

Project Museum

Private and Public Collecting of Non-European Objects in the Early 20th Century



International Symposium
22–24 April 2026, Ljubljana, Slovenia

International Symposium

**Project Museum:
Private and Public Collecting of Non-European
Objects in the Early 20th Century**

Ljubljana, Slovene Ethnographic Museum,
22–24 April 2026

Programme and Abstracts



International Symposium

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Objects in the Early 20th Century**

Programme and Abstracts

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CONTENTS

PROGRAMME	7
ABSTRACTS (in alphabetical order)	
INTERPRETING CHINA: AN ANALYSIS OF MISSIONARY TURK'S OBJECT LABELS <i>Tina BERDAJS</i>	14
EDWARD GOLDSTEIN (1844–1920) AND THE CERNUSCHI MUSEUM IN PARIS (1904–1908) <i>Camille BERTRAND</i>	15
ORIENTALIST DÉCOR OR MORE? DISPLAYING CHINESE DECORATIVE TEXTILES IN FRENCH AND BELGIAN MUSEUMS AT THE TURN OF THE 20TH CENTURY <i>Ariane DA CUNHA</i>	16
CHINESE CATHOLIC WAVES: COLLECTING CHINESE CATHOLIC ART IN PRIVATE COLLECTIONS <i>Antonio DE CARO</i>	17
FROM PRIVATE OWNERSHIP TO NATIONAL HERITAGE: THE EARLY 20TH-CENTURY UKIYO-E COLLECTION OF NAIM–BAS <i>Zlatka DIMITROVA</i>	18
PALIMPSESTS OF DEVOTION: THE FRAGMENTED AFTERLIVES OF THE GUANGSHENCSI MURALS IN EARLY 20TH CENTURY COLLECTING PRACTICES <i>DONG Xinyu (Maya)</i>	19
LANG SHINING (GIUSEPPE CASTIGLIONE;郎世寧; 1688–1766)'S SCROLLS, DONATED TO THE STATE MUSEUM OF ORIENTAL ART IN MOSCOW BY VLADIMIR S. KALABUSHKIN: HISTORY OF COLLECTION AND PROBLEMS OF ATTRIBUTION <i>Dinara DUBROVSKAYA</i>	20
INTERPRETING THE USE OF OBJECTS FROM MISSIONARY COLLECTIONS THROUGH PICTORIAL AND PHOTOGRAPHIC SOURCES <i>Marko FRELIH</i>	21
DILETTANTE COLLECTORS, OR NOT? A SET OF POTTERY LAMPS FROM THE HELLMUTH COLLECTION OF EGYPTIAN ANTIQUITIES <i>Jiří HONZL</i>	22
BEFORE IT BECAME PUBLIC: THE SKUŠEK COLLECTION AND ITS 1956 UNOFFICIAL GUEST BOOK <i>Klara HRVATIN</i>	23

THE KARLBECK SYNDICATE (1930–1935): CONTEXTUALISING THE EARLY CHINESE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC COLLECTIONS IN EUROPE <i>Valerie JURGENS</i>	24
TRANSLATING THE MUSEUM: TEXT, IMAGE, AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE MUSEUM IN LATE QING CHINA <i>Kevin LAM</i>	25
BETWEEN MUSEUM AND GALLERY PRACTICES: THE EARLY EXHIBITIONS OF THE DUTCH ASIAN ART SOCIETY <i>Rozanna MAAS and Marit FELD</i>	26
NON-EUROPEAN COLLECTION IN THE REGIONAL MUSEUM – THE CASE OF THE WEST BOHEMIAN MUSEUM IN PILSEN <i>Jindřich MLEZIVA</i>	27
FROM THE ALTAR TO THE STORAGE ROOM: THE FATE OF CHURCH AND MONASTIC COLLECTIONS AND THEIR TRANSFORMATION INTO MUSEUM COLLECTIONS IN THE CELJE REGION (1938–1958) <i>Davor MLINARIČ</i>	28
CURATING THE EXPERIENCE: „MULTIMEDIA“ IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY MISSIONARY EXHIBITIONS <i>Helena MOTOH</i>	29
PRIVATE COLLECTIONS BECOMING PUBLIC: ORIENTAL INSTITUTE IN PRAGUE IN THE 1930S AND THE QUEST FOR A STATE COLLECTION OF ASIAN ART <i>Michaela PEJCOCHOVA</i>	30
THE ROLE OF PRINT MEDIA AND ARCHIVES IN RESEARCH ON MISSIONARY COLLECTIONS IN SLOVENIA <i>Alenka PIPAN MUBI and Marko FRELIH</i>	31
COLLECTING, DISPLAYING, AND CREATING A NEW TASTE FOR CHINESE ART FROM EUMORFOPOULOS' PRIVATE MUSEUM TO PUBLIC MUSEUMS, 1908 TO 1934 <i>QIU Yifan</i>	32
THE ART OF TURKESTAN AND THE „MUSLIM EAST“ IN MUSEUM EXHIBITIONS OF THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE <i>Natalia V. SAFONOVA</i>	33
FROM A PIECE OF POSTCARD TO A LOST HISTORY AND RECONSTRUCTED BIOGRAPHIES <i>Chikako SHIGEMORI BUČAR</i>	34
CULTURAL VOW IN BOOK COLLECTING AND THE FORMATION OF MANUSCRIPT LIBRARIES IN IRAN <i>Azam SOHEILIPOUR</i>	35

MISSION, MUSEUM, EMPIRE: A SWISS PROTESTANT COLLECTION OF JAPANESE RELIGIOUS IMAGES AND THE UNMAKING OF COMPARATIVE RELIGION, C. 1880–1920 <i>Tomoe I. M. STEINECK</i>	36
„I CANNOT CONCEIVE OF LIVING OTHERWISE THAN IN MY CHAMBERS, ADORNED WITH THE WHOLE OF MY ILLUSTRIOUS INHERITANCE.“ A LIFELONG COLLECTOR JOE HLOUCHA <i>Jan ŠEJBL</i>	37
PHOTOGRAPHIC LEGACY: ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION <i>Bojan ŠIBENIK</i>	38
CURATING JAPANESE ILLUSTRATED BOOKS ABROAD: ART-HISTORICAL FRAMEWORKS AND THE JAPANESE DONATION TO THE UNIVERSITY OF LOUVAIN <i>Freya TERRY</i>	39
THE HÜTTEROTT FAMILY COLLECTION: FROM TRIESTE AND ROVINJ TO THE PUBLIC SPHERE <i>Tajana UJČIĆ and Katarina MARIĆ</i>	40
COLLECTING CHINESE ART IN EARLY 20TH CENTURY BEIJING: THE CASE OF IVAN SKUŠEK JR. <i>Nataša VAMPELJ SUHADOLNIK</i>	41
FROM THE TOMB TO THE MUSEUM PLINTH: CHINESE BURIAL OBJECTS ON DISPLAY IN THE VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM AND THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART <i>Elaigha VILAYSANE</i>	42
MAPPING THE ETHNOGRAPHIC AND RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES OF PETER BAPTIST TURK IN EARLY 20TH-CENTURY EASTERN HUBEI <i>WANG Hao</i>	43
MEMORY LOSS OF AN UKIYO-E COLLECTION: ATTEMPTS AT RECONSTRUCTING PROVENANCE OF P. M. MONTANI'S ALBUM OF WOODBLOCK PRINTS <i>Stella ZHIVKOVA</i>	44

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Slovene Ethnographic Museum



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PROGRAMME

Wednesday, 22 April

9:00–9:30 *Registration*

9:30–9:45 *Welcome address*

9:45–12:00 *Panel 1*

Ariane Da Cunha: Orientalist décor or more? Displaying Chinese decorative textiles in French and Belgian museums at the turn of the 20th century

Roxanna Maas and Marit Feld: Between museum and gallery practices: The Early Exhibitions of the Dutch Asian Art Society (double presentation)

Valerie Jurgens: The Karlbeck Syndicate (1930–1935): contextualising the early Chinese private and public collections in Europe

Dinara Dubrovskaya: Lang Shining (Giuseppe Castiglione; 郎世寧; 1688–1766)'s Scrolls, Donated to the State Museum of Oriental Art in Moscow by Vladimir S. Kalabushkin: History of Collection and Problems of Attribution

12:00–13:30 Lunch break

13:30–15:30 *Panel 2*

Natalia V. Safonova : The Art of Turkestan and the „Muslim East“ in Museum Exhibitions of the Russian Empire

Azam Soheilipour: Cultural vow in book collecting and the formation of manuscript libraries in Iran

Jindřich Mleziva: Non-European collection in the regional museum – the case of the West Bohemian Museum in Pilsen

Wang Hao: Mapping the Ethnographic and Religious Activities of Peter Baptist Turk in Early 20th-Century Eastern Hubei

15:30–16:00 Coffee break

16:00–18:00 Panel 3

Jiří Honzl: Dilettante collectors, or not? A set of pottery lamps from the Hellmuth collection of Egyptian antiquities

Jan Šejbl: „I cannot conceive of living otherwise than in my chambers, adorned with the whole of my illustrious inheritance.“ A lifelong collector Joe Hloucha

Nataša Vampelj Suhadolnik: Collecting Chinese Art in Early 20th-Century Beijing: the Case of Ivan Skušek Jr.

Klara Hrvatin: Before it became public: the Skušek collection and its 1956 unofficial guest book

18:00–20:00 Welcome reception

Thursday, 23 April

8:40–9:00 *Registration*

9:00–11:00 *Panel 4*

Kevin Lam: Translating the Museum: Text, Image, and the Construction of the Museum in Late Qing China

Elaigha Vilaysane: From the Tomb to the Museum Plinth: Chinese Burial Objects on Display in the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of Art

Dong Xinyu (Maya): Palimpsests of Devotion: The Fragmented Afterlives of the Guangshengsi Murals in Early 20th Century Collecting Practices

Camille Bertrand: Edward Goldstein (1844–1920) and the Cernuschi Museum in Paris (1904–1908)

11:00–12:30 *Guided tour of the exhibition »Asia in the Heart of Ljubljana«, Slovene Ethnographic Museum*

12:30–14:00 *Lunch break*

14:00–16:00 *Panel 5*

Tomoë I. M. Steineck: Mission, Museum, Empire: A Swiss Protestant Collection of Japanese Religious Images and the Unmaking of Comparative Religion, c. 1880–1920

Davor Mlinarič: From the Altar to the Storage Room: The Fate of Church and Monastic Collections and Their Transformation into Museum Collections in the Celje Region (1938–1958)

Helena Motoh: Curating the experience: „Multimedia“ in the Early 20th Century Missionary Exhibitions

Tina Berdajs: Interpreting China: an Analysis of Missionary Turk's Object Labels

16:00–16:30 *Coffee break*

16:30–18:00 Panel 6

Freya Terryn: Curating Japanese Illustrated Books Abroad: Art-Historical Frameworks and the Japanese Donation to the University of Louvain

Antonio De Caro: Chinese Catholic Waves: Collecting Chinese Catholic Art in Private Collections

Stella Zhivkova: Memory Loss of an Ukiyo-e Collection: Attempts at Reconstructing Provenance of P.M Montani`s Album of Woodblock Prints

18:00–19:00 Publications presentation

Friday, 24 April

9:00-11:00 *Guided tour of Ljubljana*
(meeting place: Prešeren square, in front of the monument)

11:00–13:00 *Panel 7*

Tajana Ujčić and Katarina Marić: The Hütterott Family Collection: From Trieste and Rovinj to the Public Sphere

Qiu Yifan: Collecting, Displaying, and Creating a New Taste for Chinese Art from Eumorfopoulos' Private Museum to Public Museums, 1908 to 1934

Zlatka Dimitrova: From Private Ownership to National Heritage: The Early 20th-Century Ukiyo-e Collection of NAIM–BAS

Michaela Pejcochova: Private collections becoming public: Oriental Institute in Prague in the 1930s and the quest for a state collection of Asian art

13:00–14:30 *Lunch break*

14:30–16:30 *Panel 8: Archives, Media, and Visual Sources*

Alenka Pipan Mubi and Marko Frelj: The Role of Print Media and Archives in Research on Missionary Collections in Slovenia

Chikako Shigemori Bučar: From a Piece of Postcard to a Lost History and Reconstructed Biographies

Bojan Šibenik: Photographic Legacy: Analysis and Interpretation

Marko Frelj: Interpreting the Use of Objects from Missionary Collections through Pictorial and Photographic Sources

16:30–17:00 *Coffee break*

17:00–17:15 *Closing remarks*

ABSTRACTS

(in alphabetical order)

INTERPRETING CHINA: AN ANALYSIS OF MISSIONARY TURK'S OBJECT LABELS

Tina BERDAJS

This paper examines the objects from the Turk Collection, today kept at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum. It was collected by the Slovenian missionary p. Peter Baptist Turk (1874–1944), who lived and worked in China during the first half of the 20th century. In 1912 and 1913 he sent several shipments of Chinese objects to the Provincial Museum of Carniola – Rudolfinum (today National Museum of Slovenia). He also maintained correspondence with the museum's director, Josip Mantuani (1860–1933), providing additional information about the objects he collected.

Many of the objects in the museum still have the original handwritten labels. Their contents are relatively consistent and typically include three main types of information. In order of frequency, these are: 1) identification of the object with a phonetic version of its Chinese name; 2) a description of object's use, often connected to everyday use or ritual/spiritual practices; 3) rarely, notes on iconography. Similar descriptions about the names and uses of some of the objects also appear in one of the Turk's preserved letters, which discusses several objects in greater detail. These notes are also included in the present research.

Through analysis of the labels and letters as well as cross-referencing the writings with the current research data of the museum collection, this paper attempts to reconstruct a part of the provenance of selected objects as well as offer an insight into local Chinese ritual/spiritual beliefs and practices in the early 20th century and their interpretation through the eyes of p. Peter Baptist Turk.

EDWARD GOLDSTEIN (1844–1920) AND THE CERNUSCHI MUSEUM IN PARIS (1904–1908)

Camille BERTRAND

An investigation in the remaining archives of the Cernuschi museum between 1896 and 1910, the archives of the city of Paris, and the Archives of the National Museum of Kraków led to the identification of the doctor and anthropologist Edward Goldstein (1844-1920) as a private collector working for the Cernuschi museum between 1904 and 1908.

The museum opened in 1898, two years after the death of its owner, the Italian economist and collector Enrico Cernuschi (1821-1896), who brought back from a two-year journey in Asia an important collection of art. At his death, Eugène Causse (1824-1905), his former secretary, was put in charge of the museum. He retired in 1905 and Henri d'Ardenne de Tizac (1877-1932) was appointed as the new curator in charge. Neither of them was an art historian nor had any particular scientific background. Goldstein might have worked with Causse, prior to Ardenne de Tizac's arrival, with the aim of writing a catalogue of the collection, as well as helping to manage administrative matters. He seems to have been a considerable help to d'Ardenne de Tizac, who obtained credits from the municipality to finance Goldstein's work. The aim was to publish a catalogue with photographs of the collection, identifying all the objects. At that time, most of the collection remained curiosities from the Far East for Parisians, with most objects hardly identified.

The archives of the museum also attest to Goldstein's intention to donate his Asian objects to the museum, while he was at the same time discussing with Feliks Kopera (1871-1952) of the same possibility for the National Museum in Kraków, to which he finally chose to donate his European and Asian art collection and library in 1909.

ORIENTALIST DÉCOR OR MORE? DISPLAYING CHINESE DECORATIVE TEXTILES IN FRENCH AND BELGIAN MUSEUMS AT THE TURN OF THE 20TH CENTURY

Ariane DA CUNHA

The aim of this presentation is to discuss how Chinese textiles were acquired, displayed and understood by Asian art collectors at the turn of the 20th through the study of two museum interiors: the “Jade Room” in the Guimet museum of religions in Paris (France) and the “Lacquer Salon” in the royal Museum of Mariemont in Morlanwelz (Belgium). These displays were organized by Asian art collectors Emile Guimet (1836-1918) and Raoul Warocqué (1870-1917), both wealthy industrialists who turned their private collections into public museums.

In 1889, when Guimet inaugurated his museum of religions, the “Jade room” was arranged to create an intimate atmosphere, echoing the orientalist taste of the late 19th century. Walls were adorned with embroidered silk hangings, therefore enhancing the luminous quality of the jade. Two decades later, Warocqué used Chinese textiles in a similar way, in the room later known as the “Lacquer Salon”. Photographs of these now-dismantled interiors provide precious insights into how both collectors envisioned the exhibition of their collection to the public.

These historic displays were later removed as curators opted for a “white cube” mode of museography. The textiles were stored away, dismissed as extravagant décor. However, the study of these textiles and their provenance offer a more nuanced vision of the value they held for their collectors. Rather than the usual export embroidery, these textiles were produced for specific ritual and social functions in China. As travel to Asia became readily available for wealthy individuals, these new types of textiles - once used - were brought back and repurposed upon entering private collections. Therefore, these two interiors reflect the shift in collecting practices for Chinese textiles that occurred at the turn of the century.

CHINESE CATHOLIC WAVES: COLLECTING CHINESE CATHOLIC ART IN PRIVATE COLLECTIONS

Antonio DE CARO

Among the numerous Chinese artworks owned by the Swiss collector Aloys Revilliod de Muralt (1839–1921), a dish, a saucer, and a cup all depict the Resurrection of Christ with clear Chinese features. Chinese craftspeople, often inspired by European prints and models, created a diverse array of similar Catholic artworks to be sent to Europe. These artworks were highly sought after by European collectors, who also frequently made specific requests to skilled Chinese artists throughout the Qing dynasty. Many of these objects did not merely replicate European motifs; instead, they established a novel form of Catholic art produced in China, featuring various unique details. Chinese Catholic artworks, then, circulated widely between China and Europe. Local Chinese Catholic communities collected or exhibited some for public or private devotion, while others were destined for the European market, where they were often perceived as commodities rather than religious artifacts. Prominent European Catholic clergymen collected similar objects and later included them in museum collections in Europe, like the Museo diocesano di Pordenone, in the case of Monsignor Celso Costantini C.D.D. (1876–1958). This presentation highlights various ‘waves’ intersecting the collection of Chinese Catholic artworks and their significance across markets, individuals, and different actors who often tried to influence their circulation, importance, and the diverse narratives surrounding them.

FROM PRIVATE OWNERSHIP TO NATIONAL HERITAGE: THE EARLY 20TH-CENTURY UKIYO-E COLLECTION OF NAIM-BAS

Zlatka DIMITROVA

The group of ukiyo-e prints preserved today at the National Archaeological Institute with Museum at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (NAIM-BAS) constitutes one of the earliest collections of Japanese art to enter a Bulgarian museum. Originally assembled and owned by the collector Zakharii Kostov, the ensemble provides a case for examining the display and institutionalization of non-European art in Bulgaria during the first half of the 20th century.

Kostov first exhibited the collection to the Bulgarian public in the 1930s, introducing ukiyo-e woodblock prints to local audiences. Including prints attributed to Hiroshige and leading artists, the collection is distinguished by the only complete ukiyo-e series in a Bulgarian museum: Hiroshige's *Aritaya Tōkaidō* (1843–47). Part of the prints reflects trends typical of the European market in the early 20th century. The collection also contains the only *chirimen-e* (crepe-paper) prints preserved in any Bulgarian museum.

In 1949, Kostov sold the collection to the then-called National Museum during a period of political transformation marked by the establishment of the socialist regime and the restructuring of Bulgaria's oldest museum into the Archaeological Museum and what would later become the National Art Gallery. As a result, the collection remained largely hidden from the public until 2023. Archival indications suggest that the prints obtained may not represent the entirety of Kostov's original collection, raising questions about the dispersal or retention of certain works.

The presentation offers both analysis of the content of the collection as well as reconstructions and hypothesis of Kostov's collection—from private ownership and to its postwar integration into a national institution. Situating the NAIM-BAS ukiyo-e holdings within broader European collecting practices, the study shows how the mobility of Japanese art, mediated through individual collectors and evolving political frameworks, contributed to the formation of public cultural narratives in Bulgaria.

PALIMPSESTS OF DEVOTION: THE FRAGMENTED AFTERLIVES OF THE GUANGSHENGLI MURALS IN EARLY 20TH CENTURY COLLECTING PRACTICES

DONG Xinyu (Maya)

In early 20th-century China, social instability and the absence of effective heritage protections made sacred art increasingly vulnerable to removal and export. During this period, Buddhist and Daoist objects were taken from temples and circulated through intermediaries and private dealers before entering collecting networks in Europe and North America. The Yuan-dynasty murals removed from Guangshengsi in Shanxi exemplify this trajectory. Between 1928 and 1929, the murals were cut from temple walls, divided into portable fragments, and acquired by the dealer C. T. Loo, whose commercial networks positioned them as desirable commodities in Western markets. Their movement from a religious interior in Shanxi to private parlours, dealer showrooms, and public museums such as the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art exposes a historical gap: the lack of scholarly attention to how commercial brokerage and institutional authority jointly shaped the afterlives of sacred objects.

This paper addresses this gap by using the Guangshengsi murals as a lens to examine how the removal, circulation, and recontextualisation of sacred art generated new interpretive regimes linking private entrepreneurship to emerging museum authority. Methodologically, the study combines object biography, provenance analysis, and historiographies of Asian art collecting with concepts of afterlives, epistemic violence, and colonial recontextualisation. By tracing the murals' passage across commercial, domestic, and institutional settings, the paper reconstructs the networks and transactions that transformed religious murals into museum-legible heritage. The paper argues that repeated acts of extraction, sale, conservation, and display recast the murals as palimpsests of devotion, their spiritual, aesthetic, and historical layers overwritten at each stage of circulation. It proposes that the early 20th-century movement of sacred fragments created a liminal interpretive zone in which collectors, dealers, and museums negotiated representational authority. This negotiation generated the regimes through which non-European religious art was classified, displayed, and ultimately absorbed into Western museum culture.

**LANG SHINING (GIUSEPPE CASTIGLIONE;
郎世寧; 1688–1766)’S SCROLLS, DONATED TO THE STATE
MUSEUM OF ORIENTAL ART IN MOSCOW BY VLADIMIR
S. KALABUSHKIN: HISTORY OF COLLECTION AND
PROBLEMS OF ATTRIBUTION**

Dinara DUBROVSKAYA

This talk will examine a group of scrolls from the collection of the State Museum of Oriental Art in Moscow (hereinafter referred to as the SMoA) signed with the name of Lan Shining (Giuseppe Castiglione; 郎世寧; 1688–1766). The speaker will seek to elucidate the reasons why one of the scrolls was long attributed to Castiglione, as well as to trace the influence and transformation of the Italian artist’s style, motifs, and paintings using works from the SMoA, confidently dated to the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Though the problem of Jesuit missionaries’ perception of Chinese art starts from the founder of the Mission in China Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), who was the first to introduce Western painting to Ming dynasty Emperor Wan Li (though in vain), that discrepancy was overcome by a seminal Jesuit painter at the Qing Court—Giuseppe Castiglione. Russian collections can boast of his single work, under the title of “Playing Children” (Qing Emperor Qian Long’s period). Besides this scroll, State Museum of Oriental Art counts six horizontal scrolls (among which “Ice Show on the Taiyi Lake”, previously falsely attributed to Castiglione), produced in Beijing in the beginning of the 20th century. The talk will cover development of the mutual movement of Jesuit artists and their Chinese (Manchu) patrons, leading to the emergence of Sino-European style, mirroring the famous Accomodativa principles of Jesuit teaching and bridging Ricci’s ideas with Castiglione’s art, as well as analyze the process of acquisition of the unique collection in question.

INTERPRETING THE USE OF OBJECTS FROM MISSIONARY COLLECTIONS THROUGH PICTORIAL AND PHOTOGRAPHIC SOURCES

Marko FRELIH

Interpreting of non-European objects often requires understanding their original function, a task complicated by incomplete documentation. Although collectors' descriptions and comparative analyses are essential, pictorial sources – such as sketches, drawings, and photographs – provide critical insights.

For 19th-century collections, including those from southern Sudan, paintings by Ignacij Knoblehar, Jakob Šašel, Wilhelm von Harnier, and Franz Morlang offer valuable context. In the early 20th century, field photography became indispensable, as shown by Paul Schebesta's documentation of Bambuti (Mbuti) material culture in Congo. Further collections acquired by the St. Peter Claver Society for African Missions between the World Wars were interpreted using comparative methods and photographic sources published by the Society.

DILETTANTE COLLECTORS, OR NOT? A SET OF POTTERY LAMPS FROM THE HELLMUTH COLLECTION OF EGYPTIAN ANTIQUITIES

Jiří HONZL

Vladimír Hellmuth-Brauner (1910–1982) was a diplomat, serving in 1947–1950 at the Czechoslovak embassy in Cairo. During this time, he and his wife Marta Hellmuthová (1917–1988) assembled a small collection of a few dozen not only Egyptian antiquities, which is kept nowadays in the collections of the National Museum – Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures in Prague.

Amongst other objects, the Hellmuth collection included also a set of 15 pottery lamps. In the absence of detailed archival data concerning the genesis of the collection, recent examination allowed not only to precisely identify the individual lamps but also to assess the set as a whole. What could appear at the first sight as a random assemblage of often rather damaged pieces of varying styles, levels of craftsmanship and dates proved to be well-curated set. It aptly illustrates the main types and development of pottery lamps produced and used in Egypt from the Ptolemaic to early Islamic periods. Comparison with other lychnological collections suggests that it was assembled in contact with and with good awareness of the then recent development of the discipline, or perhaps even directly inspired by some of them.

While Hellmuths themselves were most likely dilettanti in the fields of Egyptology and lychnology, they were certainly not dilettante collectors. At the very least, they were able to secure professional advice on forming their collection, balancing affordability with representativeness and the scientific value of the set as a whole, rather than prioritising the attractiveness of individual pieces. Cases such as this one urge caution when approaching the many small collections of antiquities that emerged amongst the members of the middle classes in Western societies during the first half of the 20th century, which can often be overlooked and underestimated.

**BEFORE IT BECAME PUBLIC:
THE SKUŠEK COLLECTION AND ITS 1956
UNOFFICIAL GUEST BOOK**

Klara HRVATIN

The collection of Austro-Hungarian naval officer Ivan Skušek Jr. (1877–1947) is renowned as one of the largest East Asian collections in Slovenia. It consists of approximately 500 Chinese and Japanese artifacts, which he brought back to Slovenia in 1920 after a six years long stay in Beijing, together with his Japanese wife Tsuneko Kondō Kawase (1893–1963). The couple had originally intended to open a public Asian museum to display the collection, but they were not successful. Instead, the collection remained part of their living space, which also functioned as an informal exhibition space for the collection.

This presentation focuses on a particular item: an unofficial guest book from the Skušek collection dated September 8, 1956. By this time, Skušek had already passed away, and his wife, Tsuneko Kondō Kawase, had taken responsibility for preseving and presenting the collection. The book was gifted to her for her 58th birthday and 36th anniversary of her arrival to Ljubljana, and it was used until her death in 1963, after which the collection was transferred to the Slovene National Museum and eventually handed over to Slovene Ethnographic Museum in 1964. The guest book is a valuable document that offers insight into the visitors who were interested in the collection – who they were, where they came from, and how they engaged with and interpreted the exhibition. It also provides a glimpse into the social values and attitudes toward East Asian heritage in Slovenia at the time, as well as Tsuneko's role in maintaining and showcasing the collection, demonstrating her involvement in the exhibition's ongoing life.

THE KARLBECK SYNDICATE (1930–1935): CONTEXTUALISING THE EARLY CHINESE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC COLLECTIONS IN EUROPE

Valerie JURGENS

The early 20th century encapsulates a pioneering time in the history of collections, private and public, of non-European objects in the West. This history has become an important subject in contemporary scholarship in museum studies. This paper revisits my work on The Karlbeck Syndicate (1930-1934), a collector's group that focussed on collecting and connoisseurship of early Chinese material culture. At that time, as the objects entered the art market; Neolithic painted pottery, ritual and ornamental bronzes and jades, formed a novel subject amongst a defined group of European collectors and museums, who were fascinated by their refined technology, intricate design and decorative motifs.

The Karlbeck Syndicate is somewhat an anomaly within this history of collecting; this paper will discuss the operations of this group that lay the foundations of many museum collections today. Prominent in name and status; The Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities in Stockholm, The British Museum, The Louvre, Oscar Raphael, then Crown Prince of Sweden Gustav Adolf and Charles Seligman, to name a few, were involved with the expeditions by the Swedish railroad engineer, Orvar Karlback (1879-1967). He was based in China and purchased locally discovered artifacts from local markets for syndicate members. He was an amateur scholar-collector that had access, he defines the landscape of collecting practices in China by a western person.

Furthermore, I would like to touch base on the historical analysis and the theoretical orientations of then new emerging scholarship on ancient Chinese art and archaeology within western scholarship, how the non-European objects were classified and displayed in museums, and role of the private collector. The intellectual background at the time, relied heavily on exploring a 'Diffusionist' theory, where the principal outlook was to connect the objects of ancient cultures and find common ground, but also implies a strong Eurocentric attitude within the emerging scholarship.

TRANSLATING THE MUSEUM: TEXT, IMAGE, AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE MUSEUM IN LATE QING CHINA

Kevin LAM

From the reformist intellectual Wang Tao's (1828–1897) encounter with the Louvre to the diplomat Guo Songtao's (1818–1891) visit to the British Museum, Western museums began to receive Chinese visitors in the late nineteenth century. These individuals – mainly high officials, diplomats, and occasionally reform-minded intellectuals – were few in number and represented a narrow, privileged stratum of late Qing society. Yet their presence was highly symbolic: as some of the first Chinese observers admitted into these monumental institutions, their impressions carried disproportionate cultural authority. Their travel accounts, widely circulated in print, offered Chinese readers rare glimpses into foreign museums and became foundational texts in shaping early understandings of this new institutional form. Many were accompanied by illustrations produced by Chinese artists who, lacking direct experience, relied heavily on imagination.

This study examines how the museum was conceptualised in China before it became widely institutionalised, drawing on two distinct archives: the travel diaries and reports of late Qing visitors to the West, and the visual representations found in pictorials such as the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. By analysing these parallel forms of representation, the study argues that the museum entered China through a dual process of translation – one that framed museums as sites of state power, scientific taxonomy, and civilisational comparison, and another that imagined it as a spectacle of visual curiosity. Together, these layers produced a multi-level conception of the museum long before the institution took root in China.

BETWEEN MUSEUM AND GALLERY PRACTICES: THE EARLY EXHIBITIONS OF THE DUTCH ASIAN ART SOCIETY

Roxanna MAAS and Marit FELD

In this presentation, we will discuss the earliest exhibitions organised by the *Vereniging van Vrienden der Aziatische Kunst* (Dutch Asian Art Society), which was founded in the Netherlands in 1918.

Towards the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, Western attitudes towards Asian art began to change. Objects that had previously been regarded as ethnographic artefacts, antiquities or curiosities were now praised for their aesthetic quality and exhibited in new ways.

Inspired by developments in the interpretation and presentation of Asian art in countries such as Germany and the United States, the Dutch Asian Art Society sought to promote the appreciation, study and knowledge of South, Southeast and East Asian art in the Netherlands, and worked towards the establishment of a museum specifically dedicated to Asian art.

In the years leading up to the opening of this museum, the society already organised its own exhibitions. Using these exhibitions as a starting point, we will discuss how the Dutch Asian Art Society interpreted and presented Asian art, and demonstrate how it combined museum strategies with commercial gallery practices. It will become clear that the society focused strongly on emphasising the aesthetic qualities of the objects and portrayed them as abstract, vibrant and spiritually profound.

We will argue that the Dutch Asian Art Society operated as a initiative of private collectors, whilst at the same time presenting itself as a public authority in the field of acquisitions and education relating to Asian Art. It was meant to be the leading organisation that curated, contextualised and interpreted 'high Asian art' for the Netherlands. The society blurred the boundaries between private collecting and institutional formation, effectively operating as a 'project museum'.

NON-EUROPEAN COLLECTION IN THE REGIONAL MUSEUM – THE CASE OF THE WEST BOHEMIAN MUSEUM IN PILSEN

Jindřich MLEZIVA

The contribution will focus on the origin, changes in the meaning and development of the so-called oriental collection in the West Bohemian Museum in Pilsen. In 1886, a museum of applied arts was founded in Pilsen in western Bohemia, headed by architect Josef Škorpil. Similar to other applied arts museums established in the second half of the 19th century in Europe and also in Austria-Hungary, its collection also included objects of non-European origin. Initially, these were individual items that supplemented the collection with examples of artistic crafts from the so-called Orient. Thanks to foreign trips, personal contacts of the director and participation in the world exhibitions in Paris in 1889 and 1901, the non-European collections began to expand significantly. An important acquisition followed at the beginning of the 20th century, when a large number of Chinese and Japanese objects were purchased. These also became part of the permanent exhibition from 1913 in the new museum building. During the existence of the Museum of Applied Arts, non-European objects were an integral part of the applied arts collection and many were classified according to its material. The exceptions were Chinese and some Japanese objects, which were also given special attention within the permanent exhibition. After the fusion of the Pilsen museums in 1948, the applied arts collections became part of an institution with a broader collection and scientific scope. With the newly created collection records, non-European objects were divided into a special collection. However, this was not done consistently, and some objects were identified incorrectly. This collection, which is important today from various points of view, was overlooked for a long time and is known mainly by experts.

**FROM THE ALTAR TO THE STORAGE ROOM:
THE FATE OF CHURCH AND MONASTIC COLLECTIONS
AND THEIR TRANSFORMATION INTO MUSEUM
COLLECTIONS IN THE CELJE REGION (1938–1958)**

Davor MLINARIČ

This paper explores a turning point in the relationship between church (religious) and public (state) collecting, focusing on the broader Celje area covered by the Celje Regional Museum. We will attempt to expand the thesis on the intertwining of the private and public spheres through an analysis of the forced transfer of ownership and the museumization of collections during the period from the early 1940s to the late 1950s, covering the time during and after World War II. Although the Celje Regional Museum does not hold extensive collections of non-European missionary objects, local church and monastic collections—including historical, ethnographic, and numismatic items—were also subject to confiscation and transfer to public institutions. The paper focuses on several key points: the impact of the war and postwar periods on the preservation of collections; an analysis of the legal mechanisms, court proceedings, and inventories through which religious collections were formally nationalized after 1945; and how public institutions took over these objects and how the new socialist ideological agenda influenced their reinterpretation and display (or storage). The aim of this paper is to shed light on how state intervention in religious collections in Yugoslavia represented a dramatic yet crucial step in the formation of new regional “museum projects,” using the example of the Celje region to illustrate the challenge of transforming collections that were not primarily missionary in nature into public cultural capital.

CURATING THE EXPERIENCE: „MULTIMEDIA“ IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY MISSIONARY EXHIBITIONS

Helena MOTOH

Missionary exhibitions were extraordinarily popular in Slovenia in the 1920s and 1930s, a phenomenon that stemmed both from intensified missionary activity and from changing views regarding the role missionaries should assume in their home countries. These exhibitions took many forms: from small-scale travelling displays to fixed pavilions at trade fairs, from lectures held in rural parish houses to permanent missionary museums established by certain missionary orders in Slovenia.

This paper examines the “dramaturgical” principles of missionary exhibitions. In addition to analysing their structure and the ways in which they engaged diverse audiences, it focuses in particular on a less well-known aspect of these displays: their “multimedia” approach, which extended beyond the mere presentation of objects. The study explores key multimedia elements in greater detail, including speeches, music, slideshows, maps, dioramas, and live reenactments. It further considers how these multimedia strategies were intended both to promote missionary work and to function as informational and educational tools through which audiences at home could learn about regions beyond Europe. Fragmentary archival sources, which offer a compelling new perspective on how these exhibitions were constructed, are combined with surviving visual records in order to assess how these various approaches were employed and integrated, and what role they played in shaping the exhibitions as cohesive experiences.

PRIVATE COLLECTIONS BECOMING PUBLIC: ORIENTAL INSTITUTE IN PRAGUE IN THE 1930S AND THE QUEST FOR A STATE COLLECTION OF ASIAN ART

Michaela PEJCOCHOVA

Collections of Asian art in Central Europe steadily expanded around the turn of the 20th century and after the establishment of Czechoslovakia in 1918, there were several important players in the business with Asian artworks. They all gathered personal collections of Chinese, Japanese, and Tibetan art, which they also offered for sale in large-scale exhibitions and, eventually, proposed to establish a state collection of Asian art to emerge out of these initiatives. Due to the numerous economical, social, as well as political problems that the young republic had to face in the first decades of its existence, the situation was nevertheless extremely chaotic and difficult to manage.

This paper will look more closely at the role of the Oriental Institute – a public institution of a unique kind in the inter-war period Czechoslovakia – and its collections of Asian art. These were assembled as a specific result of the interplay of the private and public spheres, building on the personal contacts and knowledge of individuals acquainted with the Far East and its art markets, while aiming at becoming a respected public body.

The study will introduce the actors involved in this process, as well as individual artworks and whole collections acquired by the Oriental Institute. It will elaborate on the political and social conditions that determined their possibilities, as well as the processes and difficulties that were under way as part of the efforts to establish a fully fledged public collection of Asian art. Finally, it will discuss the relative successes and failures of the Oriental Institute in the process of formation of a public art collection in inter-war Czechoslovakia and indicate the paths these endeavours took after the transformation of this institution in the post-war and post-1948 periods.

THE ROLE OF PRINT MEDIA AND ARCHIVES IN RESEARCH ON MISSIONARY COLLECTIONS IN SLOVENIA

Alenka PIPAN MUBI and Marko FRELIH

Missionary collections in Slovenia are among the earliest ethnographic museum holdings and display two defining characteristics. First, they signify the beginnings of ethnographic collecting, as demonstrated by acquisitions in the Provincial Museum of Carniola, including collections from North America (Friderik Baraga, 1837) and southern Sudan (Ignacij Knoblehar, 1850). Second, they show a close connection between collectors and the documentation process, supported by archival records on provenance preserved in the National Museum of Slovenia.

Print media significantly influenced public awareness of these collections, with newspapers such as *Laibacher Zeitung* and *Zgodnja Danica* providing coverage that reflects the cultural and historical context of their acquisition. Written and visual materials related to missionary work are also preserved in archives, notably the Archdiocesan Archives in Ljubljana and the Baraga Archives in the Slovene Museum of Christianity in Stična, which document objects from missions.

COLLECTING, DISPLAYING, AND CREATING A NEW TASTE FOR CHINESE ART FROM EUMORFOPOULOS' PRIVATE MUSEUM TO PUBLIC MUSEUMS, 1908 TO 1934

QIU Yifan

Early Chinese artefacts used to be defined as objects dating to the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 A.D.) or earlier. Most of them were discovered since the late nineteenth century, after which they entered international markets. As newly available materials, their emerging scholarship developed in parallel with the evolving taste for collecting them. In this context, the role of private collectors in interpreting these artefacts and creating opportunities for their access was no less significant than that of scholarly publications or museums. Among the many collectors, George Eumorfopoulos (1863-1939), a London-based tycoon, collected an exceptionally wide range and number of Chinese artefacts, who came to be regarded as a representative collector of Tang-Dynasty (618-907 A.D.) tomb figurines. And the collecting club he chaired, the Oriental Ceramic Society, was recognised as a pioneer in the collecting of early Chinese artefacts. Eumorfopoulos strategically displayed his collection throughout his grand house, a space rich in meaning: from 1922 it was opened to the public visitors; and it also served as a meeting place for the Oriental Ceramic Society as well as a social setting that regularly received leading scholars and even Chinese diplomatic figures. He once planned to turn his Asian collections into an independent private museum, but due to personal financial difficulties, he was compelled to sell collections to two national museums in 1935.

This paper, through the case of one of the most representative collectors, George Eumorfopoulos, and with a focus on his early Chinese ceramics, examines questions: why the display methods in his house differed from those of general assemblage collectors or those who collected primarily for decorative purposes; and how he was able to exert influence not only among private collectors but also within public institutions, as evidenced by an album of his interior displays and records preserved in museums.

THE ART OF TURKESTAN AND THE „MUSLIM EAST“ IN MUSEUM EXHIBITIONS OF THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE

Natalia V. SAFONOVA

After Turkestan's annexation to the Russian Empire, a strong fascination with the art and objects of "Asian" antiquity emerged. Archaeological and ethnographic expeditions enriched the collections of central museums (in Moscow and Saint-Petersburg), special exhibitions were organized, and local museums were opened in the region itself. The language used to describe the material culture, architecture and the peoples of Turkestan was in many respects colonial and orientalist. The tradition of describing and classifying monuments of Eastern art largely migrated to the publications of Soviet scholars in the 1920s.

In the presentation, I will examine, based on publications from the beginning of the XX century, both in art journals and scholarly literature, as well as illustrated catalogues, the main principles of museum representation of the art of the "Russian" East, and the development of the historiography of Central Asian culture.

FROM A PIECE OF POSTCARD TO A LOST HISTORY AND RECONSTRUCTED BIOGRAPHIES

Chikako SHIGEMORI BUČAR

Already a decade ago, I started searching for old picture postcards from East Asia that are currently archived in Slovenia. The beginning was a panel at a Japanese-studies conference about non-written cultural materials, i.e. materials without words such as photos, maps, blueprints, etc. One of the institutions I visited in search of old postcards was the National and University Library of Slovenia (NUK) where I found, among others, some Korean picture postcards. One of them stood out because it had no inventory stamp nor any date of donation, but had on its reverse a printed explanation of the photograph in the Slovene language. It said for the black and white photo: “Asia, Korea: Benedictine monastery in winter peace”.

In the following years, I searched for the provenance of this postcard in various ways.

There have been several institutions and individuals who helped me: project colleagues, missionary organisations and museums. Many facts were also possible to trace back based on published books, journals, and internet sources.

In this particular case, the existence of a printing house during the interwar years in Slovenia is a lost history. However, it was possible to reconstruct a biography of a person who was closely connected to the monastery on the postcard photo. The history of a manor house in which this person was born had been closely recorded by a local historian.

It is still a question if this single postcard will ever be publicly displayed as a part of some collection. From the point of view of Korean studies, and of the history of missionaries, I think that the postcard carries quite an important meaning.

This paper brings forward the importance of visual materials together with written words, and of continuous endeavour of recording in order to interpret objects in their historical context.

CULTURAL VOW IN BOOK COLLECTING AND THE FORMATION OF MANUSCRIPT LIBRARIES IN IRAN

Azam SOHEILIPOUR

The collections or museums of manuscripts in Iran generally go back to scholars and religious missionaries in the past. They used the money from endowments and donations from the people to collect historical artefacts, especially manuscripts and documents, which they called cultural endowments. The reason for carrying out these activities is that cultural and historical artefacts should not be removed from the country and that they should be preserved. Collections such as the Vaziri Library in Yazd, Mar'ashi in Qom, the National Quran Museum in Tehran and etc. are among these types of collections. The purpose of this research is to survey the tendency of scholars to preserve historical artefacts in their country, as well as the trust of people in science and religious missionaries in the past, which has led to the preservation of historical artefacts. The method of this research is qualitative with library and field studies of collections of books from cultural endowments and donations, which is statistically collected and analyzed. The results of the research show that more than 90 percent of Iran's libraries of manuscripts and ancient texts were collected by a trusted person from cultural gifts received from the people or the people of Iran donated the herited manuscripts and have now been formed into collections and museums that allow for visits, research, and examination.

MISSION, MUSEUM, EMPIRE: A SWISS PROTESTANT COLLECTION OF JAPANESE RELIGIOUS IMAGES AND THE UNMAKING OF COMPARATIVE RELIGION, C. 1880–1920

Tomoë I. M. STEINECK

This paper examines a missionary collection of Japanese religious images that moved between devotional, ecclesiastical and proto-museum contexts in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and considers its place within global historical research. Assembled within a Swiss Liberal Protestant milieu, the collection comprised icons, printed amulets, sculptures and ritual implements. It was conceived not primarily as evidence of “idolatry,” but as a strategy to gain proselytising access to Japanese culture and as a systematic attempt to capture the pantheon and mechanisms of faith in scholarly form.

Drawing on archival research and analysis of surviving objects and a diary, I reconstruct how this collection was imagined as an academic entry point through the then emerging imperialist science of comparative religion. The collecting process, however, goes far beyond what Max Müller prescribed: it represents a sharply structured and ultimately “forsaken” experiment in contextual mission. The project was neither published nor used according to the collector’s original intentions. Instead, descendants donated it to the Ethnographic Museum of the University of Zurich as objects from a distant culture, where it again disappeared for decades, until the inaugural exhibition curated by the author in 2014. Attention is paid to the meticulous internal structure of the collection, its focus on the pantheon of late Edo popular devotion, and the role of the missionary’s Japanese collaborator as holder of local knowledge.

The classification and narrative proposals of the collection were later forsaken. The paper asks how questions of authorship and authority were introduced and withdrawn, and how empirical recognition of Japanese devotional practices unsettled the missionary’s collecting aims. It reflects on the afterlife of this “silenced” imperialist strategy, tolerance as conflict strategy and the recovery of local agency, within the context of provenance and the ethics of exhibiting religious objects from non-European contexts.

**„I CANNOT CONCEIVE OF LIVING OTHERWISE THAN IN
MY CHAMBERS, ADORNED WITH THE WHOLE OF MY
ILLUSTRIOUS INHERITANCE.“**

A LIFELONG COLLECTOR JOE HLOUCHA

Jan ŠEJBL

Joe Hloucha (1881–1957), Czech writer and collector, is among the most significant contributors to the Náprstek Museum in Prague. More than eight thousand objects—mostly from Japan—entered the museum through his acquisitions. His collecting is unusually well documented: he began at seventeen, already imagining a museum devoted to non-European cultures, and maintained this ambition throughout his life.

Hloucha gained fame as the author of exotic novels set mainly in Japan. Their success enabled a several-month stay there in 1906, during which he purchased a large number of artefacts. After returning to Prague, he publicly displayed some of them in a Japanese tearoom he ran with his brother. He continued collecting and dealing in art, and through his publications, lectures, and exhibitions became a well-known cultural figure. Although self-taught, he was widely viewed as an expert on Japan.

His interests extended beyond Asia: he acquired African and Oceanic masks and sculptures, European Gothic to Baroque art, and Czech folk art. In the early 1930s he attempted to donate part of his collection to the state on the condition that a museum of non-European cultures be founded. The plan failed due to the economic crisis, and the selected holdings were purchased for the Náprstek Museum only more than a decade later.

Extensive photographs of his collection-filled interiors, together with diaries and other archives, offer a rare insight into Hloucha's life and the personal vision that shaped his approach to non-European art.

PHOTOGRAPHIC LEGACY: ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Bojan ŠIBENIK

In a museum context, a photograph is not merely a static visual record but a complex historical source that requires interdisciplinary analysis. Interpretation begins with the transition from simply „viewing“ to „reading“ the image, where the photograph is treated as an interplay of content, technique, and the context of its creation. Researchers, acting as „readers,“ must translate private content into a broader social context, considering textual, semiotic, and photographic codes to remain as faithful as possible to the original context.

The Slovene Ethnographic Museum houses an extensive photographic collection from the legacy of Ivan Skušek Jr. and Tsuneko Kondo Kawase (Marija Skušek). Upon their transfer to the museum, these individual units were largely unorganized and lacked the metadata necessary for rapid identification or the simple reconstruction of events, places, and individuals. Systematic digitalization, cataloging, and in-depth research of the entire body of material have enabled individual photographs to be integrated into chronological and thematic sequences, aligning them with broader research into the lives of Ivan and Marija Skušek.

Documents, photographs, and albums held by relatives represent an essential source in the research process; having undergone various stages of organization for private use, they are often enriched with invaluable annotations. Conversely, the absence of the original „user“ or „owner“ of the photographic material can open a space for the subjective interpretation of the images.

CURATING JAPANESE ILLUSTRATED BOOKS ABROAD: ART-HISTORICAL FRAMEWORKS AND THE JAPANESE DONATION TO THE UNIVERSITY OF LOUVAIN

Freya TERRYN

Histories of European collecting of non-European objects typically emphasize private individuals and institutional acquisitions. Yet this framework obscures cases in which non-European states curated what entered European institutions. A key example is the Japanese Donation to the University of Louvain (1924–1926)—almost 14,000 volumes dating from the twelfth to the twentieth century—presented as part of an international effort to rebuild the university library destroyed during the First World War. To examine how this collection was conceptualized, this paper focuses on books designed by print artists, a category central both to European enthusiasm for Japanese art and Japan's emerging constructions of artistic heritage.

Where European collectors often shaped their holdings of Japanese illustrated books (*ehon*) according to personal taste, connoisseurship, or the desires of early *japonistes*, the Japanese Donation was assembled through a national committee led by Wada Mankichi (1865–1934). Yet the criteria guiding this process remain unknown. This paper therefore investigates whether the committee's choices may have been informed—consciously or not—by the state-formulated art-historical narratives that coalesced in Japan before the Second World War. As outlined by Satō Dōshin (2011), these narratives were articulated through works such as *Histoire de l'art du Japon* (1900) and its Japanese counterpart (1901), the *Shinbi Shoin* monumental survey series (*Shinbi taikan* (1899–1908) and *Tōyō bijutsu taikan* (1908–1918)), and art histories by individual scholars, such as Fujioka Sakutarō's *Kinsei kaigashi* (1903).

A central part of the investigation is to determine how print artists and their illustrated books were represented—or omitted—within these state-sanctioned histories: whether they appear, what status they were accorded, and which works were presented as exemplary. By comparing these art-historical precedents with the contents of the Donation, the paper explores how Japan may have projected its cultural heritage through illustrated books.

THE HÜTTEROTT FAMILY COLLECTION: FROM TRIESTE AND ROVINJ TO THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Tajana UJČIĆ and Katarina MARIĆ

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the wealthy Triestine family Hütterott assembled an impressive private collection of non-European objects in their villas in Trieste and Rovinj (then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire). Comprising ethnographic and artistic items mainly from Japan, China, Africa, North America and Pacific Area – the collection reflected the cosmopolitan reach of a merchant elite connected to global trade routes through the port of Trieste.

The Hütterotts treated their domestic interiors and established a small museum in the summer residence on St. Andrew Island near Rovinj. Objects were carefully arranged in dedicated cabinets, often accompanied by handwritten captions. These “museum” blurred the boundary between private possession and public aspiration: the family very often had prominent guests on their island turning intimate spaces into semi-public stages for cultural capital and self-representation.

After the death of Georg Hütterott in 1910 the collection’s fate experienced new circumstances. Some objects were sold or donated in the 1920s–1930s to the Trieste’s civic museums, where a few objects remain today, often de-contextualized from their original narrative. After the World War II and the confiscation of the property the collection was divided and stored in different locations, mostly in the City Museum of Rovinj and other museums.

Hütterott case invites us to reflect on how late 19th century and early 20th-century European individuals assembled, interpreted, and displayed non-European artefacts within the intimacy of their homes. What meanings did these objects carry when they moved from land of their origins to family villas or to public institutions? And how should museums today re-narrate the stories behind such collections that once represented private desire and today are absorbed into public institutions.

COLLECTING CHINESE ART IN EARLY 20TH CENTURY BEIJING: THE CASE OF IVAN SKUŠEK JR.

Nataša VAMPELJ SUHADOLNIK

This paper examines the formation of Ivan Skušek Jr.'s extensive collection of Chinese objects, assembled in Beijing between 1914 and 1920. He arrived in Beijing as an Austro-Hungarian naval officer after the cruiser SMS Kaiserin Elisabeth was sunk in Qingdao during the German-Japanese battle for the German concession. During his enforced residence, and as a prisoner of war from 1917, he accumulated 75 crates of objects, ranging from porcelain, Buddhist statuettes, albums, and musical instruments to silk garments, furniture, numismatic material, and everyday items.

The presentation explores the conditions under which these acquisitions occurred, the routes through which objects circulated, and the characteristics of the early 20th-century Beijing art market. Drawing on surviving archival documentation, it reconstructs Skušek's status and agency during captivity and situates his collecting within the broader political and social transformations that shaped and accelerated the dynamics of the art trade in this period.

**FROM THE TOMB TO THE MUSEUM PLINTH:
CHINESE BURIAL OBJECTS ON DISPLAY IN THE VICTORIA
AND ALBERT MUSEUM AND THE METROPOLITAN
MUSEUM OF ART**

Elaigha VILAYSANE

In the late eighteenth century, as private ownership of personal collections gave way to the public display of objects, museums began to emerge in the West. Those that have developed into institutions with globally diverse collections are known as universal survey museums, which hold an important and influential role in society as cross-cultural communicators.

This dissertation evaluates how Chinese objects, specifically Chinese burial objects, are displayed in two Western universal survey museums' galleries: the Charlotte C. Weber Gallery at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, United States of America, and the T. T. Tsui Gallery at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, England. This evaluation is based on understanding the original space these objects occupied—the tomb—and then examining if the purpose and function are clearly conveyed to visitors within the museum and gallery space.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Charlotte C. Weber Gallery employs a linear and chronological mode of display that focuses on the progression of the ceramic arts. The 'Burial' section of the Victoria and Albert Museum's T.T. Tsui Gallery situates Chinese funerary objects within five other thematic sections of the gallery, all of which represent core tenets of dynastic Chinese life. Following an overview of Chinese burial practices, as well as museology theory, this dissertation concludes that the Victoria and Albert Museum's display is more accessible for visitors to learn about the importance and function of Chinese funerary objects whilst learning about Chinese history and culture.

MAPPING THE ETHNOGRAPHIC AND RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES OF PETER BAPTIST TURK IN EARLY 20TH-CENTURY EASTERN HUBEI

WANG Hao

This presentation examines the dual role of Slovenian Franciscan missionary Peter Baptist Turk (1874–1944), whose work in Hubei Province bridged religious evangelization and early ethnographic practice. Commissioned in 1912 to acquire Chinese artifacts for the Carniola Provincial Museum, Turk actively advanced Habsburg ethnographic ambitions. Drawing upon his surviving material archive, historical records, and recent fieldwork in eastern Hubei, this study reconstructs his methodologies and cross-cultural encounters. By tracing the mobilization of these objects, the research illuminates the pathways of transcultural knowledge production between early 20th-century China and Central Europe.

MEMORY LOSS OF AN UKIYO-E COLLECTION: ATTEMPTS AT RECONSTRUCTING PROVENANCE OF P. M. MONTANI'S ALBUM OF WOODBLOCK PRINTS

Stella ZHIVKOVA

In 2020, a previously unknown private collection of Ukiyo-e was first researched by the author of the presentation. No data about the provenance, contents or purchase of the prints was available at the time. Upon recognizing the titles, authorship, series etc. of each print, it was necessary to shed light on how it had reached Bulgaria in the late 19-th century.

The collection belonged to an Ottoman artist, architect and designer of Italian origin, named Pietro Marchi Montani (1829-1887). He oversaw designing the Turkish Pavillion at the World Exhibition in Vienna (1873) and co-authored a treatise on theory of Ottoman architecture to be presented there.

The gifted Italian architect and decorator was dispatched to Eastern Rumelia (now – southern Bulgaria) in 1879. He was invited by Dr. Georgi Vulkovich, the Minister of Agriculture, Trade, and Public Buildings, to work on public building projects in Plovdiv. After a series of events, his family finally settled down in Bulgaria. That is the single known fact so far about the presence of a curious collection of prints.

The presentation proposes hypotheses on possible provenance of the collection that stayed in Bulgaria after Montani`s death.

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