



# NÉPRAJZI ÉRTESÍTŐ

ANNALES MUSEI ETHNOGRAPHIAE

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# NÉPRAJZI ÉRTESÍTŐ

ANNALES MUSEI ETHNOGRAPHIAE

NÉPRAJZI MÚZEUM, BUDAPEST

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The Balkan show-case, permanent exhibition,  
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NEMZETI KULTURÁLIS ÖRÖKSÉG  
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*Papers of the conference*  
ETHNOGRAPHIC MUSEUMS IN EAST-  
AND CENTRAL EUROPE  
CHALLENGES AND CHANCES AT THE  
BEGINNING OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

Budapest, Hungary 14–16 June 2001



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## Preface

This volume presents the papers of the international conference *Ethnographic Museums in East- and Central Europe—Challenges and Chances at the Beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* held in Budapest 14–16 June 2001. The purpose of the conference was to bring the new challenges and chances that effect ethnographic museums all over Europe into a new perspective. It focused on two main questions: How might this changing frame influence museums' strategies in the region? At the same time, how do ethnographic museums look at the history of their collections?

As we are all aware of the fact that European ethnographic museums did not exist in isolation in the past, they worked in multiple relationships with each other and with other kind of institutions. After the political changes in Eastern Europe these relations, however, became rather sporadically. We were therefore eager to use this conference to initiate the beginning of a new and a more conscious level of cooperation and communication among the museum personnel in Eastern Europe.

Now, at the very beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century European museums feel challenged from different sides. With the technical improvement of fixing and presenting visual information, new competitors have appeared around the museums (Internet, virtual exhibitions and catalogues, Disneyland, theme parks, etc.). Ethical questions are now taken into account in an increasing degree with regard of collections and exhibitions. Even the more basic functions and the financing of museums might be in some cases changing.

At the same time, the museums' role has become more conscious both in a broader social and public context as well as inside the museums themselves. What we experience in the theoretical interest and at public forums as well is a growing awareness in the history, development of collections. They are treated as historically constructed products instead of neutral or self-evident sources of cultures. New questions have emerged concerning museums' early and recent collecting, collection management and (re)presentation strategies and their policies in general.

In this rather new situation museums feel pressed and challenged at the same time. The field museums have until recently covered seems to become narrowed but along this tendency its borders turn to be also more clear-cut. As a result, museums are searching for new strategies and chances.

The conference's speakers were invited to address the following sub-themes: How



might be evaluated the position of ethnographic museums in East- and Central Europe in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? What are their perspectives in both the short and long run? How do they define now their goals and set their priorities with regard to their basic tasks and functions? Paralelly, by doing this how do they look at the history of their own collections? What seems to be more important: the continuity of their activity or the utilisation of the changing situations? In which respect can or shall this constrain their strategies? On the other hand, do they share the new tendencies with other types of museums, or do they rather occupy a special place among museums? If so, in which respect?

In order to find answers to some of these questions, 14 ethnographic museums from East- and Central-European countries were invited to Budapest. Almost all of them responded positively, and in the end 21 papers were delivered during the three days meeting of the conference. Although Ülle Vahar from Tartu participated in the conference, we were not able to include her paper in this volume. Marta Pastieriková presented her paper in absentia.

We would like to express our gratitude to the Public Collections Department of the Ministry of National Cultural Heritage that supported this conference financially (566/98-05 and 1242-03/2000). The Museum of Ethnography in Budapest took responsibility for the execution of the conference.

For the language editing of the conference papers, we are very much indebted to Mr. Peter Sabath and Mr. Drew Leifheit.

*The Editor  
Budapest  
July, 2002*

## PERSPECTIVES



KONRAD VANJA

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## *Are We Able to Curate "Europe"?*

*Work Strategies of the New Museum of European  
Cultures in Berlin in Co-operation with  
European Networks*

Why a Museum for European Cultures, and what has been the reason for such a Museum in Berlin?

In 1999, the Museum for European Culture was inaugurated by the State Museum in Berlin, which belongs to the foundation of Prussian Heritage. This Museum resulted from the Union of the former Museum of German Folklore and the European Department of the Ethnological Museum in Berlin Dahlem. Both Museums and their collections were founded in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and developed in different ways. The Museum of German Folklore concentrated upon everyday traditional 19<sup>th</sup> century objects, but also incorporated objects from other European countries for comparing traditional objects in their morphology, technology and design as a testimony to human implementation and labour in pre-industrial societies.

Skansen and the special exhibitions of others influenced this museum like others in Europe and at the international world fairs in London, Paris and Chicago in the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century.

After 1933, in the time of the Third Reich, these collections were divided into German and non-German artefacts, the German objects delivered to the Eurasian department in the Ethnological Museum with its rich collection covering portions of Eastern and Northern Europe. After the Second World War, not only was most of our collection destroyed, but the facility was also divided into two new museums, opening in the east and the west parts of Berlin.

Both ethnographic museums of German Folklore acquired new collections, especially the first one, which procured traditional objects of pre-industrial times from German regions. But in the middle of the 1970s, both museums changed their collections and opened them to the world of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century industry and urban strategies. This process belonged generally to a change in the paradigms of social and historical sciences especially in France; the historic schools of the *Annales ESC*: Marc Bloch, Fernand Braudel, Emmanuel de Roy Ladurie, in Great Britain with the historical journal *Past and Present* of Eric Hobsbawm and E. P. Thompson, and in the United States with David Landes, and also in both parts of Germany. You will find the results of these influences in the collections of our museums in the west as well as in the east.

In a world of trade, and through the exchange of goods and knowledge, national borders have opened to the influence of others. These are the general processes of modernisation in which regional cultures also influence urban cultures. I know that there are differences in Europe, but this process has had a long history and tradition of proliferation long before the beginning of industrialisation from the second half of 18<sup>th</sup> century up to now.

Different conferences, expositions—especially with the former European Department of the Ethnological Museum—have been arranged in which we discuss new methods of research, collecting and presentation to disclose these influences upon other industrialised countries in Europe and parts of North America, and vice versa.

After the reunification of Germany in 1990, which includes the 1992 unification of the museums of the state in Berlin and also of our Museums of Folklore, we began to organise the foundation of a new museum. We have entitled our first conference in 1994 for this project *Passages to Europe*, and in 1999 we inaugurated the new museum. We have named our new house a Museum for European Cultures. Why not a “European Museum”, or a “Museum of European Culture”? In this version, we esteem the different possibilities of cultures in Europe; there is a diversity of regions, social groups, regionalism and urbanism, languages and geographical particularities. In particular, we find different regions of European cultures within history: the time of the Enlightenment and the hegemony of the French language, the influence of the Arabian world in Spain and the south of Italy in the Middle Ages, or the influence of the Ottoman Empire in the region of the Balkan states and parts of Russia from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century; Protestant influences since the age of reformation and Luther, the diversity in the world of Christianity between Rome and Byzantium, Moscow and Wittenberg, in Scandinavia, Great Britain and Italy, and so on.

In contrast, we find many regions of Europe which have deeply rooted cultural traditions in connection with other continents; the Mediterranean area to Africa, for example, or some parts of Russia to Asia, etc. Diversity is arguably more interesting than homogeneity in Europe, and studying intercultural and interethnic processes is more helpful for understanding Europe’s past, present and surely its future.

Consequently, after 1999 we have tried to organise our new museum not in a presentation of regional cultures nor as a synthesis of Europe—whatever that may be—but in different expositions and projects which are orientated to European themes and topics. The museum is thus a place of presentation and discussion, not a place of final answer.

We first opened our museum for the public with a semi-permanent exhibition focusing upon cultural contacts in Europe: *Fascinating Images*. One of the reasons for this special European Project was a large collection of printed pictures in our collection from Italy, England, Moscow and Paris. A presentation from this collection was made last year in the State Museum of History in Moscow, entitled “Lubok and Bilderbogen”. Besides all of the official items of European cultural politics in Brussels or elsewhere, we are able to show cultural contacts in Europe in the material of our



collections, in the production of objects in different places of Europe, in their transportation throughout Europe, and their exchange between people in the different regions and different places in Europe. A great deal of space is dedicated to the merchants of these images and other hawkers who sell plaster figures or to street singers who perform songs of love, crime and death in front of large wall paintings. As an example, ambulant merchants, who walk throughout Europe to sell popular prints, the so-called Bilderbogen, Catchpenny prints, imagerie populaire from Italy to Stockholm, Warsaw or St. Petersburg, and so on. They distributed not only Italian prints, most entitled in French, German and Latin, but also constructed a heritage of well known European images and themes outside of political borders or the areas of languages or traditional cultures. We can find this exchange in our collection of popular prints depicting the *Wandering Jew*, the stages of life, etc. You will find this European heritage up until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Besides these common European topics, we will also find special themes of different cultures: the special patrons and saints, like St. George or St. Nicholas for Russia, Napoleon for France and parts of south-west Germany.

I will end here and invite you to Berlin to show you a little of this programme in our exhibition *Cultural Contacts in Europe: Fascinating Images*, which can be viewed until 2004.

Finally, I return to my first question: Are we able to curate Europe? I think this is a complex inquiry; it is not necessary to curate Europe in one museum, and it is—naturally—not possible to collect the totality of European culture. But we are able to find a lot of European topics, and we are able to find these topics together in special networks. Our house is involved in such international networks in the *Réseau des musées de l'Europe* in Paris, the network *Ethnographic Museums in Central and Eastern Europe* in Budapest, and a special group for the research of popular prints *Cercle d'étude image-impression-papier* in Berlin. Besides these groups, we have some temporary networks like *Migration work and identity* or *Born in Europe* in Berlin, which are both supported by the European Community in partnership with institutions in St. Petersburg (Kunstammer) and Poland (Poznan).

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## *The Contemporary Role of Ethnography Museums*

In today's context, I suppose, it would not make much sense to speak about the history of ethnographic museums. Their origins and also their status within cultural history is known among us too well. Perhaps it is not always so thoroughly documented as in the case of the Ethnographic Museum in Budapest, but we know that at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century in almost every European country a wakening interest in the phenomenon of rural cultures emerged among intellectuals and artists, which led to the establishment of ethnographic museums all over the continent.

The Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art in Vienna, which was founded by Michael Haberlandt and Wilhelm Hein in the year 1895, has perhaps a special status in so far, as it was meant as a museum of the peoples living in the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, with the exception of those regions that belonged to the Hungarian crown.

The Museum für Österreichische Volkskunde (Museum of Austrian Ethnography) as it was called at that time did not simply follow national principles, but focused on supranationality. Of course the choice of the cultural materializations followed ethnic aspects, but always with the intention of a comparative approach. Central issue was the typical, the peculiar, yet always bearing the common roots in mind. The point was to discover the unity within the diversity of the several ethnic, religious and linguistic groups often living together in a small region, such as in Transylvania, in the Bukovina or in Istria. In 1917, when the museum moved to its present quarters, a baroque garden-palace in the eighth Viennese district, the emperor himself took it under his protection. However, the time of the monarchy was coming to an end. The idea of a museum of all the peoples still lived on through the years of confusion caused by the wars and survived in the form of the Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art.

While the Ethnographic Museum here in Budapest owns also extra-European collections, hence is a Folk and Ethnographic Museum, the Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art stores almost only objects from the regions of the former monarchy. Nevertheless, it owns further collections from Savoy (France), from Ireland, Spain (Basque-collection), Scandinavia, and from southern Germany. By and by, a respectable collection from all over Europe had been established. Our museum

fulfilled therefore in the nineteen-twenties the demand of what was later on called *Ethnologia Europaea*. Supported by this material Michael Haberlandt and his son Arthur, who followed his father as director in the twenties, were able to develop the theoretical foundations for the second volume of the *Illustrated Ethnography* by Georg Buschan, published in Stuttgart 1926, whose topic is Europe: Michael Haberlandt delivered the voluminous article about *The Indo-Germanic Peoples of the Continent* (1–304) and Arthur Haberlandt the important thesis on *Europe's Rural Culture and its Historical Development* (305–658) with several illustrations and photos of objects from the collections of the museum.

This collection, which filled every space of the building, was not altered in any way until after the second world war. Only under the next director of the museum, Leopold Schmidt, a first, big renovation of the building was undertaken in the middle of the nineteen-fifties, combined with a rearrangement of the exhibits. Schmidt restricted himself to the parts of present day Austria. Yet in the so called South-German-Room he revived once more the comparative method of Haberlandt father and son. The collection of the crownlands of the monarchy as well as the collections of the rest of Europe were stored in the depot, to the consequence that with the objects also the countries and peoples moved out of sight. However, the collection of East and Southeast Europe had a profound guardian in the person of Adolf Mais, member of the scientific staff at that time. He drew up an inventory of the objects according to the material they were made of, which is of great value until today, and presented those groups in exhibitions, such as *Popular Art of the Eastern Church* (1960), *Ancient Folk-Art in Dalmatia* (Collection Natalie Bruck-Auffenberg) (1961), *Popular Music Instruments of the Balkans* (1969) and *Ancient Christmas Cribs of the Sudeten and Beskiden* (1969). And it was Adolf Mais, who—after organising an exhibition on Balkan Folk Art in Vienna—moved parts of the exhibition into the castle of Kittsee. There, neighbouring the former Iron Curtain he founded the Ethnographic Museum as a window to the east. Here a part of the Eastern and Southeastern collection was again opened to the public in a permanent exhibition.

Of even greater importance is the fact that Kittsee evolved into a contact- and meeting-point with our eastern and southeastern neighbours. Austria's status as a neutral country made direct bilateral contacts easier. What was considered impossible from a political point of view, became reality in the cultural field: cooperation. Intense contacts were maintained especially with Hungary, namely with the Ethnographic Museum and its former director general Tamas Hoffmann, who had lively contacts with Klaus Beitzl, director of our museum from 1979 to 1994. Therefore, several interesting and beautiful exhibitions could be realised in Kittsee from the beginning of the nineteen-eighties on:

*Bulgarian Folk Culture from the collections of the Ethnographic Museum Plovdiv* (1980);

*Made of Wood, Stone and Clay Hungarian Village Architecture. Fotos by Lantos Miklós* (1981); *Folk Art and Folk Studies of the Slovenian Alps* together with Gorenjski Museum Krain (1981) (connected with a Slovenian Workshop/Conference)

*The Hungarian Rural Kitchen from the Ethnographic Museum of Budapest* (1982); *Tachta Kale—Traditional Craftsmanship in Turkey*, arranged by the Museum of Ethnology Vienna (1983).

Sensational was the exhibition *Albanian Folk Culture* in 1984, which was brought to Austria by the Ethnographic Institute of the Albanian Academy of Science. Sensational, because it was Albania's first contact with a Western country since long time. According to this, the transport of the objects and the diplomatic demands were highly complicated. But, thanks to Austrian Neutrality we could make it. Connected to this exhibition was a symposium and mutual visits.

In 1985 a Croatian Day was held in Kittsee together with the exhibition 450 years of Croats in Burgenland (the eastern part of Austria). In 1986 the exhibition *Popular Ceramics of Hungary* from the Ethnographic Museum Budapest followed. *Costumes of Croatia and Burgenland* was curated by the Ethnographic Museum Zagreb in cooperation with the Museum of the country Burgenland. *Statues of Transitoriness. Folk Art in Hungarian Village Cemeteries* was presented by our Hungarian colleague Ernő Kunt.

The exhibition *Popular Jewellery of Slovakia*, which was organised by the Slovakian National Museum in Martin 1987, was the starting point for the cultural contact with Slovakia, which has been very intensive from this time on until now. The exhibition *From Bohemia's Groves and Fields* followed in 1989 and *Folk Art of Bohemia and Moravia from the Ethnographic Museum at the National Museum in Prague*.

One year earlier, in 1988, the Ethnographic Museum Warsaw was guest in Kittsee with its exhibition *Paiak and Kraciak—Striped and Chequered. Folk Art from Poland*.

After the fall of the Iron Curtain, it was on the one hand easier to establish contacts, on the other hand new problems emerged, first of all financial handicaps.

In order to recall the fruitful exchange of exhibitions, I would like to mention the further exhibitions:

*Textiles and Jewellery from Bulgaria. Traditional Cloth and Costumes of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries of the Collections of the National Museum in Sofia*, 1990;

*Shepherds and Herds—Sheep Herding in Slovakia* by professor Jan Podolak, Bratislava, 1991;

*Popular Music Instruments from Croatia of the Collection Kresimir Galin*, Zagreb, 1991;

*Puppets' World. From the Collections of the Puppeteer Anton Anderle from Slovakia*, 1992;

*Gélem, Gélem Lugone Dromeja... I've Gone a Long Way. From the Life of the Roma*, 1993;

*Rural Architecture of Macedonia*, 1995;

*Woodcarving in South-Slovakia of the Ethnographic Museum Komárom* 1995;

*Cicmany. A Village in Slovakia. An Exhibition of the Povázské Múzeum Zilina*, 1996;

*Krakow. Land and People. Folk Culture in Galizia*, 1997;

*Between the Seen and the Unseen. Historical Calendar Customs in Bulgaria from the Ethnographic Institute of the Academy of Science in Sofia*, 1999.



In the meantime also at our main location in Vienna, where space has always been less than sufficient, exhibitions from neighbouring countries took place.

In this context, I would like to mention:

*In the Veronese Mountains. Land and People of Tregnano and of Val d'Illasi*, 1987;  
*Man and Bee—Clovek in cebela. The Apiculture of Slovenia in Traditional Economy and Folk Art from the Ethnographic Museum in Ljubljana*, 1989;

*Pictures—Signs—Songs from the Ethnographic Museum East Berlin*, 1989—which was particularly interesting as during the period of the exhibition the Wall fell;

*Paska Cipka. The Art of Croatian Lace from the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb*, 1996.

Of immense importance during the past ten years has been the rediscovery and new evaluation of our own collections, especially of those from Eastern- and South Eastern Europe again in connection with exhibition exchanges.

They offer the possibility to reflect upon the history of our collections and upon the collecting process itself, the intentions of the collectors, the representational value of the collection and the consequences of having such a collection in the museum. A model case study for dealing with all that is the present exhibition *Istria—Points of View*. We prepared the historic items from our Viennese collection completed it with recent material from Istria and together with the colleagues from the Ethnographic Museum in Pazin we were able to reevaluate the material, to design new viewpoints and to offer current approaches.

In this years the Istrian Ethnography put its main interest on the croatian-slavic tradition, in order to support the newly established governmental circumstances. Since the end of the Tito-era Ethnography in Istria has been involved in the process of searching for a new Istrian identity within Europe. During mutual visits we opened one another's eyes for those processes and obtained a concept that should make clear, how one's actual point of view leads to a certain image of the country.

We had similar goals with our comprehensive exhibitions on *Bosnia—Between Occupation and Assault. From the collections of the Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art*, 1994. *The Leaf in the Ocean. Cyprus in Austrian Collections*, 1997; or with our important exhibition *Galizia. Ethnographic Studies among the Huzuls and Bojks in the Carpathians*, 1998, for which we were supported by the director of the Ethnographic Museum in Kolomea, Ms. Jaroslava Tkatschuk, who helped us with the work on our voluminous collection from Galicia. In L'viv in 1996 a symposium on the topic *Ethnography Without Borders* was already held. Moreover, in a touring exhibition the original pictures from the volume *Galicia* of the so called *Kronprinzenwerk*, 1998 was shown in L'viv, Krakow and Vienna.

As you can see, we house a treasure—the treasure of central European cultural heritage. The delight we feel about this is not completely without restraint. The preservation and maintenance of the collection is one of our deepest concerns. As it is the case in all museums, we also have to cope with lack of staff, space and money.

But we have to cope with the burden of administering this cultural heritage and new balanced concepts of acquisition are necessary. When we in European Ethnol-

ogy claim as the issue of research the analysis of everyday culture, then this should also be the case in our museums.

Tightly connected to this is the question of our image, of how ethnology is judged by the public. What modernity discovered once as an escape from a crisis, has transformed into folklorism. The so called folk culture was and is honoured—as it was also the case in the former communist countries—by politicians as a symbol of identity—if it is fitting—and by touristic advertising. The fault is ours, as we have, especially in museums, not only developed and produced these stereotypes, but have also transported them unaltered through decades: in our permanent, but also in our special exhibitions. As impressive the list of exhibitions in Vienna and Kittsee may be and - what is a thoroughly positive aspect—can be seen as a proof of the good bilateral relationship among the Ethnographic museums; with all these costumes, furniture and customs we have transported an image of yesterday. For some years now, we have therefore made every endeavour to depart from exhibitions of the Folk Art from..., Folk Life in...-type and organise exhibitions on current cultural or social topics. I would like to remind you of the exhibition *Beautiful Austria*, which discussed the idea and ideology of the Heimatschutz-movement, to which ethnology had also contributed, or of the well heeded exhibition *Life in the 'Platte' (Prefabricated Housing in GDR)* on everyday culture in the German Democratic Republic during the seventies and eighties, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. To this type of thematic exhibitions also last year's *Doing Nothing. On Strolling, Pausing and Idleness* is to be counted, which evolved in cooperation with the Institute of Ethnology at the University of Vienna. The exhibition *PhotoFamilyPhoto*, which was shown in Kittsee last year, dealt with photos as a source of knowledge and with photography as a cultural phenomenon, focusing on the family, in order to show its shifting importance in society. With the exhibition *2000—times/transitions* we reacted on the hype caused by the turn of the millennium. Mr. Fejős and colleagues visited it in the forefield of their own great and important exhibition about "time". I am convinced that in the long run we are being taken seriously only when we present exhibitions that deal with current topics; the tenth exhibition on embroidery of Mezőkövesd or another region wherever, as interesting as they may be, will not raise the acceptance of ethnographic museums.

Beside exhibitions, in which we rediscover our historical collections, consider Bosnia, Galicia, Istria, and the just mentioned thematic exhibitions, we have started a further series during the past years, in which we present young artists who deal with traditional culture in an artistic way. I would like to mention *Tool-Transformation* (1997), *Artistic Toys* (1998) and *Phono-Inventions* (1999) or recently *Special Models. The three hundred eighty seven houses of Peter Fritz* (2001). In one case, used and having become useless agricultural tools were transformed into sculptures, in another, toys were designed as pieces of art, in a further, waste was formed into music instruments. The bric-o-brac of Peter Fritz, as presented by young artists, sharpened one's view on everyday-architecture as it was seldom achieved by Ethnographic research on vernacular buildings.

Based on this let me draw some conclusion for our future cooperation and offer some proposals to you:

- Above all, we should place the protection, preservation and evaluation of our historical collections. For this the exchange of experience is necessary. Our goal should be the mutual opening of our collections.
- Continuing to present our regional collections in cooperation with an adequate partner institution on a bilateral level.
- Developing new strategies for acquisition and research.
- In this connection I would like to invite you to a meeting in Vienna next year.
- Using the keyword of *Neighbourhood*, new opportunities to get to know everyday life in Central and Eastern Europe should be created. I am thinking of exhibitions but also of projects on the Internet.

It would be very appreciative, if such meetings like this could become a permanent institution, with the location shifting each year. Therefore, I would like to repeat my invitation to Vienna for a meeting in 2002.

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ZOLTÁN FEJŐS

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*The Museum of Ethnography in Budapest:  
Past and Present*

The Museum of Ethnography in Budapest is one of twelve large national museums sponsored by the Hungarian state. The 1997 Hungarian Law on Public Collections and the 2001 Law on Safeguarding National Heritage provide the current basic legal framework for its activity. The Ministry of National Cultural Heritage contributes financially to the museum's operation, while the museum actively raises funds for about one third of its total budget. The Museum of Ethnography is usually considered among the most popular public institutions in the city of Budapest, as well as in Hungary, according to the number of its yearly visitors.<sup>1</sup>

The museum's collection was assembled over the course of more than 125 years. The almost 250,000 artefacts, millions of hand-written notes, reports and printed documents, as well as photographic material consisting of 400,000 photographs and slides, and thousands of hours of audio, film and video recordings, together constitute the largest and most significant Hungarian ethnography source material. Much of what we know about the traditional culture of the Hungarian people, and the transformations in their lifestyle and material culture, is due to this source material. The international collection of the museum provides a picture of the cultural diversity of the human race, of both its traditional and its contemporary profile, which cannot be encountered through any other source in Hungary. Indeed, in its breadth and quality this collection is unique in Central Europe.

The Museum of Ethnography was established under the auspices of the Hungarian National Museum approximately 130 years ago.<sup>2</sup> In 1872, a separate department was set up for the acquisition of newly arrived ethnographic objects. The Minister of Culture appointed the geographer and naturalist János Xántus (1825–1892) to head this department. Xántus was known for his activities in the United States as a refugee in the wake of the defeat of the Hungarian Revolution of 1848, and then, after returning to Hungary, his extensive ethnographic pursuits financed by the Hungarian government, which he carried out in South-East Asia between 1868 and

<sup>1</sup> This text is the revised and augmented version of FEJŐS 2000. References added are mostly items available in foreign languages.

<sup>2</sup> For main points of history of the Museum see HOFFMANN 1972, 1973; HOFER 1973; KODOLÁNYI 1972; SELMECZI KOVÁCS 1989, 1997; FEJŐS 2000a.

1870 (see XÁNTUS 1871). The need to house his findings led directly to the creation of the new institution within the museum. The history and development of the museum collection had a direct influence on the institutionalisation of ethnographic research in Hungary, as it represented the sole formal institution for the discipline until its instruction at university level was organised in the 1930s.

The Department of Ethnography enjoyed relative autonomy from the Hungarian National Museum, particularly after it moved out of the central building of that institution in 1892 and was run by its own administration. Organisational and administrative ties to the mother institution prevailed nonetheless until 1947, when the Museum of Ethnography became independent; its name was subsequently changed a number of times.

From very early days on, the museum faced the quandary of finding a permanent facility. Even though the erection of a new, purposely-built museum was proposed from time to time, the museum was still unable to acquire a building appropriate to the value of its collections. After re-locating several times within the city, from 1924 onwards for fifty years, it was housed in the building of a former grammar school, relatively remote from the city centre and other cultural institutions. In spite of this, it served the public with its permanent exhibition until 1942–1943. The 30 rooms contained an extensive display of traditional Hungarian artefacts, and to a lesser extent exhibited the artefacts of “exotic” overseas cultural groups. The displays were accompanied by guidebooks in Hungarian, German and French (BÁTKY 1929; VISKI 1929, 1931).

After World War II, the now independent Museum of Ethnography’s situation stabilised, and for a period of more than two decades as the largest institution of ethnography in Hungary, it acted as the centre for co-ordinating ethnographic research, besides fulfilling the traditional functions of a museum. Its prosperity is signalled by an increase in the number of staff at that time. In 1952, the number of academics it employed was about four times higher than before the war (BALASSA 1954), when the average number of curators varied from 8–12 people.

This staff increase meant that some of the curators had less of an affinity with the actual museum collection; the museum became characteristic of a research institute—or at least that is what could have happened.

Under the auspices first of the Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest, and then of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Gyula Ortutay directed the primary emphasis of ethnography in Hungary, in charge of complex research and the realisation of his long planned summary works. Thus, the Museum of Ethnography did not enjoy its newly gained decisive role for very long because the period, beginning in 1967, in which ethnography received the most important emphasis in the new research group (then institute), introduced a radically different atmosphere. Once an institution with a monopoly, the museum’s role and influence had decreased. In accordance with the international practice, mainstream academic research became detached from the museum. Thus, for example, the museum did not receive a commission for producing a newly planned synthesis of Hungarian ethnography, the volume of material

culture within the *Magyarság néprajza* (Ethnology of the Hungarians) series. The relative loss of prestige manifested itself in a loss of financial opportunities and facilities necessary for research, and it caused a number of scholars to leave the museum for academic institutions that were clearly offering better prospects.

Two and a half decades later, after it had been separated from the parent institute, another organisational change occurred within the museum. The Open Air Museum in Szentendre, which had functioned as one of the departments of the museum, became autonomous, fiscally by 1972, and organisationally by 1976.<sup>3</sup> The change also meant the separation of some of the museum's collection. The material that came into the hands of the new institution amounted to over three percent of the total Hungarian collection at the time, without accounting for the articles collected especially for display in the Open Air Museum.

The partition happened simultaneously with the solving of the Museum of Ethnography's housing quandaries. Between 1973 and 1975, the museum, then under the direction of Tamás Hoffmann, moved to its present, impressive location in the one-time building of the Palace of Justice built between 1893 and 1896.<sup>4</sup> The move into this building, in the heart of Budapest on Lajos Kossuth Square overlooking the Parliament building, certainly increased the prestige of the Museum, but at the same time it required a change in the functioning of the institution. This meant transforming academic research work, formulating a relatively autonomous point of view, and expanding relations with the general public. The number of temporary exhibitions increased, while research services and museum education were augmented. Collection development and academic research definitely suffered neglect because of the task of moving and then inventorying and re-organising the collection, as well as the new requirements posed by the everyday workings of the museum and the increased number of exhibitions.

With its unique collection of artefacts, its remarkable archival collections, and one of Europe's best specialised ethnographic libraries, the Museum of Ethnography is today one of the most significant ethnographic institutions on the European continent. At the same time, the Museum is historically the hub of a network of ethnographic institutions in Hungary. It employs the most researchers in this field in the country. The total staff of one hundred includes 31 curators, trained as both ethnographers and cultural anthropologists.

One of the exceptional qualities of the Museum often emphasised in descriptions, is that in one facility it houses both Hungarian and international ethnographic material. In the rest of Europe it is commonplace for displays of a country's national culture to reside in a separate museum from another which collects objects from other cultures. Admittedly, there are museums in other European cities which contain objects from foreign cultures as well as from the national culture in question,

<sup>3</sup> Its today's official name is Hungarian Open Air Museum in Szentendre; see CSERI 2001.

<sup>4</sup> For a short history and presentation of the building in English see GRÁFIK 1997.

but the combination is less pronounced than in the Budapest museum. The history of the Budapest Museum of Ethnography is unique in this respect.

The artefacts amassed by János Xántus in East and South-East Asia in 1869 and 1870 formed the basis of the Museum of Ethnography. The fact that he, as head of the Museum, was also in charge of assembling the material to be displayed at the 1873 Vienna World Exhibition created an opportunity to compile from two different spheres. The Hungarian material amassed for the World Exhibition was only placed in the care of the Ethnographic Department of the Museum of Applied Arts after a long delay, mainly from 1898 onwards (GRÁFIK 1997b). Its advancement was for a long time far from certain, even though Xántus himself was pushing for that end, particularly as the millennium of Hungarian statehood was to be celebrated in 1896.

In light of the present day situation it may sound surprising that Xántus originally envisioned the two collections housed in two separate museums. However, a chance succession of events and various secondary circumstances, followed by Museum director János Jankó's theoretically sound action, the Ethnographic Department continued its gathering activities in both spheres, and the two potential museums were amalgamated. Jankó (1868–1902) served as director between 1894 and 1902, when the collection reached 37,000 objects—six times more than before him.

Along with curatorial activities and organisational development, today it is the job of the Hungarian Department of the Museum of Ethnography to maintain its collections comprised of material coming from Hungary and territories which historically belonged to the country. The total stock of objects is divided into fifteen collections assembled according to various principles. Most of them are centred on traditional subsistence activities (agriculture, foraging, fishing, etc.), others contain traditional crafts (pottery), or are function-based (the amassing of furniture and lighting devices, subsistence patterns, etc.); still others concentrate on raw materials (textiles and costumes). These collections include approximately 160,000 artefacts. The international material comprised of objects from outside the boundaries of Hungary and from overseas, consists of six collections essentially classified on a geographical basis, according to continents. Non-Hungarian speaking areas are represented by about 64,000 artefacts, which amount to over a quarter of the total stock of objects. In addition to this is a collection of hand-written notes, photographs, film and audio recordings. These are not displayed alongside the artefact collection but in the appropriate archives. They, too, are classified according to geographic indicators.

The main body of the collection was collected from each continent around the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, although new acquisitions are made even today. The Ethnological Archive, organised after the Scandinavian model in 1939 (KOVÁCS 1939), contains both Hungarian and, to a lesser extent, international material including written notes, manuscripts and original texts, along with various documents, photographs, slides, films and inventories. This is also where the early 20<sup>th</sup> century folk music recordings of both Béla Bartók (1881–1945) and Zoltán Kodály (1882–1967) are kept, along with folk music recordings by other collectors.

Aside from the artefact collection representing two separate spheres, international and Hungarian, the entire history of the Museum of Ethnography is characterised by an interaction of the national and the universal, both in terms of the institution's approach and that taken by its researchers. General ethnography—in other words ethnology and anthropology, on the one hand, and a more strict and narrow descriptive ethnography of Hungarian reality on the other hand, has always blended varying proportions in the museum's professional orientation, its practical activity as well as in its abstract aims and *raison d'être*.

These two poles maintain a fluid relationship, their view of each other varies from age to age and has been traditionally dependent upon institutional heads, but these bases have been stable from the very beginning. János Jankó, followed by Zsigmond Bátky (1874–1939)<sup>5</sup>, supported the synthesis of Hungarian ethnography with general ethnology and formulated research and museum activities accordingly. Jankó outlined a programme in which priority was given to studying the Hungarian people and the country's national minorities, to which the study of neighbouring and related nations was attached in a comparative research framework. In a third sphere, he enlarged the scope and museum activity to other peoples and remote cultures, because of pressing questions concerning the history of mankind. At the same time, his activities were characterised by a unified view of the importance of academic research work and of the vital role it plays in maintaining the cultural standards of a nation.

In a subsequent period, a multitude of theoretical approaches and schools gained ground within the walls of the institution but these did not have the power to alter the basic aims of research and the fundamental approach of curatorial activities. It cannot be denied that the first post-war generation brought a change of approach, while they were themselves also strongly divided. In a historical perspective, all of this did not exceed the boundaries of the previously established framework. It is only in terms of the proportion of national to general content, or in terms of the foundations, the character or ideological horizon of their academic approach, that differences may be detected between the periods headed by various directors, such as László Vargha (1946–1950), Iván Balassa (1950–1956), Tibor Bodrogi (1961–1968), Tamás Hoffmann (1969–1992) and Tamás Hofer (1992–1997).

The basic approach of the museum, and thus the material collected, is determined by cultural history. This framework has characterised its activity through decades, although we must not belittle the minor differences in approach outlined above. In 1906, Zsigmond Bátky formulated a classic viewpoint and aim, in which museums of ethnography would sooner or later have to be complemented by other collections, overarching "the entire spectrum of human culture" so that they could become "genuine museums of cultural history" (BÁTKY 1992. 5.). It is this external interactivity that describes the character of the "ethnographically based classification system" of the museum. For researchers of the classical age, ethnography is unified, as

<sup>5</sup> He was the leader of the Museum between the end of 1919 and 1934.

it studies the peoples (*Völkerkunde*), and on the bases of cultural history and nationality extends to examining almost the entirety of the culture of a national past. Theoretically this is the case, while in actual fact its scope is narrower. It leaves analysis of the past to the historical sciences, and in a social sense it does not exceed the examination of "the people".

There were few advocates of a radically different approach or profile which diverged from that traditionally cultivated in the Museum. The great challenge up to now has been an attempt to break with the cultural historical trend, or at least partially modify or extend it. Initially, in its first decades, physical anthropology provided the opportunity for changing course, while from the 1960's onwards the increasing popularity of the social sciences and the general social scientific view opened up possibilities. At the same time, a need to interpret the general historical development of the European peasantry and its changing modes of existence determined the interpretation of the museum's collection (cf. HOFFMANN 1969; 1973; 1989).

The most recent trends influenced by the social sciences attempt to explain the functioning, structural features, dynamics, and communicational and symbolic nature of societal relations. Curatorial activity may contribute to this through empirical studies of society, the methods of contemporary history, sociology, or cultural sociology, but best of all through cultural or social anthropology. This is particularly true of the "contemporary cultural artefact research" which more or less comprises the disciplines listed above yet bears multiple internal facets.<sup>6</sup> These influence researchers' approaches to a varying extent but have created no breakthrough in acquisition policy, nor within curatorial activity. There have been numerous attempts to establish a contemporary research unit, and to document the lifestyles and material culture of particular strata of society other than peasants, but these have not altered the approach or classificatory principles of the museum to any significant extent. Today, the basic quandary remains unanswered: How can curatorial work, which follows and indeed enriches the traditions of the cultural historical approach, be modified or corrected? How is it possible to capitalise upon the opportunities offered by mainstream and alternative social scientific approaches in analytic or interpretative curatorial activity which is based on object analysis? Clearly, this is an enigma which permeates the whole of European ethnography, cultural anthropology and museum anthropology today, and simultaneously presents unique problems in relation to museums.

In the long term it may be postulated that in the Museum of Ethnography in Budapest, similarly to other institutions of its kind, the theoretical underpinnings of collection work will shift from objects to information. This was prefigured by new registration rules which were introduced in sets between 1939 and 1950 (KOVÁCS 1939; BALASSA 1954). This did not indicate a decrease in the interest in objects, quite the contrary: it represented an extension of the concept of the ethnographic object

<sup>6</sup> Regarding some aspects of that connection see FEJŐS 1999; 2000b.

and an enhanced precision in the handling of data which may help interpret the object, and thus opened a qualitatively new phase in the attention paid to objects.

On the basis of the formation processes (cf. SCHIFFER 1997; FEJŐS 2000a. 17–21.) and rules which are active in constituting ethnographic collections and data bases, a new change of course is required today which requires the support of theoretical arguments. This is presaged by modifications in the historical trends for evaluating objects. The most significant phase in this process occurred between the 1940s and 1960s, when the need to record an unprecedented plenitude of data about ethnographic objects was emphasised. This the aim of the organisation of the Ethnological Archives, set up on the basis of historical sources, manuscripts, various written notes and other documents.

Today's mainstream curatorial practice, defined by preventive conservation, acts in the same way. The stress has irrevocably moved, it seems, from the object to the information and its rigorous documentation. This came about either because we are often speaking of phenomena which cannot be approached through objective documentation, or because of an irrevocable awareness of the fact that even beside the existing opportunities for object collection the need to document the context is fundamental and inevitable.

The process outlined above will indubitably modify the position and perception of objects/artefacts within ethnographic research and curation and thus also the academic and professional strategy of the Museum of Ethnography. A museum is a collection of cultural documents—in other words it does not collect objects in a strict sense, but is essentially a place for amassing and storing cultural information. Naturally, objects are an indispensable source of information about human activity, cultural and social relations, but, in and of themselves, have only a limited validity. Their existence, however, deems that they deserve thorough analysis; in other words an uncovering of information, for example, in terms of their material, technique, age and, naturally, their use or relation to other similar objects. The information concealed in ethnographic objects is knowledge which can only be made use of by understanding both the context and the history its acquisition. This means that, like all museums, the Museum of Ethnography must transform its activity and approach and should re-organise itself accordingly. At the same time it shall retain and preserve the experience and useful practices which have been formulated hitherto, but it must eschew routines which impede the required changes.

The collections of the Museum of Ethnography are described in a comprehensive volume which introduces its material by providing an analysis of the principles and history of collecting work and the organisation of its inventory. The book, entitled *A Néprajzi Múzeum gyűjteményei* (The Collections of the Museum of Ethnography), was published in 2000, the result of two years' research. This handbook seeks to provide a systematic overview of the Museum's holdings. Authors present and analyse each collection of the museum according to a common guideline involving three main points: (1) the historical constitution of the collection; (2) the present composition and main characteristics of the collection; (3) perspectives on the future

of the collection. Theoretically, two main principles guide the volume. On the one hand, it is clear that the evolution of the collections is part of a historical process in which the research and acquisition agendas of museum administrators fluctuate. On the other hand, varieties of factors, such as the conditions of storage, limited acquisition budgets, training, or even the mindset of the curators have shaped the Museum's collections. Concurrently, the historical evolution of the collections creates and continually transforms the segment of 'objective' reality which has been defined and selected as the object of study. Concepts such as 'folk culture' and 'exotic cultures' of the world's people have undergone transformations as a result of researchers' perceptions and routines. The aim of the handbook, then, was not merely to write a history of the museum. Instead, it had the aim of examining the evolution of the collections both as sources of ethnographic knowledge and as abstractions; in other words, a reconstruction of the ideas which shaped the history of ethnographic collecting in Hungary. Also, this volume attempts to call attention to the inter-connectivity of museum practice within a wider context, thus joining the more recent trends of research—the approaches that have been labelled "new museology", and the critical historiography of ethnographic (or anthropological) museums and of material culture studies.

In order to publicise its holdings and activity, the Museum of Ethnography issues several series of publications. Its annual publication, *Néprajzi Értesítő* (Ethnographic Review: The Yearbook of the Museum of Ethnography) which has been published for decades, is now in its 82<sup>nd</sup> year. In 1998, a new periodical called *Tabula* was introduced. Published twice a year, it aims to become an open forum—"slate"—for all contemporary ethnographic trends, European ethnology, cultural anthropology, cultural studies and historical anthropology. The Museum's rich collection of artefacts is touted in the publication *A Néprajzi Múzeum tárgykatalógusai / Catalogi Musei Ethnographiae* (Object Catalogues of the Museum of Ethnography),<sup>7</sup> and in a series intended for the general public entitled *Magyar Népművészet* (Hungarian Folk Art),<sup>8</sup> as well as in exhibition guides and catalogues. A series published by the Museum under the title *Fontes Musei Ethnographiae*<sup>9</sup> makes available the sources held by the archive collections; the same is true of a publication focusing on the history of ethnographic research, entitled *Series Historica Ethnographiae*.<sup>10</sup> A complete bibliography of the several hundred publications issued by the museum to up to now is contained in the aforementioned volume (Fejős, ed. in chief 2000. 938–958).

Today the Museum of Ethnography contains a permanent exhibition alongside several temporary exhibitions. The display *A magyar nép hagyományos kultúrája* (The Traditional Culture of the Hungarian People), occupying 13 halls and containing almost 3000 artefacts and documents, illustrates the traditional material culture

<sup>7</sup> By the end of 2001 five volumes have been published since its initiation in 1993.

<sup>8</sup> Twenty-six volumes have appeared from its beginning in 1924; five since its renewal in 1994.

<sup>9</sup> Six volumes since its start of 1988.

<sup>10</sup> Eleven volumes since 1989.



characteristic of Hungary up to the industrial revolution (see guide booklet; SELMECZI KOVÁCS—SZACSVAY 1997).<sup>11</sup> The museum's other exhibitions draw from two aspirations. Temporary exhibitions partly process the material of the various large collections while focusing their attention upon themes which may draw a broader public audience. Thus the exhibitions unveil the historical material of traditional cultures, as well as examine the various mechanisms, functions and characteristic attributes of society and culture.

Special mention must be made of the endeavours which, utilising the unique advantages of this museum, attempt to consider Hungarian and international material side by side. One notable example of this was the largest exhibition ever organised within the Museum, *Időképek—Millenniumi kiállítás* (Images of time—Millenary Exhibition)<sup>12</sup> which was opened on the night of 31<sup>st</sup> December 2000, and was displayed for one year. It was an experiment, both in its choice of subject and in its methods of representation and design, to expand the current possibilities of displays offered by ethnographic museums.

The near future's most important task is to reformulate the Museum's mission statement and elaborate upon its middle-term strategic plan according to facts and tendencies outlined in this overview, as well as other factors like public service and the new necessities of management.

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<sup>11</sup> The permanent exhibition of the international collections has been closed in 1995 after 15 years of function. See its guidebook: *ÓSTÁRSADALMAKTÓL* 1982.

<sup>12</sup> See its complete catalogue FEJŐS—LACKNER—WILHELM 2001.

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## *Ethnographic Museums in Croatia: History, Challenges and Perspectives*

As it is the case in most Central European countries, ethnographic museums in Croatia share a long and often turbulent history. Major museums, in large cities, were founded at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Beside Croatian material, these museums also contain highly valuable collections belonging to continental, as well as non-European cultures. Acquisition policies and their interpretation have remained more or less unchanged for the major part of the museums' existence. Only recently, different approaches have been introduced resulting in intriguing exhibitions and different collection policies. Also, recent times have witnessed the intensification of collaboration between museums within, as well as outside Croatia, enabling the discovery of other cultures, the exchange of professional experience, and the promoting of professional co-operation between museums. In a situation where the funding of most museums is inadequate, the museum community plumbs the depths of resourcefulness which results in some creative solutions.

The earliest documentation of Croatia's traditional culture was recorded in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries through the works of poets and writers of those times. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries this ever-increasing interest resulted in a collection of valuable artefacts: folk stories were written down; customs and ways of life among peasants were also described. During that time a number of foreigners, like Valvasor and Alberto Fortis to name the most prominent, also travelled through parts of Croatia composing interesting and valuable descriptions of places, people and customs.

The second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the emergence of the first private collections of objects belonging to traditional culture. Also, the theoretical and practical foundations for future research and collecting were laid at that time. A number of authors, scientists and enthusiasts published an ever-increasing number of texts and descriptions of traditional life in numerous papers, magazines, journals and periodicals. Among them, the most important and influential was *Journal for Folk Life and Customs*, published by the former Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts (today the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts).

In 1846, upon the recommendation of the Croatian National Revival Movement, the Croatian parliament decided to found a National Museum. Among other materials, its mandate was to collect ethnographic items. In 1880, the ethnographic collection was separated from the National Museum with the aim of placing it to-

gether with collections from other museums, as well as with many private collections added later, in a newly-founded ethnographic museum. Among these there were also several collections containing material of non-European origin. The Zagreb Ethnographic Museum was founded in 1919, thus one of younger ethnographic museums in Europe. Most of its counterparts were founded during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: St. Petersburg's in 1836, Munich's in 1868, Budapest's in 1872, Hamburg's in 1879, Berlin's in 1889, and Prague's and Vienna's in 1895.

The first ethnographic museum in Croatia, however, was founded in 1910 in Split thanks to the efforts of an enthusiast who was later appointed director of the museum, and who even financially supported it in tough times.

Croatia's newest ethnographic museum was established in 1955 in Pazin, Istria.

The museum in Zagreb is a national facility, while both museums in Split and Pazin are regional. Apart from these, there are many smaller museums and collections of regional and local levels, most of them founded after World War Two. A large number of complex museums also hold ethnographic collections. Except for the Zagreb museum, none of the other museums is located in buildings designed and built for this purpose, and many of them have to make do in inadequate space. However, they all store many ethnographic treasures bearing testimony to the country's rich and varied cultural history.

The Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb is situated in an art-nouveau building in the centre of the city. The initial collection consisted of around 16,000 items, mostly textiles. This collection was sold to the government by Salamon Berger, a Jewish textile manufacturer of Slovak origin. Because of this sales agreement and his initiative for founding the museum, he was also appointed its first director from 1919–1925. The money received from the textiles was partly used to purchase new acquisitions for the museum, and the remainder was donated to charity. Berger also organized scientific work, initiated field research, the acquisition of artefacts, publishing activities, and documentation.

From the very beginning, the museum applied traditional curatorial and ethnological ideas and patterns, so most of the work routine consisted of collecting, the preservation of objects, and their presentation in exhibitions. Like in most European institutions that were influenced by German ethnological thought and curators followed the theories and principles of the cultural-historical school. Their emphasis was upon collecting objects—mostly textiles—that would illustrate Croatia's cultural history. Very often, compared to today's criteria, there was an excessive number of objects in permanent exhibitions, almost as if it was a display of inventory. In the years which followed, there were several reorganizations and a great number of permanent exhibitions were also constructed.

The present exhibition was inaugurated after the last refurbishment of the museum in 1972. Although it is visually attractive and fairly modern, conceptually it is outdated and will soon be replaced. It manifests an idealised picture of patrimony, showing the most beautiful costumes and objects, neglecting their context or the real life situations of their origin.

The museum's first director, Berger himself began rigorous exhibition activity. He was the owner of a textile factory employing peasant women to manufacture (woven and embroidered) traditional textiles for sale in Croatia and abroad. He organized several international exhibitions of these textiles, promoting them in world exhibitions, as well as the display of national costumes and textiles produced by his manufacturers.

Over the 82 years of its existence, more than 400 temporary and four permanent exhibitions have been organized in the museum, and also in many other museums in Croatia and abroad. For the most part these were simply descriptive, dealing with certain aspect of traditional life and its history or geographical area. There were very few problematic exhibitions that provoked questions, and did not attempt to provide all the answers. Recently, there were some experimental excursions into new provocative realms, and more are likely to emerge in the future. Efforts to hire architects and designers to plan exhibitions and catalogues have succeeded. A new qualitative level has thus been reached which is worth maintaining. This means that additional financial constraints upon exhibition resources have emerged yet, today, everything must be done professionally and up to the highest standards to achieve success. Consequently, the museum decided to employ a full time, professional designer.

An educational department was established in 1953, among the very first in Croatian museums. It is now successfully developing and implementing different programs for all ages and educational levels.

During recent years some other aspects of museum work have also been successfully modernized, preparing the institution for future important changes. The museum has built a local computer network with a powerful server and around the clock Internet access for all its curators, taking into consideration that information and communication are of the highest importance in this profession. It was also among the very first cultural institutions in Croatia to have its own web page since 1996. Also, the first fully interactive multimedia exhibition CD-ROM in Croatia was produced here in 1998. Extensive documentation is presently being digitized. A computer program called *Promus* was developed in 1996 by the Museum along with a computer consulting firm, and this database is being filled with catalogue records together with digitized images of related objects.

Today the Museum holds about 85,000 objects, including a small but valuable collection of objects belonging to non-European cultures. This collection has been seriously studied since the 1960's and 1970's, when it was also displayed in a permanent exhibition for the first time.

Although good care is being taken of the objects—the Museum has a team of seven conservators—the available area and quality of storage space is unsuitable and possibly damaging to the collection. Plans are being made for the construction of a new storage facility some 5 kilometres from the museum building, which would eventually solve the problem for many years to come. The new facility will have restoration and study areas, and some collections will be open for visitors.

The Museum's collection policy in the past wasn't well-defined and, consequently, the collection depended more or less focused upon pre-Second World War, rural material. Now, interest is shifting towards more recent happenings and the aspects of everyday life in rural, as well as urban, areas. This is reflected in the character of research activities, but also in the collection policy and exhibitions. Consequently, the Museum is now extensively researching and collecting in areas and topics that were previously neglected.

The last renovation of the Museum took place between 1968–1972. At that time, the building more than accommodated the need for more and more complex and demanding museum activities. But since then, everything has changed in the museum world, and facilities now hardly satisfy. Now plans are being made for a general refurbishment of the Museum. The removal of the collection will enable the expansion of exhibition areas and the addition of a lecture hall, along with smaller rooms needed for organizing workshops, etceteras.

The new museum will have three exhibition areas. Approximately one third of the total exhibition area will hold a permanent exhibition that will be on display for 10–12 years. A second area will be dedicated to exhibitions lasting 2–3 years, and third area reserved for temporary exhibitions. Presently, discussions are underway for conceptualizing permanent exhibitions.

Multimedia will be used extensively but discreetly. All this, along with some other "tricks"—like high-tech lighting—will create a certain dynamism and effect that will likely attract more visitors. The exhibition policy seeks a balance between scientific and visitor-oriented approaches. Visitor surveys will be used in order to discover their preferences and expectations.

Another important, but time and resource demanding activity, is co-ordination and professional assistance to smaller museums in Croatia. Many of them are understaffed or underbudgeted, and they face various problems that they are not able to solve by themselves. The Zagreb Ethnographic Museum hopes to provide them assistance within its capacities, taking this on a regular basis.

Speaking about other ethnographic museums in Croatia, it must be stressed that their activities are restricted more often than not by inadequate funding. Furthermore, most of them have stagnated for decades, following the tried but true paths of cultural-historical theory. To make things worse, during the disintegration of Socialist Yugoslavia and war in Croatia, some of them (Konavle, Dubrovnik, Vukovar) were damaged or destroyed by Yugoslav military and paramilitary units.

But even in such adverse conditions, some of them are now producing interesting exhibitions and succeed in maintaining professional work. Notable examples include ethnographic museums or departments in Pazin, Split, Zadar, Šibenik, Vinkovci, Županja and Slavonski Brod, where teams of younger ethnographers produce stimulating results. A number of them renewed their museums to create new permanent exhibitions. A sort of informal network of museums has been established enabling the exchange of ideas and information.

To use a well-worn expression, in this era of globalization ethnographic muse-



ums will play a unique and important role. Confronted with the aggressive bombardment of uniform, instant, commercialised culture from the mass media, they will not only have to preserve and interpret memories of "old" culture, but also have to research, analyse and interpret—disclose the essence of so-called globalization as a cultural, social, political and commercial phenomenon. To be more efficient in doing this, museums will probably co-ordinate their efforts and resources. Also, more active exchanges will be welcomed, since it is worrying that the average European citizen sometimes knows more about culture coming from across the ocean than about their own or their neighbour's culture.

Finally, the increasing demand for better results at less cost put museums in an specially awkward position. They will have to increasingly rely on their internal resources and resourcefulness, including the congenial support of similar institutions.



ANDRZEJ RATAJ

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*Ethnographic Museums in Poland:  
Between the Past and the Future*

In Poland, like in others parts of Europe, the origins of scientific collections and museums are connected with the rationality of the Enlightenment and with the emotional nature of Romanticism. But, as a matter of fact, it all began with the erudition of traditional society in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In Poland the beginnings of museums in general, and among them ethnographic museums, originate in a sombre period for Poles—that of the partition. The following are the most important elements of sociological and historical background of that time:

- first of all, ethnography at that time became an independent science;
- individuals or associations undertook numerous activities trying to develop village economies and improve the living standards of the peasantry. This made necessary the study of local crafts and skills, and also the general studies of village community life;
- national activities were also crucial. As there was no Polish state, territory was divided and the Polish nation was strongly influenced by the German and Russian populations. It was, consequently, important to prove that Poles had their own national identity. As the Polish nation consisted essentially of peasantry, the cultivation of folk culture was paramount;
- during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a variety of diverse educational activities developed in Poland. This included the creation of libraries, local archives and museums, all significant elements;
- other trends of 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe (as well as in Poland), were popular, so-called regionalist movements, along with tourist and sightseeing activities.

The aforementioned factors created an environment for the development of museums in general and ethnographic museums in particular. At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and all through the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and spurred by the French, exhibitions of industrial and agricultural production occurred. The first of these were organised in 1798 and 1801 in Paris. Similar exhibitions were made in subsequent years all over Europe. They were local, regional, national, and in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, also international.

The first industrial-agricultural exhibition on Polish territory was arranged in 1821

in Warsaw. Traditional village products, like pottery and textiles, were also displayed. From 1821 until the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, two thousands exhibitions of this kind were organized in the Polish territories belonging at that time to Russia, Prussia and Austria. Similarly, the first so-called industry, craft and agricultural museums were organized in Krakow (1868), Lvov (1873), Warsaw (1875). Exhibition collections were transferred to various types of museums: industry museums, national museums, or museums of art, and in this way separate departments were also created, sometimes departments of ethnography.

The Slavonic Exhibition in Moscow in 1867 as well as the 1873 World Exhibition in Vienna were also very important for the creation of ethnographic museums. One of the oldest collections of Polish folk costumes was collected especially for the Moscow exhibition and is to this day preserved in the St. Petersburg Ethnographic Museum. In the Vienna exhibition, peasant houses (from Galicia) with all their trappings—furniture, textiles, all kinds of tools and utensils—were on display. Conferences and congresses were organised in parallel with the exhibitions. Pan-Slavic ideals were popularised in Russia, while the diversity of the national folk cultures of the Habsburg Empire was stressed in Austria. Vienna possessed a special attitude towards national concepts; state authorities to some extent were promoting these ideals, when they did not present peril for the Empire. Congresses and conferences assisted in the development of a theoretical background for ethnographic museums.

The first ethnographic museum in Poland as a distinct institution was established in Warsaw in 1888. The Museum's main originator was Jan Karłowicz, an outstanding Polish scholar. He possessed important contacts with German museums, especially the *Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde* (National Museum of Ethnology) in Berlin, and was personally acquainted with the famous German ethnographer Adolf Bastian. Collections belonging to this museum were mostly from non-European countries, but in subsequent decades numerous Polish objects were added.

The second institution to be established was the Ethnographic Museum founded in Krakow in 1911. As one of founders of the Museum and its first director, it is necessary to stress the importance of teacher and school official Seweryn Udziela. He played a crucial role in the Museum's collection activities and research, also co-operating with schools and, in general, establishing relations with young people.

The third important Polish ethnographic museum was established in independent Poland in 1925 in Vilnius, the present-day capital of Lithuania. It had quite a unique character. The Museum was part of the Chair of Ethnography at a local university, and it was organized as a "laboratory" for students and scholars. It was the most modern ethnographic museum in Poland at that time.

The next big ethnographic museum was organized in 1930, in the textile manufacturing city of Lodz, by local town authorities. This typical capitalistic, industrial town was evolving very quickly and high society along with local authorities decided it was necessary to do something for the promotion of culture.

Other ethnographic museums were created in the inter-war period of 1918–1939,

as independent institutions or as departments of regional museums. At the same time, museum specialists were very active in different associations. Of special note in Poland were at least two associations important for the promotion of ethnographic museums and for Polish ethnography in general.

*Polskie Towarzystwo Ludoznawcze* (PTL) or the Polish Ethnological Society was the first one. It was established in 1895, in Lvov. Members of the PTL were mostly professionals connected with various institutions, not just ethnographic museums. There were also many laymen—fans of tradition who were interested in their regions. Also of note were the Society's publishing activities. One of the oldest ethnographic yearbooks, *Lud* (Folk) is still edited by PTL.

The second association, important for all museums, was *Zwiazek Muzeow Polskich*—the Association of Polish Museums. The very beginnings of this association are deeply rooted. It was established in 1914, when a group of representatives from 14 museums active on Polish territory created the Delegation of Polish Curators. They decided to follow the footsteps of their foreign colleagues—mostly in Great Britain and United States—establishing a permanent organisation.

Between the First and the Second World Wars it was the most important museum organisation in Poland, initiating yearly congresses, which issued reports of their findings. The Association was a significant partner with state and local authorities, and took part in the creation of the first Polish museum law of 1932. Prominent members of the Association also wrote the first museum handbook, which, although ready before the Second World War, was published only in 1948.

International organisations were also present on the Polish scene. There was, for example, the Office of Museums, part of the Institute of Intellectual Co-operation connected with League of Nations. Just as in member countries, there were national committees in Poland as well. The Institute was, for example, the organiser of the International Congresses in Athens in 1930, in Madrid 1934, both of which were attended by Polish delegations made up of museum staff. The effect of this co-operation was published in 1935 with the title *Repertoire International des Musées* (International Repertory of Museums), a second volume of which was devoted to Polish museums—the first issuing of such a vast amount of information about these institutions. It included an index of 109 museums in Poland including their addresses, descriptions of their collections, exhibitions and so on. It also made note of all the most important artistic, historic, archaeological, ethnographic and regional Polish museums. Today's successor to this organisation is the International Committee on Monuments.

During the inter-war period, a slow but systematic progress of modernising museums, the initiation of ethnographic field research, and the expansion of collections took place. The Second World War dramatically ended that period. In the very first days of the war, in 1939, the Central Ethnographic Museum in Warsaw was completely destroyed by German invaders. Many of the museum's staff were also killed. Because of the Polish state's border changes, some collections were lost to Lithuania, Byelorussia or Ukraine.

The political situation of Poland changed after the Second World War. State authorities' control over affairs became stronger and stronger, and the totalitarian features of the new system became increasingly evident. In 1950, all Polish museums were nationalised. In general, the role of associations weakened. The Association of Polish Museums, for example, ended its activities in 1951. There were other regional and professional associations which remained (some of them had so called museum sections), but their role was minor and their influence limited.

Polish ethnographic museums make up a relatively small part of all Polish museums. There are approximately 600–630 museums in Poland, which employ around 6,000 employees. The total number of display objects in these museums totals around 13 million. 19 million people visit these institutions on average every year.

This first group of Polish museums, called national museums (*Muzea Narodowe*), is regarded as the most important: they are big, inter-disciplinary institutions situated in metropolises like Warsaw, Krakow, Poznan, and Gdansk. These are state museums, answering directly to the Ministry of Culture.

National museums in Poznan, Gdansk, and Wroclaw contain important ethnographic departments. While their exhibitions and collections are significant, staffs are usually small and their accompanying ethnographic departments do not receive primary emphasis within the institutions. There are also numerous bigger and smaller ethnographic departments in almost all local and regional Polish ethnographic museums.

The most important Polish ethnographic museums are situated in Warsaw, Krakow, Lodz and Torun. Their main field of concentration is traditional Polish folk culture, but also touch upon European ethnography, and, at least in the Warsaw and Krakow museums, include quite extensive non-European collections.

Since 1951, all ethnographic museums were run by the state, in connection with the Ministry of Culture and Art. Subsequent to 1989, however, they were submitted to representatives of the central government in local communities, and more recently to local parliaments.

While all of the previously mentioned museums are so-called gallery museums, there are also numerous (precisely 29) open-air museums or ethnographical parks within Poland, and about 30 large artefacts are displayed outdoors in their natural environment. More than 1,000 large objects and a few thousand so-called small architecture objects are displayed in open-air museums, a less proliferated type of museum before the Second World War. Only two museums of this kind existed at that time in Poland: in Wdzydze, near Gdansk, founded in 1906, and in Nowogrod Lomzynski (1927), also in northern Poland. There were also objects preserved in situ, but not very numerous.

The creation of open-air museums was a trend after the war. Wooden peasant architecture began vanishing very quickly. Fortunately there was a group of Polish ethnographers—mostly museum workers in the 1950s and 1960s—promoting the preservation of wooden folk architecture through the development of existing open-air museums and the creation of numerous new venues. These museums are situated

mainly in small towns and villages. The most important and the biggest are in Toruń (the open air museum in Toruń is a department of a gallery type ethnographic museum), Lednoga, Lublin, Kielce, Zielona Góra—Ochla, Opole—Bierkowiec, Kolbuszowa, Nowy Sącz, Chorzów, and Sanok.

During the last 12 years, Polish museums, along with many similar institutions, have undergone some very important changes. This is, of course, connected with general political and economical changes in Poland.

Before 1989, the most significant aspects characterising Polish ethnographical museums were the following:

- a majority of museums (approximately 90%) belonged to the state; very few had different status; these belonged to different social organisations or to the church;
- the activity of museums was regulated by a Museum Law—*Ustawa o ochronie dóbr kultury i muzeach*—ratified by Parliament in 1962;
- museums co-operated very closely with the Ministry of Culture and Art,
- within a strongly centralised state there was only one ideology, which meant that research programs, exhibitions, and personnel policy were under the strict control of political and state authorities.

The most important aspects of the post-1989 scenario are:

- ideological and political pressure disappeared;
- almost all museums are now directed by local authorities, which means they are no longer state institutions;
- the tenuous economic situation of museums is connected with the limitations of state policy supporting cultural institutions from central budget;
- a never-ending process of transformation concerning these factors continues.

From the point of view of the museum community, at least three big problems remain in connection with this new situation. The first one is the decreasing prestige of state institutions. Consequently, there is also real danger of interference on the part of non-competent local officials, politicians and so on in everyday museum activities.

Polish ethnographic museums may have also lost their sole stable source of funding. While the funds may be steady they are not sufficient as 80–90% of the budget is allocated for employee salaries; the income of museums covers less than half of that cost.

Since 1989, life is less and less centrally governed and museums are no exception. Polish museums are now at a crossroads. Socio-economic changes that have been taking place for the last 12 years are now affecting these institutions. There are, however, changes in the system of governing and financing of these museums. Local government, for example, plays an increasingly important role. Still, not everyone can count on a piece of the ever-shrinking financial pie. Museums must now vie with

other seemingly more important priorities like the educational system, health care system, not to mention state industry or administration. The quandaries faced by museums, thus, often remain ignored. Museum administrators may not be numerous enough for the creation of strong lobbies able to influence these changes taking place in a post-dictatorial society.



MARTA PASTIERIKOVÁ

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## *Slovak Museum of Ethnology at the Beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

Since museums in the present-day Central and Eastern Europe are forced to face a really difficult situation, we highly appreciate the initiative of the Hungarian Museum of Ethnography (*Néprajzi Múzeum*) to organize a meeting of the representatives of East-European museums of ethnology in order to share their experiences as well as opinions. With respect to the fact that I am also an employee of a Slovak Museum of Ethnology, I would like to begin with a little bit of history first. The Slovak National Museum was founded in Martin, a small town in the Central Slovakia, which gradually developed into a significant cultural centre for all Slovaks in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. At that time there were many different museums in Slovakia, yet none of them worked on the basis of a national principle. The first signs of a national museum began to appear within *Matica Slovenská*, which operated, however, in Martin only for a short period of 13 years (1863–1875). In 1893 a Slovak Museum Association was founded in Martin, which regularly published its own collection of books as well as a periodical. Since people from all the regions of Slovakia began to send various gifts of remarkable historical significance to Martin, soon a need for a separate building arose. Due to crown collections from Slovakia, a medium-size one-story building was finally built in 1907. It was opened to the public in 1908.

As can be seen, the beginnings were rather humble. At present, the Slovak National Museum resides at its second building built between 1927 and 1932. Though originally a national gallery and a museum of national history and geography, it gradually developed into a specialized museum of ethnology in the early 1960s. The other departments of the national museum—departments of History, Archaeology and Natural Science—moved to the Bratislava Castle and to buildings in the River Danube area.

At present, our museum also comprises an open-air ethnological exhibition. It was established in the mid-1960s and named *Museum of Slovak Village*. Originally this national open-air museum was supposed to represent the 13 regions of Slovakia but at present only one region has been completely finished. Though the second region has already been built, only part of it is open to the public. The other two regions are now at different stages of construction. Huge amounts of money have been invested in the research of traditional folk architecture in Slovakia, the selection of objects, the feasibility study and documentation of the selected artifacts.

However, the idea of an all-Slovak open-air museum will never be realized. It is not only a matter of money, but it seems now also unnecessary. Several open-air museums have been created in Slovakia according to our model. Some of them, being managed by skilful managers, still do well despite the present-day unfavourable conditions for maintaining traditional culture. A museum of Liptov village in Pribylina, situated near the High Tatras, serves as a good example.

Our museum also comprises a specialized museum of Slovak ethnological photography containing vast and precious collections. Our own ethnological collections consist of more than 100,000 pieces. We have made a complete inventory of our collections. In their instructions, the organizers of our conference pointed out the ethical questions, which are taken into consideration with respect to the growing responsibility for the collections and exhibitions. Our museum has also faced this problem. Former depository managers left us in the early 1990s, at time when museum employees were reduced to half of the original number. After several years of vacuum period the responsibility for the collections became a part of job description of professional employees—ethnographers being completely resolved.

At present we focus on computer processing of inventoried collection items. Approximately seven years ago an Automated museum information system was introduced to the Slovak museums. This system provides software for ethnological collections. It consists of administrative and special ethnological parts. In the first stage we fill in basic identification data regarding our collections. Although it is a very laborious process, it helps us to quickly collect clear and comparable information on all items, which can be found in our collections. It is good to see our museum being capable of keeping pace with the actual European trend in the sphere of this activity.

During the past few years we greatly concentrated on the history of our collection funds. Acquired data represents a good starting point for the present-day analysis and possible documentation of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century post-World War II, which brought about significant social changes in our country, primarily as a result of socialization and collectivization of agriculture. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it was not possible to use the same procedures that were commonly used when collecting antiques and working on documentation of the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> or the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, which were periods when the traditional folk culture was largely confined to the traditional rural communities.

If we wish to document objectively the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we must utilize the previous high-quality ethnological or even ethnological-sociological research enhanced with quantitative indicators. It is remarkably more difficult than typical ethnological research, though it is still possible. I am saying this on the basis of my personal experiences. In the second half of the 1980s, I carried out quantitative research focused on the habitation culture in villages in a representative selected village. In order to do this it was really demanding work.

Ethnological museology has to cope with greater difficulty because it is supposed to document accurately and competently the examined and often contradictory pre-

sent through museum materials. It is, of course, not impossible to separate the continuous traditions from the new phenomena. The newly created phenomena, however, do not have to last long, though at the same time they might give rise to a new tradition. Also important is the selection from the wide range of supply, i.e. the preference for certain phenomena and objects. These all are very interesting topics which certainly deserve to be particularly attended to.

Presentation activity represents a particular problem. Our museum usually does not have enough money to pay for exhibitions of high technological as well as artistic merit. In the last decade we had to organize most of our premiere exhibitions using our own financial resources, though 20–30 exhibitions per year, both abroad as well as in Slovakia, were a commonplace. This situation, however, is no longer bearable. Two years ago a destructive fire damaged our exhibitions. Later, in the ruins, an interesting exhibition *Walking Through the Past* was organized. Most of the Slovak museums also actively participated in the preparation of this exhibition. At present this exhibition has moved to important Slovak museums. It seems that this coordinated approach could possibly be one of the solutions necessary when organizing exhibitions applying to a large number of visitors. Once the exhibition is organized, it would be a luxury not to repeat it.

At present we are presenting our representative exhibition called *Treasures of Folk Culture in Slovakia*. This exhibition premiered in 1999 in Paris. Last year it was shown in Rome and now it is in Germany. On each occasion a complete catalogue in appropriate language was published. From the financial point of view, it seems fairly reasonable not to bring the exhibition back to Slovakia. It is more advantageous to plan and organize the exhibitions so that they are suitably linked to each other with respect to the place and time of each exhibition. Next year we are thinking about Lisbon. A few years ago our museum participated in the preparation of the exhibition called *Gypsies in Central and South-Eastern Europe*, which was organized and put on in Budapest. We believe that such exhibitions as these, created together by more countries, have a promising future.

On the other hand, however, it sometimes happens that some of our exhibitions have low attendance, despite being really interesting and of high quality. This is often a result of poor promotion or inappropriate and unsuccessful marketing. If museums are to be economically successful, they should observe the requirements and needs of their potential visitors more strictly. In accordance with this policy, the activities of the museums should also be modified—something we still have to cope with. Young and flexible people speaking foreign languages might be the solution we are looking for. However, these young people must be given appropriate salaries to prevent them from leaving our institutions and working abroad instead. Since culture in our country does not have enough financial resources, persuading young people to stay and work here still represents a serious problem. I think that the main difficulties could be found in the differentiated work evaluation. Responsible exhibition and promotional activity employees should be evaluated on the basis of the

attendance. At present, however, their salaries do not reflect this important factor of our success in connection with the public.

The presentation of collections is not only about exhibitions. It also includes publications, which are supposed to introduce our collections. In the early 1960s an ethno-museology publishing company called *Fontes* was founded in our museum. Its aim has been to publish professionally prepared collection volumes. So far altogether 15 volumes have been published. At present we would like to introduce its modern, multimedia form—for instance CD-ROM production. The large storing capacity of a CD-ROM could, for example, enable us to record certain traditional technological processes of production, or help the restorers working with a collection item. We are also thinking of a foreign language version. This, of course, requires a selection of a sufficient number of different topics. From the technological point of view, we would like to test our CD production by producing a CD-ROM version of a book, which has already sold out a long time ago. The name of the book is *Folk Paintings on Glass*.

Though the open-air museum is now our most attended ethnological exhibition, we have noticed that the requirements of the visitors are growing. They are no longer satisfied with the provided information, which was satisfactory and sufficient ten years ago. They have become more educated as well as demanding. Therefore the museum management is now considering new strategy as well as new possibilities of utilizing of our open-air museum.

Despite low financial resources we are seriously thinking about the preparation of new ethnological exhibitions in our main building. Our present exhibitions come from the second half of the 1970s, still possessing very high factual and artistic value. At the same time, however, these exhibitions have a big disadvantage—they have already become commonplace. People, wanting to see something different and new, often find the exhibitions unsatisfactory. The part of our permanent exhibitions, which has not been damaged by the fire (i.e. approximately one fourth of the exhibition area), now serves as the exhibition area. In the future, however, we would like to bring it back its original function. Therefore, we are now thinking about the purpose and basic conception of the future exhibitions, which we would like to call *Folk Culture in Slovakia in the Central European Context*. We consider these exhibitions to represent the best possibilities for new and conscious co-operation with the national ethnological museums of Central and Eastern Europe. In the following few years we would like to organize an international conference in our museum, which would focus primarily on the preparation of new ethnological exhibitions reaching a high factual and technical level and attract visitors by providing them with an emotional and intellectual experience.

Finally, I would like to say a few words about the future of our museums. I believe that the national ethnological museums have a future. Though they have to face new serious competition—e.g. the Internet, virtual exhibitions and catalogues, Disneyland, theme parks and many others—they will certainly survive. Theatres and operas

have also managed to survive despite being put into competition with film, television and, in the last few years, video. At present they have been very successful in providing their customers with musicals, which are very much in demand. Theaters as well as museums and galleries possess one irreplaceable quality—they show their visitors the original objects of their desire. There are and there will always be people who prefer this possibility in any circumstances. We should respect these people more and provide them with services of better quality. This situation certainly cannot be resolved by lecturing ethnographers as it has happened here. Actual analyses of salaries clearly show that this inappropriately overcharges our services. The visitors do not need erudite lecturers. Instead they prefer a guide who is supposed to provide them with an explanation as clear and understandable as possible.

Ethnological museums play an irreplaceable role in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These museums are very helpful in strengthening national consciousness and tolerance and respect for other nations, nationalities and ethnic groups. Goals and priorities of national ethnological museums should not change drastically in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. What should change, however, are the forms of museum activity, such as methods and techniques the museums follows. Furthermore, more attention should be paid to the direct contact with the visitors, and there needs to be openness and co-operation among museums at the national and international level. If museums want to survive in the new conditions, they inevitably have to adapt to them. This does not apply to ethnological museums only. In fact, it covers all museums in general. The ethnological museums, however, have to face greater difficulties because their aim, among other things, is to document the ethnic, local or regional specificity. This is a very demanding task, yet a very honourable one. I believe that it is definitely worth the exerted effort.



NADEZHDA TENEVA

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*National Ethnographic Museum, Sofia:  
Exhibitions, Audience and Problems*

One of the founders of European integration Jean Monet said the following: "We are not creating a coalition of states, we are creating a union among people". However, for that union to be created people should first get to know each other. Do Europeans know each other—both those who are EU members and those who are aspiring to become members? Will it be possible for people who virtually know nothing about one another be able to live together, in one family? Is it possible to create strong family ties among people who are ignorant of each other's likes and dislikes, customs, attitude to tradition, everyday life, art, world outlook and religion? In their striving to integrate themselves into the world proletariat many of the former socialist camp states were forced to denounce their roots, to forsake age-old values based on tradition and faith. Separated by the iron curtain, the peoples on either side of the curtain knew very little of each other and did not care to know while engulfed by their own anxieties.

The great French writer Pierre Daninos writes that people usually talk of one another using clichés of the sort: "The Americans are all grown-up children" or, "the Chinese are all impenetrable", etc. Moreover, he mentions big nations about which much is said and written. What about small nations then, like the Bulgarians? From my relationship with other Europeans I have found out that their idea of Bulgaria boils down to information that it was to be found somewhere in the Balkan Peninsula, and the most knowledgeable among them mentioned they had heard about Bulgarian yoghurt.

I am making this introduction because in my understanding the main goal of the ethnographic museums in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is not only to preserve and show their collections of unique objects, but also to spread information about traditional folk culture and art. It is my understanding that we should work towards exchange of travelling exhibitions, which would acquaint the public in various countries with the material and spiritual culture of the ethnic groups inhabiting the Old Continent. It is my firm belief that national identity will continue to exist even after state borders have been torn down and there will be only differences of language, style of life and ethnic and psychological peculiarities. European history has shown, though, that psychological barriers are the most difficult to overcome. There are smouldering ethnic conflicts everywhere, not only in the Balkans. More often than not they were

caused by total lack of knowledge about "the other". Therefore, the important role of museum exhibitions, functioning to facilitate communication, comes to the foreground. The way I see things is that all those who work at ethnographic museums should make it their goal to compile exhibitions which, on the basis of factual material evidence, depict the image of a nation and its spiritual world at a definite point in time.

Another type of exhibitions, also serving the purpose of providing knowledge, demonstrates the common and the different features in the traditional culture and arts of nations living near or far from one another. I will only mention in passing *Danubean Bulgaria*, the travelogue by the famous Hungarian artist and traveller Felix Kanitz, in which he wrote, after having visited towns and villages in the foothills of the Balkan mountain in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, that the Bulgarian lifestyle had much in common with the lifestyle of those living in the Swiss Alps. We Bulgarians, however, know next to nothing about the life in neither the Swiss nor the Tyrolean Alps in Austria, in order to make such a comparison. Had we more thoroughly known about their day-to-day life of over a century ago and their achievements of today, perhaps we would have been more confident in our aspiration and in our faith that we would catch up with them since we had equal starts. However, they have moved way ahead of us. This is to a great extent a reference point for the objectives pursued by ethnographic exhibitions nowadays. They should not confine themselves to being sentimental retrospectives of old times, but they should rather give a perspective for the future from the vintage point of the past. The same is true of the traditional calendar holidays and customs of the different European nations, which very often have common roots and have preserved a number of archaic elements of the pre-Christian era. It is worth tracing the common pagan roots of the calendar rituals, their resilience in time and the influence of Christianity on their evolution. There are a host of themes related to the common and the different. They could be sought in the technology and technique of the handicrafts, the agricultural and livestock breeding traditions, and weaving techniques, etc.

I consider environmental topics to be very important for each country and for our common European land. As an ethnographer, I have asked myself many times, "How did our predecessors succeed in preserving nature and living in harmony with it? And what made us declare war on it? Was it just our bias for technical progress or something that subsequently affected our way of thinking and brought us to the brink of environmental catastrophe?" Our forefathers did their best to penetrate the secrets of nature and take advantage of it without being its conquerors. This is most probably due to what science calls a mythological or cosmic way of thinking which lies at the basis of all ancient religions. Man is conceived as being part of nature; Man and Nature are identical. Even though considered irrational from a contemporary point of view, this is a profound philosophy which no one can negate today and which we should try to get a deep insight into in order to understand it and use it to our best advantage. For example, the life of the Bulgarians till the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was regulated by the principles and norms of popular



culture and world outlook. This is the reason why so many notions and beliefs, and the restrictions and prohibitions related to them, survived for such a long time and can, from today's perspective, be looked at as a regulator of the ecological balance. These prohibitions concern the water, forests, wildlife, and failure to abide by them was equal to a curse that would fall not only on the individual person but on the entire village community as well. Pray the curse which our forefathers feared would not befall us! Perhaps we should try to discover the rational grain in their "irrational" perceptions and learn from their wisdom, morality and ethics. I am of the opinion that an exhibition on this theme would be very suitable. It could be organised by any individual country, but on an all-European foundation. It would be like blazing a trail from the past through the present and towards the future. It would help us enrich our mutual knowledge of one another.

And since mutual familiarisation is at the core of my reasoning, I would like to avail myself of the opportunity to acquaint you in brief with the history of the National Ethnographic Museum, and the themes and problems that have occupied it over recent years.

The collection of the Museum started in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century along with the opening of museums treasuring the objects of popular life and works of art all over Europe. It became an independent institution in 1906. The museum keeps in store over 50,000 unique exhibits of objects of the day-to-day life, tools, handicraft articles and works of the arts from the period of the 17<sup>th</sup> through the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Ceramic vessels with exquisite shape and multi-colour decorations remindful of samples known to us from the Bulgarian Middle Ages, richly embossed copper vessels, household items made of wood and metal and objects for interior decoration, engraved firearms, gaily coloured woven rags, carpets, towels, cushions, church plate, icons and wood-carved iconostases. The museum's largest collection is that of national costumes demonstrating the fine sense of beauty and harmony of the Bulgarian women. The costumes are from all regions of the country representing the great variety in clothing within the ethnic boundaries of Bulgaria until the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The embroidery is one of the most salient elements of the traditional costume and together with the ornaments on aprons, skirts and jackets they carry ancient symbols and images thus being an indication of traditions which have come down to us from millennia back. Jewellery is an inseparable part of the costume. The collection of Bulgarian jewellers' art is one of the richest—it contains some 10,000 exhibits, among them buckles, necklaces, ear-rings, rings, head-pieces and other ornaments made of gold, silver, bronze and decorated with enamel and semi-precious stones. The collections also treasure necklaces made of beads, bracelets, amulets made of bone, mussel and snail shells, etc. Of exceptional value is the collection of objects related to various rites—suffice it to mention the kukeri (dummies) masks, votive tablets, martenitsas (tussled white-and-red thread pendants which people wear on the first of March till first spring). These are all objects and articles, which are part and parcel of the holidays and customs of the Bulgarian people, most of them specially made for the occasion.

A separate exhibit-stock of the museum has brought together costumes and objects of the life of other ethnic groups, which inhabit the Bulgarian lands such as Jews, Armenians, Gypsies, and Turks, etc.

The collections of the museum started at a time when the traditional popular culture was still viable and thanks to that there were detailed descriptions of the way of life, customs and philosophical ideas of the Bulgarians of that time. This made possible the arrangement of the objects according to their cause-and-effect relations, facilitating the contact between exhibit and viewer and revealing the non-material aspect of the entire composition.

Due to various circumstances I am not going to dwell on, the permanent exhibition of the National Ethnographic Museum was closed down in the late 1980s, confronting the team of researchers with the difficult task of creating new exhibitions to keep the visitors' interest and, above all, to show one or another aspect of the life of Bulgarians and of the ethnic groups with which they have co-existed for centuries. The exhibitions that have run over the past ten years are targeted along several lines. The first and foremost are the ones showing the life of the Bulgarians in the traditional society and it is the aim of the exhibits to illustrate as fully and expressively as possible the customs and beliefs, the daily chores and the holidays and accompanying rites in the period from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> through the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century—a time for which there are plenty of ethnographic sources. This part of the museum's activities could be referred to the very important issue of self-knowledge. For, as the Gospel reads self-knowledge is one of the most important lessons one learns in life. For various reasons, most of them ideological, the ancient popular rituals, holidays and customs were declared anachronisms and a thing of the past, related to superstition and other negative phenomena typical of life in the pre-socialist era up until the 90s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. That is why they were stored in the memory of their contemporaries, i.e. those, whose youth lasted till the mid-50s. The following generations grew quite estranged from them, they did not know these phenomena in depth and in a large measure considered them "peasant-style", thus preferring to differentiate themselves from their origins and to turn into a hundred percent "city folk" who have nothing to do with a society that had outlived its day. It goes without saying that traditions were kept more or less in the villages, very often in secret and the rites were much curtailed. Bearing in mind that the church rituals too were prohibited the connection with the past was severed for the overwhelming majority of the population for over forty years. That is why the team working at the museum started staging a series of exhibitions illustrating the traditional family and calendar customs of the Bulgarian people, illuminated from various angles. To introduce greater authenticity old photographs from the archives of the museum were added to the collection of exhibits, all accompanied by explanatory texts. *Bulgarian Wedding Costumes*, *The World of the Bulgarian Woman*, *Koleda* (Christmas), *Velikden* (Easter), *Gergyiouden* (St. George's Day), *Hope for a Better Life*, *Love Magic*, *Between the Visible and the Invisible*, *Folk Culture and Christianity*—these are some

of the exhibitions but I will dwell at greater length only on a few of them, which have attracted considerable public interest and some were shown abroad too.

The exhibition *Bulgarian Wedding Costumes* illustrates the traditional Bulgarian wedding ceremony starting with the pre-nuptial rituals, through the wedding day, the first wedding night and ending with the post-wedding rituals. *The World of the Bulgarian Woman* enjoyed tremendous success and was shown at home and in the course of four months in Tokyo. It illustrates the role of women in the traditional society outlining the changes, which occurred during the National Revival period (18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries) and the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. The main theme of the exhibition is the continuity of the tradition, the handing down of the experience by one generation to another and the preservation of the system of rites and rituals, the traditional female crafts, the expert manner in which the mother prepared her daughter for adulthood like for instance teaching her to be a good housewife, mainly such skills as kneading ritual bread loaves with rich ornaments made of dough, weaving, embroidering, sewing clothes for the whole family, in one word everything that pertained to the role of women in the traditional Bulgarian family. The version of the exhibition shown in Tokyo was expanded to include the theme of the wedding by demonstrating graphically elements of it where the woman was in the centre of the ritual. As a matter of fact the Japanese public was offered a combination of two exhibitions—*Bulgarian Wedding Costumes and The World of the Bulgarian Woman*. Due to the great interest in the exhibition in Tokyo an album, *Traditional Bulgarian Costumes* was published in Japanese with rich photographic illustrative material. Regrettably, there is no version of the album in the Bulgarian language.

*Between the Visible and the Invisible World: Historical Calendar Customs of the Bulgarians* was an exhibition illustrating the main beliefs and notions of our people connected to the holiday calendar. It was shown in Kittsee near Vienna, Austria. The exhibition illustrated the most widespread traditional Bulgarian calendar holidays, which testify to common roots with the other European nations. Authentic ethnographic exhibits such as costumes, fabrics, embroidery, copper and earthen vessels, wood carvings, jewellery, ritual plate, all organised in ritual scenes presented for the Austrian public the various church calendar holidays worshipped in Bulgaria. Each scene was accompanied by a text telling about the roots of the rituals, excerpts from folk songs, well-wishing rhymes, legends, archive photos from the time those rituals were part of the life of the Bulgarians. In six months the exhibition was visited by 12,000 persons. The success of the exhibition was a testimony to the fact that such exhibitions are quite appropriate as part of the cultural exchange between the European states and mark yet another step towards better understanding, mutual familiarisation and discovering the common and the specific in their histories.

Another international success was the participation of the National Ethnographic Museum in the impressive exhibition organised by the museum at St. Louis, USA, which toured five American cities, among them Washington, Boston and Philadel-

phia under the motto: *Mask: Face of Culture*. The exhibition organised in St. Louis presented the mask since antiquity to the present day unravelling its magical and mythical nature as well as its utilitarian use today. I would like to note here that while preparing the exhibition our American colleagues thoroughly studied the kukeri (masked dancers') rites in Bulgaria and the masked dancers' parades. They visited the country several times and acquainted themselves first-hand with the people who work out the masks and those who participate in the parades. This is, in my understanding, of crucial importance when presenting other cultures, although to a great extent depending on financial means rather than on good will. The exhibition was accompanied by a remarkable catalogue.

The exhibition *Folk Culture and Christianity*, which is now running at the Museum, is dedicated to the 2000 years since the birth of Christ. Showing scenes of family and calendar holidays, it demonstrates the influence of Christianity on the rituals, customs and arts and its interplay with pagan symbolism. The exhibition accentuates on the articles made by Bulgarian craftsmen and related to the church rites—most of the objects are exhibited for the first time.

Another type of exhibit illustrates the arts and crafts of the Bulgarians. The works of the Bulgarian craftsmen and the household crafts are in no way inferior in their artistic merits to the works of art made by individual artists. Besides, in terms of shape and function many of them take a pride of place in the contemporary home—rather in a changed function though, not as objects in everyday use but as elements of the interior decoration. Exhibiting the finest samples of traditional household objects in a series of exhibitions the organisers aimed at promoting their participation in contemporary life through the works of contemporary master-craftsmen. Among these exhibitions was the one entitled *From the Treasure-store of the National Ethnographic Museum*, which put on display some of the most beautiful samples of the traditional crafts such as pottery, wood-carving—shepherds' and church, goldsmith's, blacksmith's, silversmith's and gunsmith's trade, carpentry, carpet-weaving, the making of national costumes from all parts of the country. *Coppersmith's Trade and Ceramics* was the exhibition which revealed the similarity of shapes shared by those two materials and their evolution in time as well as the difference in the aesthetic impact of each of the two materials. The same series included the exhibition *Chiprovtsi Carpets—Tradition and Modern Times*, which was put on display along with the old carpets made between the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, also works by modern carpet weavers from the village of Chiprovtsi. The exhibition was accompanied by a bazaar selling carpets copying period models. The exhibition attracted enormous interest. Similar exhibitions will be dedicated to the other carpet-weaving centres during the National Revival period which have been keeping the tradition to this very day.

*Beauty and Secrets—Structure of the Traditional Bulgarian Female Costume* has been one of the most successful exhibitions in recent years. Due to the great interest it lasted for more than eighteen months. The fact that the museum has on stock a rich collection of costumes from all over the country made it possible to compile a

collection representative of all the regions populated by Bulgarians. The costumes were displayed both as ensembles and in parts, with exhibits showing the cuts and kind of stuff used for their making. In order to demonstrate the great variety of the traditional female attire and its evolution in time the exhibition was enriched with pictures and illustrations of costumes and elements of it. The costumes on display were exhibited in chronological order and covered the period from the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> through the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The secrets of the Bulgarian female costume lie in its complex texture, cuts, rich embroidery, ancient symbols, the wealth of headpieces and the multitude of versions of the various types of clothes. The exhibits acquainted the public with the artful skills of the Bulgarian woman down the centuries and her ability to create harmony of colours and compositions. The participation of fashion designer Ani Avramova with her collection *From the Source* proved that the Bulgarian national costume could be a source of inspiration for contemporary fashion designers to create unique clothes based on the traditions handed down by their predecessors. Our goal was to show the unique nature of the traditional Bulgarian female costume in its details and the great artistry possessed by Bulgarian women of yore which had been somewhat forgotten in the past few decades. It was also a challenge to designers stimulating them to seek inspiration from their roots and then, perhaps, to create no less genuinely unique masterpieces of fashion than the traditional folk costume. The exhibition attracted the attention of the media—all daily papers, fashion magazines and radio and TV specialised programmes covered it thus justifying the goals of its creators. While the exhibition was running the album *A Tale of Magic from Bulgaria*, author Mirella Decheva based on an idea by Antonina Stoyanova, wife of the President of the Republic of Bulgaria, was published. It unveiled the secrets of the Bulgarian costume and embroidery, the magic practices when tailoring them, the significance of the garment as a counterpart of the individual in the Bulgarian popular beliefs and other details in the process of making and wearing the costume. The book's promotion took place during one of the regular meetings of the President's wife with the wives of foreign diplomats in Bulgaria and was accompanied by a fashion show in which the original costumes of designer Ani Avramova were combined with authentic jewellery treasured at the museum. Thus tradition and modernity were fused in one. This was followed by other similar shows of Bulgarian fashion and charity events in favour of the museum while designer A. Avramova won the most prestigious prize for Bulgarian fashion design. It is a pity this event remained only on local soil. Such fashion shows would have had success in any country of the world because they will be part of mutual familiarisation. Further down I will dwell on the problems of communicating with other countries, which is tied in with getting to know each other.

Another direction of the museum's activities is to present the other ethnic groups that live in Bulgaria: *Gypsies of Yore* (1995), *The Holy Path—From the Life of the Bulgarian Jews* (1998) commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the state of Israel, *Armenians in Bulgaria* (2000–2001) dedicated to the 1700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of Christianity by Armenia making it the first Christian state

in the world. This year is proclaimed by UNESCO a year of Armenia, and an exhibition titled *Karakachans in Bulgaria* shows a comparatively small but very colourful ethnic community taking its roots most probably from the ancient populations that inhabited the Bulgarian lands—Thracians and Greeks.

Yet another theme among the priorities of the museum staff was to acquaint the Bulgarian public with the life of Bulgarian ethnic groups living in large communities outside Bulgaria's borders. Exhibitions dedicated to this theme were *Daily Life and Holidays of the Bulgarians in the Western Border Regions* about our compatriots inhabiting territories in Yugoslavia under the Treaty of Neuilles of the end of World War One. *Visiting the Banat Bulgarians* is an ethnographic story about the life and culture of Bulgarian Catholics who in their overwhelming majority now live in Romania, some in Hungary and a third group returned to their homeland after Bulgaria's liberation from Ottoman rule in 1878. Although they had left their homeland three centuries ago settling in the then Austrian Empire the Banat Bulgarians have preserved their ethnical identity, language and literacy. The two exhibitions displayed rich ethnographic and archive material (documents, old photos) collected from Bulgarian archives but also donated by the descendants of this ethnic group now living in Bulgaria. Including the public in arranging and assessing the exhibition was a challenge for its creators. The opening of the exhibition was attended by guests from the Bulgarian communities living in Yugoslavia and Romania. On the other hand the Bulgarian public was also interested in this little known part of the Bulgarian nation. There was, however, an omission, due to lack of financial means. Exhibitions are like a theatrical performance—the moment one leaves the auditorium only emotions and scarce visual memories from “a harbour of moments” remain. Therefore it is extremely important that albums should be offered to visitors in order also to enlarge the circle of people who have become acquainted with the theme. The permanent shortage of funds prevented us from making such a publication.

We have arrived at the subject of the public and the problems surrounding it. The Bulgarian public has recently been considerably interested in traditional popular culture. This is largely due to the museum's policy of ensuring media publicity, work with pupils and students, and projects especially designed for work with children. The Ethnographic Museum is one of Sofia's attractions for foreign visitors. They share their impressions of the exhibitions and make an assessment of what they had seen in the visitors' book. Positive responses prevail. All exhibitions are accompanied by a guided tour with a lecture. The guides are all graduates in Ethnology and well versed in the traditional Bulgarian culture. This is yet another feature of the museum's policy over recent years to appoint on the staff of the museum guides who are specialists in ethnography in order to be able to go beyond the framework of the guided tour lecture and answer any question. Moreover, as specialists they can judge first-hand which are the successful and not so successful aspects of an exhibition and help us learn from our mistakes when preparing another exhibition.

The gravest problem faced by the Sofia Ethnographic Museum is financing. The museum lacks the basic facilities needed by a contemporary institution of this kind

and given the current financial problems of the country, the state seems to be ignoring the needs of the museum. Thus, we tried to raise funds through sponsorship. This, however, turned out to be a non-working model for Bulgaria. It seems to be more characteristic of practice in the United States rather than Europe. As far as I know the bulk of the financial means for the European museums are provided by the State and much less come from sponsors. The same is true of Japan where museums are entirely supported by the state or the municipalities depending on their status. Concerning state museums, a combination of different financial mechanisms should be used because some international projects require as a pre-condition that they will not support state institutions. I should like to draw special attention on the projects financed by the European Union, where funds are allocated under very strict conditions. Throughout the 50-year period of the country's political isolation, our museum lost touch with other European museums. Invitations are extended to us very rarely, as are they to other museums such as the Austrian ethnographic museum and the Todyo Bunka Gakuen Costume Museum. The European projects usually recommends that at least three partners from other similar museums are part of a common project. There is no option to participate on one's own. So far we have neither found partners for joint participation in the project Europe 2000, nor has any other museum initiated a joint project. This unequal status of ours is a great impediment to the work of the museum associates. Young people are not particularly anxious to come to work at the museum after graduation owing to low salaries and the discrepancy between their ambitions for self-fulfilment in a modern museum with well-equipped stocks and attractive exhibitions and the concrete, quite worse situation. In a talk I had with the director of a well-respected museum in France, who had acquainted himself with our museum's overall policies and had seen its collection, he told me: "The difference between us is only in the financial means we get. Your exhibits are so unique—I could not even dream of such at home".

At this forum I would like to raise the question of co-operation between museums and the need of communication. I would be very grateful to borrow from the experience of other colleagues, especially on how they raise funds for a museum with a rich collection as ours, and we should be able to get all the necessary equipment that would help us take our due place in the European family. I consider the question of the European exhibitions that I touched upon at the beginning of my expose extremely important, for it can provide a solution to the fund-raising issue and help solve the technical problems of the ethnographic museum. Joint projects could be the basis for starting to raise funds along the line of subsidies granted to museums by the European Union.





MAGDALENA MOLNAR

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## *The Romanian Museums at the Beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

To start, I would like to present you with an X-ray of the situation of the museum units from Romania, and then to analyze specific aspects of the ethnographic museography. This, because in the post-revolutionary period of time, the museum units were confronted with similar problems. Generated by the slow process of the transition from the socialist state to a democratic society, these problems were of an administrative, economic, financial, legislative, and, of course, human nature.

In Romania, almost every locality of some importance has at least one small museum-type institution covering themes that could be structured upon multiple domains: history and archaeology, art, ethnography, natural history, the history of the science, the history of literature, etc. From a total of 520 museums, 70 of them have an ethnographic profile.

The administrative decentralization, which started in the first years after the revolution, meant that only 19 museums from the entire country have remained subordinate to the Ministry of the Culture. Four of them are ethnographic museums. Most of the museums remained under the administration of local authorities, still receiving subsidies from the government for projects or programs considered important.

The long-sought decentralization wasn't in all cases auspicious, because there were many cases in which the budget of the local administrations was "thin" and could not support the costs of the museum unit. From some points of view, the museums answering to the Ministry of Culture are somehow better positioned in this domain, although because of minimal growth of economic indices, the budget of this ministry has been slowly reduced for more essential sectors of society (health, defence, etc.). Culture still seems to have a Cinderella status.

In the museums' domain, the lack of funds has consequential effects on the conditions of the objects within collections, and on the methods of exhibiting patrimony.

Another illustration for emphasizing the financial difficulties of these institutions: despite some growth, the number of visitors remains small. Statistics and opinion surveys explicitly reflect this situation. According to one of these statistics, the visits to a museum represents only 2% of the time allocated for culture by the average Romanian citizen. According to the same source, more than half of the

population of our country spends nothing on cultural consumption. At a family level, the sum allocated is about three-and-a-half dollars per month. While the average monthly income is still under US \$100, it seems normal that most of the population would spend that money trying to live, avoiding museums, some of which have substantial entrance fees; the entrance fee at some museums in Bucharest is about US\$ 2–3.

But let's not forget that a number of museums, especially in the provinces, have symbolic entrance fees. In order to illustrate this, I can tell you that last week I visited an ethnographic museum in a small town in Moldavia, where the entrance fee was less than half a dollar. And this in the context of the fact that the patrimony exhibited there contained objects of great artistic and documentary value on the local, but also from a regional standpoint. It must be added that the museum was contained within a castle with special architecture but, despite this, the institution did not have many visitors. This isn't a singular case.

Beyond the fact that most of the population has a low income, another explanation for this situation is allegedly the mentality of some of the leaders and specialists in this domain. This is shown by the fact that attracting visitors still represents a secondary aspect in their managerial strategy. In the socialist, over-centralized system the museums possessed a high amount of prestige, being financed entirely by the government. On the other hand, through different methods of the educational system it was obligatory to visit museums. This assured a continuous flow of visitors, from kindergarten children to older students.

Integrated within the propagandistic apparatus of the system, the museum had to participate in upgrading the intellectual level of the masses, by raising their educational and ideological levels. The ethnographic museum was also a tributary of Marxist ideology, by presenting a false image of the Romanian village. The national festival, Praising Romania, had real support in this institution, but by seeking to avoid this rigid prescription people tried to emphasize scientific purposes. This measure succeeded only in a small way, the contemporary creation being a far cry from tradition. Sadly, it created celebratory reflexes which were still maintained by cultural factors which resisted after 1989.

Despite ideological compulsions, the Romanian Ethnographic Museum had specialists of great intellectual and professional value who succeeded in dodging agendas set by the political center. They succeeded in realizing interesting exhibitions which were unanimously appreciated when they covered material outside of the country's confines. On the other hand, as I said before, after 1989 occurred necessary corrections, adaptations and interventions in this sector. Because a portion of the staffs of these museums was still accustomed to the old ways of action, a period of time was needed before people and mentalities in the domain of Romanian museums and Romanian cultural leaders would change.

Although in a reserved way, some daring projects were started for the museums. For example, some of the country's museums started to incorporate multimedia within their exhibitions. Their number is still small: around 10 museums. Out of

these, only one or two have ethnographic character. But our exhibitions still concentrate upon objects. The multimedia development of this sector of activity is impeded more by the financial difficulties, than by the conservatism of the specialists. To illustrate this, there is a series of museums that already has projects in this domain and they are seeking for funds in order to be able to work on them. One of the most plausible solutions would be sponsorship.

The Romanian Peasant's Museum has already had a positive experience in this domain: the sponsorship offered to us by Mr. George Soros. With that sponsorship we equipped the exhibition halls and storage rooms with hi-tech computerized installations for microclimate control. With the help of another sponsorship, a member of the Romanian diaspora, Mrs. M. Berza, new showrooms will complete the basic exhibition of our museum, will include multimedia, and will be open to the public this autumn.

Through these initiatives, the museum becomes more attractive and satisfying for visitors, while raising the professional standard of the museums. The effects can be quantified following the evolution in the number of visitors, the funds obtained from the entrance fees, and from the selling of gifts from the existing museum vendors.

In Romania, the competition for filling the public's spare time doesn't seem too stiff yet, because computer technology isn't yet a big part of life, despite the huge popularity the Internet has achieved in the last few years. Thanks to video and the computer, very selective visits to big museums can be made in the comfort and peace of one's home, and the visitor no longer goes to the real museum anymore. But we cannot consider these new means of recreation (and I am referring now not only to Internet and all of the factors of change we are talking about) as competitive for museums as they are in the West. We have no doubt that in the near future, as computer technology grows the situation will also change here.

Next, I would like to talk about the more specific domain of Romanian ethnography, as I have only spoken about it tangentially. In their exhibitions and collections, Romania's ethnographical museums shelter a number of rich and varied objects of a great artistic and documentary value, evidence of traditional culture and civilization. Traditional culture is alive in Romanian villages, in contrast with other countries where, for centuries, urban civilizations have been predominant.

The achievements of ethnographic museography are obvious. But there are some drawbacks and negative influences, among them an illusion of authenticity and originality. The ethnographical phenomena presented in some museums suffers from uniformity, avoiding the realities of village life for peasants and its links with property, religion, traditions and customs. Moreover, most of the museums prefer to present the beautiful, artistic, elaborate version of life. Many of these types of museum present this in exhibition tools, or household items. But presenting valuable artifacts in an exhibition makes them lose their historical meaning.

Deviations from descriptive ethnography and the integration of the ethnographi-

cal phenomenon in a larger one—the social phenomenon—characterizes a recent tendency of modernization in this type of museography.

The most spectacular, financially encouraged solutions were recorded for exhibition development, as well as some thematic re-organizations.

The Village Museum, for example, was enlarged in 6 years. Some buildings have been established that complete the presentation of some geographic areas and traditional trades.

On the other hand, many of the document-objects from ethnographic museums are organized in a way that they validate the knowledge of people's daily life and their links with their natural surroundings.

An innovative vision in the ethnographical scene can be discovered in the Romanian Peasant's Museum, which is one of a kind after the oldest Romanian Ethnographic Museum. The Museum of Arts and Folkloric Traditions was been established in 1906. Sheltered in a splendid building, the museum was evacuated in 1953. It was here that a new museum was established for glorifying the Romanian Communist Party and its leaders.

Suppressed by assimilation with the village museum in 1978, the old museum of tradition and trades was reborn in 1991 by the establishment of The Romanian Peasant's Museum, which took over the old collections and also the premises which today are an historic landmark.

Going back to the expository experiment displayed here, it is clear that it is about a different kind of museography, which utilizes the unknown resources of the ethnographic object, decoded in other views than the ones currently being used. This different approach demands application upon objects and their context using symbols and semiotics, making intelligent juxtapositions, comparisons and analogies. We think it is no coincidence that, in 1996 with the EMYA, manager Horia Bernea's artistic vision of this expository experiment won an award. An important accent is placed on multicultural life in Romanian museography, an aspect less regarded in the past.

The ethnographic museums, among them The Romanian Peasant's Museum, are presently trying to make serious examinations within this domain. New exhibitions of enriched collections, enriched from acquisitions in the field, (where this thing is still possible), will be created with the results of these examinations.

The Romanian Peasant's Museum, for example, will enlarge its basic exhibition this autumn with a hall dedicated to ethnic minorities. Entitled *Together*, this exhibition seeks to present aspects of life and specific features of these ethnic groups. This initiative is not singular. Other museums are doing the same thing. Sibiu's Astra Museum is already working on a project having the Roma ethnic group as its central subject.

Thinking back upon acquisitions from field, we must say that rural space is only partially being excavated because of the lack of time and funding. Much evidence is still hidden, waiting for scientific recovery and cultural re-evaluation. A recovery strategy devised by great pilot-stations of national, zonal and regional interest is a

prime objective. This will require an acquisition fund that must enhance the recovery of objects, facilities, and craft-shops in a representative ensemble.

Unlike other museums with different profiles—scientific, technical, etc.—an ethnographic museum may have a show-like appearance. This, we believe, means that its functions are not affected by computer technology as they may be in other types of museums. The tasks for fully implementing this are more numerous for open-air museums. We will note here that in time only a few of them may prove themselves to be viable, attracting a great number of visitors and finally giving life to the concept of “museum vivum”.

The following events are being used to bolster these institutions:

- annual fairs, where popular craftsmen demonstrate their abilities, offering their products for sale (also a way of helping preserve traditions and keeping trades alive);
- the organization of festivals and contests in which singers and assembles are invited to present authentic folklore;
- the holding of national contests for the children of Romanian villages. Learning traditional trades, they are given the possibility to participate in a national “olympics” of artistic trades.

Another future category of Romanian ethnography is the eco-museum, which is quite common internationally. Established due to the necessity of offering a global vision of life, including habitat, eco-museums represent an institutionalized form of cultural action to protect patrimony, functioning within the certain parameters of natural habitat. It is an informational mean and a demonstrative mean of an historical reality. Eco-museums identify certain occupational resources. Some of them are still used in an evolved way. The eco-museum discloses solutions of revitalization and economic advantage. It is co-opting some old trades, specific to certain communities, reviving them through the modern flow of cultural re-evaluation.

In closing, I would like to point out that the profound changes happening in the ethnography of developed countries affects Romanian ethnology less, for now. Still, they must continue their activities in this domain, without letting new orientations fall to the wayside. Resources in the field and in museum collections do exist, but the human factor bears a decisive influence.

In the long term, we deem that ethnographic museums will not lose their attractiveness. The tendencies of cultural globalization will motivate people to seek out their roots.

I will close here, mindful of the principle according to which a people cannot identify itself exclusively by its material manifestations because, apart from this, a people bears the marks of identifiable traditions which give color to their spirituality and gives them a distinct voice within the “peoples’ choir”. Traditional culture represents an important dimension of national cultural identity preservation.

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## *A Century of a Museum*

At the beginning of the new millennium, the Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade celebrates its hundredth anniversary. The founders of the museum, motivated by the ideas of Romanticism, wanted to present folk life at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Ethnographic Museum survived two World Wars and the changing of the social system and the disintegration of former Yugoslavia, thus, both the denial of the national culture and its euphoria during the 1990s. This shows that culture as well as the Ethnographic Museum should free itself from the daily politics and gain its independence. The aims of the research should be clear, and it should be financed by the museum itself, which should be monetarily autonomous. Today, when communication by Internet is accepted, I hope that, after many years of minimum contact with colleagues from the neighboring countries as well as all the others, we will re-establish cooperation and more efficient communication.

In this paper, I try to outline the Ethnographic Museum's strategies from its establishment until now. My intention is not to criticize the work of the museum and the work of my colleagues driven by certain social and political ideologies. I want to point out that the museum must have its own attitude, principles and course which can be changeable but not according to political influences.

I am in charge of the museum's ethnographic documentations, and also responsible for the museum's archive material and its exhibition archive. On the basis of the available data from the Museum Archives and Exhibition Archives, I will try to illustrate how the political events and changes influence the work and policy of the museum. I will argue that this is perhaps one of the issues that should be discussed, namely, the need for the museum as a cultural institution to enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century both expertly and economically autonomous.

A hundred years ago, when the Ethnographic Museum was established in Belgrade,<sup>1</sup> the state was in transition,<sup>2</sup> as it is today. During the creation of the independ-

<sup>1</sup> The Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade was established in 1901. Mr. Stojan Novakovic, one of the most important Serbian politicians and historians of that age, had the idea to start the Museum after the Panslavic Exhibition in Moscow in 1868, when the national treasure of Serbia was presented. There was the ethnographic department within the National museum since its establishment in 1848, so Mr. Stojan Novakovic used his influence to separate that department from the National museum and to establish new Ethnographic Museum.

ent Serbian state after the liberation from the Turks, beside the development of the state institutions, cultural institutions appeared as well: the National Museum, the National Theatre, *Velika Skola* (the Great School that develops into Belgrade University in 1905), *Srpsko Ucenio Drustvo* (the Serbian Erudite Society, which is now the Serbian Academy of Science), and so on. During the period of nationalism, the national institutions expressed the need to preserve and strengthen national identity. In addition to protecting the national treasures, they also had propaganda purposes. They wanted to present their own people and state in the best possible way. Prior to the opening of the Museum, the ethnographic material originating from our territories was displayed at several world exhibitions, such as the World Exhibition in Paris in 1900. The Museum was created under these circumstances and the first permanent display opened in 1904, a day before King Petar I Karadjordjevic was crowned, which was the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first Serbian uprising and the creation of the new national state. Like most European museums of the time, this Museum exhibited ethnological treasures in a rather aesthetisizing way, and its policy was under the influence of national politics of that time.

For the world exhibitions the museum participated in,<sup>3</sup> the material was selected by Mr. Sima Trojanovic, the former director, and Mr. Nikola Zega, the curator. The Ministry of education and religion supplied funds. Therefore, the state of Serbia wanted to present itself as young and independent as well as the country with rich cultural history and tradition.

That tendency continued after World War I when the first ethnographers were employed by the museum. They were pupils of Mr. Jovan Cvijic, the renowned ethnographer with European reputation, who founded the ethnographic department at Belgrade University.<sup>4</sup> The experts who graduated from the well-known European universities were also employed, so at that period the first museum collections were created and the publication of *The Ethnographic Museum Herald* started as well.

After World War II, the change of the political system influenced and consequently changed museum politics. Serbian national characteristics diminished and it turned to the communist and Yugoslavian ideology. At the permanent and peri-

<sup>2</sup> Transition seen here as an historical period when the existing institutions and regulations are being destroyed and altered by the new ones.

<sup>3</sup> *The Costume Exhibition*, 1902. St. Petersburg, the exhibition prepared by: Dr. Sima Trojanovic and Mr. Nikola Zega. 813 exhibits and peasant costumes were sent to the exhibition; *The Industrial Exhibition in Lieze*, 1905. Lieze, the exhibition prepared by Dr. Sima Trojanovic and Mr. Nikola Zega; *The Jubilee Exhibition* in Bukurest, 1906. Bukurest, the exhibition prepared by Dr. Sima Trojanovic and Mr. Nikola Zega; *The Publicistic Exhibition in Paris*, 1906. Paris, the exhibition prepared by Dr. Sima Trojanovic and Mr. Nikola Zega; *The Balkan Exhibition in London*, 1907. London, displayed in the pavilion built in Earl's Court, exhibition set: Mr. Nikola Zega; *Serbian Woman*, 1910. Prague, the exhibition organizer: Female Society, expertly helper: Dr. Sima Trojanovic; *The Jubilee Exhibition in Torino*, 1911. Torino, the exhibition was set at the specially built pavilion, a copy of the Gracanica church, author: Dr. Sima Trojanovic.

<sup>4</sup> The ethnographic department was founded at the Faculty of Arts in 1900. The first professor was Mr. Jovan Cvijic.



odical exhibitions of that time (in the spirit of brotherhood and unity) the complete ethnology and culture of the socialist Yugoslavia was demonstrated and the material from all the republics was presented during the visits abroad. The good side of this policy was the inter-republic cooperation among the ethnographic museums in the former Yugoslavia according to the laws of that time, and the cooperation with Slovenian Ethnographic Museum was especially important.

Since the end of the 1980s with the new political changes, the policy of the museum has changed as well. The growth of Serbian nationalism places the nation ahead, and that reflects on the contents of the exhibitions during that time. The typical example was the Legend of Kosovo Exhibition, which opened on the eve of Vidovdan (28<sup>th</sup> June) 1989, on the 6<sup>th</sup>-century anniversary of Kosovo battle, one day before the speech of Slobodan Milosevic at Gazimestan; this speech marked the beginning of the leader cult, the explosion of Serbian nationalism. It was the time when they imagined that the tradition might lead to democracy (Ms. Zagorka Golubovic), when they started to celebrate the religious holidays forgotten some forty years ago. In this atmosphere of the return to tradition, exhibitions with national topics were organized, TV broadcasts were recorded and films were made with material in the museum.

What should be done after one century of existence? One of the problems worth considering at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the preservation and strict respect of the museum's autonomy by both experts and politicians. That is to say, evaluation should be done in accordance with expert and scientific criterion, not by a political one. Even though the museum is a national, state-owned institution, it must not depend on the political needs of any policy. That is the reason why its dependence on the state must be reduced and why the museum should make its own funds, be more open to the public and concerned with ethnology and anthropology in a contemporary way.

Two exhibitions, now popular in New York, should be taken as an example. The exhibitions of Armani's creations at the Guggenheim and Jackie Kennedy's clothes at the Metropolitan are, in my point of view, real ethnological exhibitions. Perhaps this course should be taken into account in our country too. This does not mean that the world famous fashion designers should be imitated but there are also some domestic ones, and the exhibits need not be only of clothing but of household furniture as well.

The audience is also attracted to contemporary ethnology. The exhibition of *Wedding Photography* in Belgrade Ethnographic Museum, showing the snapshots of married couples, was a success in regards to the number of visitors. A lot of people came to bring us their own photos. There are, indeed, a huge number of possibilities. For example, making exhibitions about the way of life in New Belgrade in the 1970s and 1980s, in one of those huge, gray satellite settlements similar to all Eastern European cities, with the characteristic photo wall papers and the big walls—with unit like the main furniture pieces which could be found in all those flats. Or, to exhibit all the objects from the period of socialism made with the intention to present the achievements of the domestic industry were clumsy surrogates of western

products. Then, to present the life and the objects of voluntary work—drives, shock workers badges and decorations, furniture and equipment of the Party's committees, and so on. And of course, it would be very interesting to a lot of people, in fifty years time, to see what we looked like at the protests in 1996–1997 and in 2000.

As the founders of the museum gathered the objects of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, now the contemporary Museum must gather the objects that marked the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This is very important for the Eastern Block countries, and a good source for 20<sup>th</sup> century ethnology research. A modern museum must be opened to grab the attention of a broader spectrum of people, and it must sustain their interest by exhibiting its material in a creative, contemporary way. A museum that is interesting to everyone could be supported by selling copies of its unique objects, and this revenue could eventually be used to help finance further research considered necessary by the experts.

In conclusion, I would like to add that we need interdisciplinary cooperation as well, mainly through contacts with colleagues from the non-ethnographic museums of South-Eastern Europe. Now, when communication by Internet is available for everyone and after the decade of being isolated from each other, we would like to reestablish cooperation between our museum and other museums. At the opening of the museum in 1901, besides the welcome speech of Dr. Sima Trojanovic, the present guests were also greeted by Dr. Pavlika, the Czech representative in Belgrade.<sup>5</sup> We expect the foreign colleagues to be our guests during the celebration of a century of work. We are connected not only by long lasting cooperation but by similar problems as well, for our social and historical circumstances are alike.

<sup>5</sup> POLITIKA, 7th (Tuesday) September 1904., number 236.

Today at half past ten a.m. the King ceremoniously opened the Museum of Serbian countries, situated in the building of the deceased Mr. Stevce Mihajlovic. In front of the Museum, the King was welcomed by the members of the Government and numerous guests from abroad. The King first entered the naturalist department, greeted by Mr. Jovan Zujevic, as the representative of that department. After Mr. Zujevic's speech, stressing the cultural importance of the institution, the King started careful examination of the exhibits, inquiring about certain objects from all naturalist groups. After the tour of the naturalist department, situated at the first floor [...] After Mr. Sima Trojanovic's speech, the representative of the ethnographic department, the King was greeted by Dr. Pavlika, the delegate of Check ethnographic society, which made a very pleasant impression on the King as well as on the other listeners. The King stayed longer at this department and passed through all the rooms of the ethnographic exhibition. He returned completely satisfied, accompanied by enthusiastic salutations.

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*The Ethnographic Museum: Keepers of the National  
Identity or the Exotic Places of Knowledge  
in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

There are two topics to be considered in this explication: the ethnographic museums and collections as the keepers of national identity and their exotic knowledge at the beginning of the new millenium.

Most ethnographic museums in Europe were established in the mid-nineteenth century when vigorous ideas of Romanticism prevailed. That was the time of creating nations everywhere in order to distinguish one from the other. Paralelly, small ethnographic collections were founded also in Serbia. The nineteenth century was filled with scientific inventions and achievements which influenced the development of civilization. Even then modest collections appeared, especially in the multinational milieus. Their intention was to remind us of the period which belonged to history on one side, and on the other they represented tools in developing and encouraging the awareness of ethnic and national origins.

National identities represented the starting-point for establishing the social identities based on class hallmarks and affiliations in the sense of economy and position. Such processes were more complex during history. This is why ethnic communities looked for their identity in religion. While the class identities originated from manufacturing and trade, the religious ones sprang from communication and socialization. They were based on the reconciliation of culture and its elements—values, symbols, myths and traditions, which were often codified in customs and rituals (SMITH 1991. 18–19.). It is well known that the religious framework coincided with the ethnic communities despite the efforts to surpass and abolish ethnic borders.

Historical processes in the South Slavic countries and their population influenced an early forming of the awareness of their ethnic and religious identities, otherwise many nations would have disappeared from these regions. The collective desire and need to protect the nation lead to creating strong cultural mechanisms, which represented starting point in recognizing oneself among others.

In South Slavic countries, and also in Serbia, museums were founded not as temples for beautiful arts or possible scientific development, but as warm home hearths in which the memories on our forefathers, what we were and where we came from, were still alive. Greater significance was attributed to the affirmation of nations and their cultures, so the national heritage was collected, preserved and studied.

Efforts in museological development and research in Serbia coincide with the

foundation of the first cultural institutions in liberated Serbia in the nineteenth century. One of the oldest museum institutions was established in Kragujevac in 1837, and then in Belgrade in 1844, where the Ethnographic department was formed along with other historical-artistic collections (BJELADINOVIC-JERGIC 1991. 9–32.). In Budapest too, among the Serbian intelligentsia during the 1820s, initial ideas appeared about the Serbian museology in the modern sense, and about the importance it should have in raising the consciousness of the Serbian people in the northern parts settled by the Serbs. It is not a coincidence that the ethnographic collection in the newly founded Museum at Matica srpska in Budapest became popular in 1847.

These facts present some of the many features from the history of our ethnographic museology, which has been trying to establish immediate communication with the national awareness of origin, importance and duration for a century and a half.

Presently, there is one national ethnographic museum in Serbia today, which was founded in Belgrade in 1901 and it is celebrating its centennial in the twenty-first century.

During its existence and work, this ethnographic museum has improved not only its collections and experts (now there are about 68 employees), but the balance was achieved on collections and scientific studies in materialistic and spiritual culture of both the Serbs and other nations that live in Serbia. There are about 150,000 items today, of which there are about 50,000 museum's objects, photo documentation, paintings, audio-visual materials, archives and legacies. The collections have been systematically supplied with the objects from different parts of the country, they are, at the same time, of different age and variety. Such an approach has enabled dialectic studies of the development separate ethnographic phenomena, and the comparative studies as well. Collections have been thematically and regionally arranged regarding to the type of material. Data from the museum's documentation were divided into sections, so it is adopted in museology that the museum documentation makes the "brain" of the Museum (ZECEVIC 1977. 14.). The exhibitions, publications and lectures in the Museum represent the link between the museum and scientific work (ZECEVIC 1977. 13.). These documentations deal with one or more topics, epochs, ethnic or regional groups. Field research teamwork has not been interrupted all this time due to monographic studies of particular regional ethnic groups. Such a standpoint of cultural background is important for systematically supplying collections with the objects from explored field. Up to now, the monographies of particular regions in Serbia have been published together with entry catalogues and bulletins. The museum's associates studied the Serbs outside Serbia—in the Romanian part of Djerdap and near Budapest. Since the Ethnographic museum has been improving, the Centre for Audio-Visual Ethnology was founded about ten years ago, and it has initiated the International festival of ethnographic film, which took place the past ten years despite all the difficulties. Stressing the visual device in protection and research of the materialistic and spiritual culture is just one proof of a tendency to keep up with the time we live and work in.

Other museums, formed in smaller or bigger cities, are rather complex and almost each contains an ethnographic or ethnological department, with the ethnographic collections defined and classified regionally, beside archeological and historical collections. Most of these collections are dedicated to all ethnic communities on the territory of Serbia, which means that they represent multinational treasures. Larger ethnographic collections are located in the Museum of Vojvodina in Novi Sad; the National Museums in Vrsac, Kikinda, Pancevo; the City Museums in Subotica, Senta, Sombor, Sremska Mitrovica; and the National museums in Nis, Knjazevac, Zajecar, Leskovac, Vranje, Kragujevac, Kraljevo, Cacak, Valjevo and Sabac.

The Museum of Kosovo in Pristina suffered a tragic event at the very end of the twentieth-century and is now working in Belgrade with its Serbian department and staff.

The Museum of Vojvodina in Novi Sad and its Ethnographic department stands out with its highly professional work of collecting, keeping, treating and displaying the collections related to the documentation of a multiethnic culture in Vojvodina. It considers separate knowledge of every ethnical community—of their cultural past and contemporary existence—and this results in synthesized observation of their features in the cultural complex of the region.

Therefore, due to collected objects and materials on different styles of life and national arts, the ethnographic collections have undoubtedly become the priceless treasure of the twentieth century in which the evidence of great cultural and materialistic values is preserved. With regards to the heritage from the nineteenth century and the last decades of the twentieth century, as observed from the current perspective, the main role of the ethnographic collections was to document all the elements of materialistic and spiritual cultures, which pointed to the features of ethnos as a particular category, and to influence the emotions and devotion of an individual and a collective to one of the following categories: nation, community, or group. However, it is obvious that the museums in general, including the ethnographic ones, have gradually estranged themselves from the subject of their studies—nationhood. Considering their scientific approach, users had less access through the tools of communication in museums. Culture began to be interpreted by culture, beautiful and representative objects, and the communication was realized through symbols.

The ethnographic museum has kept its traditional conventionality concerning the communication with the public, but it looks traditional only on the first sight. By carefully studying the content and programmed activity of general work, it becomes obvious that museums are excluded from mass communication and have become accessible only to a small portion of the public.

Therefore, a question arises for both museum experts and me: haven't ethnographic museums crossed the path from the national keepers of identity to the exotic places of knowledge bearing the message, "This is what we are, come on and meet us". The exotic in that context could be equal to nationalistic, so it is not clearly differentiated at the beginning of the new millenium. According to C. Todorov, both the exotic and the nationalistic are connected to relativism (TODOROV 1994. 257.).

Symmetrically opposite, in both cases, what is valued is not a permanent content, but a country and culture designed only in relation to the observer. "What is mine is what is the most valuable" claims a nationalist, whereas an advocate of what is exotic points out "it is that what is not mine and what differs from mine". Both statements are relative and subjective, and the "museum's language" should help define the terms of "mine", "yours", "us" and "them".

The statement that through the "museum's language" it becomes clear that we are not that, is incomplete (TODOROV 1994. 257.). The point is that the "museum's language" communicates with the public in a way of getting one cultural model closer to another for better comprehension. Observing the differences should not be the final goal. It is just a way to discover features that make one culture in general sense.

It is obvious that the ethnographic museums and most ethnographic collections in Serbian museums stepped into the twenty-first century as the keepers of the national and ethnic identity, but also as a proof about duration and development of cultures in Serbia. The ethnographic collections grew out of a nationally romantic need in the beginning, and then followed purity and symbolism of cultural duration, both on micro and macro plans, and through their presentation to the public with the symbols of representative heritage.

Meditations on entering the twenty-first century have shown the obvious tendency to approach not only the creators and keepers of tradition—people and their symbols such as thinking and acting—but also culture in a general sense. The fact that communication with the majority are being controlled by a small group, and receivers are turned to accepting the wholes of symbolism from the central sources (GREDELS 1986. 9.), creates a need for a modern "museum's language" and visual experience which would shake up the visitor from indifferent universality towards acceptance of the mass culture which abolishes the values of its own.

In that case, the ethnological visual expression through one exhibition is a complete reflection of humankind, the environment, and natural, cultural, historic and social development. It speaks a specific kind of language, a language of objects, material things. In this way, it leaves a strong impression on the ordinary visitor, as well as on a visitor immersed in visual impressions, and on those who would rather look at the scientific and scholarly side of things. It leaves impressions on everyone, preserving the memory of ethnic and cultural identity, which helps to overcome alienation, and many other challenges in today's world (ANTONIJEVIC 1997. 277.).

This is where I notice the exotic. Not in the attitude to know the differences for the sake of exclusive validity of what is mine (GEERTZ 1973. 30.), but in the comprehension of one culture towards the other, without diminishing the other one's particularity, in vertical and horizontal cultural sections. The multidisciplinary approach to the studies of one's own culture among other cultures means not only that the collections should be represented as codes in recognizing one's own identity, but also be symbolic in recognizing both European and world cultural development of mankind.

The Ethnographic museums in the twenty-first century have to get rid of their



conventional contents, the silence of exclusivity, static displays and stereotyped activities. They have to become the centres of cultural ambience where the clear borders between a theatre, film, audio-visual animations, scenography, scientific achievements, new technologies and natural environment are abolished.

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## *Role and Place of Ethnographic Expositions in the Network of Museums in Ukraine*

My report is dedicated to the urgent problem common for most countries of the world. It can be formulated as follows: how to make the youth appreciate and accept artistic and cultural contributions of past generations?

Ethnographic museums are a significant part of the artistic, cultural and historic heritage of Ukrainian people. They are intended to help successfully solve this pressing and complicated profiles associated with the revival of spiritual life of Ukrainian people, with the passing of ethno-cultural and social experience, of historic contributions and educational traditions of past generations to the posterity.

Role of ethnographic museums in this process can hardly be overestimated. Nowadays, there are over 150 museums in Ukraine, that is, three times as much as at the beginning of the twentieth century.

In the historic and local ethnologic museums, ethnographic themes are usually presented in the general context of the expositions, thus discovering association of ethnographic phenomena with the socio-economic and public-political events and episodes in the society. In every ethnohistorical region of Ukraine, there are museums with the expositions of folk things of the everyday use, different kinds of tools, garments and ritual attributes reflecting the local colouring of traditional domestic culture of the Ukrainian. Local museums are at present offered great opportunities to create extensive expositions displaying original culture of the local population during all the period of its history. These expositions are, as a rule, composed according to the thematic-regional principle.

They are such, as the following exhibitions: *Folk garments of the Western Podillya* (Ternopil Ethnological Museum), *Ceramics of Opishnya* (Poltava Ethnological Museum), *Easter egg art of the Hutsuls* (Ivano-Frankivsk Ethnological Museum), *Towels with artistic embroidery of Polissya* (Zhytomyr and Tchernihiv Ethnological Museums), *The road of the Kossacks* (Dnipropetrovsk Museum) and others.

Creation of a wide network of museums and the extensive system of state measures aimed at the detection and preserving of cultural monuments of Ukrainian people, have broadened the scale of ethnologic expositions in the museums of other types. Among them, memorial museums take a special place. Alongside with the contemplated things, there exists a more perceptible world created by the host himself—by a writer, composer, scientist, public figure—a citizen of Ukraine.

Exteriors of memorial museums and architectural museums are perfectly alike. But the interior of the memorial museum displays the articles of culture which reflect the mentality characteristic of the Ukrainian people.

Ukraine has a rich tradition of folk trades and artistic handicrafts. In some places, the production buildings were also preserved. Among the acting technical-household museum buildings, it is worth mentioning: the museum of timber and timber-crafting near the lake of Sinavyr in Mizhgyrya district, the monument of folk agro-technics—water-mill and water saw-mill in Khust district, the museum—smithy in Irshava district of Transcarpathian region, the museum of Hutsul ceramics in the village of Pystyn' (Ivano-Frankivsk region).

In 1986, the Museum of Pottery was opened in Opishnya, the well-known centre of Poltava ceramics. The concept of acting museums suggests creation of the multifunctional centres aimed at facilitating of regeneration of the traditional production experience of the Ukrainians.

The creation of open-air museums has given rise to a new stage of ethnographic museum building in Ukraine. Open-air museums were found to be the most rational, comprehensive and effective form of the complex exhibition of the monuments of folk architecture, household utensils and tools in the natural medium of their employment. For the last forty years, about ten regional open-air museums were created.

Expositions of ethnographic material, displaying the origin, ethnic history and culture of Ukrainian people are urgent and timely both from the point of view of the apprehension of the national heritage and due to its cultural significance for the mankind in general. Museum collections are not only a part of the material culture of the people—they can help the nation or the ethnic group becoming consolidated and asserting their originality. Those are precisely the complex expositions of open-air museums which correspond with this purpose most of all.

The first Ukrainian open-air museum was founded in 1964 in Pereyaslav-Khmelnytskyi of Kyiv region. Various monuments were thematically grouped into the following sections: archaeology, country handicrafts, collection of wind-mills, the village on the Dniper bank. The latter section depicts houses household buildings and houses of Worship. The farmstead is the central exposition object. The reproduction of the interiors of houses and household buildings depends on the occupation of their masters. In the centre of *The village on the Dniper bank* there are fair places with shops, rows of stalls and a village board. The wind-mill is situated in the outskirts of the village and two water-mills of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are to be seen here also—in the river valley.

Although open-air museums in L'viv, Uzhgorod and Kyiv differ in their structure from the museum in Pereyaslav-Khmelnytskyi, they are based on the common principle of reproduction of the characteristic regional historical-ethnographic features of village-planning, of the fragments of separate settlements taking into consideration landscape and environmental peculiarities, and the exhibition of the cultural articles in their natural context.

For the years of the state independence of Ukraine, the role of museum exhibitions aimed at strengthening the ethnic identity of the Ukrainians has been constantly growing, the functions of the ethnographic museums are expanding and the museums themselves are gaining the status of scientific and cultural-educational institute.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century we may already comprehend the results of the museum development in Ukraine as a social phenomenon which has emerged at a certain cultural stage, and retrace the role of museums in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The very twentieth century was the period of the establishment and development of museum affairs in the world practice, and it laid the foundation of the museum as a universal illustration of the world cultures. The greatest museums of the world are generally known to be based on private collections. Let me focus now on the history of Ukrainian museums.

In the 1820s, museum collections appeared in Western Ukraine. The first steps were done by the Ukrainian clergymen who collected an extensive library of ancient manuscripts and printings the core of valuable collection *Peremyski kapituly*. Canon Antin Petrushevych began collecting "... all sorts of the national relicts of the past" thus laying the foundation of the museum of *People's House* in Iviv. During this period, the historic-artistic collection of Ukrainian ethnology were gathered by the Polish progressive public figures, as Ossolinskiy, Didushytskiy, Liubomyrskiy.

The 1850s marked the beginning of goal-directed collecting of historic-cultural monuments of Ukraine. It was associated with the outstanding public figures, progressive citizens of Ukraine, famous for their donations, such as: V. Tarnavskiy (Chernihiv region), K. Skarzhynska (Poltava region), O. Pol (Katerynoslav region), F. Shtengel (from Volyn), B. Khanenko (from Kyiv), the Tereshchenkos and others.

Despite the demolition, chasing and persecution, collecting in our country was preserved and fulfils at present its cultural mission which is a strong evidence of its vitality and necessity for people.

Nowadays the significance of the collectors' personality is acknowledged again and their activities in this humanity field are considered as a form of public cultural work. This may be proved by the creation of the Museum of Ivan Honchar's ethnographic collection in Kyiv. The museum exposition numbers over eight thousand exhibits which display all the variety of Ukrainian folk art. Of special value are the collections of garments (over 200) from different regions of Ukraine and more than 400 (four hundred) ancient paintings. The museum takes a significant part in the museum network of Ukraine.

This year the Museum of Ethnography and Artistic Handicrafts in L'viv has been considerably replenished by the valuable collection of glazed tiles dated as far as the thirteenth centuries, numbering over one thousand samples. It was kindly donated by the collector J. Linynskiy.

An unique collection of Hutsul folk art in the possession of the collector I. Grechko might become the core exposition in the future museum of private collections.

For the years of the state independence of Ukraine, the importance of museum expositions aimed at increasing the scientific assertion of the ethnic identity of Ukrainians. The functions of ethnographic museums are now expanding in this new context; they are becoming both scientific and cultural-educational institutions.

L'viv Museum of Ethnography and Artistic Handicrafts, founded on June eleventh, 50 years ago, has become the leading scientific institution of Ukraine and the department of the Institute of Ethnology at the national Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. It fulfils the honourable mission of popularizing and developing ethnologic studies. Let me focus more precisely on the characteristics of the only academic museum of ethnology in Ukraine.

Scientific research of the museum is conducted in several directions—museology, ethnology, sociology and folklore investigations. Museology covers the problems common to all kind of museums: history, scientific-methodical basis of conducting research, scientific acquisition of the funds, psychological-pedagogical peculiarities of the perception of expositions, etc.

The main collection of L'viv Museum of Ethnography and Artistic Handicrafts is based on the collections of Ethnographic Museum of T. Shevchenko Scientific Fellowship opened in 1895 and the Industrial Museum of L'viv founded in 1873. The museum collection was also replenished in 1940 by the nationalized private collections rich in ethnographic material.

The valuable pieces of West European and oriental artistic handicrafts which are now in the possession of the museum permit the scientists to investigate Ukrainian folk art in the context of the world cultures and make it possible to design interesting exhibitions.

For the last five years, several ethnographic exhibitions from the museum's collection were organised abroad: *Ukrainian folk toys* in Poland and France, *Ukrainian Easter egg in Serbia*, *Jewish relicts of the past from Galychyna* in Poland and Israel, *Ukrainian folk garments* in Poland.

An ethnographic exposition inside the museum is presented in three halls of the former savings-bank of Galychyna, in the architectural monument of the nineteenth century. This exhibition was created at the beginning of the 1970s. Conceptually it is somewhat "academic". Its structure resembles the chapters of an monograph: precise and perfected, illustrated by the exposition nodes *Agricultural tools*, *Folk Garments*, *Folk artistic handicrafts*. Besides, there is the open fund exposition of the style furniture, sacral textile, artistic metal articles, ceramics of the fifteenth and twentieth centuries. All of them are exposed in the architectural monument of the seventeenth century.

At present the museum staff is working at a new exposition concept of ethnographic composition taking into account the development of technical devices and theoretical and practical museological make-ups.

Ethnographic materials which are the evidence of the ethnic history, of the changes taking place in the traditional everyday culture of people under the influence of

social conditions are sometimes the only witness of the vanished, components and events of ethnic culture. At the beginning of the twenty-first century they gain a particular significance as historic sources. Due to their multifunction they may be used in the exhibitions of different types of museums and play a great role in the process of ethno-cultural revival of the nation.





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## ASPECTS



## *Selection, Collection and Interpretation.*

### *On the Criteria and Strategies of Collecting Material Cultural Heritage and their Ethnological Interpretations*

Most of the collections of 20<sup>th</sup> century objects in Slovenia's museums are still incomplete and unsystematic; this is all the more true of collections of objects for everyday use. The first generations of ethnologists in museums had a clear concept about collecting: they collected objects from the "disappearing peasant world", the remains of the pre-industrial society, while, on the other hand, objects which were produced continuously in serial, industrial production and objects which stood out among the common ones (e.g. inventions, technical adaptations and improvements, etc.) were ignored. The post-war generations of ethnologists in museums became increasingly aware of the fact that modern utensils have a short lifetime because they are quickly discarded by their users. Mass production makes products cheaper and accessible to many more people; as a result many products are no longer status symbols. It is difficult to keep track of such an abundant and diversified production, even harder to document it, and hardly possible to try collecting it. The relationship between people and objects varies and it is always a two-way process. How we see this relationship depends both on the culture it originates from, that is on the culture which records, documents, preserves and protects this relationship, and on the contemporary culture to which the knowledge about the relationship is communicated. We are of course referring here to the makers, users, curators-ethnologists and museum visitors.

Selection and collection must be closely connected with ethnological research because only a methodological approach is capable of setting the criteria by which we may interpret life in all its phenomena as the cultural heritage. Owing to the absence of final criteria for collecting the material cultural heritage—criteria which would translate ethnological theory into practical advice—museum workers have yet to seriously engage in systematically collecting objects from industrial society.

Objects are exposed to the processes of use, wear, maintenance or negligence, and re-use. As soon as an object is no longer used, it is put away temporarily or permanently. Permanent disposal means the "death" of the object. Temporary deposition provides for the "status quo" of its physical and essential substance and enables it to be reactivated in some other period. When, instead of being disposed of permanently, an object is selected and brought to a museum, its existence continues, but with a completely different function. Its utility value is replaced by a documentary

one, and its market value by a cultural value, based on how representative or expressive the object is. The attitude towards the object is a much more complex issue than would appear at first glance. Therefore, it is of key importance that in collecting material elements of culture we do not neglect the context of the objects, and that we document it accurately. The motive for the decision to take a well-defined object out of its vital context and transfer it to a museum, where it becomes a museum object, certainly derives from its information structure. The latter is based on how representative the chosen object is in comparison with a range of similar objects of the same type, or on how it is connected with certain processes and phenomena on which it can provide valuable information.

*Some basic criteria for collecting objects from the industrial society:*

- mass or common objects: in the sense of the general spread of a certain cultural element which reflects the general circumstances and customs of a society;
- typical or specific objects: in the sense of the specific adaptation of a common object (see 1.) by a certain professional, age, interest or other social group;
- special, exceptional, innovative objects: in the sense of the adaptation of objects which are either common or specific (see 1. and 2.) to individual needs, tastes, abilities, circumstances.

All these criteria are connected with production, selection and modified use, and less with the past practice of differentiating between social groups (peasants, bourgeoisie, aristocrats, workers). In the present society of mass production and consumption there is no society left that would reflect its structure by means of a relatively independent material culture, one that would be completely different in form from other societies. Structures are still involved, but they are based on professions and education, locality (in the sense of remoteness from domestic and foreign shopping centres), generations, interests, and sexes, because these provide distinct differences when researched or when co-existing in space and time. To collect objects in order to establish these internal differences is demanding enough; theoretically, it is also to some extent controversial to collect museum materials that have remained unchanged for many years, and the remoteness-in-time criterion for collecting material, the unwritten rule that 50 years have to pass for the accurate self-selection of objects, can be difficult to follow. In the present affluent society (in the sense of an farfetched comparison with the conditions up to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the general nature of customs did not expect people to accumulate objects, even if they were available and an individual's wealth could afford them) such a distance in time as a precondition for including an object in a museum collection no longer stands.

For these reasons it seems to be sensible to have a multi-phase strategy for collecting museum objects, at least for such objects which "everyone" had, objects with a short useful life in which their function changes. This method of collecting was

somewhat self-evident and resulted from people bringing relatively new, but worn objects to the museum, asking the inevitable questions: "Do you collect this? Does it belong in a museum? I'd like to throw it away, but I don't manage because it meant so much to me in the past." Such statements already refer to the above-mentioned self-selection, which is connected with the owner's valuation criteria and which appears in a different light in the new conditions. In practice, multi-phase collecting is carried out approximately like this:

Phase one: wide, open collecting which observes the criterion of common presence. Objects collected in this phase are acquired through accidental finds, donations, or bequests, and less through purchases or the like. Their basic data and form are relevant for a general outline of a certain cultural phenomenon. However, they do not necessarily become real museum objects in the following phases, and a complete, detailed inventory is therefore not required. It is sufficient to establish a basic documentation on their arrival at the museum, but the fate of these objects can be quite diverse:

- they may become real museum objects which meet the criteria of museum and ethnological selection and whose depth and width of expressiveness depends on the information which adorns an object with meaning;
- they may remain on the level of a general illustrative material object which provides evidence on, illustrates or explains a certain common cultural phenomenon;
- when the museum acquires additional material of the same type which by its contents and form is better suited to "institutionalise" the cultural heritage, the first objects can be simply excluded from the collection (selection of material by the museum). Occasionally, it takes ten or more years for things to become clear and for establishing what is really important and what is only temporarily significant.

Second phase: directed and purposeful collecting, connected with a specific research project, or with the systematic complementing of collections; in this phase objects become museum objects either directly or they remain on the "sieve of time and selection" from the first phase. The relevance of an object is connected with the criterion of being typical or specific for the researched group of users; it reflects a group identity. It can be used in different narrative contexts of museum exhibitions.

The third phase means deliberate inclusion in a collection of a special group of "individualised" objects of mass, serial, industrial production; by their origin and original form these objects are not unique, but they were made unique by their users and their additional interventions; they therefore meet the criterion of being special, exceptional or innovative, and they are the visual expression of a self-conscious, individual identity. Among them are objects of mass production which were preserved because they belonged to a famous person, or, perhaps, they may have been connected with a generally important, exceptional event. Consider for instance the interest of the public in the public auctions of objects which belong(ed) to famous

people! The expressiveness of such a museum object ranges from providing entirely specific information about “the individual”, but it also contains a wealth of information on what was common to a group in general; it can be included in numerous contexts of exhibition stories. The significance of such “individualised” objects should therefore not be underestimated.<sup>1</sup>

### *The formation of collections (types of collections)*

A museum collects objects not only as vehicles of information and knowledge, but also to form collections. In the formation of new and complementing of existing collections four categories are to be considered:

<sup>1</sup> How meaningful an individual museum object can be is best illustrated by an example. Let us choose a single item of clothing—jeans. Influenced by western fashion trends jeans started to spread in Slovenia in the early 1960s. At first they were, of course, rare but soon became the most desired clothing item of the young (teenagers and students) or at least the hippie generation. In the 70s it was hard to find genuine jeans in Slovenia and they were therefore held in high esteem by the young (and consequently their parents). In the 80s jeans were already worn by many more people across the generations; and in the 90s they were worn by most of the urban population and by the young in the villages. Jeans are therefore undoubtedly a clothing item which in the course of these four decades acquired the right to become a part of the cultural heritage (and not only the Slovene heritage) in museums. In the phase of mass or general use the museum acquired jeans more or less regularly, but seemingly randomly (usually from people who had a more intimate knowledge of museums, ethnology and ethnologists). They were often donated to a museum when wardrobes were cleaned out, that is when people finally decided to make a thorough selection of their old clothes, which they had kept for sentimental or other (“you never know”) reasons for years without ever wearing them. In this way (and with more or less reliable background data) a collection of jeans was acquired which differ by age, fashion and, of course, “story”. In this phase jeans were not searched for systematically as they were not yet part of a concept for a thematic study or exhibition. However, owing to the place jeans occupied in the general dressing culture of the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we are aware that they will, at some time, be part of such a study or exhibition. Their “history” is not over yet not and jeans therefore continue to be “under observation”.

The second collecting phase directly added to the collection specific brands of jeans which are “must” to a group or subgroup that would be the subject of a research project (e.g. the hippie generation of the late 60s (Super Rifle...) or groups of *rappers* (Fubu, Wu-Wear, Johnny Blaze, Musher, etc.), *skaters* (Alphanumeric, Droors...), *dagos* (Big Star) from the late 90s, etc., or researches of the student and teenager population in Ljubljana in the last four decades, researches about the masses shopping in Trieste in the 70s, and many other possible researches. Systematic collecting brings about a developmental and design survey of the changes in design, colour, materials and “additions” (bleaching, fraying, undoing, taking in, insets, etc.) of jeans and of the accessories worn with them, as well as the development of the circumstances and the groups of people the general opinion associates (or not) with jeans.

To the third group belong jeans of any brand which played such a distinct role in the life of an individual that he or she is attached to them in a sentimental way. Usually his or her “story” is added and it is often reflected in the appearance of the object (individual interference with the jeans the like of inscriptions, (sewn-on) badges, deliberate tears, added, undone or torn-off parts or seams, dyeing or bleaching, etc.). Acquisitions of this type were discussed in the journal *Etnolog* 8/1998. Jeans of this type could be those worn during the 1968 students’ movement by one of today’s celebrities (politicians, artists, managers, scientists, etc.).

- occasional collections, established by a museum from a donation, not as the result of its own intentions; this requires the museum to have the physical capacity to accept the collection (room, shelves, etc.);
- associated collections, only a limited number of objects meet the collecting criteria, their true value will become clear only in the course of time (these objects are therefore not inventoried and they can be eliminated from the collection at a later date);
- collections representative of individual structures of the population;
- systematic collections which depend on the degree the existing collections have been researched and on complementing them.

If we consider these methods or phases of collecting, we find that individual collecting phases yield collections with corresponding contents: the first collecting phase establishes occasional and associated collections, the second and third phases, on the other hand, establish representative and systematic collections. The latter two types of collections require systematic collecting in the sense of active searching for objects with accurately defined characteristics. The opposite is passive waiting for some objects to find their way to the museum more or less accidentally.

### *New aspects of old collections*

Every classification of an object into a certain collection or its inclusion in an exhibition puts it into a new, important relation to the other objects in the collected holdings and this enables us to change our ideas about it. This narrows down the field of the "undefined" which is never finally resolved. Every new period, every new generation detects new data in museum objects, either owing to new scientific discoveries or because of new views adopted by the discipline.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> That the criteria for collecting museum objects change is best illustrated with objects from the collections of folk art and embroideries, both in the Slovene Ethnographic Museum:

Example 1: The collections of "folk art" in the Slovene Ethnographic Museum and in other Slovene museums originated as collections of objects made between the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the inter-war period, but most of them are from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. To be included in a collection of folk art an object must meet the condition that it was either made on a farm or bought somewhere, taken to the farm, and used there. A common characteristic of these objects is that they were given conscious "treatment" in the sense that their simple usefulness was surpassed by adding aesthetic components. They were bought, made, and used by people who belonged to the lower classes of society and who were legally and economically underprivileged. Objects belonging to folk art are therefore made of relatively cheap materials, their execution is rather modest and they were made by craftsmen with limited skills.

But how do we approach the so-called "folk art" of the industrial and post-industrial ages? What is the relationship between objects and their inclusion in a museum collection and what are the collecting criteria for this "folk art"? The activities to complement existing collections observe the criterion of mass presence of a certain form of "folk artistic" creativity and that of exceptional objects or objects differing from previously known findings. It remains undisputed, however, that the basic principle for collecting

*On the importance of originals and recreated objects*

Regardless of the type of objects (the place or time they originate from) a museum needs to collect originals, while recreated objects (whether copies, replicas, fakes, illustrations)<sup>3</sup> are useful only for the additional, secondary tasks of a museum. Only originals can be the vehicles of the entire range of information that we can read from them (or will be able to read) and convey it to others. Original objects are the direct physical evidence of the culture which created them; they are materialised bits of the past and as such at least in some part independent from subjective interpretation. This is a power not possessed by replicas, copies or fakes, even if they are visually close to the original, but differ from it in substance, dimensions, techniques, unique features of production, or use. Only an original object is capable of communicating to its environment the message or the spirit of the people and life it

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objects is the identification of socio-historical structures and their attitudes to "aesthetic enhancement". In this sense the following factors should be taken into consideration:

- a) The choice of mass-produced goods available on the market
- b) Their alteration in the sense of an added "aesthetic value"
- c) The creativity of individuals and groups in various fields that is not the result of a formal education/training
- d) The creativity of individuals and groups which follow or enhance/rework known traditional patterns.

Example 2: Objects embellished with embroidery have drawn the interest of museum workers and have been collected from the beginnings of institutionalised museum collecting. Museums were interested in them from the point of view of beautiful, artistically enhanced objects, their motifs and composition; from the point of view of the artistic expression of "the national identity", including the pre-industrial, peasant identity. At a later stage, embroidered items were considered from the point of view of a socially and functionally structured cultural element which had much to tell, not only about itself, but also about the whole of its "unembroidered" counterparts. The viewpoints of embroideries gradually moved to the makers and users, their own valuation of objects and to the wider aspects of life which also influence objects. Old collections can be re-interpreted in the light of new issues in ethnology: we may be no longer that much interested in the artistic, decorative sense or in the aspects of embroidery techniques, but in a quite indirect sense we may be stimulated by the artistically and technically totally insignificant inscriptions on embroidered cloths which used to ornate most Slovene households in the inter-war period: "A tidy home and tasty food are the work of a worthy housewife", "Don't worry, God arranges everything for the best", "Keep out of my pots and pans, leave the kitchen to me", "After rain the sun comes out, and joy is followed by sorrow", "Diligence is worth more than a pile of gold", "Give me one more kiss while the flowers and May are still in blossom", "Go easy on the coal, it costs us a fortune!", "The best thing in the world is a home built on happiness", "Young and handsome you are, but tempted oh so easily". (sayings embroidered on wall cloths in SEM's collection).

In view of the emphases such an object may convey, it can be exhibited in a museum in very different ways (flat in a showcase, flat on a panel, in a composition, combined with other objects, seemingly invisibly included in an exhibition's installed interior, etc.)

<sup>3</sup> Replica: a work of art by the same artist that is identical with an original sculpture or painting (Dictionary of the Slovene Literary Language 4, Ljubljana 1985, p. 478); a copy or reproduction of an artist's own work of art (Verbinc France, Dictionary of foreign words, Ljubljana 1971, p. 380). In ethnological museum collections making and using a replica, which has by definition the same appearance, is made of the same material and with the same technique or even by the same maker, is quite unusual, certainly if older objects are involved or objects made by unknown persons.



belonged to; every other object communicates more or less successfully only the external shell, conditionally the object's composition, and even more conditionally the production technique that was used to make it. Their "internal language" is not telling enough. The weak point of originals is also their principal advantage: their irreplaceable uniqueness. Their transient and delicate nature make it difficult to keep and protect originals and even harder to handle them in order to make their message accessible to others. On the other hand, the advantage of replicas, copies, fakes, and illustrations lies precisely in the fact that they are not difficult to keep and protect because it is easy to replace them with new and nearly equal objects. These objects are therefore "invaluable" because they meet the needs of touching, simple exhibition, illustrative lectures, workshops and the like. Originals are not used for such purposes because of the risk of damaging them. The advantage of recreated objects also lies in their capacity to temporarily cover "blank areas" in a museum collection or in the concept of an exhibition's interpretation (e.g. in the development changes of a certain cultural element or when presenting models of elements which are too large or, owing to their nature, can not be transported to a museum exhibition).

Collections of contemporary culture as interpreted in an exhibition are interesting to visitors in spite of the standard expectation that they will see old objects in the museum (observing from "a distance in time" is "watching another world" and

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Copy: a product which results from copying something; what is made so similar to something that it looks like the genuine, original object (Dictionary of the Slovene Literary Language 2, Ljubljana 1975, p. 428); a (written) copy of an original, copy of an original representation, print, cast; an exact reproduction of a work of art (Verbinc, Dictionary of foreign words). By definition a copy differs from a replica in relation to the maker or re-creating person and, of course, by the time of origin (replicas are usually made in series which have the same time of origin, and they are usually numbered by the maker himself). In a museum environment copies can be used but they should not differ from the original visually or by the material or technique used in making them. A limited number of copies are made, they are usually numbered and equipped with certificates.

Fake, imitation: to fake: to make something to look like a genuine object; a copy of something (Dictionary of the Slovene Literary Language 3, Ljubljana 1979, p. 808). In museum activities this is the most frequently used form of recreated object—beside illustrations—which cannot be told from the original by its appearance (including dimensions), but it may differ by material, techniques used, maker or re-maker; imitations may (contrary to copies and replicas) ignore individual "faults" on an object which resulted from the production, use or simply from ageing (patina). Good-quality imitations, accompanied by a certificate which emphasises how they differ from the original, are made in limited quantities, and it is recommended that they are numbered. Every numbered series of imitations and their differences have to be verified and confirmed as is the rule with copies. In museum activities we can make good use of imitations of poor quality, if we are frank about the differences from the original. Usually, imitations are not numbered and this makes them cheaper (e.g. if they are for sale). They can be used in all instances where illustrations are used.

Illustration: what helps to better understand the subject at hand by its illustrative nature (Dictionary of the Slovene Literary Language 2, Ljubljana 1975, p. 22). It can differ from the original in size, material, finish, even composition, if this does not affect its illustrative nature. They usually involve stylised or illustrated cultural elements (e.g. the distribution of fields, types of settlements, models of types of buildings) or they illustrate the presentation of how something operates, phases of production or development, etc.

is no less exotic than observing geographical and cultural differences).<sup>4</sup> Since a visitor can easily and directly relate to such museum material—because it is part of his own life in the same form or in a very similar form—a museum exhibition about “another world” acquires the nature of “my world”, that is of the visitor’s own world. But even this own world can be completely evaluated only from a distance of at least one step. Contemporary utensils offer precisely this step as the selection criteria have made them enter the particular world of symbolical meanings and signs (that of a museum collection). They enable the visitor to compare his own personal culture of memories and experiences with the common awareness of the present and indirectly of the past. The visitor’s “own” objects (not in the sense of actual possession of the objects), interpreted in a museum exhibition as the mosaic elements of a wider order or general system of values, stimulate in the visitor the need to re-evaluate his self-image and his image of the wider social group. This makes it necessary for a museum’s collecting activities to be based on criteria established systematically and responsibly. The advantage of exhibitions on modern themes is also that it is possible to instantly verify whether the collecting criteria were chosen appropriately, because the visitors will respond effectively to the exhibited objects only if the proper criteria were chosen.

Allow us to mention here a reflection about new, modern museums or at least exhibitions which new technologies enable in the virtual world of the Internet and in interactive presentations of exhibition issues. The problem of such reflections lies not in the power of virtual sensations stimulating the visitor’s world of experience and feelings. That, after all, is one of the goals of every museum exhibition. What is controversial is rather the ambition for such “up-to-date” media to question whether it still makes sense to collect, preserve and exhibit original museum objects. Such an ambition certainly cannot be the fruit of knowledge about the real meaning and internal differences between classical museums and various cultural events.

<sup>4</sup> Two well acclaimed presentations of the culture of contemporary life may be mentioned here: The exhibition “Memories of our youth” by Inga Miklavcic Brezigar in the Gorica Museum in Nova Gorica (1998), and the new permanent installation in the Museum of Recent History in Celje.

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ADINA VARGATU

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## *Some Aspects of the Policy of the Astra Museum Complex*

### *History*

In 1993, *The European Museum of the Year Award Committee* decided to award a personal distinction to Dr. Corneliu Bucur, director of the ASTRA Museum in Sibiu,\* for “maintaining and developing the ASTRA Museum in the face of all possible political discouragement”. Indeed, “political discouragement” has marked the history of the organization more than once. The roots of the Museum Complex of today go back almost a century. In 1905, the Transylvanian Association—abbreviated ASTRA—founded in the first Ethnography Museum in Sibiu, which presented traditional culture of the Romanian population in Transylvania. Besides costumes and household objects, the museum displayed tools and devices used in various traditional crafts and small-scale reproductions of peasant industry installations and means of transportation, pointing out an increasing interest from the part of the researchers in the folk technical creation.

In 1950, the communist authorities closed the museum. Its collections were scattered among other museums, and an important part of the collection was either lost or destroyed. The remains were integrated into the collections of the more renowned Brukenthal Museum. It was only after a decade that the first sign of revival was given by the Museum of Folk Technique, organized in the early sixties by a group of ethnologists and architects, who based their concept on a project Romulus Vuia had outlined in 1940. The implementation of the Open-Air Museum project in 1963 was the first step towards the revival of the ASTRA Museum, but the real start was made in 1990, when the museum regained its status of independent organization and was free to apply its development strategy. Without resigning from its primary functions (i.e. collection, conservation and valorization) the ASTRA Museum had to adjust its cultural policy to the new context brought about by the nineties. In the process, several quasi-independent organizations emerged, functioning today as the National Museum Complex ASTRA. Besides the regular work in research, conservation and exhibitions, the Complex focuses on programmes designed to enliven its extremely rich heritage. Its mission statement reiterates the words of the scholar

\* The presentation is based on materials published in the collection “Cibinium 1990–2000” (ASTRA Museum Publishing House) and on information provided by the The Department For Cultural Marketing And Consultancy of the ASTRA Museum Complex Sibiu.

Simion Mehedinti, who remarked at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that "Ethnography museums should not restrict to collecting scientific material, for they must give an intuitive perception of the scale of human civilization."

### *Structure*

#### The Open-Air Museum

It is situated in a beautiful natural setting of 100 hectares and has over 300 monuments of traditional architecture and preindustrial installations, leisure facilities (rowing, traditional inns, and an open-air theatre with 1,500 seats. Other features include the following:

- research and archives
- special exhibitions
- reconstruction of traditional customs
- folk shows

#### The Franz Binder Museum of Non-European Ethnography

- permanent exhibition based on the own collections
- special exhibitions organized in collaboration with foreign embassies and cultural organizations

#### The Emil Sigerus Museum of Transylvanian-German Ethnography

- research, conservation and exhibit of their own collections
- permanent exhibition: *Transylvanian Tiles of the 14<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries*
- special exhibitions

#### The Museum of Transylvanian Civilization

- folk art exhibitions displaying old objects and contemporary artisan creation
- traveling exhibitions both in the country and abroad
- strategic programmes for the revitalization of the artisan creation and traditional culture (The National Contest *Traditional Handicrafts*)
- assists the programmes of the Academy of Traditional Arts and those of the Association of Artisans
- organizes the Artisans' Fair every year

#### The Regional Laboratory for Conservation and Restoration

- conservation and restoration works for the ASTRA Museum and other beneficiaries from the Transylvania region
- annual courses for restoration specialists all over the country, organized by the Laboratory's Training Centre
- collaboration with universities, research institutes and restoration centres all over the world

#### The ASTRA FILM Studio, Visual Anthropology

- anthropology research programmes in Transylvania
- visual archives
- production of non-fictional, non-commercial documentary films
- organizer of the biennial ASTRA FILM Festival since 1993
- organizer of the Conference on Visual Anthropology since 1996
- workshops on documentary film-making
- offers advice on Transylvanian locations, resources

#### The Information and Documentation Centre Cornel Irimie

- computer management of all the archives (photographs, object cards, film, dia, data)
- coordinates the publishing process for the museum publication (the ASTRA Publishing House)
- headquarters of the COMREG (Regional Centre for Community Research)
- national training centre for ethnography museum specialists

#### The Centre for Cultural Marketing and Consultancy

- education programmes
- international programmes for the promotion of contemporary artisan creation
- promotion of the museum image and programmes
- sociological research of the museum offers beneficiaries relationship
- public relations

### *Programmes*

#### MUSEUM VIVUM

The idea of changing the philosophy of the museum by changing its focus from the ethnographic presentation of technical facts to the comprehension of the history of civilization started growing in the early seventies, with the concept of the living museum (museum vivum). In this mindset ethnography objects and facts become the background and props for the true actors—occupations and trades, habitat and life styles, religious life and rituals—in the process of discovering and understanding the traditional civilization.

#### THE FAIR OF THE TRADITIONAL CRAFTS

For many years, the Fair on St. Mary's Day has proved that the artisans, modest and anonymous people, keep making wonderful things. In fact, there are villages where folk art has remained the main trade and, most important of all, many artisans have apprentices, who are often their own children or grandchildren. Once more the folk art has proved capable of overcoming difficulties. In August, the open-air museum turns into a traditional village of the pre-industrial period for three days. The Fair

in the museum is 25 years old. Every year, more and more visitors come here to meet the most famous artisans in the country.

#### THE OLYMPICS FOR YOUNG ARTISANS

The programme developed at a national level in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and addresses students between 6 and 18 years of age, who are skilled in traditional crafts. The sections include weaving, woodcarving, painting (on glass, wood or eggs), basketry, pottery, making of musical instruments, metal work. In the first stage, the applicants are selected at the county level. The winners participate in the final competition, organized by the museum every summer. Over the years, the young champions of folk art have shown impressive abilities to exploit the natural resources on behalf of the technical and aesthetic traditional values, and produce masterpieces by adding their personal touch.

#### THE ACADEMY OF TRADITIONAL ARTS AND CRAFTS

The intellectual elite, accustomed to the absolute anonymity of the artisans, received the foundation in 1993 of The Academy of Traditional Arts with suspicion. It took some time to understand that beyond their technical and artistic skills, these people have a philosophy of their own, as well as intelligence and sensitivity. As artists, they are not less than the great names of the mainstream culture. There is a reception protocol for those who are admitted in the Academy of Traditional Arts. An exhibition displaying the most representative works of the candidate, meaningful stories from his or her life, discussions with experts—all of these make up a unique moment for the new members, who refer to it as “the most beautiful day of their lives”. The Academy is structured on five sections: figurative arts, performing arts, music, literature and mechanics. 172 members represent twenty-four trades. Their work fully justifies the title of *academician of the traditional arts*, even for the doubtful ones. Most of the academicians are over 60 years old and the title means recognition of a lifetime dedication to traditional art. The honour of being a member of the Academy brings about the obligation of having disciples. Thus, the Academy of Traditional Arts is more than a showcase of objects and diplomas. It is a cultural space where tradition is naturally transferred to the next generation.

#### THE FOLK ART GALLERIES

The Museum opened its first gallery in 1991, in the old part of the medieval city of Sibiu, sensing the need for good quality folk art. From the very beginning, the gallery was more than a usual museum shop, acting like an interface between the artisans and the public, helping really valuable artisans to make their work known and, on the other hand, educating the buyers to recognize genuine folk art products and reject the kitsch. The display reconstructs the traditional rural home, giving the visitors an accurate idea about the use of each object. The offer includes pottery, household objects carved in wood, textiles, leather and fur items, painted eggs, ornaments, traditional costumes, and musical instruments. The success of this first



stage lead to the opening of a second gallery, located at the entrance of the Open Air Museum in Sibiu. Thus, the visitors can buy products belonging to the traditional way of life after having visited the households and pre-industrial installations displayed on a surface of 100 hectares. Artisans who are invited for demonstrations increase the attractiveness of the galleries.

#### RURAL COMMUNITIES IN THE MUSEUM

Rural communities from the original villages of homesteads or installations displayed in the open-air museum are invited to visit them and spend a day in the museum doing exactly the same things they do at home. It is a great occasion for visitors to get to know a slice of real rural life, and, as far as the villagers are concerned, they become aware that their traditional way of life is something worth preserving and feeling proud of.

#### TRADITIONAL PUBLIC PLACES IN THE MUSEUM

The museum offers the visitors a chance to experience traditional life. At the wooden church, people can attend the regular Sunday service. Moreover, during the past years, more and more young couples have chosen to have the religious ceremony of marriage in the museum. Visitors can have traditional dishes at the inn and the pub, they can play a traditional version of ninepins, dance in the dance pavilion, listen to traditional music, etc.

#### LIVING HUMAN TREASURES

The traditional culture with its various forms of expression through music, dance, theatre, oral traditions, mythology, rituals and handicrafts are the basis of our universal heritage, the essential source of the peoples' cultural identity. Its preservation, revitalisation and transmission to future generations has become increasingly difficult. UNESCO issued the Programme *Living Human Treasures*, focusing especially on the human holders of these values. One of the main goals has been to establish an international co-operation for the promotion of the programme in as many countries as possible. In 1999, the UNESCO Workshop in Venice presented models of the *Living Human Treasures* system, as they have been already applied in Japan, Republic of Korea, Philippines, Thailand, France and Romania. The National Museum Complex initiated and developed the Romanian system. During the workshop it became clear that international partnership and co-operation is needed to sustain the mutual effort of preserving, promoting and facilitating transmission of traditional culture. According to UNESCO recommendations, governments must be committed to undertake measures to protect the intangible heritage, focusing on the issue of a favourable legal environment for the holders of traditional culture values. The countries that have already implemented the *Living Human Treasures* system are called to share their experience among themselves and to the others who are just about to start the programme in their countries.

The model presented by the ASTRA Museum Complex includes some of the programmes of the *museum vivum* concept, which is designed to protect, encourage and promote the living cultural heritage as a source of cultural identity, a warrant of cultural diversity, a factor in consolidating cultural pluralism and developing sustainable communities, and a source of creativity in the contemporary world.

#### THE ASSOCIATION OF ARTISANS

In 1992, it was becoming clear that the artisans needed an organization of their own to represent their interests. In this respect, the ASTRA Museum initiated and supported the foundation of the Association of Artisans, a non-governmental organization, aiming to obtain official recognition of the artisan status and to offer promotion, technical assistance and consultancy to its members. Today the Association has 250 full members, and about 1,000 further artisans have shown interest or have participated in the programmes developed by the Association in collaboration with the ASTRA Museum.

The most substantial programme involving the Association, *Artisans & Enterprise*, started in 1995 and will end in June this year, with funding from the USAID and private American sponsors, collected by the main organizer, the American NGO *Aid to Artisans*. Broadly, the programme consisted of training workshops, promotion of the products in international fairs and the publishing of the excellent album *Romanian Folk Art—A Guide to Living Traditions*.

### Projects

#### THE NATIONAL FESTIVAL OF TRADITIONS

The project employs the model of the famous *Folk Life Festival* organized every year by the Smithsonian Institute, following Romania's successful participation in the 1999 edition. In the local version, the ASTRA Museum will invite three counties every year, each of them representing a different part of the country, to send their most representative and skilled artisans, who will compete in the following sections:

- religious arts
- traditional crafts
- traditional music
- traditional foodways
- customs and rites
- folk poetry and theatre

#### THE MULTIMEDIA MUSEUM OF ROMANY CULTURE

The project *Culture and Civilization of the Roma* focuses on the culture of the Gypsies in Romania. The ethnic group of the Roma has a peculiar position in Romania and Eastern Europe. The Roma have been discriminated for a long time because they

choose to live according to their own rules. They were nomads and some groups still live a nomadic lifestyle today. The idea that they do not have their own language, written culture and customs has been widely accepted by the majority, who tends to reject them because they are different. Lately there have been some projects attempting to make the Romany culture known and understood. The project of the multimedia museum addresses a wide public interested in learning about the many aspects of this very special ethnical group, including their history, lifestyle, trades, education, customs, music and dance, beliefs, and relationship with other ethnic groups. The project includes research, the initiation of a collection of ethnographic objects representative for the Romany culture, the production of a series of documentary films, a website and CD-ROMs.

#### THE MUSEUM OF MULTICULTURAL TRANSYLVANIA

The project of an ethnographic museum of Transylvanian civilization is the ideal model of the European museum of ethnography in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as part of the policy for a united Europe. In a continent of regions rather than countries, the cultural specificity of each ethnic group, as well as the results of the interaction of different ethnic groups, will need to be defined. As far as the folk civilization is concerned, according to Dr. Corneliu Bucur, Transylvania has been “the miraculous melting pot, where cultural confluence have produced—after an almost undecipherable formula—a distinct place with a special culture.”

#### *Conclusion*

The presentation of the future projects could go on. Little information was given about the collections of the museum. Their variety and value should be the subject of a much more detailed presentation. The ASTRA Museum does not reject its responsibility in this direction. However, the source of a dynamic development lies in the vocation of the museum to act as a catalyst and a promoter of the living cultural heritage.



## *What Kind of Entrepreneurship is Possible in the Ethnographic Museums?*

The Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade, as one of the oldest and most prominent institutions of this kind in Southeast Europe, celebrates its jubilee (centenary) in unfavorable circumstances.\* First, the support for cultural activities from domestic sources has been at the lowest point during the past few months. The potential sponsors and donators are currently rather unmotivated in their turbulent economic and fiscal situation. Cultural policy still has no answer to these temptations and challenges. Even the Ministry of Culture itself is being reorganized by reducing an already insufficient budget and other funds to which the museums have been accustomed for a long time. New working procedures, very different from the recent ones, have been insisted on now.

All these have been reflecting on basic museum activities. Owing to the shortage of finances for purchase, the acquisition policy of collecting ethnographic objects orientates itself almost entirely to donators and depends on their good will to present the museum with artifacts. Just like in most other museums in Serbia, the Ethnographic Museum suffers from inadequacy and lack of space—storerooms for the objects. The situation in other activities is similar to this one: there is no money for the chemical and technical maintenance of the items, for field research, for publishing of the material in the different collections or even for the production of exhibits and other relevant cultural programmes. Technical equipment is obsolete because it was inherited from those happy times. Staff management has not been yet adapted to new realities. It is a pessimistic diagnosis, isn't it?

However, the problem can often create a chance and space for the initiative of an entrepreneurial spirit. I believe that with some effort we can clearly observe and identify few elements which will serve in formulating of new strategies of cultural institutions such as the Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade and even in other ones. What I have in mind are few elements of which we were not aware enough before, though they already existed.

I shall recall myself of the modern tendencies in the world. The museums' role has increasingly changed in comparison with the inherited stereotype of a museum as a temple. The museums are more present in public now, so their public respon-

\* Thanks to Ms. Darija Radovic for translating the original text into English.

sibility grows along with that. So what is their new role all about? It may speak about the new awareness of a museum (in this case an ethnographic one) as an educational centre with the possibility of evident teaching. The ethnographic museums have in their funds a special quality and dimension: traditional folk culture (which is, more or less, our main priority in activities), and that is what makes a difference. With all due respect of great achievements of elite cultures and even the current global culture in our civilization, these cultural codes, from nation to nation and from country to country, mostly differ neither morphologically nor essentially among themselves, especially within particular regions or continents. Contrary to this, the indigenous cultures can reveal great treasury, variety and mutual differences within very narrow geographical spaces: it often happens that traditional garments or rituals clearly differ between two adjacent villages. Unfortunately, up to now we have witnessed that the negative potentials have been more often activated than the positive ones out of these facts so the conflicts usually escalated, justified by ethnic and religious differences. We have specially experienced this in the Balkans.

The funds of the ethnographic museums have enormous educative potential and the question who shall use it and how and who shall direct it, is becoming increasingly significant. Our museums have more powerful strategic resources in this cultural patrimony than it can be supposed according to the classical, old-fashioned image on the role and significance of the museums. But what could be more important than the fact that we are dealing with an "educative bomb". (Well, we are luckily not politicians.) In respect of all this, it is a great responsibility that we bear for the sake of the human community. The main ethical imperative which I personally wish to stick to results from the possibility that the treasure of the ethnographic museum provides its spiritual contribution to the atmosphere of tolerance among people and nations. But not the biased tolerance, but the one which rests on strength and self-confidence of its own identity. The ethnographic museum can influence creating of convenient climate from which new great deeds of civilization could result.

Besides the cognitive value, the authentic traditional document can own a strong emotional force because a considerable part of museum's audience easier identifies with the traditional national culture than with the elite art.

Bearing this in mind, I consider it a pity that there are still museums which virtually keep their collections away from the public which are the bearers of information and messages of the passed times. And then, possibly sometimes, the public will get an opportunity to see those objects on display lasting for a month or two, every thirty, fifty or hundred years. And that is all. Again few generations will pass before those treasuries come to light. What is their purpose then? A museum can be a keeper or a tomb of collective memory, which depends on how the subject matter is approached.

I have no illusion that culture—or finally ethnographic museums—can make this world better. But that does not mean that the mentioned principles and faith in their effect cannot be used better in a certain strategy which can give long-term positive results.

I consider that the collective memory, kept in museums' collections, should intensively and in wide range get into the public, and the control over the possible manipulations anyway depends on society's maturity. The new media, Internet and virtual technologies can help us in that. However, their power is not unlimited. No matter how much the traditional folk culture is qualitatively presented to the mind and senses in this way, it still only simulates traditional context, that is, it presents certain objects and phenomena torn out from the cultural context. This is not an immanent guilt of these media, they are great themselves as the means of technical presentation. The trouble is if they become a goal to themselves. A Web site can "slip" into a pure projection of the wished state, although the essence of museum's management may be completely different. Say, the museum can own rich funds and its own tradition, but the disposal of that treasury can be pretty fruitless. When the marketing philosophy gets out of control, it starts to serve to itself with the very product being maybe rather bad. The marketing idea therefore can be uninventive and barren, but the propaganda campaign can make it attractive, can protect it and affirm it because the invested money must be justified.

It is difficult to keep pace with the modern technological development of means for presentation, especially in impoverished countries in East Europe such as Yugoslavia. While tending to follow this progress, we come under a dependent position, always running after the technological development in the developed world. I do not wish to deny the need to keep pace with these new tendencies and standards (it would be insane!), but there is always some danger for the constant dependence of this kind makes a complex of inferiority. Is there any solution? I believe that the criteria of real necessity assessment should be defined as well as the anticipation of life cycle equipment and relevant methods.

My aim, of course, is not to spread skepticism towards what has already become a professional standard. All I want is to point out the traps that result from uncritical consummation of the technological innovations of the new age. More than that, I would like to point to a few sources from which the entrepreneurial and innovative spirit can gain a great benefit for the cultural activities, in this case, for the ethnographic museums in their contents and methodology work. I shall keep to the direction of commercialization in a few activities, such as the possibilities of the museums' self-financing.

I shall now talk a little about the opportunities of the Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade, although this principle can probably be partly applied to other ethnographic museums.

With regards to the museum's shop there is a considerable possibility for promotion of activities such as the selling of copies and replicas of the museum's objects, souvenirs, museum's publications and editions. The actual initiatives for the programmes of old artistic crafts' restoration are close to these.

We have to consider the development of certain branches in cultural industry in accordance with the mission of the ethnographic museums: classical and multimedial editions; ethnology, museology; musical publishings (folklore music, jazz, world

music inspired by folklore heritage etc.), and film production (ethnological and anthropological documentary films).

A caffè club and a restaurant may not only create a nice atmosphere for visitors, they serve national dishes and drinks with certain cultural contents as the supporting activities. Why shouldn't curators conceive few aspects of organization in catering?

We can also concentrate on the development of the ethnographic museum as a special scientific and cultural centre. One of the particularities of the Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade is the rich and diverse cultural programme. Not only exhibits are held, but also other performances, which reveal our main priority and programme mission: lectures, scientific meetings, film projections, concerts, promotions, workshops, and other interactive programmes (besides this, the Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade is a proof that most of these activities can successfully develop even without any budget).

I would point to a few issues from certain fields of management, which are necessary conditions for successful realization of the said programmes. First, the transition period in Serbia appeared suddenly and with a delay in comparison with most countries in East Europe. Implementation of marketing approach to the management is a long and hard process, but not before long the marketing was considered an exotic function and it was not integrated in the managing philosophy of the museums in Serbia. Second, I would like to stress staff management. The activity of curators must be evaluated on the basis on few clear criteria and standards concerning knowledge, expertise and abilities. However, I consider skill development and motivation technique among the employed even more important. I think that this problem got too little attention so far in relation to its real relevance here.

In the end, I shall point to few more enterprise opportunities in the museum's vicinity and thus I shall step out of its walls for a moment.

There are some comparative advantages of the East Europe countries which could be used in a much more effective way. It is again about our main priorities. The authentic traditional rural culture is preserved in more developed countries of West Europe mostly only in memories, while its traces are more visible in East Europe. This is true both in Serbia and Montenegro, although the politicians systematically suppressed the traditional culture of these countries for decades back. I know for example, that the Balkans are exotic for many people from western countries, but it is not so often visited touristic destination (except Greece). The reason why an average tourist from West Europe visits distant exotic countries can often be found even in East Europe: old way of living, customs and rituals, folklore events, attractive national folk architecture amidst unspoiled natural environment, domestic healthy food, old crafts etc.

Folk tradition lives on here and I believe that museums could more participate in some economic programmes such as the development of cultural and educative tourism, even as the consultative organizations. Possible forms of dealing are still to be defined, but it would be more significant if we could extend our actions on the



whole context of our priorities as ethnologists, not only to explore, connect and “explain” the fragments of reality.

I wish if we could formulate a kind of “organic” approach to the research, presentation and affirmation of traditional culture. I consider our interventions possible in economic life and revitalization of the rural environment (and not only the rural one). If traditional modes of agricultural production are possible to renew, why shouldn’t it be the initiative of the ethnologists? Thus they could correspond with another global trend: ecology and programmes of sustainable development. Conservation and restoration of traditional folk architecture can have real economical effect, besides the museological one, as well as the renewal of old forgotten crafts. I shall mention, finally, the folklore art as an inexhaustible inspiration of modern artistic guidelines and another ethno-trend. Traditional cultures have strong influence on all fields of life, from art to business, through science.

Additionally, I can see an opportunity for the ethnographic museums as future active factors for development of local communities. New working posts would be open. Different cultural institutions, NGOs and economy could network through those programmes. Mutual understanding and tolerance among the adjacent countries could also be reinforced through the following: common projects, experts and information exchange, creating common data basis on certain issues from the fields of traditional culture and ethnology. We could also include those projects which require multidisciplinary approach, research of rural and urban locations in different countries on comparative basis.

Although the term of commercialization is mentioned here, the activities can remain in the non-profitable range, which depends on current legislation.



## *The Museum and its Educational Activities*

The Ethnographic Museum of Krakow has organized classes for several years. The program curriculum was designed for all primary and secondary school pupils. At the beginning of each school year, special, updated information leaflets are distributed, which provide news to schools about temporary exhibitions. The goal set by the Museum has been to try and target a class with each exhibit. Following the past several years, thanks to these efforts the Museum has gained a large following of teachers who bring their pupils every year. These educators treat the Museum's offerings as complements to school subjects like history, geography, Polish, and fine arts education. The Museum's outreach efforts happened at a very appropriate time, as schools introduced general studies and regional cultural heritage into their curricula. And, educators appreciate the input of the Museum's professionals.

Furthermore, through exposure to authentic museum artifacts, this type of experience stimulates pupils' sense of curiosity and their imaginations. It is of great importance that students consider these classes fun. The classes are held in exhibit spaces, like inside peasant huts that are reconstructions of the living spaces of the Krakovia and Tatra highland regions (the two dominant ethnic groups of southern Poland called "Malopolska"). The interior resembles those inhabited at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Despite being the oldest part of the exhibition, designed in the fifties, it has not lost its appeal.

The inside of a Krakovian home is an appropriate place to discuss "the everyday life of Krakovians in the first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century." The encounter illustrates where Krakovians' dwellings were located in the vicinity of Krakow and what particular features made them unique. A museum guide also expounds upon the great importance of the local dialect and costume. The professions and trades of the time are also highlighted. Students have a chance to get acquainted with new vocabulary.

When particular villages are used as examples, special attention is paid to their dominant form of trade. The vestiges of these settlements are memorialized through street and district names. Those seemingly insignificant anecdotes became real discoveries for pupils. The guide tells pupils how houses were built, also mentioning how technology furthered the success and prosperity of future inhabitants. The children are also exposed to everyday life activities, such as domestic activities at the kitchen stove. The guide demonstrates the use of household utensils and tools, (such

as planing shingles or the making of butter and bread), unknown to contemporary urban children. The children's amazement with these things brings much satisfaction to the guide.

A class about the everyday life of Tatra highlanders at the turn of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century is presented in a similar way. The reconstructed interior, in great part, can also be attributed to its success. For an hour and a half, a lecturer introduces many objects, which children are encouraged to touch in contrast with youngsters' often unpleasant impressions of museums: "do not touch!" These classes enable children to come into contact with artifacts. When shepherding is mentioned, for example, children can examine the tools and dishes used to produce highlander cheese. They can also try on regional ceremonial costumes and also listen to folk songs and legends. Special care is paid to objects of artistic value, and children are invited to produce their own artistic works to help them process what they have learned.

Classes devoted to ceremonial customs provide special opportunities to create waves of interest about the subject, especially in the spring and holiday seasons.

A class devoted to 20<sup>th</sup> century Polish village traditions produces curiosity, and not only because of their spectacularly colourful ceremonies which take place every year. This program also reveals long-forgotten customs connected with agrarian lore, familiarising students with the thinking and beliefs of the farmers of the time, their knowledge of nature, which they perceived as an enemy in their struggle to cultivate crops.

Clearly, the secret of a good presentation lies in conveying information in an accessible and comprehensible way, suited to the age of the participants. This is not an easy task, especially in the case of describing the symbolic portions of Christmas. According to folk tradition, Christmas spanned the period from Christmas Eve (24<sup>th</sup> December) to Epiphany (6<sup>th</sup> January), and it comprised a series of rituals and customs, which were to procure health and prosperity. Surely, everyone is familiar with the Christmas Tree. Nevertheless, its enchanting nature is a result of simple decorative elements, such as apples, walnuts and ornaments made of tissue paper. Other forgotten decorative objects are discussed, decorations which were supposed to guarantee abundant crops, such as a sheaf of hay, or stars and crosses made of straw.

When children are taught the custom of wafer sharing, they also learn that there were specially dyed wafers to be shared with household animals. An atmosphere of games and fortune telling is evoked, and children become acquainted with the history of carols which is a specific folk custom.

In Polish folklore, the *Krakow crib* plays a very important role. It is a dazzling, colourful way of celebrating Christ's birth, as well as providing an occasion for contemporary social satire. The Krakow crib, which relates to the city legends and the most famous architectural monuments, is a hallmark, one of the main symbols of Krakow. The Museum's classes have quite likely contributed to maintaining the tradition of the yearly crib contest. These competitions have been held for many years with many of the works produced by young people.

A class based on a folk school exhibition drew a lot of attention. The most at-

tractive part of this exhibit was a precisely arranged and outfitted classroom which evoked the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Such an exhibition made our young audience realise how much schooling has changed (e.g. the wearing of uniforms, school accessories, or books), and at the same time how certain games, and school habits have remained the same into the present. Disciplinary measures of the time piqued their interest. Kids were able to see how it felt to be placed in a corner or have to kneel on a pea. Each student receiving a fountain pen, paper and ink, accented this travel back in time. The children struggled with the antiquities to complete an assignment.

It is also worth mentioning that classes devoted to American, Asian and African cultures enjoyed great popularity, thanks in part to authentic artefacts like weapons and jewellery.

In the light of the aforementioned, it could be said that the Museum possesses a broad appeal. But due to the constraints of their buildings, ethnographic museums, unlike heritage parks, are not able to host open-air events which attract large audiences and provide entertainment. While not underestimating the value of those facilities which can accommodate those events, the distinctiveness, and to some extent superiority, of institutions like the Krakow Museum lies in their varied exhibits which are not limited to one region, country or continent. They give a wider choice and are self-sufficient when it comes to educational or curatorial projects.

A museum must also take advantage of opportunities for providing educational offerings, for which there is a constant demand. Museums that offer only permanent exhibitions, which may be quite static and archaic, are perceived as unattractive. The reason for this lies in fact that the relationship between the museum visitors and an ethnographic museum has changed significantly.

In the past, such museums also functioned as scientific institutes. Although academic ethnography did not yet exist, there were already folk specialists aware of their mission. The role of the first Polish ethnographic museum, established in 1888 in Warsaw, was conceived in by a group of ethnographers led by Jan Karłowicz (Bujak 1975).

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a time of rapid societal change from rural to urban, the Museum's aim was to save dying heritage. Seweryn Udziela, who in 1911 together with a group of Jagiellonian University scientists and collectors created The Ethnographic Museum in Krakow, took on this task (Jacher-Tyszkowa 1967. 214.). It was not just spiritual and social culture that interested Mr. Udziela, but also material, something which distinguished him from other contemporary collectors.

These museums also bore the mission of strengthening national awareness. This is extraordinarily tangible in this part of Europe, where many nations manifested their individuality through folk culture, considered faithful to tradition and unpoluted by cosmopolitanism.

The issue of museum and politics should be also mentioned here. One does not need to be reminded that Poland belonged to the working classes in the Commu-

nist era. Ethnographic museums in Poland had the task of strengthening this imposed ideology.

Nowadays, the primary role of ethnographic museums is to preserve collected heritage for future generations. Traditionally, curatorial co-operation has been mandatory. Museums with a high frequency of new exhibitions receive top rankings (Ames 1992. 29.).

On average, the museum visitors have changed too. Until recently, people who visited museums were driven by a certain nostalgia—a longing for the colourful world of a traditional village—which they knew from personal experience or background. These days, however, the traditional, rural environment has died out. Even the inhabitants of contemporary, urbanised villages become acquainted with their past and traditions through schools or museums. Such museums are a boon for students of ethnography when it comes to envisioning what they have read in textbooks.

The intriguing programs devised by ethnographic museums should provide visitors with a new experience, something which cannot be found at funfairs. One must rely upon imagination and man's thirst for knowledge (Kosko 1998. 89–90.), and on the belief that a young person who remembers their visit to the museum as an educational adventure will one day return there.

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MIRELLA DECHEVA

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*Ethnographic Exhibition as a Way of the Intercultural  
Communication: the Experience of the Bulgarian National  
Ethnographic Museum*

In the course of more than 120 years, the policy pursued by the state of Bulgaria to the minorities has been extremely inconsistent. Every change of power entailed a change in the approaches to them and, naturally, nothing good could come out of this either for the country, or for the society as a whole, or for the minorities, themselves. On the other hand, coexistence of different cultures in their everyday life creates the "Bulgarian model" of tolerance. This model has been successful, despite certain political interference. But furthermore, the period of transition in the wake of 1989 has brought to the foreground a new ethno-cultural situation in terms of politics and institutions, whose dialogues and stabilities have, however, been influenced by the difficulties of economic crises. The aspirations and practices of united Europe have brought forward the problem of interethnic communication as extremely topical in the frameworks of society, in the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century. This is important, particularly when the mistakes of the past have been reckoned with and the considerations are focused on the present and the future. Increasingly more prominent, the surfacing duality of "we-they" has to be considered within the frameworks of a dialogue. The key condition in a dialogue is mutual respect of the parties.

These most general considerations have outlined the position of the Bulgarian National Ethnographic Museum, when it took a decision to stage exhibitions dedicated to different ethnic communities living within the confines of the Bulgarian state. It was quite clear that we could not draw general conclusions or change the image of some of these communities in Bulgarian society. Neither could we make any radical changes in minority-majority interaction. It is common knowledge that the efforts of a number of scholars, social workers and politicians have not produced satisfactory results along these lines. As practice has shown, generalizations and universal recipes are not the most promising highway to building the image of "the other"—in this case of the minority as perceived by the majority. Therefore, our target was specific and clear-cut: to introduce the public to the culture of the different ethnic communities living in Bulgaria. This has been prompted by the understanding that familiarization with "the different other" is the first step towards his acceptance, towards respecting him, and towards tolerance in general. What encouraged us was also our confidence that culture is that first bridge across which politicians, social

workers and scholars pass (as it provides the best prospects of bridging differences). So far the experience of the National Ethnographic with regards to presenting the ethnic communities that are living within the confines of Bulgaria and their image as perceived by the majority originates from the exhibitions devoted to the Gypsies (1995), Jews (1998), Armenians (2000–2001) and the Karakachans (2001).

The complexity of such exhibitions made exclusively important the choice of an approach that might provide the best possible effects. We have staked on the positive image of “the other”, on the great variety and specificity of his culture, on its adaptability and coexistence with Bulgarian culture in the course of centuries. And that solution, which seemed to be holding greatest promise, proved to be operating. I have in mind the history of the four exhibitions already staged. The results can be followed along several lines, but in this paper I shall make use of just one of them: the mirror image of the exhibitions, registered in the Visitors’ Books. A mandatory attribute of every museum exhibition, this Visitors’ Book has been rarely made use of by experts as a source of information. However, it is interesting and indicative of the public response to the messages addressed to society through the exhibition. Visitors desire to put down their opinions in writing because the book encourages individual self-expression. But on a social plane it is representative for certain group moods, and as a whole, it is valuable for the museum worker for the position in states: a relationship with those to whom the exhibition has been addressed. Unlike the media news and reviews, the Visitors’ Book holds unedited immediacy and directness. We find precisely this confirmation of the correctness of the approach chosen in the view of a number of young people regarding the exhibition *Gypsies in Times Past*. To them it reveals “an unfamiliar world which has been around us all the time”.

Insofar as the individual ethnic communities have their integral image for the Bulgarian majority, the presentation of their different groups, their main occupations, livelihood and specific cultural traits that have become part of the macro-culture of society, expand the ideas the individual group culture. The guiding idea prominent in all the four exhibitions has been to expand the knowledge about and to present a positive image through reviving “the memories” of living in common. The majority will rediscover this positive image, which exerts an influence on the self-confidence of the minority. If we turn to the Visitors’ Book again, we can read the following in connection with the exhibition of the Armenians: “I was very fond of my neighbours, the Armenians. They were all extremely decent and kind people. Having seen this exhibition with my husband I feel an even greater respect for that great ‘fragment of the great Armenian people’”.

From the very outset, the positive stand taken was challenged by a number of difficulties, mostly associated with accumulated public opinions and prejudices. The first one of them has been connected with the different image and social status of the individual ethnic communities. The opening of *Gypsies in Times Past*, dealing with Bulgarian Roma, confronted us with the first problem of this kind: an outspoken negative attitude and irony with respect to the Gypsies, even among some of the



museum workers. "Why exactly the Gypsies?" and "We have had enough of these Gypsies!" were two of the arguments, stemming from one and the same motive. This reaction is not surprising. I must declare that at that time (and this still persists today) the sociological polls showed that 69% of the Bulgarians were prejudiced towards Romanies. This was also indicated in the Sofia newspapers in which publication with headlines like the following often appeared: *Gypsies Beat Someone to Death, Gypsies Kidnap a Girl, Gypsies Beat a Cop, Gypsies Terrorize Social Workers*. It turned out that, generally speaking, not only the majority of the population had a negative attitude to the gypsies. Even ethnologists were so much influenced by it that it had stifled their ethical and professional obligations to study the ethnically specific characteristic features of the various Roma ethnic groups.

A second example: at the inauguration of the exhibition *Armenians in Bulgaria* it was pointed out that this was the third exhibition of the Programme representing the different ethnic communities in Bulgaria, which had started with the exhibition about the Gypsies. There were suppressed whispers of discontent again regarding whom we had chosen to start with.

A third example from the opening of the exhibition *The Holy Road. From the Life of the Bulgarian Jews* outlined yet another problem. The President of the Republic of Bulgaria had sent a Message of Greetings to the exhibition dedicated to the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the State of Israel. It noted the contribution, made by Tzar Boris III to the salvation of the Bulgarian Jews from the genocide (the awards, as the public later saw, had been placed in a special show-case of the exhibition). Precisely at that instant, the former communist authorities' supporters violently expressed their protest at the mentioning of this fact by loud hooting and whistling.

A fourth example: the latest exhibition of the Programme staged so far is dedicated to the Karakachans—a community little known to the public. Having preserved their traditional nomadic lifestyle, and having settled only during the past 50 years, today they make up one of the most closeknit communities in contemporary Bulgarian society. Scholarly investigations put to the fore various hypotheses about their origins: ancient Thracians or Greeks and have put to the test the correct approach to their presentation. The option for any of these hypotheses would have had an offensive ring to individual representatives of the community.

These are four examples, which I find to be sufficiently eloquent and indicative of the hardships of interethnic contacts and the delicacy of interethnic relations. They have been a problem encountered not only in the experience of the Bulgarian National Ethnographic Museum. They have been a common hardship to be tackled in staging interethnic exhibitions. The painstaking reckoning with all the possible attacks, criticism and dissatisfaction makes it possible to consider in advance the inclusion of unbiased and sufficiently eloquent evidence in the exhibition itself in order to "neutralize" them. Naturally, a different approach was needed in each individual case. The example quoted of the opening of the exhibition, devoted to the Jews, has its continuation. The preliminary uneasiness regarding a possible response was neutral-

ized by the complete and detailed presentation of the process of salvation of the Jews in Bulgarian. It was involved mass protests, initiatives launched by parliamentary deputies and prominent personalities, who enjoyed prestige in society, and went as far as the decision of the head of state. Within the overall context of the elaborated idea, the arguments of passing over in silence some of the historical facts, become meaningless.

In the case of the Gypsy exhibition we staked on the "rediscovery" of the Gypsies via their culture. It is a well-known fact that Bulgarians and Gypsies have lived together for such a long time that it seems like eternity. This was the basic motif in determining the time parameters of the exhibition, setting as its most recent limit the 1950s. Its title *The Gypsies in Times Past*—takes us right away to the past, to the time of the "traditional" model of the relationship Bulgarian/Gypsies in order to avoid all possible ambiguities which could give the problem political coloring. The impressions of the visitor's confirms the rightness of this choice. In the first few days after the opening of the exhibition in Sofia, someone who identified himself or herself as *A visitor* gave expression of her or his gratitude in the book that we "had touched upon a way of life, which was familiar and not so familiar after all". It is common knowledge that for the Bulgarians coexistence with the Gypsies has been so long that it seems primordial. Challenging of the knowledge/memory of coexistence sparked off not only curiosity regarding the culture and lifestyle of an "unfamiliar", in the words of a visitor, minority in society, but also concern and interest on the part of the majority of society. Placing the Gypsies in the dichotomy "own-strange" in the Bulgarian variant does not affect the harmony of the Bulgarians-Gypsies relations, since in the conditions of the traditional popular culture what is a fundamental, overall feature is precisely integrity, the unity of the world and the upholding of the existing harmony. I.e. though "strange" as a category and respective status, the Gypsies are an integral part of this world and of the common cultural milieu, in which they have a place of their own. The fact that added to the majority's slighting attitude to the Gypsies has also recently been turning them into "a scapegoat" in the period of crisis was the main motive for the attempt at their "exoneration" via the wealth of their culture. This was our main consideration in determining the temporal parameters of the exhibition *Gypsies in Times Past*—the upper limit being the 1950s. This directly leads to the time of the largely "traditional" model preserved in the Bulgarians-Gypsies relations, so that any ambiguity that might give a political colouring to the problem could be avoided.

An exceptionally important result of the Programme contributing to the proper organization and presentation of each of the exhibitions has been the cooperation established between the NEM, on the one hand, and the cultural and educational organizations of the individual communities, their national and Bulgarian non-governmental organizations, foreign foundations. That cooperation has proceeded along three main lines:

- the financial sphere
- collection and donation of exhibits
- assistance of methodology.

Skipping the first line, which is quite clear, as well as mandatory, I shall draw your attention to the other two lines. Even in the preparatory stage of each one of the exhibitions, teams of authors had purely practical consultations with representatives of the community, regarding the correct display of the ethnographic artifacts I shall only note that the NEM does not have specialized funds on the ethnic communities, and it is for the first time in its history that interethnic exhibitions have been staged. These consultations often naturally developed into “field research” of the ethnologist and produced new archive registers.

The contributions made have been an unexpected result, highly appreciated by the museum workers. As the exhibitions themselves also included exhibits borrowed from similar museums in the country, as well as from private collections, the donations of valuable artifacts have proved a very agreeable surprise and acts of exceptional importance for the NEM, as they have enriched the museum funds.

Every exhibition is either a success or a failure, and this is well known. But by and large its life does depend on this. At the very conception of the idea, the term of the exhibition is quite clear, depending on the size and schedule of the museum, and this automatically restricts the scope of its public response, as well. In a period of stagnation, it has been a success for the NEM, to secure the publication of catalogues of each of the exhibitions, with the exception of the latest one about the Karakachans, for technical reasons. Their artistic layout and information value, have made them inseparable elements of each of the exhibitions. The presentation of their texts in two or three languages has considerably expanded their distribution. It is an interesting, even a curious fact that the catalogue of the exhibition *The Holy Road. From the Life of the Bulgarian Jews*, published in 1998, is now a bibliographical rarity.

The success of the first exhibition of the Programme in Sofia prompted the idea of its transformation into a traveling exhibition, which has considerably extended both the time and the space of its “own” display life. This has enabled the extension of the circle of viewers, within the frameworks of the country as a whole. Specific data show visits to ten cities during the past six years. It is noteworthy that the initial interest on the part of the hosting museums ensued from the fact that the exhibition was offered completely free of charge with money secured by sponsors. I shall not hide the fact that in a period of crisis and absolute no finances of the museums in the country this has, logically, also played a major role. However, the response to the exhibition on the part of the public imposed another mode of dissemination after the initially sponsored project had concluded: scheduled traveling of the exhibition whereby the hosting party takes over the expenses. That hosting party always proves to be an amalgamation of a museum, a municipality and non-governmental organizations. There was an interesting case in one of the History Museums in the country. In 1996, the NEM’s suggestion to stage the exhibition there was refused by the

museum of the town. In the early 2000, the same institution, in cooperation with the municipality and two Gypsy organizations, addressed an invitation to the exhibition to visit the town, covering all the expenses associated with this. I do not doubt that situation nor the trustworthiness of the excuse that "four years ago the times were hard". I am sure that the reputation of the exhibition has itself "earned" its prestige. In this aspect it is noteworthy to mention that this exhibition has successfully been included in the big international exhibition devoted to the Gypsies in Central and Eastern Europe, staged here, in the Ethnographic Museum in Budapest.

The road setting out along, trodden by this exhibition are also the others of the Programme. Currently, preparations are going on for the staging of the exhibition *Armenians in Bulgaria* in the second biggest city of the country, again all the expenses being covered by the hosting party.

This experience of the NEM in the sphere of interethnic exhibitions has no claims to be a global educational or cultural event in the realm of interethnic relations. Fully aware of the restricted possibilities of a cultural event like an ethnographic exhibition, we have staked on the positive principle of familiarization, underlying tolerance and mutual respect. This is a promising way of a successful dialogue, based on the worthiness of the strangers' difference. The thing that has been at the base of the Programme is the understanding that the ethnographic museum is an entrance to the context and particularities of the past, the present and the future. This is the common space in which the dialogue between the ethnic communities in Bulgaria has proceeded. Therefore, it is of greater importance for us that a specific event may reach those it has been addressed to; that our message may find its supporters and may leave a memory of something experienced together.

## *Ethnographic Museums and Perspectives of Ethnology in Ukraine*

An exclusive place among various scientific, cultural and educational foundations, which investigate and propagandize the cultural inheritance of Ukrainian people, is allocated to museums. During the process of state independence of Ukraine, they have got statements of the increasing and greater value in the development of national consciousness, ethnocultural originality, integrity of Ukrainian people and revival of their national culture.

Defining museums not only as centres of popularization, but also of the development of ethnographic science is an important tendency in the modern conceptualisation of museum affairs in Ukraine. Objectively, it is determined already by the nature of museums which cultural-educational work is based on the basis of their scientific activity. This activity has two directions, one is museological and the other is not museological. Museological researches cover such common problems for all museums as history of museums, scientific-methodological basis of their functioning, share work, psychological-pedagogical features of perception of the exposition and so forth.

These researches have the specificity connected to functions of revealing, acquisition and preservation of collections and organization of their use for the scientific-educational purposes. On the one hand, they are of source character the result of which is the scientific description and classification of museum pieces and creations of scientific catalogues on their basis. On the other hand, ethnographic researches of museums pursue the purpose of the development of those questions, which are connected to creation of expositions on the basis of the materials, the collected field data and the data available in profile science. The analysis of research subjects that is developed by museums of Ukraine, certifies the many-sided nature and complexity of ethnographic scientific problems which represent a circle of their scientific interests.

In particular, subjects of scientific researches concerns the features of national construction and its relic forms, types and versions of traditional inhabited and economic constructions, tendencies of development of modern national habitation. National architecture is analyzed in the process of historical development of concrete ethnographic groups, in relationship with the culture of people. Interdepend-

ence of the exterior and the interior of national habitation, bright spokesmen of traditions, customs and ceremonies of the Ukrainian people are studied in a complex way. The history of creation of museums and formation of ethnographic collections, raise the important questions of the preservation of national architecture, in particular, in the context of open-air museums, and also their museumification at certain places are successfully investigated in profile museums.

Questions of development of folk art, crafts and trades, problems of preservation and revival of cells of national crafts are put in researches of workers of the museums of Folk Art. The creation of a *Red book of national crafts* is one of the important directions of activity in this area.

Research work of the local lore museums covers topics of museological character which basically concern questions of creation of ethnographic expositions. Ethnographic aspect of research has quickened in many regional local lore museums after the declaration of independence of Ukraine connected with the necessity of creation of new exposition complexes. Complex ethnographic inspections which locate all breadth of ethnographical life of this or that district are carried out in a number of museums. In parallel, separate narrow aspects of material and spiritual culture of people: national traditional clothes, national knowledge, beliefs, and legends are studied completely.

Review of research activity of the museums of Ukraine allows to ascertain the actuality of the topics for development of modern ethnology. Nevertheless, the results of studying of this or that question for the lack of funds are embodied frequently in specifically museum forms (expositions, exhibitions, scientific information and so forth). Therefore, publication of the results of museum researches and their introductions into a wide scientific circulation is extremely actual today. First of all, it concerns the research work on ordering of the ethnographic collections and folding of scientific and popular catalogues. This folding is one of the priority directions of modern ethnographic work of the museums of Ukraine, they will assist the further expansion of source base of ethnology due to the fact of popularizing of the complex collections.

Collections of the Museum of Ethnography and Craft in L'viv, a unique museum of ethnographic structure that is included into the system of the National Academy of Ukraine are the basis for many researches of material and spiritual culture of the Ukrainian people and their traditional art crafts. The museum funds cover over 83 thousand exhibits nowadays, which are treasury monuments of not only traditional culture, but also of folk art of many nations of the world.

Science officers of the Museum conduct volumetrical work with the view of preservation and popularisation of collections. In addition, they have done a lot for the development of Ukrainian ethnology. Their contribution is extremely outstanding to the field of the development of the Carpathian problematics, research of various aspects of material and spiritual culture of population of the people who live in the Western region of Ukraine, and to the studying of the cultural and community phe-

nomena of common-Ukrainian character. The museum staff is also interested in art criticism problematics, particularly, in studying the history and the development of applied arts, as porcelain, metal, fabric and other. Works devoted to these questions, cover materials of huge assemblies of the Museum, contain valuable generalizations and conclusions about the development of national art crafts not only with art criticism, but also with ethnographic sight.

Wide and productive development of research activity of employees of the Museum has entailed its development into conducting academic establishment of the country—Ethnology Institute of the National Academy of Ukraine. Museum of Ethnography and Craft was included into its structure as an important cultural-educational centre, that actively propagandizes an inexhaustible treasury of the Ukrainian culture. Its exposition is widely involved in educational processes of schools and universities of Ukraine. The training courses in the form of internship are conducted in the museum for the students and teachers from secondary schools and higher education institutions. Readings, recitals of poets and artists, concerts, dramatized exhibitions, solemnity in honour of memorable dates of history of Ukraine are held in halls of the Museum.

The Museum of Ethnography and Craft is also the outstanding scientific art centre of Ukraine. Signification of this is the engagement in large-scale exposition activity both in Ukraine and abroad (common projects with museums of Poland, Slovakia, Israel, Canada, the United States of America, Austria) and realization of numerous scientific-theoretical conferences, symposiums, round table discussions and meetings with participation of the Ukrainian and foreign scientists and artists where they bring up questions about functioning of ethnographic museums in modern conditions and the further development of Ukrainian ethnology (International scientific conference *Ethnographical Museology in Ukraine: Establishment, Problems, Prospects* [1995], International symposium *Ethnography Without Borders* [1996]).

At the same time, the collections of the Museum of Ethnography and Craft are important base for ethnological researches concentrated in Ukraine, in Cultural Institute, Study of Folklore and Ethnology named after M. Ryl'skyi of the National Academy of Ukraine, Ethnology Institute of the National Academy of Ukraine and ethnological faculties of the L'viv and Kiev national universities.

Works of the Ukrainian ethnographers, written for the last few years, are based on proved conceptual bases in the field of theory and practice of scientific researches where the complex approach to ethnological judgement of realities and the phenomena of traditional culture and modern way of life prevails; there is some expansion of subject sphere of ethnology as science and, development of new disciplines adjacent to ethnology spheres: ethnolinguistics, ethnopsychology, ethnoeconomics, general theory of ethnos, ethnodermographics, law anthropology, ethnology of dialogue and others.

Many problems of modern Ukrainian ethnology can't be solved without close cooperation with museums. In this sense careful study of museum collections makes

a good starting point for studying of multidimensional ethnological phenomena of the past and present in a complex way. At the same time, the actualization of the questions of protection and use of the national cultural inheritance that is observed in connection with declaration of independence of Ukraine, objectively assists to increase the role of ethnographic museums in creation of ethnographic knowledge and ethnocultural information, the creation of source base for ethnology and the formation of modern elements of spiritual culture of people.



ELENA BARBULESCU

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## *The Ethnographical Museum and its Long Term Perspectives*

Museums appeared at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a consequence of specific social, political, economical and historical context. At the beginning of this century the humanist disciplines gained a greater recognition and the researchers started to examine the activities and functions of the museums. The main functions of museums are: preserving the cultural patrimony, and enriching and educating people. At their beginning these goals were easy to reach. The competition among the museums wasn't so high and they had the advantage of being something new. This was not the situation with the eastern museums, which generally didn't have enough money to make progress with either the material base of the museum or the latest research in the field of preservation and conservation. What they could fulfil was the scientific activity and the acquisition policy, which was in certain cases one of the newest in Europe (researches in the field, dioramas, the themes of an open air museum, etc). The turbulent 20<sup>th</sup> century materially and spiritually affected the activities in the museums. The second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the period of collectivisation, when the old, traditional way of living and working was radically and brutally changed. The type of houses, the arrangement of interiors, and the style of textiles and clothing all changed. The notion of private property resulted because of the greatest change in the attitude towards land. Private property became a collective one and so, in a sense, none's property. We may say that generally, the culture developed somehow isolated from other cultures in the world. But the stress upon the positive side is general to every culture as it has to be didactic, and serve in educating the people.

In the end the system reached a stability, and an exchange of cultural values was fulfilled, in the sense that the citizens were consuming the culture in the forms the state ideology provided it. The museums were one of the ways. The museum was an alternative to television—that lasted two hours a day and with the same programmes, especially political. So, the museum became a place where to go when you wanted to go out, for entertainment or even a place where to go if one felt the urge of being culturalized.

The situation changed after 1989, in Romania, in many ways, we may say that it changed radically. There was an invasion of mass-media, of entertainment means and a rough competition began for the museums and other cultural institutions. We may say that the museums lost their social-cultural-political context that have supported

them before. The ideology had been broken. Television diversified its programmes, a lot of movies were broadcast, newspapers, magazines of all sorts, more books were published, and these were means of entertainment easier to get, and more diversified. What can you see by going over and over in a museum? A lot I would say. One reason would be that you see it differently every time you go. But still remains the question: Why would I go again? The answer is difficult and a possible one would be that referring to the programmes. As long as a museum has cultural programmes besides the permanent or the temporary exhibitions, it can have a constant and pretty high flow of visitors. As the other sources of entertainment are continuously developing and diversifying their offer, more colourful, more challenging, approaching new subjects, the museum may appear old and rigid in its presentation. It is true that it collects old things, but it doesn't have to remain old. Its presentation can change according to the present time, of course without affecting the objects... This is the case of the Romanian Peasant Museum in Bucharest which has a very original and plastic conception of the permanent exhibition, or that of the open-air museum in Sibiu.

As concerns the museum I work in, it is one of the oldest in our country, at the time of its foundation—1922, and 1929 for the open-air section—it was in the avant-garde of the field owing to the huge work of Romulus Vuia, the founder of the museum, and remained in this place still, after the Second World War, when its conception changed. It was thought to be a living museum like the Skansen, and this was practically done for some decades, between the two world wars. After the Second World War, this idea was given up and the museum was to be organized in four sections: ethnobotanical, ethnozoological, technology and households. We have now just two, the traditional technology and the households sections. The museum is highly praised by specialists and by the foreign visitors as well. The indoor section is organized into main and secondary occupations. The open-air section looks very much like an old village and we are trying to keep the urban atmosphere as far as possible from the museum. One of the museum's functions is to educate. But how can you educate a public that is absent? How can you educate pupils that are coming from school because the teacher wants to make them visit the museum and all the way in the museum they are laughing and yawning?

You have to use programmes, mainly entertainment ones, to make them come. The programmes will be related to the specific of the museum. The inherent compromises must be as small as possible or otherwise you come to be you/the museum educated in the negative way, that is to make compromise after compromise and have no cultural message to send.

First the orientation of the programmes should be towards children. Because they are easier to educate, they want to know more and they are willing to do it. Secondly, the next public to have in mind is the adult one, which is generally very busy, it works hard, has children to take care of, a career to make, and represents the most reticent public to education. They could be the first generation that lives in town, and probably they don't want to remember how they lived in the country. Others, on the

contrary remember it very well and so they wouldn't see it as something of interest to see any longer. On the other hand they think that "they had enough education in school" and they need to entertain now. The programmes must be oriented towards this direction: relaxing people and educating indirectly educate, so that cultural information will appear as the secondary aim of the programmes. The people in the third stage of life is the most constant public of the museums, you don't have to call them: they want to come and very important, they have the time to do it and they do want to know about the things they didn't have time for, before; or, they come because they like what they see and are coming over and over. Once we have established the categories of public the museum refers to, we can elaborate activities to satisfy each category's cultural needs.

For the first category, the first activity would be the traditional games as if you were to define childhood the word game is the most appropriate. We can make groups and championship of traditional games: sledging in winter, the spring games, *Lapta*, the Stone, *Rugasu*, all being traditional games or performed in the traditional way. This will help them understand the context that refers to that activity and it's an easy way to get them acquainted to the traditional culture and to the message the museum wants to send to them. Once they are in the museum to perform an activity, they will see other things and their curiosity will be the lead to the cultural message. They will want to know why are those houses in the museum, what can you see in those houses, how did they use the tools, how was the peasant life in the old times. This refers especially to the open air section. As concerns the indoor section, film and slides projections will also be activities with impact to the children. On certain themes their message will be as convincing as other materials, maybe even more convincing. They could show some handicrafts, some tools, especially they will show ethnographical objects grouped on one theme only so that they could focus on the message. The fairs, which already have a certain age in our museum, and who refer especially to the adult public, could be extended to the children as well by putting the craftsmen make demonstrations and even let the children try that activity (pot making, weaving, sewing, woodcarving). This lead us to the idea of ethnographic circles, with certain themes as I enumerate above which could constitute an alternative to the extra activities in schools. A craftsman will teach groups of pupils his art: pottery, sewing, woodcarving. This could bring new elements: it would be a premiere, pupils will learn about something they were only told about and, very important, they would get out of a known space. An interesting activity for children will be the organization of a summer camp. This idea is better to be done in the case when there is a possibility of bringing animals in the open air section and so supervise the children in breeding those animals and in performing some of the jobs a kid would do in a peasant household according to his/her age. Another activity would be the storytelling with the recreation of the space this was usually done in. We all know that this activity was a ritual one, done at a certain time and in a certain space and with a certain space order. The ethnographic message will be clearer and linked to the context of the facts described in the stories. A good way to recreate a past atmosphere will be to recre-

ate the social gathering (*sezatoarea*) of the teenagers, and make comparisons with the nowadays gathering of the teens. The Sunday dance is also an easy activity to organize in our open air section. The problem will be in this case how far can you go with the reconstruction of the past: use only folk music, the specific dance, or let them combine this with the new dances? Maybe the answer will come from a thorough research in the field done on this particular subject. What dances do the teens in the villages dance today and why?

With regards to the adult visitors, the most important activities that would bring them into the museum are the folkloric shows with best-known singers, the fairs which already attract a lot of visitors and make the public conscious of the existence of an ethnographical museum in town. They are, at the same time, of great importance and relevance concerning the survive of traditional arts, annual festivals of local communities that are represented in the museum with artifacts or households; and the international folk dance festivals. Besides, the adult public will come whenever an activity that concerns their children will be performed in the museum.

Very important now, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the internet, as internet—I think—is the most important competitor of the museum and other cultural institutions. The museum ethnographical or of other kind, should and must use this opportunity. It must transform this competitor into a means to propagate its own image. Internet is the easier and cheaper way to get information about almost everything. But, in many fields, it has the disadvantage of being incomplete and be a copy, of course. The huge advantage is that a museum can be easily reached from any corner of the WorldWeb, especially the rich and so the desirable one. The presentation made by using plain or even better 360° images on CD-ROM or a website will stir the interest of the visitors. He will want to see the object in its natural shape and size. With an appropriate text, pointing the historical, social, and touristic valences of the artifact, the interest will grow more. Because everybody wants to see the original, see that everything is as he saw it in the copy-image on the internet, the CD-presentation or other publication.

In conclusion, the way a museum, in our case an ethnographical museum is recognised has changed a lot. That is why it has also to change, having in view and using the new technology discovered so far... The challenge has already been set. Now the museum response is very important if it wants to survive.

*Collections Management and  
Preventive Conservation at the  
Museum of Ethnography in Budapest*

Most artefacts will spend most of their museum lives in storage. Recent estimates show that on average 80 per cent of UK collections are in storages. Therefore this museum function must be carefully considered when planning for expansion, renovation or a new museum.<sup>1</sup>

Hungary is a candidate for membership of the European Union. This integration means that the Hungarian society is changing rapidly to meet new requirements. This transformation influences the museum community as well. Beside these consequences recent European developments have influenced the museum community like independence was given to museums that were until that time dependent on the government. This development requires innovative and smart management of all museum tasks: preserving and research of collections and their accessibility to the public.

Challenges and chances at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century for ethnographic museums in East- and Central Europe brought a variety in topics as the themes of the lectures here in the conference shows. There are 20 lectures and 14 topics, which mean that we have a lot of different approaches towards this important question.

Most of the topics are dealing with the basic activities of the museum—collecting, exhibiting, interpreting, researching –, some others with history and the role of a museum; entrepreneurship in museums, educational activities etc. Only two of them are dealing with one of the most important fields, the care of collections: preserving and restoring the objects as a procedure and as a strategy.

It is not so surprising. Around the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the three main fields of the museum activities—collecting, preserving, and exhibiting—was extended with three other ones including research, education, PR marketing and enterprise activities as well. Planning the work of the museum, prioritising among these fields which is the most important task for short or long term, what proportion is adequate among them—this depends on several internal and external circumstances.

Turn of the century, turning into 2001 caused lot of “compulsory” exhibitions, big events for the museums in Hungary during the last few years. The anniversaries of the conquest of the Carpathian Basin, the War of Independence in 1848–1849, and

<sup>1</sup> LORD—LORD 1991. 115.

the Millennium, which is the 1000 years anniversary of the foundation of the Hungarian State, resulted in many exhibitions; and it seemed that these activities make the museum activities assymmetric at the expense of taking care of preserving the objects and documents.

Besides organising exhibitions, editing publications, collecting objects and documents the Museum of Ethnography have been dealing dominantly with two international projects, the Collections Management and Preventive Conservation. In order to show how big this task is I would like to refer to the fact that in 1980 there were 150 thousand objects in the museum and now, twenty years later we have about 250 thousand artifacts. I would like to introduce now the two projects.

### *Dutch help between 1995 and 1997: Museum Management*

In 1995 members of the Pulszky Society (Hungarian Museum Association) and the Netherlands Museum Association (Nederlandsche Museum Vereniging) started a co-operation in museum management, called Matra-project. The project was supported by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Education, Culture and Sciences, the Hungarian Ministry of Culture and Education (now Ministry of Cultural Heritage) and ICOM National sections in both countries.

During the Matra project museum management was introduced to Hungarian museum leaders. However, this does not mean that museum management is institutionalised yet. Sustainability of the knowledge accumulated during the Matra project and further education in museum management should be structured in an educational professional institution.

During this project a structure to exchange knowledge between Hungarian and Dutch museum managers was established. The project contributed to the reorganisation of museums in Hungary, especially the development and transformation of the Hungarian museum community towards an autonomous and self-conscious role within the new Hungarian and European social and economic context. Furthermore the network of Hungarian and Dutch museum colleagues was strengthened by exchange of information on the main responsibilities and basic obligations of museums. In November, 1997 Johanna Kievit and Tamás Vásárhelyi made a tentative program for 'Management of the different functions of a museum' courses, with three main topics:

- Management of the collection oriented functions of the museum
- Management of the science (research) oriented functions of the museum
- Management of the visitor oriented functions of the museum

<sup>2</sup> KIEVIT—VÁSÁRHELYI 1997.

"Topics of a course—like modules—can be selected, according to the needs of the participants, on the basis of exploration and/or opinion of contributing museum professionals (advisors, organizers and trainers) of the different nations."<sup>2</sup>

The evaluation of the Matra project made evident the need to root educational activities in a larger and more formal infrastructure. A first step has been taken by the establishment of the management section<sup>3</sup> of the Pulszky Society, which evolved out of the working group that was responsible for the former Matra project in Hungary.

### *Dutch-Hungarian co-operation between 1998 and 2001*

The next step was to discuss the main tasks of the museums; preservation, collection management, education (visitor oriented function) and research of collections. In what way do the results of these functions have impact on the other functions and, even more important, in what way can they correspond to each other. The last objective includes twinning contacts between museums in Hungary and the Netherlands and extending these contacts within the European museum community.

There were two main fields in the co-operation between 1998 and 2001: the Small Museum Project and the Collections Management.<sup>4</sup>

In 1997 a workshop was held by Dutch experts on Collections Management in Hungary, Tata. There we could see slides about the situation of the museum collections before the Delta plan, a big project for preserving the Dutch cultural heritage. During the 1990s Dutch government spent 40 million guilders for restructuring the state-owned museums, forming adequate storage rooms for the objects with optimal circumstances, developing computer registration system for collections, differentiate the objects of collections into four groups—the fourth group of objects was offered to other museums or to the Collectie Institute, which was founded for this task.

After the workshop, I had to make a summary of it for the museum management section of Pulszky Society, to show what we can use from these results. We learned that the Deltaplan cannot be copied in other countries; parts of it, however, can be implemented, like collection analyses. What I could offer was to make a pilot collection management project in the Museum of Agriculture where I was working at that time. The Museum of Applied Arts joined this offer in the computerisation and registration field, developing thesaurus for objects of the museum.<sup>5</sup> The aim of the first version of the project was the following:

<sup>3</sup> REMINDER 1998.

<sup>4</sup> "Collection management begins at the point of acquisition and continues through the full cycle of artefact's life, including registration, documentation, preparation, conservation, research, storage, exhibition or other use, and loans. Ultimately it may even include de-accessioning. All of these functions have requirements for space and facilities." LORD—LORD 1991. 113.

<sup>5</sup> MAA Proposal 1998.

"The process of examination will result in standard procedures which can be used by museums. During the process of examination, small seminars on this subject will be organised to spread the knowledge and experiences. To make the process of examination known the collections of the Agricultural Museum and the Museum of Applied Arts in Budapest will be analysed. Afterwards the analysis will result in a collection management policy and finally the policy will be implemented in the organisation. The methods used for making a plan of action on collections are principles of project management, which will guide the participants of the activities towards required results."<sup>6</sup>

The Dutch partner asked the Museum of Ethnography and the Museum of Fine Arts to take part in this project, so the new Matra project started in 1998 with these four museums and the Directorate of Cultural Heritage, which also joined to the project.

In order to continue the Matra project a management core group met in Szentendre Open Air Museum on 14<sup>th</sup> September 1999 in a workshop. The core group made a two step Plan for Matra Project Hungary:

1. The purpose of the 'First plan of ideas for activities within the scope of the general project' was to "name those elements of the Matra document that until now have not been further studied or detailed, and to decide on the approach for these items with possible required adaptations."<sup>7</sup>
2. Besides this there were two additional workshops for Collection Management<sup>8</sup> and for Smaller Museum<sup>9</sup> project of Matra.

In the Plan of activities subproject of Collection Management the participants decided that they would like to continue the project on a more individual basis for giving each participating museum the chance to proceed with a tailor made programme in an effective and efficient way. It was decided not to have common workshops or organising common study trips but make twinning connections between Dutch and Hungarian museums. They stated the main activities for each museum in the team:<sup>10</sup>

- Museum of Applied Arts
  - Results required: Setting standards for the description of individual collections
  - Computer registration of the deposits on loan (processing, identification elimination of overlaps)

<sup>6</sup> PROPOSAL 1999.

<sup>7</sup> MATRA 1999. Participants: Miklós Cseri, Péter Deme, Éva Vámos, Katalin Wollák.

<sup>8</sup> Participants: György Balázs, Ildikó Ember, György Kurucz, Zsuzsanna Vámos-Lovay, Gábor Wilhelm, Katalin Wollák.

<sup>9</sup> Participants: Levente Füköb, Ildikó Poroszlay, Tamás Vásárhelyi.

<sup>10</sup> The Museum of Fine Arts failed out of the project.



- Museum of Ethnography
  - Improvement of organisation/structure by defining responsibilities and scope of authority
  - Improvement of the conditions of collections by relocating sub-collections according to material types
- Museum of Agriculture
  - Completion of new storage room (including relocation plan for smaller collections, storage, data processing, accessibility by using advanced methods)
  - Reassessment of the function of newly available storage rooms
  - Introduction of museum data base
- Directorate of Cultural Heritage
  - Create a structural advisor-partnership with the RBO and the ICH, Inspectie Cultuurbezit

During the term of the Collections Management project museum professionals from Hungary went to the Netherlands (7 persons) and from the Netherlands to Hungary (3 persons). While in the small museums project workshops were held, the Collections Management group decided not to have workshops but a twinning programme between partner museums developed. During the twinning connection term both museums sent 2–2 persons to each others. There were 20–22 people involved into the project during the term of Matra project.

### *Activities in Dutch–Hungarian partnership, 1999–2001*

During the term 1999–2001 there were seven museums, two other institutions and the museum associations from Hungary and the Netherlands taking part in the partnership. In the Netherlands there were 24 museums and institutions visited by Hungarian colleagues. There were 24 participants from both sides taking part in the project.

There are some further activities in museological field as the Young Curators of Pulszky Society formed a group and organises workshops with Dutch and Hungarian trainers.

With the financial help of the Dutch Museum Association (Nederlandsche Museum Vereniging) the Management Section of Pulszky Society published two volumes of museology: the Collection Management project a manual for setting up collection plan,<sup>11</sup> and the Small Museum Project the about writing a museum plan.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> BALÁZS 2000.

<sup>12</sup> SCHOLTEN 2001.

*Preventive convention*

The other international project is the ICCROM Preventive Conservation project in which the Museum of Ethnography has been taking part.

"Ten years ago hardly anyone would have known what preventive conservation is. Now most museum professionals have at least a basic understanding of what it covers, but it is still evolving as a concept. In the United Kingdom, preventive conservation is now part of the overall concept of stewardship defined simply as 'the sustainable use of collections', that is, balancing preservation and use. This changes the traditional approach to preventive conservation where professionals are solely in charge, dictating the type of public involvement that is acceptable."<sup>13</sup>

There are several specifications on the term of Preventive Conservation in use. The ICCROM definition is the following:

"Preventive conservation is a discipline that involves everyone including all museum staff, administrative officials and the public, to work together to achieve its goal. It is an innovation that deals with long-standing problems. Preventive conservation requires an agreement on a plan and multi-disciplinary action, to slow the rate of object decay and to reduce the physical and environmental risks to collections in order to preserve them for future generation."<sup>14</sup>

Between 1995 and 1997 ICCROM co-ordinated the Pilot Project called Teamwork for Preventive Conservation. This project was successful in developing and applying team management methods for preventive conservation in four European museums. The project showed that European services to assist in implementing preventive conservation varied widely throughout Europe. Although every nation had at least part of a complete range of programmes and institutions that assist museums in the implementation of preventive conservation, many of these resources were not available in the appropriate languages, or in manner suited to the national administrative style.

The Teamwork for Preventive Conservation 2 Project between 1998 and 2000 was an extension of the pilot project and led to the expansion of preventive conservation in six other European countries. Its aim was to ally European institutions in developing multidisciplinary museum teams for preventive conservation and to identify plans and resources to make long-term improvements in the condition of European museum collections. By joining with national partners to launch activities at the professional, administrative and public level, Teamwork museums helped assisting other national and international museums implement long-term preventive conservation.

In this new project seven European museum participants joined the four museums from the pilot project, to learn how to implement common management me-

<sup>13</sup> CASSAR 2001.

<sup>14</sup> PUTT—SATIN 1997.

thods and the common scientific principles of preventive conservation. By working with other professional experts and consultants, nations and cultures, this project promoted respect and effective communication among the participating museum teams, between museums and professionals in different countries and throughout Europe.

The 'Proposal for Implementing Conservation with Partners' stated that "in order to assist other museums in Hungary to increase awareness of and implement preventive conservation we wish to focus on two target groups: ethnographic museums and museums in general, and we plan to use for this purpose three kinds of techniques:

- To address museums of all kinds in Hungary we would like to share with them our experience and results that may have a more general scope and that have been accumulated during our first phase of the Teamwork for Preventive Conservation 2. For this purpose we plan to publish a special volume of the bulletin *Múzeumi Hírlevél* (Museum Review) in May 2000 with the Board of Cultural Heritage and the Hungarian National Museum as editors. This volume will describe the basic ideas of preventive conservation, talk about our project at the Museum of Ethnography, that mean about our initial conditions, plans to change people's attitude toward collections and to improve those conditions, and our concrete results until now. It will also include a list of literature and some reviews of them, and a list of special equipment and useful addresses concerning both further literature and of access to preventive conservation tools.
- We also feel that we have more common problems with regards to collections of ethnographic museums. In order to assist them we decided to hold a conference on Preventive Conservation and Collection Management in April. We will set specific topics for the conference and all the museums having ethnographic collections in Hungary will be asked to take part in the presentation and discussion. We shall use one of the sections to discuss our project. Speakers will be invited from the Conservation Educational Centre too. After the conference we plan to publish the more outstanding papers in our annual Yearbook (*Néprajzi Értésítő*).
- Finally, in order to achieve a permanent and easily enlarged source of information on preventive conservation we wish to establish an Internet website as a part of our museum's homepage. This website will include reports of our experience concerning preventive conservation and at least ten articles from international journals and books translated in Hungarian—besides a list of useful links to other sites of similar themes and a selected bibliography. This website will be regularly upgraded."<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> PROPOSAL 1999.

There was a launching conference of ICCROM Teamwork for Preventive Conservation 2 in Rome between 24–29 February, 1999, where the Museum of Ethnography was represented by Zoltán Fejős director general, Katalin Sterbetz head of restoration department and Gábor Wilhelm scientific advisor.<sup>16</sup> On the basis of the advice we formed an Action Group of Preventive Conservation. The leader of it became a colleague who was not a head of department or a leader in the museum structure. We formed the group out of all the departments of the museum as preventive conservation is the task of everyone working in the museum, even those in the public relations department.

During May 1999 there was a survey of conditions in all of the collections, storing rooms. There were recurring questions about the objects being on the floor; cleaning procedure, the need of covering the objects on the shelves, and the isolating conditions of the windows, doors. The survey was completed in 20 stores. There were some interesting statements, where beside the report of the team of a restorator and curator there was an other report made by only the curator, stating that this kind of work should have been only his/her duty and responsibility...

The survey of conditions resulted in a short report of the collections. The main points were: isolation of the windows and doors against dust; climatic isolation, calibration of testers for measuring humidity and temperature, setting them to proper places and control the humidity and temperature; curtains or folie against lights and sunshine; covering the objects by canvas on the storage shelves; storing on the basis of the material of objects; priority for solving the problem of the Asian collection and the painted wooden objects in Törökbálint store; cleaning the storerooms regularly.

In the end the director of the museum, Zoltán Fejős made a plan of action identifying the priorities of the work:

- Investigate the need of covering materials (canvas, acid-free paper), and other needs (cupboards, shelves, vacuum-cleaner etc.)
- Action plan for the Department of Finance about the isolation work of windows and doors
- Schedule and budget of transporting the Asian collection from the staircase into an air-conditioned room in the basement.
- Proposal of cleaning of storages was accepted.

During 1999 and 2000 two consultants—Neal Putt, ICCROM and Jim McGreevy, Ulster Museum—were supervising our activities. They made a Report on Familiarisation Visit, observing the main collections of the museum, making comments and giving advises to us. They investigate the documentation, the placing of artefacts, conditioning systems, cleaning of the floor, fumigation, pest infestations etc. Their

<sup>16</sup> WILHELM 1999.

comments were the basis of our work for two years and furthermore as well.<sup>17</sup> We had a one-day workshop providing an opportunity for the facilitators to meet members of the Preventive Conservation Action Group.

The Group had clearly considered most, if not all, of the issues commented upon by the facilitators and agreement emerged in two important respects:

- There is a need to purchase reliable temperature and relative humidity monitoring equipment so that accurate information on the various storage and display locations throughout the building can be obtained. Such information is essential as a basis for deciding if and where improvements are needed.
- There is a need to address the dust/dirt problem in the various stores. Acquisition of effective cleaning equipment along with its correct and regular use would be a useful starting point. More extensively use of protective materials (polythene and cloth sheeting, archival quality boxessupports, acid-free tissue) would also offer undoubted benefits.

In addition to these important considerations, a number of other concerns were highlighted. In no particular order, these were as follows:

- a need to establish procedures for dealing with loans;
- a need to consider object location data (this may become very important if a decision was taken to relocate collections according to materials as opposed to object types);
- a need to consider the movement of objects within, into and out of the building and how objects are handled/carried during moving; and
- a need to consider the condition of the building itself and service within it (reference being made to the recent 'flood' damage, the unreliability of environmental control equipment and the effects of external weather conditions (orientation) on internal conditions.

In respect of all the above, it was recognised that any objectives associated with these particular concerns should be realistic and should focus as much as possible on what can be achieved by the members of the Preventive Conservation Action Group."<sup>18</sup>

In October 1999 the PC Action Group prepared a report on the tasks of the PC in the MHE. They defined 10 tasks and 8 suggestions for solving the problems:

1. Measuring humidity and temperature, obtaining equipments for handling objects
2. Maintaining windows, doors
3. Curtains for windows, canvas for shelves

<sup>17</sup> REPORT 1999.

<sup>18</sup> REPORT 1999.

4. Organising cleaning of the storages
5. Acid-free containers, boxes, papers for packaging
6. Pulleys for moving objects in the museum
7. Inspection, disinfection
8. Order in storages
9. Space planning
10. Providing staff and money

As the Collections Management and Preventive Conservation projects affected nearly the same tasks and the same people, we decided to form one group for the collections—and conservation themes in the Museum of Ethnography, Budapest.

*Achievements of the Preventive Conservation Action Group  
in the Museum of Ethnography, Budapest*

- Meeting regularly between 1999–2001 weekly for 2 hours
- Investigation in all of the collections (20 collections, for objects on the floor, isolation, coverings for the objects on shelves etc.)
- Detailed report and list of activities (see above)
- Measurements of humidity and temperature in the storages
  - Due to slight damage in the store of nutrition items collection in 2001 we submitted an application to the state secretary of Ministry of Cultural Heritage, and received 6.5 mHUF extra budget for MUNTERS dehumidifiers and testers for measuring light and UV and humidity and temperature with softwares and PC connections for scientific surveys ...
- Advice to get air condition equipments where needed (collection of data carriers of ethnomusical collection—cylinders, LPs, cassettes, tapes etc),
- Investigation of handling and other equipments and materials needed in storages (ladders, trolleys, pilows filled with poliuretan bullets, acid-free paper and canvas for covering objects etc.)
- Proposal for space planning
- Restructuring six stores for better conditions e.g.
  - from a staircase into a double floor room (Asian collection)
  - from a working room into an air conditioned storage (ethnomusical data carriers)
  - from a concrete building, without isolation, 25 km away from Budapest into the basement of the museum main building (collection of religious objects)
- Conference on Preventive Conservation and Collection Management for colleagues working with ethnographic collections in the country in 2000 (100 people)
  - Publications on the same themes
  - Publication on the collections of the Museum of Ethnography
  - Special issue of Museum Review

- Yearbook of the Museum of Ethnography with the following articles:
  - The (eternal) task: safeguarding the museum collections and artefacts
  - Collections Management and Preventive Conservation: the Connection
  - Preventive conservation and the Néprajzi Múzeum—a view from abroad
  - Toy “handling” in the Szórákaténusz Toy Museum
  - The Deltaplan, 1990–2000. Preservation of Cultural Heritage in the Netherlands
  - Relative Humidity is constant—but the people are not
  - Computerized data base in the Museum of Ethnography
  - Photographs in the collection of the Viski Károly Museum
  - The removal of objects to the collection of the Church to the Museum of Ethnography
  - The importance of the transportation (packaging) of the museum objects
  - The collections of the Herman Ottó Museum
- Preventive Conservation Internet website
- Purchase of polifoam for the bottom of drawers and the surfaces of shelves
- Purchase of canvas, acid-free paper for covering objects
- Purchase boxes in different sizes for containing objects
- Protective curtains against the sunshine in exhibition area
- Registration: we develop new sheets in the computer database for lending objects
- Develop datasheet for materials, state of objects and the suggested temperature and humidity for them
- Forming a PC library with the support of ICCROM PC project

### *Summary*

Beyond all these achievements it is essential to take care about properly trained staff. All staff who handles the collections must be properly trained in their care. Curatorial staff has an opportunity to study the objects and also to acquire the collections, to care of them. It is essential that all curators develop the museological up to date skills necessary to handle, inspect, and store the collection (documentation, inventory, care and maintenance, conservation.) It is obvious, that without the proper record of all objects, which are kept in the museum, adequate management is impossible.

We plan to uniform registration system by description standardising, computerising, and complete photographic registration of collections:

- Setting standards for the description of collections - there is a need for unified terminology,
- establishing a computer network in the museums,
- computerising of registration,

- giving access to the existing database about the collections,
- giving possibilities to correct and complete it on a basic level,
- elaboration of a complete system of registration, adapted to the international standards,
- adaptation of the new system of registration to the completed first database.

The process of examination of the collections is:

- Qualifying objects (A, B, C, D categories),
- establishing documentation and registration standards,
- uniform the way of basic registration data.

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GÁBOR WILHELM

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## *Ethnographic Museums and Challenges at the Beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

With this paper I would like to discuss some of the concepts of the conference entitled *Ethnographic Museums in East-Central Europe—Challenges and Chances at the Beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. By summarising the challenges ethnographic museums face, I take the Ethnographical Museum of Budapest as a case in point but, as I see it, the issues addressed are of a more general nature, potentially symptomatic of all ethnographic museums in Europe. Even when referring to the exotic collections of the museum, I will also draw conclusions as to how specific problems with this material might be connected to objects of national heritage. Some of these challenges clearly call for co-operation among ethnographic museums at a European level, while some of them must be handled on an individual (institutional) level; nevertheless, a shared familiarity with such quandaries might benefit all of the museums.

These challenges seem to appear in all realms of the museum's activity, and they are connected with the following features: the development of a new reflexivity in the museology and social sciences, the emergence of rights questions, and the appearance of limits to museums' different fields.

### *Collections' histories*

The end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries are now widely recognised as the nascent period of museum ethnography within the history of ethnology. In many ethnographic museums, basic collections developed at this time and most research was initiated by museums. It was a time, too, when curators, travellers, missionaries, art dealers, expeditions and museums bore a complex relationship with each other, and when all of these agents contributed, in one way or another, to the museums' material. Until the end of this period, in the 50-year span after the First World War, substantial attention was no longer paid to the principals of collections' development. It was only in the 1970s and 1980s that a new interest in material culture emerged, and the focus of ethnological interest shifted back to museums. Ethical issues of acquisitions were discussed, native museums developed, and museums were treated as the invention and tool of modern Western culture. With this, a rethink-

ing of problems concerning representation, both of exotic and modern life, began to come alive. By considering museums machines that made objects ethnographic, researchers became interested in the strategies and policies of ethnographic museums in the early phase; they began to consider "the historical contextualization of the collecting process" (Jacknis, 1985). In this kind of study early documents such as letters, diaries, notes of curators and collectors received a new importance. It has largely been acknowledged that without a focus on the historical dimension of the collecting process ethnographic collections are nothing more than a lineal accumulation of rare objects. There is now an increasing number of publications that deal with the history and development of collections, at least on two levels of analysis: analysing the social history of objects, and looking at the museum as a machine for re-contextualisation. The history of collections, however, did not stop at individual museums. There is thus a growing need to compose the history of collection, which won't be possible without the co-operation of several museums.

Upon careful examination of museum objects, in some cases we find that they tell much more about the duration they have spent in the museum, (for example, how they were handled and formed, or for what aims they were used), than about the people from whom they were collected. Beside this interest in museums' and collections' history, however, at present only a few of the documents concerning this period are easily accessible to the public and researchers, and not much has been written about the interdependence and connections of museums that worked in the rich context of art dealers, sponsors, politicians, etc.

### *Collecting*

The historical interest in museums may originate, at least in part, from the very clear contemporary constraints upon the acquisition and storage, and even the presentation of, ethnographica. Almost all of the ethnographical museums today face the enigma of dealing with the present's manifestations of everyday life. It has been their traditional task to document traditional or even exotic cultures, but limiting the focus of research and acquisition to only this field will lead to a very narrow role where ethnography will easily become archaeology, and an increasing part of social life will remain outside the scope of the museums' interest. Dealing with modern and, to a great extent, urbanised life calls for a systematic approach because of its complexity and museums' limited resources (time, money, specialists) to accomplish this. It may be an open question now whether such research should be undertaken at a national, or a more international, perhaps European level. It may also be that the real question is more about the sharing of research principles and collecting than its actual doing.

Undertaking research and collecting objects in an urbanised or modernised field might also require the co-operation between those not associated with institutions (amateur collectors). This co-operation has a long history but it has been mostly

limited to the traditional interest of ethnology on rarities or old practices, peasants' art and tools. Documenting contemporary life can also provide a closer relationship to it and access to the knowledge and material databases of private collectors.

### *Representations*

Questions of who has the right to collect, to store and to display ethnographic objects are highly interconnected issues, sometimes in a more subtle way. Since the 1980s, it is no longer unusual for persons of minority groups to participate actively in constructing exhibitions on their own culture. Note that it is rather the right of representation of somebody's culture which is at issue here, and not the difficulty or objectivity of ethnographic research.

Along this line, much discussion deals with the nature of ethnographic exhibitions. Are they simple, or if you like, complex semiotic representations of cultures or cultural knowledge? Or shall we treat them as a visual, three-dimensional shows of ethnographic collections? Are they an instrument for identity making or rather alienation? It seems clear that the further we move from the concept of ethnographic exhibitions as representations of knowledge, the more acute rights questions will become.

### *Questions of rights*

If a group's present or past material culture belongs to this same group who owns it? The answers to this question depend naturally on how we define terms like ownership, cultural heritage, ethnic group and so on, which can all have both theoretical and political interpretations. As it seems, there are no beaten paths to follow in this field at present, yet there may be few museums with some kind of exotic material that have not yet faced the highly discussed problem of its repatriation in the last 10 years. On the one hand, it is about the ethics of collecting in the past, while also about control of the rights to manage and interpret history and culture at present. It is now widely recognised inside and outside of museum circles that "many methods of museum collecting, (especially in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries), would be questionable by today's moral standards" (Ames 1986). On the other hand, maybe at a more practical level, it is more about controlling access to cultural heritage. This problem is not limited to exotic or indigenous peoples living outside of Europe; it likewise surfaces in the case of minorities within the national borders of many countries.

### *Access and interpretation*

One may think, however, that these concerns are no longer limited to just minority or exotic groups' claims, but we face a much more general problem: how can everyday people get in touch with the ethnographic objects stored in museums? One may immediately respond by listing a wide array of techniques through which museums publish information about or make public their treasures: electronic or print catalogues, CD-ROMs, public data bases, exhibitions. However, free access need not always mean just physical access, but it may also address issues of interpretation. Exhibitions create artificial contexts that may obscure the objects. One way of loosening museums' arrangements can be the opening of storage facilities, with which museums seem to have had little experience until now.

In order to put ethnographic objects in context, one needs all their relevant background data. Because these items are in most cases located or stored in different physical places, there are practical limits for handling them efficiently. One of the solutions to this situation seems to be storing and retrieving ethnographic data in digitised form. This can be a technical mode of comparing and analysing data from different sources at the same place and time.

Contexts, however, don't end at physical or linguistic borders. It happens very often that we need information for interpreting objects or collections from abroad. If we all use a common database structure and put our data on the Internet, at least one problem remains: language. Public access requires a common language with a standardised vocabulary. Terminology control is one of the key priorities in this respect. In order to achieve any progress in this field, ethnographic museums must co-operate on a very broad scale. On the other hand, museums need to know where to begin, what kind of collections are worth comparing, what periods of museums' history are more important at present than others, and where future research interests lie.

### *Exhibitions*

One of the traditional ways for museums to enable public access to ethnographic objects, (and to exercise control over representation), is the constructing of exhibitions. Beside the question of control, many contemporary museological discussions about ethnographic exhibitions deal with the timing (permanent, semi-permanent, temporary), the style (artistic, thematic, didactic, virtual), but issues of preventive conservation are also addressed. In this latter case, short and long term access seem to be in conflict. In the case of contemporary ethnographic exhibitions, there is also a clear tendency to think in a wider context, to unify collections during the exhibitions, the pieces of which were spread to different museums across the continent.

It is also evident that with the help of exhibitions, usually no more than ten per cent of a museum's entire collection can be displayed over many years. Therefore museums need to rely upon other techniques like publications as well.

### *Catalogues*

Much experimentation is going on at present in regard to the composition of ethnographic catalogues. Their scales range from very object-based descriptions to context-based ones. Some minimal requirements for publishing catalogues have thereby emerged. Steps have been taken to publish catalogues that unify (as in the case of exhibition) collection pieces from different museums in order to broaden background information for the interpretation of these collections. Until now the relationships between printed, Internet or CD-ROM catalogues have remained open ones.

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