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Legacy of Milka Trnina in the Collection of Non-European Cultures of the Ethnographic Museum

- The paper presents objects owned by the singer Milka Trnina, which make part of the Collection of Non-European countries at the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb, and are linked to the collector William Sturgis Bigelow. Short biographies of M. Trnina and W. S. Bigelow are outlined here in order to point to the attachment between them and the items and to contextualize the whole. In the same time the paper describes the earliest beginnings of the Collection of Non-European Cultures in the frames of the National Museum in Zagreb and discusses the representation of museum objects which belong to world cultures in the founding collections of the Ethnographic Museum.

Key words: Trnina, Milka
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INTRODUCTION

Objects which were donated to the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb by the opera singer Milka Trnina make a valuable whole of about thirty museum items evidenced in the Collection of Non-European Cultures, but not dealt with so far. Objects originate from China, Japan and India, and the majority of them were personally donated to the Museum by the singer in 1930. Pieces of extreme value are the ones which she had received in present from William Sturgis Bigelow, esteemed collector of Japanese and Chinese fine arts



from Boston, who spent time in Japan by the end of the 19th century. Today his collection of 26 thousand items from Japan and China is located in the *Museum of Fine Arts* in Boston¹. The aim of this paper² is to present this whole and bring together all available data by consulting literature, in order to contextualize and evaluate the objects. However, before this, a short review of the history of the Collection of Non-European Cultures is presented, the earliest beginnings of which can be found within the then National Museum in Zagreb.

Five collections represented the basic fund of the Ethnographic Museum in the course of its foundation in 1919. These are: the Ethnographic Collection of the Archaeological-Historical Department of Croatian National Museum, the Berger Collection, the Collection Berger-Chamber of Trades, the Collection of the Museum of Pedagogical-Literary Board, and the Collection of the Museum of Arts and Crafts (Gjetvaj 1989: 17-18). Beside objects from Croatia, collectibles from world cultures make also part of the listed collections³. We can find origins of the Collection of Non-European Cultures already in the National Museum in Zagreb⁴. Within its archaeological department it collected ethnographic material⁵ from Croatia and from the world as well. In years

1 Official page of the *Museum of Fine Arts* in Boston (<http://www.mfa.org/>).

2 The paper came about as a written part of a certification exam and is kept in an extended form in the Museum Documentation Centre. I extend special gratitude to senior curator Marija Živković and the restorer Mihaela Grčević, with whom I worked in the Collection of Non-European Cultures in the course of my professional training, for wonderful cooperation and expertly advice. In 2014 the Museum carried out a re-systematisation of its collections, and the Collection of Non-European Cultures was renamed Collection of World Cultures. The former name is used in the text (ed.).

3 Objects from the mentioned collections, together with other objects which belong to the world cultures, were inscribed in two separate inventory books (books of *Exota*) and they carry on a label Ex 1 – Ex 2133. After the last inventory number entered the book of *Exota*, new objects for the Collection continued to be registered in the common inventory book with other objects in collections of the Ethnographic Museum.

4 The National Museum in Zagreb has been opened in 1846 and it existed until 1939. Its primary location was the National Home Palace in Opatička Street no. 18, but due to the lack of space it was moved in 1872 to Demetrova Street no. 1 (Szabo 1998: 27).

5 In his report from 1869, the Museum director Šime Ljubić mentioned the gift by Gjorgje Crnadak containing 10 dolls, as the start of the ethnographic collection (Luetić 2001: 236; origin: AHASU-R, 7/1870). The very next year the collection was left untended (Luetić 2001: 236; origin: AHASU-R, 13/1871). In 1875 a small Chinese boat donated by I. Kukuljević entered the

preceding the foundation of the Ethnographic Museum, the ethnographic collection of the National Museum in Zagreb (inventory labels Et. 1 and A.H.) received valuable donations by Dragutin Lerman⁶ (the Lerman Collection)⁷ and by Mirko and Stevo Seljan (the Seljan Collection)⁸. Except for these collections which comprehend objects from the territory of Africa (the Lerman Collection and the Seljan Collection) and from South America (the Seljan Collection), other larger wholes should also be mentioned: the Srećko Lay Collection of objects mostly from Australia, the donation by Dane Čorak containing objects from India and Africa, the gift by Ivan Stunić from Eastern Africa, Zanzibar and Madagascar, the Franjo Marek Collection of objects from the central Congo, and the gift by Dragutin Mezzoran from the Maluku Islands⁹. Beside the already mentioned items, there also exist smaller collections and single objects which will not be referred to this time. The mentioned collections and single objects were transferred from the National Museum to the Ethnographic Museum on the occasion of its foundation and, by having been inscribed into the separate inventory book (the first book of *Exota*), they became the base of today's Collection of Non-European Cultures¹⁰.

The Berger Collection bears marks Et 2 and B, which point to the fact that the

collection (Luetić 2001: 241).

6 On May 24th 1889, at the beginning of his diary, Lerman noted that because of the lack of financial funds he had to give up gathering material for the collection of natural history, and decided to collect only the ethnographic material for the "Croatian museum". Lerman wrote the following: "I will endeavor to collect a worthy collection of ethnographic objects, but this is going to be all there is. It really costs me much more than gathering material for the collection of natural history, however experience teaches me that day by day more and more African things have been disappearing... quicker than anyone can even think of..." (Lazarević 1989: 50).

7 The Collection comprises 494 objects collected by Dragutin Lerman on the territory of Congo from 1882 – 1896. For more details consult Lopašić 1982.

8 The Collection comprises 120 items from Ethiopia (1899-1902) and 237 items from South America (1903-1913). For more details consult Lazarević 1977.

9 The word is mostly about donations from 1880s to the beginning of the 20th century.

10 Objects were inscribed under the inventory marks Ex 1 – Ex 1321. Old inventory marks A.H., which refer to the belonging of objects to the then Archaeological-Historical Department, are noted under the remark at every Ex number. Beside the last inventory number from the Archaeological-Historical Department there is a note: "Composed and transcribed in line with the old inventory of the Archaeological-Historical Museum and the new card catalogue, and found in accordance with the present state". It was signed by Vladimir Tkalčić, director, on December 31st, 1928.

word is about objects owned by Salamon Berger and purchased from him for the future Ethnographic Museum (Gjetvaj 1989: 18). The Collection is mostly composed of textile objects from the territory of Croatia, also from western Bosnia, Macedonia, Albania, Romania, Bohemia and Slovakia (Ibid), but there are textiles from India, China, and Japan, then from Persia, Arabia, and Madagascar as well, which constitute part of the Collection of Non-European Cultures.

The Collection Berger-Chamber of Trades, with the signature Et. 3 or BK was the ownership of the Museum of Trades and Crafts. It comprises pottery, objects made of wood and straw, jewellery, arms, house inventory, carpets and textiles (Ibid).

The Collection of the Museum of Pedagogical-Literary Board (today's Croatian Museum of School) carries the signature Et 4, or ŠM (Školski muzej, Museum of School). It comprises fragments of woven fabric and embroidery, patterns of weaving and lace-making techniques, costumes and wooden objects (Ibid). In Collections BK and ŠM there are only a few objects which belong to the Collection of Non-European Cultures.

The Collection of the Museum of Arts and Crafts is signed Et 5 or U.O., and it mostly comprehends clothing items from Posavina and Slavonia (Ibid). Considerable part of this Collection belongs to the Collection of Non-European Cultures. We can find here objects for everyday use, like baskets and textiles from Africa. Objects from Asia also make part of the Collection, for example caps from Indochina, usable items from China, but there are also a few objects from Brazil.

We can see from the above-mentioned that every of the five basic Museum collections is represented in the Collection of Non-European Cultures through various kinds of objects. According to the number of objects, the Ethnographic Collection of the Archaeological-Historical Department (A.H.), the Salamon Berger Collection (B) and the Collection of the Museum of Arts and Crafts (U.O.) have a head start. All listed collections make the base of the Collection of Non-European Cultures, which has been gradually enlarged by gifts and acquisition of single objects or complete wholes.¹¹

In 1989, there existed 1845 inventory numbers in the inventory book of Ex-

11 *In Instructions for commissioners of the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb*, from 1922, it is stated that the scope of the Museum is to present, beside the proper peasant culture, also "life and culture of so-called half-cultured and wild peoples" (Matasović, ed. 1922: 347).

ota (Gjetvaj 1989: 19). They include objects from world cultures from the Archaeological-Historical Department and some objects which entered the inventory from 1919 on. This is not the complete number of objects from world cultures counted that year, because items should be added from the four above-mentioned collections which remain as closed wholes.

Already in the first decades of the Museum's existence, the Collection of Non-European Cultures was enriched with objects from Japan, China and India, donated by Milka Trnina. In order to determine them as precisely as possible as musealia, it is necessary to give a short survey of the great artist's life.¹²

MILKA TRNINA AND WILLIAM STURGIS BIGELOW: SKETCHES FROM LIFE

Milka Trnina, the famous Croatian opera singer, was born on December 19th in 1863, in Donji Sip in Vežišće, the district of Križ. After the death of her father, she came to Zagreb to live with her uncle Janko Jurković and his wife Laura, who would accompany her during the entire life in the course of her appearances all around the world. While studying singing at the Vienna Conservatoire, she had her debut in Zagreb, in the Croatian Theatre at St. Marco's Square. Trnina hoped to get an engagement in the Zagreb Theatre, but this did not happen. Therefore she returned to Vienna, graduated from the Conservatoire, and then signed a contract with the Opera Theatre in Leipzig. After Leipzig she sang in Graz and then in Bremen. In 1887 she left for Munich, the most outstanding opera centre of the time not only in Europe, but in the world as well. Grković stated that "being member of the Munich Royal Opera meant being listed in the choir of the top-class singers. Neither the Vienna Court Opera nor the Berlin Royal Opera House could compete with the Royal Court Opera in Munich" (1966: 87). In Munich Trnina achieved the title of the Royal Bavarian Chamber Singer. In the course of ten years spent there, she became worldly famous, especially for her performances of Richard Wagner's works. In 1894 she was invited to sing in Russia on the occasion of the coronation of the Russian emperor Nicholas II. After the performance she was given a large star-shaped brooch with brilliants and rubies in gift by the elated emperor¹³, the empress Alexandra gifted her with a brilliant bracelet, a

12 The most comprehensive monograph on Milka Trnina was written by Mato Grković and entitled *Milka Trnina* (1966).

13 The brooch which Trnina got from the Russian emperor Nicholas II is kept in the Museum of Arts and Crafts in Zagreb.

lady from the public gave her a ring with a large sapphire and brilliants, while a young officer donated her silver belt from his Cossack uniform (Grković 1966: 99). Appearances in London followed, and also a tour through North America. During her stay in America she gave interviews for *The Sun* where she was announced as “one of the most aspiring Wagnerian interpreters of Germany” (Grković 1966: 103). *Boston Saturday Evening Gazette*, *Boston Daily Advertiser*, *Philadelphia Press* and other magazines gave positive comments on her arrival and stage appearances.¹⁴ In 1898 Trnina appeared in the Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb, donating part of proceeds from the performance to the Company for Embellishment of Plitvička Jezera. In return, the Company named one waterfall after her. Even in earlier times Trnina used to sing for humanitarian purposes, for example for St. Vitus’ Company, for the foundation of the Institute for the Blind, for the society Benefactor, for the building of the Croatian Teachers’ Home, and for needy students of the Croatian Music Institute (Grković 1966: 146). In the same year she appeared for the first time in London at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden. The English press enthusiastically reported on that appearance. From 1898 on she was engaged in Bayreuth, the city which, beside Munich, had priority in performing Wagner’s works (Grković 1966: 87).

In Bayreuth Trnina kept a diary, the parts of which are reproduced in the monograph *Milka Trnina* written by Mato Grković. Today there is no trace of the diary. It certainly was in possession of Grković who presented whole sections from the diary in order to prove his statements. In the preface he pointed out that Trnina did not want that anyone wrote about her life and tried to reject any such attempts, especially of those who wanted to deal with her private life. After her death, part of her memories reached Grković (1966: 6) who used them in writing the monograph. Definitely the word is here about the diary, and probably also about travelling notes on performances and performers from the times when she did not sing any more, but only attended presentations (comp. Grković 1966: 358). Correspondence between Trnina and Grković witnesses the friendly rapport they kept, as she signed it as “sis” (seka),¹⁵ while Grković described their relationship as

14 Press cuttings from various newspapers on Trnina and her performances are kept in the Croatian State Archives, HR-HDA-1791, in boxes no. 2-5.2.

15 Postcards which Trnina had sent to M. Grković are kept in the Croatian State Archives, HR-HDA-1791, box no. 1. Part of the letter in which Trnina thanked Grković on the text he had written about her life can be read in: Grković 1966: 429.

friendly and full of devotion and respect (1966: 7). Grković made personal contact with Trnina in order to discuss her life and he had insight or was in possession of her personal notes, therefore we may consider the book *Milka Trnina* a faithful document on life of the acclaimed Croatian opera singer. His credibility is important because from his book we can learn about the relationship between Milka Trnina and William Sturgis Bigelow, the man who donated pieces from his Japanese and Chinese collections to the singer. Part of these collectibles found place in the Collection of Non-European Cultures of the Ethnographic Museum.

William Sturgis Bigelow (1850 – 1926) was a Boston physician and big collector, in the first place of Japanese art. Under the pressure of his father, he decided to follow the family tradition of practising medicine, therefore after having received his degree in medicine from Harvard University he went to Europe on specialist training, although he never showed great interest in medicine. The lecture by Edward Sylvester Morse on Japan and Japanese art given at the Lowell Institute in Boston was a turning point in his life. Edward S. Morse was one of the first American collectors of Japanese art. His valuable collection of Japanese art, mainly constituting of pottery, makes the basis of the Department of the Art of Asia at the *Museum of Fine Arts* in Boston.¹⁶ In May 1882, Bigelow and Morse went to Japan together, and Bigelow unexpectedly decided to stay there for the next seven years (Lee 2000: 18). He started intensive research into the Buddhist philosophy and Mahayana Buddhism, finished the school for priests and became a valid member of the *Tendai* sect.¹⁷ He was fascinated with Japanese culture and started purchasing valuable objects, what his financial situation could allow (Lee 2000: 18).¹⁸ During the time of his stay in Japan, the state started opening towards foreign influences and was widely selling out its own riches. The Japanese were strongly attracted to the western culture; at the same time they were neglecting and selling out their own valuables (Lee 2000: 12). Even whole collections of artistic objects belonging to particular families were on sale, as they wanted to ensure financial funds for their children's education or for business

16 The basis of the Department of the Art of Asia at the *Museum of Fine Arts* in Boston is made of collections of E. S. Morse, E. F. Fenollosa and W. S. Bigelow. The text on the history of the Department of the Art of Asia at the *Museum of Fine Arts* in Boston can be found at <http://scholarship.shu.edu/theses/149/>.

17 <http://goo.gl/ICXxwd>, p. 508.

18 Bigelow's grandfather was a rich merchant in the China trade (Ibid).

development (Lee 2000: 14). Considering the fact that the Japanese were loosing interest for artefacts made by native artists, they were pressed to sell them to foreigners at lower prices. The Department of the Art of Asia of the *Museum of Fine Arts* in Boston originated from donations and acquisitions of collections of those collectors who spent time in Japan in the second half of the 19th century buying artefacts without any restrictions. Namely, in that time there did not exist any law on national treasures which could limit westerners in purchasing valuable Japanese works of art (Lee 2000: 17), which would then leave the country and become part of private collections and museums. Together with his fellow collector Ernest F. Fenollosa, whose collection has also become part of the Museum in Boston, Bigelow visited temples in order to discover their treasures (comp. Lee 2000: 18). Having made good use of the moment when treasures from private collections and temples were on sale (comp. Shattuck 1927: 5)¹⁹, he created his own worthy collection. “Fenollosa and E. S. Morse cooperated with Bigelow, and later with Dr Charles G. Weld, in a number of their acquisitions. The Bigelow and Weld collections were donated to the *Museum of Fine Arts* (Boston) and they comprise, together with continuous contributions by Bigelow, the supreme collection of the kind in the world, incomparable with collections in Japan”(Shattuck 1927: 5). In literature the word is mostly about Bigelow’s Japanese collection, while the Chinese one is being disregarded. In the bulletin of the *Museum of Fine Arts* in Boston from 1911²⁰ we can find confirmation on Bigelow’s collecting of Chinese artefacts. It says that his collection, kept in the Museum, comprises almost all aspects of Chinese and Japanese art²¹ and that the very same year they accepted a new worthy donation from W. S. Bigelow’s Chinese and Japanese collection.²² After his return to Boston, Bigelow became the Museum trustee, and remained one until his death (Lee 2000: 18). He donated his collection to the *Museum of Fine Arts* in Boston (Lee 2000: 23). It comprises

19 The article “William Sturgis Bigelow” written by Frederick C. Shattuck is kept in the Croatian State Archives under the signature HR-HDA-1791, box no. 1.

20 “The Bigelow gift”, in: *Museum of Fine Arts Bulletin*. Vol. 9, no. 53: pp. 48-50, Oct. 1911. Source: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4423528>.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid, p. 50. Data in the Museum bulletin on Chinese artifacts in the Bigelow Collection open the possibility to speculate on the premise that objects from China, as well as those from Japan, donated by Milka Trnina and deposited in the Collection of Non-European Cultures, were primarily in ownership of the collector from Boston.

26,000 pieces, among which there are items of Japanese painting, lacquer ware²³, swords, Chinese glass, also Buddhist and decorative sculptures (Lee 2000: 31). Little in fact is known about W. S. Bigelow's life. Part of his life was linked to Milka Trnina and Grković presented it in his book.

Trnina and Bigelow met in Europe, in Bayreuth or Munich (Premerl 2006: 155). Bigelow was a great admirer of Wagner, so it is possible that they got acquainted at one of Trnina's appearances. In 1899 they had an intense relationship in Bayreuth, which parts of her diary could confirm. That same year Trnina went on tour in North America with her aunt. On December 3rd 1899, after her performance, they left for Boston where Bigelow welcomed them (Grković 1966: 217) and proposed to her. First he gave her a large 38 carat diamond named "Cleveland", while a week from that he presented her a letter with his marriage proposal (Ibid), which she rejected. It is apparent from her diary that from then their relationship became more intimate (Grković 1966: 217). Trnina allowed "(Bigelow) to give her numerous pieces from his Japanese collection in gift, unique specimen of Japanese craft ..." (Grković 1966: 218). Unfortunately, Trnina's diary has not been found yet, so we cannot say for sure which exactly the objects in question were. We can read in the Grković text that Bigelow donated her many pieces, among them also the Japanese furniture, part of which is kept in the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb (comp. Grković 1966: 363). After a series of exhausting appearances, Trnina decided to buy a house in Berchtesgaden, in a mountainous district near Munich. After her last appearance in Munich 1906, she moved there on account of her illness which forced her to retire from the stage at the height of glory. Supposedly it was then that the Japanese furniture gifted by Bigelow and his other gifts were moved there. In 1913 Trnina moved to Zagreb, in an apartment on the third floor of the building owned by the then Bank of Serbia in Jurišićeva Street no. 4 (Grković 1966: 345). There she moved the furniture and other useful objects from her former house, while her home became the meeting-place of workers in culture and occasionally the spot where music evenings were organized (Grković 1966: 348). "It was possible to transport the largest part of furniture which had been brought from Berchtesgaden and later found appropriate conditions for station in Jurišićeva Street, to Demetrova Street" (Grković 1966: 363) where Trnina moved in 1929. "Her study was furnished with unique pieces of Japanese furniture of the museum signif-

23 Lacquer is used in China, Japan and Chorea as material applied onto a thin base in multiple layers, creating a thick and solid material the surface of which can then be carved.

icance – Bigelow's gift – part of which she donated to the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb when she moved to Vramčeva Street" (Grković 1966: 363).

According to Grković, Trnina moved to Vramčeva Street no. 3 in 1939, two years before her death. This could mean that she donated the furniture to the Museum at that time, but it does not tally with Museum's documentation concerning the donation by M. Trnina from 1930. She left the apartment in Jurišićeva Street in 1929 and moved to Demetrova Street no. 5, so it is most likely that the donation of furniture to the Museum took place at that moment. One can suppose that Grković mixed up numerous addresses where Trnina had lived with the date of the donation of objects.²⁴ Milka Trnina died on May 18th, 1941. Monographs and numerous press clippings speak of her greatness, so does the prize "Milka Trnina" given by the Croatian Society of Music Artists. On occasion of her hundred and fiftieth birth anniversary, the year 2013 was proclaimed Year of Milka Trnina.

Numerous objects kept in other Croatian museums also recall Trnina's life. The Zagreb City Museum cherishes a whole of about 250 items which belonged to M. Trnina,²⁵ mostly consisting of theatre costumes and costume sketches,²⁶ 117 photographs and furniture from her study. The Museum is also in possession of a map with the crane motive from Japan²⁷, which was the gift by W. S. Bigelow (Premerl 2006: 113). The City Museum Požega keeps several personal belongings of the singer, which went to the family Balog after her death in 1941 (Ivančević-Španiček 1996: 79). Of objects from the world cultures one should mention the Japanese curtain in gold work embroidery from the 19th century, and also the valuable Chinese tapestry made of silk, from the turning of the 17th to the 18th century, which served as a curtain in a Buddhist temple (Ibid) and was linked to W. S. Bigelow. Single objects which belonged to

24 The information that the Japanese furniture was donated to the Ethnographic Museum in 1939 is noted also in later works which quote Grković.

25 Part of objects from the collection was shown at the exhibition "Milka Trnina and London" in the Royal Opera House in London in 2006. A valuable catalogue entitled "Trnina and the Royal Opera House" was published accordingly. On occasion of the hundred and fiftieth birth anniversary of M. Trnina, the exhibition "Milka Trnina – the world-famous opera singer" was set in the Zagreb City Museum in December 2013. It comprised, among other, the cabinet and the folding screen which belonged to Milka Trnina, kept today at the Ethnographic Museum.

26 Costume sketches were made by the British painter and costume designer Percy Anderson (Premerl 2006: 157).

27 Inventory signature is MGZ 630 (Premerl 2006: 113).

Trnina can be found in the Croatian History Museum (a costume), in the Museum of Arts and Crafts (a brooch which she was given by the Russian emperor Nicolas II), and in the Croatian State Archives (correspondence).

The majority of about thirty items was donated to the Ethnographic Museum by the singer herself, on May 14th, 1930, when she was moving from Jurišićeva Street to Demetrova Street in Zagreb. On that occasion she donated household and decorative objects, and also Buddhist sculptures. Among household objects we can find Japanese furniture as well, a gift by W. S. Bigelow, mentioned by M. Grković in his book *Milka Trnina* (1966). The word is about a cabinet *kazari-dana* and two identical folding screens *byobu* (Fig. 1/p. 340). Trnina's niece Zlata Kranjčić²⁸ donated part of the legacy of the famous singer to the Museum²⁹ on September 11th 1941, several months after her death. It comprises four fragments of silken embroidered fabric from China or Japan, and a fragment of embroidered fabric from India. The last item which belonged to Milka Trnina was purchased on February 6th, 1954 from Zdenka Balog, whose family³⁰ got one sixth of Trnina's inheritance by will (comp. Ivančević-Španiček 1996: 79). The word is about a robe made of satin and silk from China, which has been exhibited in the Museum's permanent exhibition.

If we consider the fact, mentioned by M. Grković, that Bigelow gave Trnina numerous items from his collection in gift, and if we take into account that Bigelow had collected not only Japanese but also Chinese art objects, we can presume that the majority of items donated to the Museum had been gifted to Trnina by her friend Bigelow. In his Bostonian collection we can find, among other, lacquer artefacts, Chinese glass, as well as Buddhist and decorative objects, which are also represented among Trnina's objects in the Collection of Non-European Cultures. In the following pages they will be described in more detail.

28 In the catalogue of the Zagreb City Museum, Nada Premerl presents a variant of the family name Kraičić (2006: 156-157).

29 On the occasion she also donated a bag from the Dinaric area (inv. no. 13781) and a belt from Đakovo (inv. no. 13783) which were part of Milka Trnina's legacy, to the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb. Nada Kraičić left the furniture of M. Trnina's study to the Zagreb City Museum by will (Premerl 2006: 156-157).

30 The family Balog originated from Požega, the birthplace of Milka's mother.

TRNINA'S LEGACY IN THE COLLECTION OF NON-EUROPEAN CULTURES

The group of objects from Japan, donated to the Museum by Trnina, consists of two folding screens, a cabinet, a writing box, an incense sticks box, and an altar. All the pieces, but for the altar which is made of wood, are made of lacquer and wood and make part of the Museum's permanent exhibition. The lacquer *urushi*, as material for making different objects, is produced from the juice of the lacquer tree which grows in Japan, China and Chorea (Franc, ed. 1985: 95). These are also countries where the lacquer was traditionally used as material. After the lacquer has been obtained by cutting into the tree trunk, the liquid is heated in order to let the surplus water evaporate. In such a manner the sticky mass is produced, to which red or black pigment is added (Tsuda 2009: 259). Different materials like for example wood, paper, leather, porcelain or metal are used as the base to the lacquer; today plastic too is used as the base instead of wood (Kamachi 1999: 85). Lacquer is applied onto the surface in several layers, sometimes even in a hundred, and before each new layer it is necessary to wait for the former one to dry out. Motives can be carved only after the last layer has dried. Typical Chinese technique of cut lacquer should be mentioned here, consisting of coating the base in 80 to 100 layers, with intermediate layers made of lacquer and ashes, in order to create a base thick enough for decoration in haut relief (Franc, ed. 1985: 94). Several craftsmen often used to work together in the manufacture of such pieces due to the slow process of production; objects made of red lacquer were mostly carved in this way (Franc, ed. 1985). Lacquer ware, like boxes and furniture, was made and has still been made today bearing the Japanese term *shikki* (Kamachi 1999: 85).

Two two-wing folding screens from Japan found place in the Museum's permanent exhibition. By the way of manufacture they recall Chinese carved lacquer artefacts. Folding screens *byobu* are made of wood and many layers of lacquer, being of identical look. At the front side there is haut relief in red lacquer. A temple with people surrounded by trees is represented on each wing. Edges are carved in black and red lacquer, representing vegetal motives with a row of swastikas in between. A dragon carved in red lacquer is placed at the bottom part of each half. The back is also made of red lacquer, representing a landscape in bas relief.

Visitors can see the cabinet *kazari-dana* in the permanent exhibition, in the case *Japan*. The cabinet was a gift by W. S. Bigelow and was part of the interior of Milka Trnina's apartment in Jurišićeva Street 4 in Zagreb, which is

confirmed by one of the rare photographs of her private life. The photograph of her study where the cabinet *kazari-dana* appears, was published in the magazine *Dom i svijet*³¹ in 1923, while the original photography has so far remained undiscovered. The cabinet is composed of a four-legged base and an upper body part. It is made of wood and black, red and golden carved lacquer. The upper part is divided into several compartments and drawers with decorations in relief made of mother-of-pearl in the shape of flowers and birds. The manufacturing style is named *shibayama*. It includes the use of pieces of ivory, turtle-shell, shell and coral or, like in this case, of mother-of-pearl, inlaid in the base of golden lacquer so as to produce an ornament in haut relief.³² The *shibayama* style evolved in the 18th century, having reached its peak in the late 19th century, when objects in that style were largely produced in Yokohama for export.³³ Two more pieces of lacquer ware are exhibited in the case *Japan*. The word is about a writing box *suzuri-bako* and incense sticks box *kobako* (Fig. 4/p. 341). Both items are made of wood with coats of lacquer applied in techniques *maki-e*. The expression *maki-e* involves a series of techniques which use golden and/or silver powder in production of various motives on lacquered items (Murase 2000: 111-113). They are applied in painting, calligraphy, sculpture, lacquer, architectural decoration, and on different materials like textile, metal and ceramics (Ibid).

Maki-e techniques were developed in the 8th century and were used for decorating the most valuable lacquer objects in temples and imperial or noble court residences (Ibid). In the past, golden lacquer objects were symbols of luxury. Furniture and boxes decorated in *maki-e* techniques were used for storage of worthy items like scrolls, books, costumes, writing kits, incense sticks and tea (Ibid). Lacquer ware was in the first place linked with the elite and formed typical parts of the interior of Japanese aristocracy palaces. First phase in the procedure of manufacturing is the same for all lacquer ware. In the beginning coats of lacquer are applied in order to obtain a smooth, even base, mostly black in colour. Then paper stencils are used, which determine the shape of the future ornament on the object. This part is coated with lac-

31 Along with the article about the singer, the magazine *Dom i svijet* no. 6 from 1923, published two photographs featuring M. Trnina's study with the Japanese furniture (Fig. 2/p. 340 and Fig. 3/p. 341). The magazine is kept in the Croatian State Archives, under the signature HDA-1791, box no. 2.

32 <http://goo.gl/RCViBC>

33 <http://goo.gl/SlqtkB>

quer and immediately sprinkled with golden powder, in order to let it cling over the lacquer to the base (Tsuda 2009: 259-260). Beside powder, golden and silver leaflets or foil and pieces of cast metal can be used in manufacturing various motives on the lacquered base. The final coat of lacquer is always transparent. Techniques *maki-e* are used to produce flat motives or motives in bas relief. The relief is obtained by applying a mixture of unprocessed lacquer and whetstone powder, over which golden powder is then sprinkled. The base is left in black colour or golden powder of different size is applied to it (Tsuda 2009: 259-260).

The writing box *suzuri-bako* is made of wood coated with black lacquer, while the landscape in bas relief is created by using golden lacquer. The picture on the outer side of the lid represents an elevation on which a cherry-tree is growing, with geese in flight towards the moon in the background. The whole surface of the inner side of the lid is covered with golden powder, as is the whole inside of the box, with raised motives of trees and a river. The inside of the box is divided in three compartments, where the side ones were used for depositing brushes, while the middle part contains a water dropper in the shape of a small fan and an ink stone where ink was produced. On boxes decorated in *maki-e* techniques one could often find pictures representing landscapes with animals, as is the case with the box which was owned by M. Trnina.

The box *kobako* (the Japanese name literally means ‘small box’) is made of the same material using the same technique as in the production of the writing box. Its whole surface is decorated with golden powder. The outer side part is decorated in vegetal ornament, while the inner part is filled with thin golden powder. It serves as incense sticks container.

All described objects from Japan which belonged to Trnina were used in everyday life, except for the gilt wooden altar in the shape of two Buddhist deities, which belongs to the group of sculptures of religious purpose.

Items from China can be divided into religious, usable and decorative pieces. One should certainly mention valuable sculptures, among which religious figures in the shape of Buddhist deities made of wood, bronze and porcelain can be found, together with decorative bronze and porcelain figures. Large part of daily artefacts has been on display in the Museum’s permanent exhibition in the case *China*. Among them we can notice two vases,³⁴ a brush-holder, a

34 The importance of vases as essential parts of an interior can be observed in the book “Ping shi” (History of vases), written by Yuan Hongdao, who suggests how to make flower arrangements,

small vessel, a glass button for a Mandarin cap, a silken cloth and three snuff bottles (Fig. 5/p. 341).

Attention should be drawn to snuff bottles, two of which are made of glass with red and blue ornament respectively,³⁵ while one is made of porcelain and decorated with a painted motive of a bird. Motives represented on snuff bottles mostly symbolize health, wealth, longevity and good luck (Fahr-Becker 1999: 235). The Museum possesses snuff bottles with representation of a stylized dragon, an emperor's emblem and a spring sovereign, while a bull is depicted on the other one.

Taking snuff started in China in the first decades of the 18th century and was considered very beneficial for the health (Fahr-Becker 1999: 234). Quickly after their emergence, snuff bottles became a popular gift and a kind of a bribe (Fahr-Becker 1999: 235). Snuff bottles were normally made in small dimensions, 5 to 10 centimetres high, so as to be easily transportable. They had small openings in order to prevent tobacco from spoiling. The stopper was mostly made of the same material as the bottle. A small spoon made of horn, bone or ivory was attached to the stopper. Some snuff bottles had accessories in the form of small plates of the same material for depositing pieces of snuff, and also a holder, a box and a bag for carrying the bottle (Fahr-Becker 1999: 235). They were made of precious materials like jade, precious and semi-precious stone, coral, ivory, ceramics, metal and glass, but also of more accessible, cheaper matter like wood, kernel, coconut shell or bamboo.

Carving was often applied in manufacturing, for example in production of wooden sculptures, of objects made of jade, also in making brush holders of ivory and bamboo, gifted by Trnina. Bamboo carving is specific for China, and this technique was used in the manufacture of various objects. Figures were carved out of bamboo roots, while stems were used for making arm rests, fans (Zhiyu 1981: 242) or brush holders. The Museum owns a bamboo brush holder decorated on the front with a carved scene of a forest and five men inside it. Objects made of jade have a decorative function in this whole. Jade is carved in the shape of a sea-spider, a tablet filled with a motive of a bird among tree branches and a low pedestal. In the past jade was considered

which vases to use in summer and which in winter, and how to adjust the size of the vase to the space (Fahr-Becker 1999: 205).

35 Similar glass snuff bottles from China from 19th century are found in the Bigelow Collection at the *Museum of Fine Arts* in Boston. See: <http://goo.gl/EfjpfE>.

more valuable than silver or gold in China, due to its rarity and connection with immortality (Lukšić 1984: 273). At first it served as grave attribution as it was believed that jade could prevent body decay, while afterwards decorative items started to be manufactured of jade, for example hair decorations, as well as animal and human figures. A wooden toy in the shape of a handcart with two instrument players seated in it also belongs among carved items from China.

Textile objects comprise silken textile from China, a robe from China made of silk and satin, embroidered silken fragments from China or Japan, and an embroidered silken fragment from India. A brazen box for storage of amulets, decorated with turquoises and jewels, and a plate made of brass come from the territory of India and are on display in the case *India*.

CONCLUSION

Objects belonging to different world cultures and donated by the opera singer Milka Trnina, have been kept in the Collection of Non-European Cultures at the Ethnographic Museum, the origins of which can be found already in the National Museum. The Collection has been based on museum objects from the Ethnographic collection of the Archaeological-Historical Department at the Croatian National Museum, the Collection Berger, the Collection Berger-Chamber of Trades, the Collection at the Museum of Pedagogical-Literary Board (today's Croatian Museum of School), and the Collection at the Museum of Arts and Crafts. In the course of the Museum's foundation in 1919, these collections became basic collections of the Museum fund. The majority of items which had belonged to Milka Trnina, were personally donated by the singer while she was moving from one address to another in 1930. Textile items from Trnina's heirloom were donated or sold to the Museum by her heirs. The word is about versatile material which makes a whole linked in large measure to the life of the famous Croatian opera singer and the great Boston collector William Sturgis Bigelow, whose collections of Chinese and Japanese pieces are kept in the *Museum of Fine Arts* in Boston.

The whole Trnina consists of about thirty usable, religious, decorative and textile artefacts from the territory of Japan, China and India, exhibited in the Museum's permanent exhibition, while the rest is kept in the storage of the Collection of Non-European Cultures. One could presume that items from China and Japan were once part of W. S. Bigelow's collection which

had evolved in the course of his seven-year-long stay in Japan at the end of the 19th century. We can establish with determination that Bigelow gave the cabinet *kazari-dana* and folding screens *byobu* in gift to Trnina. These objects are presently exhibited on the permanent exhibition at the Ethnographic Museum, while in the past they were part of the interior of Trnina's living space what was documented by photographs.

In order to make an accurate determination of these items, especially concerning their provenance and age, this whole demands a more detailed interdisciplinary analysis by experts in Japanese and Chinese art.

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