and his brother Theodor (1822–1892) actively participated in the museum's development from the 1870s until their deaths in the 1890s. For further details on the Offermann family's other activities, see Šulová (1994) or Schmidtbauer (1978).

³⁸ Suchomel 2024, 13.



Fig. 9: Japanese baskets acquired for the Museum of Applied Arts in Brno from the Vienna World Fair in 1873. Courtesy of the Moravian Gallery in Brno.

A year after the end of the World's Fair, in 1874 and 1875, Offermann donated to the museum in Brno a total of 32 objects which probably came from his collecting activities at the Vienna Fair itself or at earlier events in which he had actively participated.⁴¹ He was interested in specimens of Chinese fabrics, Chinese shoes, stockings and hats, and leather articles. A traditional Japanese fan or a Chinese parasol were also part of this generous gift. Examples of Japanese basketry, lacquerware, Chinese ceramics and a traditional Chinese pipe formed an important part of his donation. In addition to the Far East, however, the Middle East and Arabia are also represented in this collection. It was the elegance of these art objects that captivated him at the Vienna World's Fair. Such examples were exhibited

in large numbers at the Japanese Bazaar and at the exhibition itself. His brother Theodor was also keen to support the museum's efforts, actively pursuing opportunities to develop and shape the museum's collections, including through the acquisition of new collections.

In the first years of the museum's existence, we also encounter other important donations which most probably originated at the World's Fair in Vienna. Here we should mention the Chinese textile screen⁴² demonstrating characteristic Chinese embroidery and the exhibits donated by the Moravian Association for the Promotion of Handicrafts, which again contained samples of East Asian fabrics or examples of handicrafts from Arabic regions. Some of

⁴¹ See Moravian Gallery in Brno, inv. nos. U581, U824, U826, U827, U831-840, U843-845, U848, U849, U851-854ab, U856-859, U861-863, U1228-U1229.

⁴² See Moravian Gallery in Brno, inv. no. U117 purchased in 1873 from the Vienna exhibition. https://sbirky.moravska-galerie.cz/dilo/CZE:MG.U_117. Accessed December 1, 2024.

these items were also added to the collections later, as evidenced, for example, by the inventory entry for subtle lace from the Syrian region which was purchased at the World's Fair, but not recorded as in the museum's possession until 1876.⁴³

The first ten years of the Brno Museum of Applied Arts were thus marked by the addition to its collections of Japanese and Chinese artefacts not exceeding ca. 106 items—mainly examples of lacquerware, ceramics, bamboo and fine fabrics, which represented an important part of the emerging collection. Although purchases of East Asian objects for the museum's collections were modest, the first major exhibition of non-European objects from the Oriental Museum in Vienna presented at the museum as early as 1877 was a great success. For example, the *Brünner Zeitung* dated 12 April 1877 published the following:

The travelling exhibition of the Oriental Museum in Vienna features braids from Tunis, China, and Japan, Persian calico, fabrics from Tunis, Egypt, Turkey, China, and Japan, uniforms from Turkey and Tunis, Japanese fire-fighting suits (both fireproof and waterproof), embroideries from China and Egypt, Japan and Persia, edgings from Tunis and Japan, and lace from Smyrna. Further specimens include samples of Tunisian and Chinese footwear and collections of lacquerware, porcelain, wood, and bronzes, as well as items made of soapstone from China and Japan; also, a rich collection of paper from China and Japan, and a vast collection of other commercial objects, assembled by His Excellency, Count Edmund Zichy [...].⁴⁴

East Asia ultimately remained of paramount importance to the museum throughout the following years,⁴⁵ as evidenced by the fact that in 1883, only

six years later, it presented the Brno public with yet another demonstration of its non-European collection, albeit this time in a much more comprehensive form. Instead of relying on a travelling exhibition showcasing its metropolitan collections, the museum approached prominent dealers and collectors. In contrast to 1877, this show was supplemented by a detailed catalogue⁴⁶ equipped with itemised descriptions of all exhibits on display. This reveals that a total of 1,071 items were on show for public viewing, which, in many cases, consisted of more than one example, and whose compilation was made possible only by the considerable support given by both public institutions and individuals who were willing to loan their collections for display. The exhibits included textiles, lacquerware, ceramics and porcelain, metalwork, bamboo weave work, objects made of wood, and works of graphic art and painting from the Far East from several private collectors. The show also included 164 items from the museum's own collection. The 1883 Brno exhibition no doubt provided further impetus for the expansion of the museum's non-European art collections; the Japanese collection, for example, grew by almost 120 exhibits between 1883 and 1900.⁴⁷ While donations from art collectors and dealers remained essential, the majority of these new objects were now being purposefully purchased by the museum, giving the impression that the institution's financial situation had stabilised.

But let us return to Vienna in 1873. Visiting the World's Fair was the cultural and social event of the season and it is likely that many visitors took home memories in the form of souvenirs. For example, if we look at some of the collections housed in former noblemen's mansions in Bohemia, we can also find

43 See Moravian Gallery in Brno, inv. no. U1531. https://sbirky.moravska-galerie.cz/dilo/CZE:MG.U_1531. Accessed December 1, 2024.

44 *Brünner Zeitung* 1877.

45 However, items of non-European provenance were also

displayed in smaller configurations at other museum exhibitions, often as gifts or loans from private collectors. Such was the case, for instance, in 1881, when according to an article in the *Mährisch-Schlesischer Correspondent*, the museum exhibited a Japanese “Caffette [...] eine herrliche Arbeit japanesischer Lackindustrie”, which had once again been donated to the museum by the dealer A. M. Mandl. Cf. *Mährisch-Schlesischer Correspondent* (1881).

46 Catalog 1883.

47 Suchomel 2024.

objects that come from visits to the Fair, as is evident, for example, in the basketry and papier-mâché works from the Richard Metternich (1829–1895) collection housed at Kynžvart Castle and purchased in 1873.⁴⁸

The Fair, which aroused strong interest throughout the monarchy, probably played a role in the development of the activities of some Czech and Moravian entrepreneurs. Let us remember at least Vilém Staněk (ca.1853–1893) (see fig.10), who soon after 1873 opened his tea and alcoholic beverages shop in Prague, in which, probably thanks to the influence of the exhibition, he supplemented his product range with other trade goods from distant countries, including Japan and China. During his business trips abroad, he became interested in the possibilities of importing East Asian goods to Prague, including Japanese and Chinese handicrafts. He then resold these goods from the late 1870s in a specialised shop in Prague on Vladislavova Street, which he regularly advertised in various Czech magazines.⁴⁹ In the 1880s Staněk held several special sales exhibitions of his Chinese and Japanese items, including bamboo items, embroidery, cotton blankets, Japanese paper and paper products, lacquerware, coloured photographs, Satsuma pottery, cloisonné, netsuke buttons, and embroidered screens, which, as advertised, were goods imported directly from his own branch warehouses in Hong Kong and Yokohama.⁵⁰

However, Staněk's company was not the first business to import Japanese and Chinese goods into the Czech territory. In the South Moravian metropolis of Brno, Japanese and Chinese arts and crafts goods were already available before the establishment of the Museum of Applied Arts in Brno, from at least the early 1860s, when Adolf M. Mandl (1831–?) opened a shop selling spirits, tea and exotic goods.⁵¹ While we cannot pinpoint the exact date on which the shop first began to offer this range of art, it would appear likely to have been around the year 1863, or 1864 at the very latest, as the article

mentioned above draws the reader's attention to the fact that "[...] for over ten years now, the renowned shop of Mr. A. M. Mandl has been offering a large selection of Chinese and Japanese goods".⁵² Mandl was offering a variety of art objects of Japanese and Chinese provenance at his store during the early 1870s, as the correspondent emphatically mentions:

Here one will find beautiful vases of various shapes. Plates, bowls, flowerpots, tea sets, tea bowls, artistically crafted baskets, boxes, jars, glove boxes, various lacquered and natural wood objects, teapots of all shapes and sizes, lamps and lanterns for both interior decoration and practical use. A true speciality to remark upon are the Chinese and Japanese bronzes depicting a wide range of human and animal characters, followed by cloisonné enamel and, finally, figurines of carved ivory. This brief list, which affords but a cursory account of the abundant and exquisite collection of Asian wares which visitors to Mandl's Tea Shop may choose from, is sufficient to attract the attention of the many lovers of trifles and curiosities.⁵³

Mandl, who is later repeatedly referred to as either the donor or the source of the Japanese and Chinese porcelain objects held in the Museum of Applied Arts in Brno, was undoubtedly a significant driving force—in the current sense of the word, an influencer—promoting interest in Asian cultures among the general Brno public. His shop was perhaps one of the first—if not the very first—in this country to spark a widespread interest in Asian products and art pieces. Its success inspired the activities of other Brno merchants in the late 1870s and early 1880s.⁵⁴

Much as in Liberec or Brno, other museum institutions were founded towards the end of the 19th century, which also bought items of Japanese and Chinese art and craft for their fresh collections,

48 Suchomel 2025.

49 Štembera 1996.

50 Hánová 2008, 125. See also *Národní listy* (1889a; 1889b).

51 Suchomel 2024, 7.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid.



Fig. 10: Emanuel Staněk. Advertising poster for Vilém Staněk's shop in Prague. Colour lithograph 1888. Private collection.

both those of a historical character and contemporary works. In 1881, the museum in the small Central Bohemian town of Čáslav acquired the collection of Josef Kaunický (1820–1908), originally a local joiner who in 1850–1875 had worked as a master of piano manufacture for Broadwood, a London company.⁵⁵ Kaunický was also influenced by visiting world exhibitions, where he became acquainted with the modern produce and traditional cultures of distant countries such as China and Japan. We know that he personally visited the World's Fairs in London in 1862, Dublin in 1865 and Paris in 1867, where he was able to encounter the products of non-European nations on a large scale.⁵⁶ During his stay abroad he acquired some oriental wares and thereby created a compact collection. However, he also made purchases in Vilém Staněk's shop selling oriental goods and tea in Prague. His collection eventually included contemporary Japanese wares, armour, lacquered and wooden bowls, porcelain or bamboo wares, which were a regular component of Japanese collections at the time, making them mostly ethnographic wares and not top works of art.

In the late 1870s, 1880s and 1890s, other regional museums were created which, among other things, also bought goods of Japanese or Chinese origin. The most important of these was the *Západočeské museum v Plzni* (the West Bohemian Museum in Pilsen), founded in 1878, which exhibited its first objects of Asian provenance in the first two years of its existence. The museum collected Asian craft systematically until the First World War, creating a small, comprehensive collection, based on porcelain, lacquerware, ivory, examples of weapons and their fittings, armour, and Japanese woodblock prints. We should also mention the *Slezské muzeum v Opavě* (Silesian Museum in Opava / *Das Schlesische Landesmuseum*),⁵⁷ founded in 1882, which also collected a very interesting set of Chinese and Japanese artefacts from the beginning. However, this collection was almost completely destroyed during the Second World War, as

the museum was completely burnt down due to war operations in 1945.

Less important Asian collections were created in other museum institutions, where the artefacts were often acquired as special examples of exceptional designs. Here we should not omit the *Jihočeské muzeum* (South Bohemian Museum) in České Budějovice (founded 1877 as *Stadtmuseum* in Budweis), the *Jihomoravské muzeum* (South Moravian Museum) in Znojmo (founded 1878 as *Südmährisches Museum* in Znaim), *Regionální muzeum* (the Regional Museum) in Teplice (*Regionalmuseum* in Teplitz 1894), or *Regionální muzeum* (the Regional Museum) in Děčín (founded in 1892 as the *Stadtmuseum* in Tätschen and opened to the public in 1908) and a number of other small institutions where Japanese and Chinese objects made up a small, marginal and yet important component of the assets, that gave an idea of the art and crafts of these remote lands.

Most of these institutions, however, did not expand their non-European collections during the 20th century.

Opening of New Sea Routes to Asia as a Further Impetus for Collecting East Asian Objects

If we talk about the beginnings of modern collecting of Japanese and Chinese objects in the Czech lands, it is necessary to mention the first travellers who, thanks to new opportunities, were able to reach countries that had been practically inaccessible only a few decades earlier. It was the discovery of the propeller and steam power and not least the shortening of the route to Asia thanks to the Suez Canal that enabled the quick development of maritime transport and with that also new possibilities of travel. Representatives of the landed nobility would travel to the Far East and bring back interesting artefacts which enriched their existing collections.

It was, in fact, navy personnel who were among the first to have the opportunity to learn in situ about the culture and customs of distant nations, and who

⁵⁵ Sajvera 2006, 38.

⁵⁶ Suchomel 2019.

⁵⁷ *Schlesisches Landesmuseum für Kunst und Gewerbe*.



Fig. 11: Unknown photographers. Costumes from China. A sheet from an album of Chinese photographs purchased by Heinrich Wawra in the early 1870s. Private collection.

brought back from their travels the first more complete collections of various objects from the destinations they visited, especially after the Suez Canal was opened and travel to the Far East was greatly simplified. Here it is necessary to mention the physician Heinrich Wawra von Fernsee (1831–1887), who visited the Far East in the service of the navy in 1868–1869 aboard the frigate *Donau* and later privately in 1872–1873, and his colleague, Erwin Dubský (1836–1909), who as first mate of the corvette *Erzherzog Friedrich* took part in the round-the-world expedition of 1874–1876, during which the crew visited Southeast Asia, China and Japan. Among Wawra's collections, we should mention in particular the unique set of more than 500 historical photographs that he purchased during his two trips to document the geography of the places he visited, as well as the local people and their customs. The collection contains photographs not only by Wilhelm Burger, the official photographer of the 1868 *Donau* frigate expedition, but also by a number of other photographers who operated studios in the Asian open ports (fig.11).⁵⁸

58 Suchomel and Suchomelová 2011.

If we look at Erwin Dubský's collection, which is now housed in Lysice Castle, it is striking that the largest part of it consists of objects from Japan, although the expedition also spent many days in Siam, China and the American continent. Why didn't Dubský bring back objects from other parts of the world in larger numbers? It seems that Japanese goods were greatly admired thanks to the fame of their successful presentation at the Vienna Exhibition, whether they were traditional Japanese porcelain, lacquerware, cloisonné, woodcarvings or various Japanese weapons (see fig.12).

Although Dubský mentions the exhibition only in passing in his diary of this trip, it is clear that, like most of his contemporaries, he also visited the World's Fair. Seeing the Japanese exhibition probably influenced him greatly in his choice of souvenirs during his travels.⁵⁹ This is also evidenced by the mention of the Vienna exhibition in another travelogue entitled *Um die Erde: Reiseskizzen von der Erdumseglung mit S. M. Corvette "Erzherzog Friedrich" in den Jahren 1874, 1875 und 1876*, published

59 Suchomel 2022.



Fig. 12: Case and vases decorated with cloisonné technique. Japan early 1870s. Collection of Erwin Dubský, Lysice Castle. Courtesy of Lysice castle administrative office.

in Vienna in 1878 by Josef Lehnert (1841–1896), a colleague of Erwin Dubský from the crew of the corvette *Erzherzog Friedrich*.⁶⁰ In connection with the World's Fair in Vienna, Lehnert mentions the extraordinary interest aroused among visitors by some of the foreign objects on display, such as Chinese carved ivory concentric balls or Japanese folding fans of the *ogi* type from Kyoto.⁶¹ All these references in contemporary literature confirm how strongly the World's Fair shaped the way distant countries were ultimately perceived, and how it influenced the contemporary view of quality products from Japan. The Japanese presentation at the Fair was certainly one of the most attractive, and this awakened the interest of Central Europeans in finding out more about this distant country.

⁶⁰ Lehnert 1878.

⁶¹ Lehnert 1878, 244 and 465.

We can see, then, that it was the Vienna World's Fair that was chiefly responsible for the growing thirst in the Habsburg Monarchy for knowledge of distant lands. Of greatest interest were the countries of East Asia, China and, above all, Japan, whose presentation at the exhibition was very popular. Influenced by their experiences at the World's Fair, the industrialist and representative of the Austrian noble family Josef Doblhoff (1844–1928) and his friend, the painter Julius Blaas (1845–1922), even set off for the Far East before the Fair ended in October 1873. In his diary, *Tagebuchblätter von einer Reise nach Ostasien 1873–1874*, which was published in book form shortly after his return to Europe, Doblhoff (1874/1875) notes that it was the Vienna exhibition that aroused his desire to explore new lands. Doblhoff mentions the World's Fair several times in the book, and it is clear that



Fig. 13: Václav Stejskal's collection of Japanese and Chinese objects arranged in his villa in Hostomice pod Brdy in the 1930s. Private collection.

he was particularly impressed by the Far Eastern presentations.⁶²

An important figure associated with Japan, and also with the presentation at the World's Fair in Vienna, was the Czech-Austrian, Raimund von Stillfried-Ratenicz (1839–1911), who spent several years in Japan. This native of Chomutov in West Bohemia opened his own photographic studio in Yokohama in 1871 and made a significant contribution to the development of Japanese photography.⁶³ Even before the Vienna exhibition, he had already made himself known by two significant activities that greatly influenced his subsequent successful career running a major photographic studio. First and foremost was the fact that he was the first to photograph the Emperor of Japan in January 1872.⁶⁴ The main aim of this semi-illegal activity was to monetise these unique images, which caused a truly international scandal and forced the Japanese authorities to commission official portraits of the then monarch and empress. Stillfried's next major work was the first photographs of the indigenous Ainu people of Hokkaido, which documented the very different indigenous culture of the Japanese island.⁶⁵ Stillfried played a key role in fostering connections between his homeland and distant Japan. Most Austrian visitors to Japan at the time met him as a fellow countryman, and Doblhoff, Blaas, Dubský, Lehnert and, only a little later, another aristocrat, Joseph Zichy, did so likewise. Stillfried helped them get around in unfamiliar surroundings, and thanks to him, they all took larger sets of photographs that became the basis of their collections of Japanese and Chinese art.

Stillfried's high-quality albumen images depicting Japan's most famous sites were among the top photographic works of their time. The most interesting part of his work, however, was undoubtedly the hand-coloured portraits of

Japanese beauties and the arranged images depicting traditional Japanese crafts, customs or habits, where Stillfried's painterly training—which one would not expect from a former Austrian army officer—was fully evident. Thanks to the contacts he made with compatriots, Stillfried's photographs have been preserved to this day in the collection of Erwin Dubský at Lysice Castle and in the estate of Josef Doblhoff, now housed in Baden near Vienna. Stillfried's pictures essentially served at that time to help Europeans better understand Japanese realities. This was also helped by their public presentation, for example at the exhibition of Dubský's collection from his round-the-world trip, and the 1876 display in Lysice, which became a real attraction of the Moravian countryside. Raimund Stillfried was something of a fixture for Austrian visitors to Japan, and so it is not surprising that we find information about meetings with him in reports of other travellers, such as Richard Drasche-Wartimberg (1850–1923) or Josef Zichy (1841–1924) and Gustav (1852–1925) Zichy in the mid-1870s.⁶⁶ They, too, acquired Stillfried's photographs for their collections, either in loose-leaf form or in albums, but here their collections have not survived in their entirety.

Speaking of travellers to the distant lands of the Far East, we should also mention other representatives of the Austro-Hungarian Navy. One of them was Václav Stejskal (1851–1934), a quartermaster on the *Aurora* cruiser, who visited Japan in 1888 and brought home a collection of over 500 items which he donated to the Náprstek Museum in the 1930s.⁶⁷ These were again wares commonly available in traditional “curioshops” in Yokohama or Tokyo, related to military nobility (armour, weapons), and also, for example, models of buildings, bamboo baskets, clothes, porcelain and lacquerware.

At the end of this survey of important Czech and Moravian collectors of East Asian objects in the 19th century, we should not omit two other travellers associated with Vojta Náprstek (1826–1894).

62 Doblhoff 1874–1875. (Japan is described in the vol. 3, pp. 1–174 with 3 photographs after oil paintings by Julius Blaas done in Yokohama, March 1874.)

63 Gartlan 2016.

64 Ibid., 72–103.

65 Ibid., 104–41.

66 Suchomel 2023, 201.

67 Suchomelová and Suchomel 2005.

These were Enrique Stanko Vráz (1860–1932), who donated a large collection of objects from Africa, America and Asia to the Náprstek museum, supplemented by his unique photographs taken in China and Korea in 1900, and, above all, Josef Kořenský (1847–1938), who was already well educated about the Far East through regular meetings with Vojta Náprstek and his circle when he set off on his journey. Náprstek even prepared a list of specific things that the museum was at that time most interested in, for example samples of cloisonné production. The black-and-white and the hand-coloured photographs purchased throughout his 1893–1894 round-the-world trip also played a significant role in Kořenský's collection. After his return to his homeland, the traveller used them during his extensive lecturing activities, so that the population not only in the large Czech and Moravian cities but also in the countryside learned about Japan, China and other countries.

Conclusion

The second half of the 19th century thus brought completely new impulses to the thirst for knowledge of non-European cultures in Bohemia and Moravia, as elsewhere in Europe. The World's Fairs, which aimed to promote progress and technical innovation, sparked increased interest in distant lands not only among manufacturers and traders, who found in the presentations incentives for new innovative steps, but also among the general public, whether they were direct visitors to these exhibitions or just readers of the daily press. In Bohemia, it was undoubtedly Vojta Náprstek and his circle of acquaintances and friends who were most instrumental in raising awareness in this field and were behind the origin of the collections of the Náprstek Museum, the largest Czech institution dedicated to the study of cultures from outside Europe.

The Vienna World's Fair and its Japanese and Chinese presentations provided the impetus for the creation and development of new business

activities with goods from these distant lands, which increasingly found their way into Czech and Moravian households in the form of either home accessories or souvenir fashion artefacts. New specialised shops were established not only in the Austrian capital itself, but also on the periphery—in Prague, Brno or Budapest—leading to a widespread interest in collecting foreign artefacts, which often amazed not only with their noble, detailed precision workmanship, but also with exotic decor themes. The newly established museums of applied arts in Liberec, Brno and Prague acquired not only examples of European production, but also products from East Asia which were to become a source of inspiration for local production. As in Western Europe, travelogues of those who could visit distant places became bestsellers in Austria-Hungary. It was during these business or sightseeing trips that the first comprehensive collections from the Far East were assembled, which are still preserved in Bohemia and Moravia today, not only in the aforementioned Náprstek Museum, but also in other public collections.

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