

Vladimir Tkalčić: “Professional *Spiritus Agens*” of the Ethnographic Department of the Croatian National Museum¹

As one of the rare museum experts in Croatia, Vladimir Tkalčić was involved in events that would lead to the establishment of the Ethnographic Department of the Croatian National Museum in October 1919. Later on, during his fifteen-year service with the Museum (1919-1934), as its first keeper (Curator) and then Manager/Director (1925-1934), he continuously worked on directing and organising the professional and scientific work, covering a wide and nowadays still current range of museum activities. The article addresses two topics: Tkalčić's role in the establishment and placement of the Ethnographic Department of the Croatian National Museum in the building of the then Trade and Crafts Museum and Tkalčić's influence on the profiling of early professional activity, the emphasis being on the collection of items for the holdings.

Key words: Vladimir Tkalčić, Ethnographic Museum, museology, management policy, professional work

INTRODUCTION

Among the cultural and economic national institutions established at the time of the Croatian National Revival, the Croatian National Museum (founded in 1846) was entrusted with the task of collecting and consolidating cultural-historical (archaeological, historical, art history, ethnographic) and natural-scientific materials. Certain larger collections and sections of the Museum

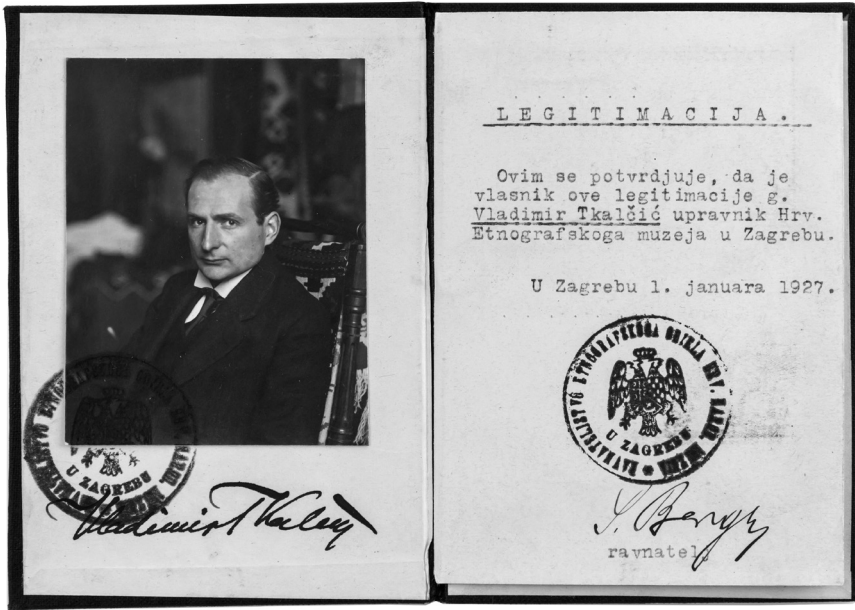
1 The article is based on a lecture given at the scientific conference *Tkalčić's Museum Mission as the Basis for Modern Museum Practices* organised to mark the 50th death anniversary of Vladimir Tkalčić (1883-1971). The conference, organised by the Croatian Ethnological Society and the Ethnographic Museum, was held in a hybrid form – in the Ethnographic Museum and on the Zoom platform – on 6 November 2021.

that had over time grown into departments or independent museum institutions held valuable ethnographic units which were continuously supplemented by donations of private collectors, individual cultural professionals, educators, and other public officials in the second half of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century.

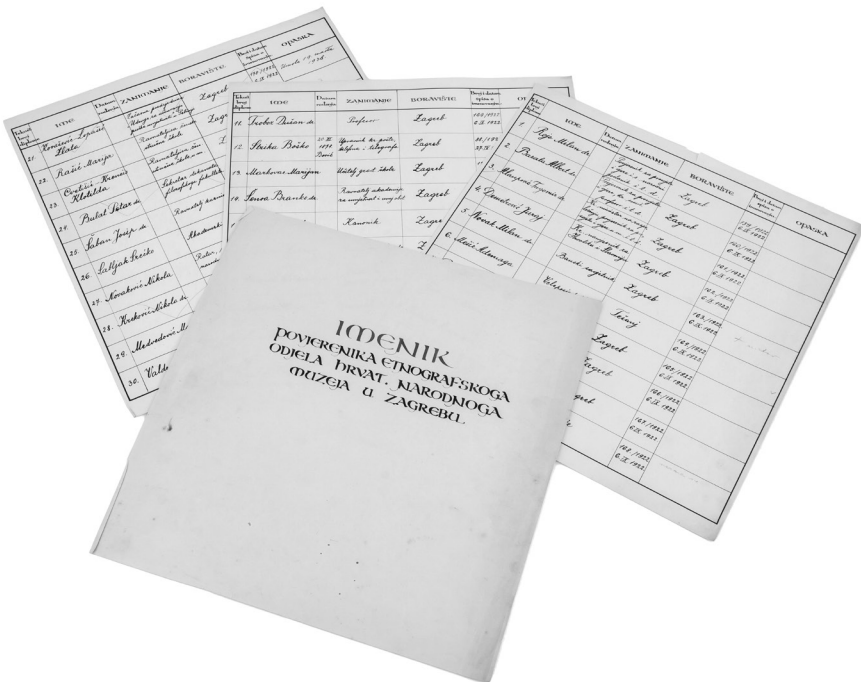
Initiatives aimed at establishing a Croatian *ethnographic* museum, a *museum of an ethnographic nature* (I. Kršnjavi, B. Bogišić, J. Purić, M. Cepelić, S. Berger, V. Deželić) that were launched in the second half of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century were not supported by sectoral institutions.² The collection of the Zagreb industrialist and merchant Salomon Berger, which the Royal National Government of Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia (hereinafter: National Government), Divine Worship and Teaching Commission, purchased for 600 000 kroner in April 1919, proved to be crucial to the establishment of the Ethnographic Department of the Croatian National Museum (HR-HDA-512, Ethnographic Museum, General Files, box 1, 1918-1921; Peić Čaldarović 2021:108).³ Over the following half a year, now the *National Collection of Salomon Berger* functioned as an independent unit under his management and in his apartment. Professor Vladimir Tkalčić from the Archaeological and Historical Department of the National Museum, who was appointed keeper⁴ of the Collection, paid special attention to finding adequate permanent placement for its objects. He proposed the premises of the Trade and Crafts Museum, which already accommodated an ethnographic collection, also purchased from Berger in 1905.⁵ The agreement of the Chamber of Trades and Crafts, under whose authority that Museum operated, to provide, against a certain consideration, a part of its rooms (on the first floor) for the placement of the newly purchased Berger's collection secured the space conditions for the establishment of the new ethnographic department, that is, museum. That was the first process implemented in accordance with the new Act on the Croatian National Museum in Zagreb of 26 June 1918, which, in addition to the four existing departments (Zoological, Mineralogy and Petrography, Geological and Paleontological, and Archaeological and Historical Departments) opened the perspective of establishing new museum departments (Peić Čaldarović 2012: 101, 103).

The order establishing the Ethnographic Department of the Croatian National Museum (No. 37605) was adopted by Ban Ivan Palaček on 22 October 1919, where in fact the *National Collec-*

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- 2 For more on a chronology of failed initiatives to establish an ethnographic museum in Zagreb, see Muraj (2006).
 - 3 For more on the content of the collection, see text below. The Collection, marked as B (Berger) in the inventory of the Ethnographic Museum, combines more than 8 000 objects, mostly textile materials from Posavina, Slavonia, Ravni kotari, and Bukovica, then west Bosnia, Macedonia, and certain European and Middle Eastern countries. These textile materials were made with old-fashioned weaving and embroidery techniques, some of which were forgotten already at the end of the 19th century, which gives them a significant cultural and historical value. It is interesting that, when collecting textile materials all around Croatia, Berger himself fished certain fragments from the garbage and thus "saved" them from recycling and reprocessing into stationary.
 - 4 The documentation materials of that time related to the occupation of a person qualified to keep a museum collection note the terms *keeper* and *curator* (or the version *keeper/curator*, as, for example, in Tkalčić's museum card from 1921). Both terms will be interchangeably used in the text below.
 - 5 The Collection was exhibited at promotional and sale exhibitions at the time; in the Ethnographic Museum it is marked by the signature III, i.e., BK (Berger-Komora (Chamber)). It contains over 1 200 various textile, wooden, and metal objects for everyday use, mostly made within the framework of organised home crafts and production.



Picture 1. Museum card of Vladimir Tkalčić, 1927., Documentation of the Ethnographic museum, Photo by Nina Koydl



Picture 2. Register of Museum Representatives, 1922. (detail), Documentation of the Ethnographic museum, Photo by Nina Koydl

tion of Salamon Berger was added to the national museum institution.⁶ Furthermore, the ethnographic collections of the Archaeological and Historical Department of the Croatian National Museum, the Chamber of Trades and Crafts in Zagreb, the Croatian School Museum operating together with the Educational and Literary Association, and the Museum of Arts and Crafts and the Royal Trade School in Zagreb were also included in the initial holdings. Salamon Berger was appointed Manager/Director of the newly established department, while Vladimir Tkalčić was his first Curator.

VLADIMIR TKALČIĆ IN THE ETHNOGRAPHIC MUSEUM (1919-1934)

During this fifteen-year service with the Ethnographic Department of the Croatian National Museum (1919-1934), as its first Curator and then Manager/Director 1925-1934), Vladimir Tkalčić continuously worked on commencing and then directing and organising its professional and scientific work, covering a wide and nowadays still current range of museum activities: inventurisation and cataloguing of the initial holdings, systematic collection and exhibition of objects, field work and document keeping, library and publishing activity, and scientific work, as well as meeting the basic technical standards (photographic equipment, means of work of preparators), etc. Two topics will be briefly discussed here:

- Tkalčić's role in the establishment and placement of the Ethnographic Department of the Croatian National Museum in the building of the then Trade and Crafts Museum
- Tkalčić's concept of professional work, i.e. the profiling of early professional activity in the Ethnographic Museum, with an emphasis on the collection of materials.

The paper is mostly based on the archive materials of the Croatian State Archives (HR-HDA-512, Ethnographic Museum, General Files, box 1-5; in the period from 1918 to 1924) and the documentation of the Ethnographic Museum, with references to the existing literature, primarily two works by Tkalčić on the newly established department/museum (from 1922 and 1924). Given that by the beginning of World War II, both in official acts and private correspondence, different names of the newly established institution were used – mostly Ethnographic Department of the Croatian National Museum and (Croatian) Ethnographic Museum – both versions will be used in the text.⁷ As to the functioning of the Museum as an independent institution or a department of the Croatian National Museum, Dubravka Peić Čaldarović assumes that Salamon Berger and Vladimir Tkalčić, as top people of the museum that was considered one of the “more current and perspective segments” (2012:119) in the newly established state, enjoyed a high degree of

6 According to Peić Čaldarović, the process of establishing the Ethnographic Museum went as follows: first, in spring 1919 the National Government purchased Berger's collection, then ethnological materials, with Vladimir Tkalčić as the Curator, were taken from the Archaeological and Historical Department, and materials of the Museum of Arts and Crafts were added. Under the order of the Ban of 22 October, the National Collection of Salamon Berger and materials from the Trade and Crafts Museum were added to ethnographic materials of the National Museum, and thus the Ethnographic Department was actually established, to which then the ethnographic collection of the Croatian Pedagogical Association was added (2012: 108).

7 In the text *Etnografski muzej u Zagrebu (Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb)* from 1924, which is actually a print of the lecture given at the 1st Congress of Slavic Geographers and Ethnographers, Tkalčić himself, when addressing the institution, used two versions of its name – “Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb, i.e., “Ethnographic Department of the Croatian National Museum”. Peić Čaldarović also points to the unclear organisational and status position of the Museum (2012: 109).

work autonomy, although formally the department belonged to the oldest national museum institution until the latter was shut down in 1940.

TKALČIĆ'S ROLE IN THE ESTABLISHMENT AND PLACEMENT OF THE ETHNOGRAPHIC DEPARTMENT OF THE CROATIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM IN THE BUILDING OF THE THEN TRADE AND CRAFTS MUSEUM

According to archive data, Tkalčić, as one of the rare museum experts at the time, was involved from the onset in the events surrounding Berger's collection that would lead to the establishment of the Ethnographic Museum. The initiative came from Tkalčić and Josip Brunšmid, that is, from the Archaeological and Historical Department of the National Museum as early as 1918 (HR-HDA-512, Ethnographic Museum, General Files, box 1, 1918-1921)⁸. Pursuant to the order of the National Government, Divine Worship and Teaching Department, of 24 June 1918, Tkalčić, who at the time was the Curator of the Archaeological and Historical Department of the National Museum, examined Berger's collection and on 29 August reported the Government on it. He stated that with the help of the owner a "summary inventory" (list of items) was made, indicating that the collection had 11 561 items, of which 10 581 textile objects, 436 church objects, 380 objects of folk and artistic crafts, and 164 works of art ("products of art"). Moreover, Tkalčić also proposed to the National Government that the ethnographic materials concerned be procured for the "national treasury", which consequently raised the question of the establishment of an ethnographic department of the National Museum:

"The establishment of an ethnographic department would meet a long-recognised need of the national museum, which, unfortunately, has remained incomplete until the present day on the ground of not having such a department and does not paint a cultural and historic picture of our homeland that would match its factual development. The ethnographic treasure of our homeland has been disappearing at an increasing pace, which will become even faster with the consequences of the current war. It is high time to save what still can be saved. Thus, it is necessary to start collecting this treasure from all available sources as soon as possible and to present it, in a way that is worthy of science and national pride, to the public in the newly established ethnographic department of the national museum" (HR-HDA-512, Ethnographic Museum, General Files, box 1, 1918-1921).

Following Tkalčić's report, several days later, that is, on 3 September 1918, the Director of the Archaeological and Historical Department of the National Museum Josip Brunšmid sent a letter to the competent Divine Worship and Teaching Department recommending also the purchase of Berger's collection as "an excellent basis for developing a Croatian ethnographic museum, which we should have established a long time ago but still do not have". On that occasion, he appealed that the collection "should not be put into the hands of dilettantes who could use it for selfish and advertising purposes and then neglect it but rather given to serious museum experts whose professional qualifications provide a guarantee that they will treat it with the respect

8 A part of files in the archive unit (box) 1 from 1918 and 1919 does not bear any number/markings. Quotations given without a note in this chapter refer to unmarked documents from the mentioned archive unit.

owed to their reputation in the scientific world”, and that the supplementation of the collection should start immediately upon its purchase.⁹

The next two important instances where Tkalčić played a significant role were the value assessment of Berger’s collection, according to the letter of 29 September 1918 addressed to the Government, and the report, i.e., opinion on the possibility of placing Berger’s collection in the premises of the Trade and Crafts Museum of 9 November 1918.

“At the request of the royal national government, divine worship and teaching department, No. 25.397 of 16 September 1918, I report that, in my opinion, a price of 600 000 kronor, in words: six hundred thousand kronor, can be approved for the collection of S. Berger, who, however, judging by today’s prices of the items contained in his collection, could receive much more” (HR-HDA-512, Ethnographic Museum, General Files, box 1, 1918-1921).

Tkalčić noted that the premises of the Trade and Crafts Museum were “very adequate, almost ideal museum premises”. He proposed that Berger’s collection be placed and exhibited in two large halls on the first floor of the building, which up to that moment accommodated various samples of craft and industrial products owned by domestic and foreign companies. Tkalčić suggested that the companies should be given a fourteen-day period to remove the mentioned exhibition materials and that, which is especially noteworthy, the existing collection of ethnographic objects that was purchased from Berger in 1905 and the existing showcases owned by the Chamber of Trades and Crafts should be made available to the National Government.

The Sale Contract between the Royal National Government of Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia and Salamon Berger was concluded on 5 April and ratified by the Government on 11 April 1919, with an Annex of 29 April 1919. In addition to detailed provisions about the amount, terms and conditions, and the payment plan, the Contract included a few other interesting elements. As there was no adequate space where the purchased collection would be placed and exhibited, it was agreed that until further notice the objects would remain at Berger’s apartment in Zrinjevac, with Berger as their temporary keeper. In addition, the Contract made arrangements that a part of the collection – a total of 1 147 objects (textile objects, church objects, products of applied crafts, and artistic objects) – would remain in Berger’s apartment permanently, i.e., until his death, and specified the obligation of the buyer to “establish a special department of the Croatian national museum in Zagreb from the products of folk home crafts, which is to forever bear the name ‘Collection of S. Berger’”.¹⁰

The record of acceptance of “the collection of folk textile products, church objects, products of folk and artistic crafts, and works of art” (here called “Ethnographic Collection of S. Berger”) of 7 May 1919 was signed by Salamon Berger, Royal Ban’s Advisor Milan Novak, and Vladimir Tkalčić as assigned expert. That act also provided that the inscription “Ethnographic Collection of S. Berger, property of the Croatian and Slavonian Government Treasury” was to be placed on the front door of Berger’s apartment (the public had no right of access to the collection) and that

9 Brunšmid also proposed that “a young, healthy, and talented force should be sent abroad for education in order to get, in a several-year time span, a properly educated specialist, who over time could be entrusted with the independent management of the ethnographic department of the Croatian national museum” (HR-HDA-512, Ethnographic Museum, General Files, box 1, 1918-1921).

10 The buyer was also bound by the Contract to remove non-ethnographic objects from purchased materials and distribute them between the existing public collections.

Tkalčić would mark objects that remained in the apartment until Berger's death as "Property of the Croatian and Slavonian Government Treasury"). Finally, until the establishment of the Ethnographic Museum in October, Tkalčić acted as the Curator of the Croatian National Museum and the Ethnographic Collection of S. Berger in Zagreb.¹¹

To be added to this chronology is another Tkalčić's engagement aimed at establishing the ethnographic museum: the weekly *Jugoslavenska njiva* published in August 1919 his text *Jedna naša kulturna potreba* (*A Culture Need of Ours*) where he critically reviewed the function of ethnographic materials in the context of the existing museum institutions, noting that, for the most part, those were textile materials, as well as the work of the Trade and Crafts Museum in general as he found that the latter had not been, for quite some time, fulfilling its basic task of exhibiting on a permanent basis products and commodities intended for trade and that its building was the most suitable one for the ethnographic museum. He stated that it was high time to establish such a museum, whose work should be based on scientific foundations – "on more scientific qualifications and systematic research work" (1919: 541). Given that there was no space to accommodate the purchased Berger's collection, Milan Rojc, Head of the Divine Worship and Teaching Department, as deduced by Peić Čaldarović (2012: 106), found Tkalčić's proposal to place ethnographic materials in the non-functional exhibition rooms of the Trade and Crafts Museum to be a life-saver.¹²

Vladimir Tkalčić, as one of the rare profiled museum experts at the time, actively and continuously participated, both *ex officio* and, evidently, out of his personal affinity, in the events that led to the purchase of Berger's collection and, consequently, establishment of the Ethnographic Department of the Croatian National Museum – thus, it comes as no surprise that he was appointed its first Curator.

TKALČIĆ'S CONCEPT OF THE PROFESSIONAL WORK IN THE ETHNOGRAPHIC MUSEUM

At a conference dedicated to the founders and first curators of museums in Croatia (Osijek, 1997)¹³, in a lecture entitled *Vladimir Tkalčić – prvi kustos i ravnatelj Etnografskog muzeja u Zagrebu* (*Vladimir Tkalčić – The First Curator and Director of the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb*), Ivanka Ivkanec described Tkalčić as "a herald of the concept, organisation, and implementation of the professional museum work and mission" (EMZ, manuscript). Indeed, according to the

11 In early September 1919, Tkalčić, signed as the „curator of the Croatian national museum and the ethnographic collection of S. Berger in Zagreb”, sent letters asking individuals to return objects (mostly folk costumes) borrowed from Berger's collection which had now become public property.

12 In an article written to celebrate the 140th anniversary of the Chamber of Trades and Crafts in Zagreb, the historian Mira Kolar-Dimitrijević also concludes that, besides Berger, Tkalčić played an important role in the transformation of that institution into the Ethnographic Museum (1992; compare Peić Čaldarović 2012: 106).

13 The academic conference *Founders and First Curators of Museums in Croatia*, marking the 120th establishment anniversary of the Museum of Slavonia, was held in Osijek on 11 and 12 December 1997 under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia. It gathered 37 lecturers, including Ivanka Ivkanec from the Ethnographic Museum with the theme *Vladimir Tkalčić – The First Curator and Director of the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb*. A comprehensive collection of conference papers was published in 1999.

archive materials, immediately upon the establishment of the Ethnographic Department of the Croatian National Museum, Tkalčić acted as its Curator and undertook a set of actions aimed at regulating and organising its professional work. The early exhibition activity of the Museum was actually carried out at two levels: the domestic and international exhibition activity that was focused on developing and representing cottage industry, that is, products intended for sale on the domestic and international markets, was directed by the Director Salamon Berger as a result his previous work, while Tkalčić conceptualised professional work and established the collection and exhibition policy in accordance with the museological standards at the time (compare Bušić 2009: 298).¹⁴

The basic concepts of the museum work, especially during the initial period of the Museum's activity, are best reflected in two similarly profiled texts by Tkalčić bearing the same title – *Etnografski muzej u Zagrebu* (*Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb*), where the first one was published in the magazine *Narodna starina*, and the second one was given by Tkalčić as a lecture at the *1st Congress of Slavic Geographers and Ethnographers* in Prague in 1924, printed in a separate form. In the mentioned texts, Tkalčić wanted to present to the domestic and general professional public the newly established museum – the history of collecting ethnographic materials, the very circumstances of the Museum's establishment, its organisational structure, and diversified activities.¹⁵ In line with the understanding of the folk culture and museum activity at the time, following on Radić's theoretical and methodological postulates which were identifiable in his work *Osnova za sabiranje i proučavanje građe o narodnom životu* (*The Basis for Collecting and Studying Materials on Folk Life*) (1897)¹⁶, and being aware of the current socio-economic movements, unequal representation of materials, and the lack of accurate data on the objects in the initial holdings, Tkalčić actually defined the research subject, set a direction for the professional work in the Museum, and presented the elements of the developed early activity (1922: 74):

- inventorisation, cataloguing, and systematisation of more than 20 000 objects of the initial holdings in accordance with “the scientific museological principles”
- entering of critical indications, descriptions, and visual identifiers in inventory books and catalogue units
- systematic collection of objects to have/give “a clear presentation of the entire folk life of our people”
- doing field work “in a scientific way from the ethnographic perspective”
- scientific study
- aesthetic exhibition
- establishment of a specialised library
- organisation and implementation of conservation and preparations activities
- organisation and conducting of pedagogical and educational work
- equipment of technical workshops (for work with objects, drawing, photographing)

14 For more on the collision between Berger's and Tkalčić's vision of the museum work, see Brenko in this publication.

15 He provides a short history of collecting ethnographic objects in Croatia since the national revival, writes about “the folk culture”, and uses the phrases “folk treasure” and “ethnographic objects” (1922: 73-75). In 1924, Tkalčić provided more information about the organisation and spatial structure of the Museum, the way of exhibition, and other aspects of the activity.

16 *The Basis* was presented in Prague as a well thought-out model of research and collection work.

- Folk Music Section
- Section for Applying Peasant Craftmanship
- in preparation: anthropological and cinematographic sections.

Tkalčić held the opinion that the basic task of the established Museum was to provide a clear presentation of “the entire folk life of our people” (1922: 74), that is:

“to show all life and culture of our people, in the first place of peasants, in particular, from Croatian regions; furthermore, to paint a picture of the life and culture, with special emphasis on peasants, of all other civilised peoples, in particular the Slavic ones, and the life and culture of half-civilised and wild peoples, which as such would be used for scientific study of our nation and of man in general; in addition, to improve educational programmes and general spreading of education and serve as a source of inspiration for arts and crafts; and, as a role-model institution, to represent a part of our whole national culture” (1924: 3).

Decades of the Museum’s future functioning that followed on the cultural and historic method and practice in the Croatian ethnology, some museum activity standards that are still relevant today, and a part of the activity that has been shut down over time can be discerned from those guidelines. Each mentioned segment of the early organisation and profiling of the professional work in the Museum would require a more detailed presentation and analysis, in particular, if Tkalčić’s engagement is taken into consideration – as was presented at the scientific conference *Tkalčić’s Museum Mission as the Basis for Modern Museum Practices*.¹⁷ Following the lecture, the early collection activity of the Ethnographic Museum will be briefly considered here.

When it came to collecting materials, Tkalčić set to tackle practical work immediately after the establishment of the Museum. One of the first steps was sending a letter to craftspeople and factories which kept their exhibits and/or showcases in the premises of the Trade and Crafts Museum. For example, as early as by the end of October, he contacted Rudolf Lukinić who manufactured candles in Karlovac; the factory Duga Resa d.d. (cotton spinning and weaving factory); Ivan Fidler, owner of *Prva slavonska mekanička tkavnica platna, zavod za apretiranje, tvornica za izradbu lana i konoplja* (*First Slavonian Mechanic Weaving Mill, Dressing Workshop, Hemp and Flax Processing Factory*) (Osijek, Vladislavci), etc. He informed them about the establishment of a new department of the museum and made a request, on behalf of the new national institution “that is to serve not only the science but also, in particular, the representation of our people” (HR-HDA-512, Ethnographic Museum, General Files, box 1, br.10/1919.), to provide certain exhibits, associated illustrative materials, or showcases, which the addressees regularly answered. Worth mentioning is also the procurement of original objects of “ethnographic and scientific value” from the Royal Croatian National Theatre (No. 27/1919; reference to 32/1920.).

17 Four participants from the Ethnographic Museum gave their lectures: A. Brenko (*Ekonomija ili etnografija? Uloga Vladimira Tkalčića u prvom razdoblju djelovanja Etnografskoga muzeja u Zagrebu* (*Economy or Ethnography? Vladimir Tkalčić’s Role during the Initial Operation of the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb*)), K. Bušić (Vladimir Tkalčić: „stručni spiritus agens“ Etnografskog odjela Hrvatskog narodnog muzeja (Vladimir Tkalčić: Professional *Spiritus Agens* of the Ethnographic Department of the Croatian National Museum)), M. Dronjić (*Vladimir Tkalčić, fotograf Etnografskog odjela Hrvatskog narodnog muzeja* (Vladimir Tkalčić, *Photographer of the Ethnographic Department of the Croatian National Museum*)), A. Vlatković (*Muzejska dokumentacija: temelji stručnoga i znanstvenoga rada Etnografskoga muzeja u Zagrebu* (*Museum Documentation: Basis of the Professional and Scientific Work of the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb*)).

The management of the Museum at the time sent a number of letters to individuals asking for targeted objects to supplement the holdings or complete certain units and organised targeted campaigns to collect materials. For example, in co-operation with public and trade schools of the Zagreb region, in 1922 a campaign was launched to collect Easter eggs, which over the following years, under the auspices of the Regional Government, Zagreb Education and Religion Department, transformed into a co-operation of schoolchildren on the collection of various ethnographic materials as part of their extracurricular activities (HR-HDA-512, Ethnographic Museum, General Files, box 3).

Over the first few years following the establishment of the Museum, its holdings were sporadically enlarged with ethnographic objects which were subsequently removed from other public collections and/or museums and added as supplements to the sections of the initial holdings. Acceptance reports and lists of materials were signed by Berger as Director and Tkalčić as Curator, who is assumed to have participated in the compilation and control of lists, that is, objects (EMZ, documentation).

Materials were largely collected through an extensive network of the museum representatives. Such practice was inherited from the Archaeological and Historical Department and actually represented a modality of amateur and voluntary field work on collecting materials for the Museum's collections and archives that involved distinguished persons from political and cultural life, as well as literate individuals from local communities (village priests, teachers, craftspeople, peasants...). Regulation on museum representatives was adopted on 30 August 1921 (No. 34.349), and a special booklet with instructions for the collection of materials entitled *Naputak za povjerenike (Instruction for Representatives)* was published. In practice, the *Instruction* was sent out as a thank-you for objects collected and sent to the museum, directing in that way further collection work of engaged individuals. Archive materials hold data on appointments, acknowledgments, and letters of thanks addressed to numerous individuals. Particularly worth noting is the so-called *Register of Museum Representatives*, which is kept in the documentation of the Ethnographic Museum and holds a list of associates. The first listed associate is Milan Rojc, Head of the Divine Worship and Teaching Department at the time, followed by prominent persons of cultural and political life, such as: Marijan Markovac, Rudolf Valdec, Julije Benešić, Srećko Sabljak, Ademaga Mešić, etc. Vladimir Tkalčić himself communicated with representatives, addressing each and every one with equal respect, patience, and gratitude and repeatedly sending postcards and letters.

Objects for the holdings were also collected through field work, which was generally undertaken by the curators – Vladimir Tkalčić and Milovan Gavazzi. As an example of a comprehensive and somewhat adventurously profiled field research, worth singling out is the so-called Pokuplje expedition (excursion) from 1923, when a nine-man group consisting of museum experts, painters, and adventurers went kayaking on the Kupa river from Karlovac to Sisak and visited 34 villages on both riverbanks to explore the way of life of the local inhabitants. On that occasion, several hundreds of objects were collected and many documented photographs were taken for the Museum.

In the early years, the holdings were also supplemented by valuable donations of individuals, public, political, and cultural figures (e.g. collection of “tissues and embroideries” bequeathed by

Milko Cepić, canon of Đakovo, in 1920).¹⁸ Moreover, the Museum received objects for so-called “permanent storage” (e.g. folk musical instruments collected by Franjo Ksaver Kuhač, owned by the Croatian Music Institute; Collection of Ademaga Mešić from Tešanj).

In addition to professional work, immediately after the establishment of the Museum, Tkalčić started gathering professional and technical employees and procuring the necessary furniture, technical equipment, and other aids and means of work. With a view to supplementing catalogue units with “good paintings, drawings, or photographs of the objects” (1922: 74) and standardising work in the Museum and in the field, he focused his attention on furnishing a drawing and photographing room (atelier) and procuring photographic and phonographic equipment, as well as “cinematographic recording equipment” (1922: 75). It should be noted that he himself was involved in the documentation work: he initiated and implemented numerous field researches in villages, made field notes and drawings himself, took photographs in the field, recorded museum activities and objects, and made employees’ portraits, thus laying the foundation of the museum documentation holdings. The method that Tkalčić established for keeping museum documentation shows considerable consistency with the modern practice of documentation keeping of the Ethnographic Museum and the applicable regulations in the field of museums.¹⁹ Tkalčić gets the credit for starting and profiling the early publishing activity of the Ethnographic Museum – the editions *Zbirka jugoslavenskih ornamenata* (*Collection of Yugoslav Ornaments*) and *Etnološka biblioteka* (*Ethnological Library*), where the latter published two expert papers by Tkalčić (*Seljačke nošnje u području Zagrebačke gore* (*Traditional Peasant Costumes in the Territory of Zagrebačka gora*), 1925, and *Seljačko čilimarstvo u Jugoslaviji* (*Peasant Rug Making in Yugoslavia*), 1929) – and for presenting the Museum to the general and professional public both at a national and international level (co-operation with trade journals, participation in congresses, etc.).

Tkalčić’s versatility is evidenced by the fact that in the second half of the 1920s he was a member of the so-called folkloristic commissions, thus taking part in peasant culture festivals,²⁰ and of

18 Cepelić’s collection was shipped from Đakovo to Zagreb by Vladimir Tkalčić himself (see HR-HDA-512, Ethnographic Museum, General Files, box 1, No. 30/1920). At the end of the document *Popis ili katalog predmeta* (*List or Catalogue of Objects*) (typed transcription), in which Cepelić provided valuable information on the collected materials, was a hand-written note made by Tkalčić concluding with regret that the document was left unfinished (EMZ, documentation).

19 For more on the role and work of Vladimir Tkalčić on compiling and keeping museum documentation of the Ethnographic Museum see Vlatković in this publication. Tkalčić presented an early systematisation of collections – around 30 000 objects grouped by type of object, that is, by material and location (geographic principle) – in Prague in 1924 (textile/costumes; woodwork / shepherds’ cups; flasks; pottery; jewellery; coppersmith objects; children’s toys; religious objects; Easter eggs; craft/farming/fishing tools / crafts/farming/fishing; models of peasant buildings and implements; objects from closer countries; “exotic” collections, and, in their infancy: collection of furniture and peasant interiors; collection of ethnographic paintings).

20 Experts in folk culture participated for the first time in the so-called folkloristic jury at the parish choir championship in 1929: Dragutin Boranić (Editor of *Zbornik za narodni život i običaje* (*Folk Life and Customs Collection*)), Salamon Berger (Director of the Ethnographic Museum), Vladimir Tkalčić (Curator of the Ethnographic Museum), Milovan Gavazzi (professor at the Ethnology Department of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb), etc. It was the beginning of a closer co-operation of the current cultural policy of the peasant movement and the science, that is, a hint of a larger cultural and political engagement of experts, which would particularly intensify in the 1930s (compare Bušić 2016: 93).

commissions for objects of applied folk crafts, while his seriousness is shown in his resolute stand when associations, institutions, or individuals sought a service or co-operation with the Museum contrary to the rules of the profession. For example, when the Sarajevo-based Croatian Singing Society “Trebević” requested to borrow a folk costume and enquired about its price, Tkalčić replied rather sharply: “our museum is a scientific institute and neither has ‘in stock’ nor lends folk costumes from these areas. Moreover, our museum is not an information centre where folk costumes can be borrowed” (HDA-512-Ethnographic Museum, Zagreb, General Files, No. 3-150/1928, 14.5.).

CONCLUSION

In line with the understanding of the folk culture at the time – “a part of our national essence, a holder of our most beautiful features, which we are to lay, as our most beautiful gift, on the altar of progress of general culture” (1922: 75) – Vladimir Tkalčić, being aware of the current socio-economic trends, saw his diligence as “an eminent national matter” (*ibid.*). A realistic, critical view of the initial holdings of the Ethnographic Museum, a clear profiling of work in all fields of activity immediately after the establishment, his vision of the future work and development, and the totality of his public activity testify to the fact that Tkalčić was “a natural born museum man” (Gavazzi 1971: 136). His colleague and friend Milovan Gavazzi bid farewell to this unwavering enthusiast, the keeper of the Ethnographic Department of the Croatian National Museum, in well-chosen words, calling him: “a professional *spiritus agens*” of the Ethnographic Museum and one of “the pioneers of our museology, including archaeological museology, art and crafts museology, and ethnographic museology” (Gavazzi 1971: 136).

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