

# Collection of Traditional Costumes of European Countries in the Context of the Ethnographic Museum: Past, Present and Future

*The paper deals with the Collection of traditional costumes of European countries of the Ethnographic Museum, which is formed in 2015 and contains mostly individual items, fragments and, to a lesser extent, sets of clothing from Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Austria, and other European countries.*

**Keywords:** Ethnographic Museum, Collection of traditional costumes of European countries, museum collections, Salamon Berger

## INTRODUCTION

The museum collection is the fundamental form of organizing museum objects in the museum, and the main role in defining its content is played by the curator, who, depending on his knowledge, specialty and worldview, collects objects that fit into the collection, and removes those that are no longer relevant to its basic idea and vision (cf. Maroević 1993:158). Of course, the curator is influenced by the historical period in which he works, so the policies of collecting objects and fitting them into specific collections change accordingly. Maroević emphasizes that the museum collection is the result of a process of accumulation with a predetermined purpose (cf. Maroević 1993:159), but what if the understanding of that purpose changes over time? How to reconcile the collection of objects collected based on the worldview of the 19th century museum with contemporary museological tendencies? This paper will show how the Collection of traditional costumes of European countries was created and how the objects that are part of it today were collected in certain periods of the Ethnographic Museum's history.

## HISTORY OF THE MUSEUM AND THE POLICY OF COLLECTING OBJECTS OF EUROPEAN PROVENANCE<sup>1</sup>

The story of the objects that today are the holdings of the Ethnographic Museum begins before its formal establishment. The establishment of the National Museum in 1846 was the incentive for the collection of ethnographic material, which until then had been collected in private ethnographic collections by individual enthusiasts (cf. Gjetvaj 1989:11-12). The incentive for collecting also came from the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts, which in 1888 established a committee with the task to collect and publish ethnographic material and studies (cf. Brenko 2019:11). After the reorganization of the National Museum and the separation of individual departments, which thus become independent institutions, the collection of ethnographic material once again found itself in the hands of private collectors, guided by their own interests and criteria (cf. Gjetvaj 1989:12). The most interesting collector of this kind in the context of today's Collection of traditional costumes of European countries is Salamon Berger, wholesaler and industrialist, and the first director of the Ethnographic Museum. He collected a large number of objects in the territory of Croatia, especially Posavina, then Bosnia, Macedonia, Czech Republic, and Slovak Republic, mostly textile objects, especially parts of costumes, few sets, woven and embroidered fragments, carpets and a number of other objects (cf. Gjetvaj 1989:12).

Although the first attempt to establish an independent ethnographic museum dates back to 1897, the Ethnographic Museum (then called the "Ethnographic Department of the Croatian National Museum in Zagreb") was only founded on October 22, 1919. Its initial holdings numbered around 20,000 objects, mostly textiles, and was divided into five collections. Objects with the signature AH were transferred from Archaeological and Historical Department to the Ethnographic Department of the National Museum, while the collection of Salamon Berger, secured before the Museum was established<sup>2</sup>, was marked with the signature B. Under the signature BK (Berger – Komora) are the objects that Berger sold to the Trade and Crafts Museum in 1905, the signature ŠM includes objects collected in the School Museum, active within the Croatian Literary and Educational Association in Zagreb, the material collected in the National Museum from the 1850s and later handed over to the Society of Arts, then to the Crafts School and the Museum of Arts and Crafts bears the signature UO (cf. Gjetvaj 1989:17-19; Brenko 2019:15-17). Although it is not one of the initial five, it is also worth mentioning the collection under the signature ZGZ (Collection of the City of Zagreb), introduced into the inventory of the Ethnographic Museum in 1928 and containing all the objects bought until 1940 with funds provided by the city of Zagreb. It also includes the objects that Salamon Berger bequeathed to the Museum, including costumes from Macedonia (cf. Gjetvaj 1989:19).

By looking at the lists<sup>3</sup> of objects from the Collection, it is easy to conclude that a large part of the objects in today's Museum Collection entered the collection precisely through the initial

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1 This refers to all the objects that today form part of the Collection of traditional costumes of European countries, and for the sake of simplicity in some cases I will use this wording or simply "European objects".

2 The collection was bought from Salamon Berger on December 24, 1918 thanks to dr. Milan Rojc, who was then the head of the Committee for Worship and Education in Zagreb. Half of the sum of 600,000 kuna Berger donated to charity, while the other half was used to establish a fund ("Pripomoćni fond", PF) which was used to buy materials for the Museum (cf. Gjetvaj 1989:15.17).

3 Available in the EMZ Documentation.

collections. Of the 2,888 museum objects<sup>4</sup> from the Collection, 711 of them are marked BK, B, UO and ŠM<sup>5</sup>. If we add to this number those objects marked with the signature ZGZ and the objects that are not inventoried with the marks BB<sup>6</sup> and PF<sup>7</sup>, we come to a number of 1,226 objects, which is 42.4% of the total number of objects in the Collection<sup>8</sup>. The largest collection consists of objects from Salamon Berger's collection, 617 of them, and if we consider that the BK Collection was also acquired from him and that he funded the "Pripomoćni fond", we can conclude that the most deserving person for the inclusion of European objects into the Museum holdings is precisely Berger. This fact also explains the heterogeneity of the Collection, which is the result of unsystematic collecting. It should be emphasized that there is very little, and most often no recorded data on the acquisition of objects from the initial collection (except "Berger Collection", "Taken from the Museum of Arts and Crafts and the like). Inventory cards usually contain the name of the object, its geographical origin (very often with a question mark), descriptions of different scopes, and dimensions.

The period of activity of Salamon Berger, from the foundation of the Museum in 1919 until his death in 1934, was marked on the one hand by the efforts of Vladimir Tkalčić, the first curator of the Museum, to inventory and catalog the initial material and to approach further collecting systematically and according to scientific principles, and on the other hand, by Berger's unsystematic collecting. Objects from private collections were collected according to the aesthetic criteria of their owners, and very often by chance, which continued in this period as well. Berger himself pointed out that sometimes valuable material was obtained by extracting it from waste (cf. Brenko 2019:20). Managing the Museum did not change Berger's merchant mentality. Thus, in that period, 22 objects from Macedonia and Kosovo were included in the Collection, mostly women's gowns, aprons, belts and scarves, which were a gift from Hodja Ali Numan in 1922 and 1923. In support of Berger's mercantile spirit, the entry written on the inventory cards of those objects testifies: "Given to the museum by Hodja Ali Numan from Skopje, in exchange for the permission to exhibit his collection of rugs in the museum premises in May 1923. The prices of the objects indicate the sums that would have been paid if the objects had been purchased." The collaboration with Ali Numan continued in 1924 and 1926.

During the 1920s, Berger maintained cooperation with several individuals, some of whom were museum trustees<sup>9</sup> who donated, sold, or gave to the Museum in exchange for something else

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4 Data according to the Record of the Revision of the Collection of the traditional costumes of European countries in 2020, available in the EMZ Documentation.

5 The analysis did not find a single object with the signature AH, which would indicate that the object came from the Archaeological and Historical Department of the National Museum.

6 The mark BB ("no number") refers to objects found without any inventory number.

7 See footnote 2. In addition to the funds that Berger received from the sale of his Collection, "Pripomoćni fond" (the Foundation of the Ethnographic Museum) was also financed by funds that he acquired while working at the Museum. A part of the objects acquired in this way was inventoried, while a part was used for exchange and sale (cf. Brenko 2019:20).

8 The number of objects from the initial collections is certainly higher because, over the years, some of the objects were re-inventoried from old numbers and old PFs to the signature Et.

9 In order to collect objects faster and easier, it was created a network of friends of the Museum who collected objects and donated them to the Museum, and at the suggestion of the Museum's management, the Committee for Education and Religion issued an Order on the establishment of the "Service of Trustees of the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb". A trustee could be anyone who could contribute to the progress of the Museum and an instruction on their work was also issued (cf. Gjetvaj 1989:20).

objects from various parts of Europe (mostly from Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo). For example, in 1920, Tomislav Krizman donated a woman's suit from Gostivar (North Macedonia) to the Museum, in 1921, in exchange for a Banat rug from the Berger Collection, he gave a woman's suit from Kosovo Polje (Priština, Kosovo), and in 1922 a man's coat, probably from Kosovo. Slava Hinković, Helena Valdec and Irena Jambriščak also donated or sold several objects to the Museum during this period. As a result of an exchange with the Croatian National Theater in 1920, a Montenegrin nobleman's suit, a coat of unknown origin and a Turkish women's coat entered the Museum, and in 1921, through an exchange with Andrija Milčinović, director of the theater in Skopje, the received Museum five objects. The unsystematic nature of the collection is evidenced by the fact that it was mostly the collection of unrelated items without much relevant data, with frequent examples of series of almost identical items<sup>10</sup>. This corresponds to the time in which they came to the Museum, given that attention was not focused on the communicative role of clothing, but the collected material was supposed to be an inspiration for the creation and decoration of contemporary objects, which is particularly true for the material from the initial collections (cf. Brenko 2019:54).

The first more systematically collected material is the material collected by Marijana and Branimir Gušić during their research in Montenegro. Between 1924 and 1935, on several occasions, they studied the life of the population on Durmitor, including their traditional costume (cf. Gušić 1973:111). Some of the objects were collected by themselves or with the help of the Belgrade lawyer Novica Šaulić, who was their connection with the local population (Gušić 1973:114), while some were collected, in collaboration with them and according to their instructions, by Sava Durković, a teacher from Podgora and a museum trustee from Drobniak (cf. Gušić 1930:191). All the objects<sup>11</sup> were donated to the Museum, some by Durković himself, and some by the Royal Bank Administration in 1929 and 1930. Marijana Gušić, in the introductory of her paper *Starinsko žensko ruho plemena Drobniak pod Durmitorom (Traditional Women's Clothing of the Drobniak Tribe under Durmitor)* from 1973, criticizes the experts of the Ethnographic Museum who, when invited to collaborate with her and her husband in 1929, remained "cold, not to say repulsive" (Gušić 1973:111). She criticizes their fascination with the "miraculous beauty of Croatian textiles" and the aesthetic criteria they use when collecting material, which prevents them from collecting "materially almost worthless, moreover, to their taste unattractive, simple wooden vessels, troughs, mangers and all those apparently insignificant accessories which the mountaineers use daily" (Gušić 1973:111).

In 1942, the Museum received a large number of objects that the Ustaše police of the Independent State of Croatia confiscated from Maximiliana Mogan<sup>12</sup>. The Mogan collection was stored in the Ethnographic Museum, and as the family was compensated in 1971, a large part of the objects became part of the Museum's holdings, partly of today's Collection of traditional costumes of European countries (cf. Brenko 2019:31).

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10 Perhaps the best example is the 241 apron "katrinca", probably of Romanian provenance, 2/6613 – 2/6854. With only a few aprons that differ by type, almost all of them are very similar, with minor variations in the decoration on the woven part.

11 These are 60 objects from the area of Drobniak lakes, mostly headwear, gloves, belts, aprons and shirts, but also some very valuable specimens, such as a child's cap for protection against spells. This includes only the objects with mentioned Durković or the Royal Banking Administration in the "Purchase" category.

12 Maximiliana Mogan, born Sachs pl. Grička, was the wife of lawyer Julije Mogan. Taken from Židovski biografski leksikon, <https://zbl.lzmk.hr/?p=1334>, accessed June 27, 2023.

In 1947, the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts donated 13 objects of Albanian provenance to the Museum, which Dr. Branimir Gušić bought in Shkodër. In addition to scarves, *poprsnice* (decorative pieces worn on the chest), shirts and knitted socks, two very valuable pieces of *džublet*, the bell-shaped skirts of the Albanian Malisors, were also donated. Marijana Gušić in her *Tumač izložene građe* (*Interpretation of the Exhibited Material*) from 1955 mentions that between 1947 and 1952 in the area of Zatrijebače, “in collaboration with the natives” was acquired material for the Ethnographic Museum (Gušić 1955:190), but she did not specify the objects or indicate how many were collected.

According to the data available in the M++ database, during the sixties of the 20th century, six objects entered the Museum, which today form part of the Collection of traditional costumes of European countries.

In the 1970s, a slightly larger number of European objects entered the Museum, 39 of them, of which two women's suits from Russia, donated through the International Folklore Festival in 1973 and 1975, and a Georgian male officer's suit, a gift of Dr. Vladimir Bakarić in 1974.

During the 1980s, the number of new objects decreased again, 18 objects were donated, and the most outstanding is the women's urban suit from Kosovo, a gift from Vera Mikas in 1984.

In the nineties of the 20th century, 23 objects entered the Museum, among them a woman's suit from Lapland, donated in 1996 by Vjekoslav Glavurdić, and nine caps from various European countries (Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Greece, Switzerland, Spain...) donated by Jasmina Šakić in 1998.

Among the 43 European objects that have entered the Museum's holdings since 2000, 22 objects from Bitola (North Macedonia), donated by Giovanna Mimica Gezzan in 2014, and 16 pieces of headwear donated between 2017 and 2019 stand out.

Collecting material from all over Europe is also in line with the first mission of the Museum, presented by Vladimir Tkalčić in 1930, stating that, in addition to presenting the life and culture of “our people, primarily peasants from Croatian regions”, the task Museum is also to “present the life and culture, especially rural, of all other peoples, especially the Slavic ones”<sup>13</sup> (Tkalčić 1930:139). However, it is impossible to talk about systematic and systematized collection on scientific grounds. For a certain number of objects, it is not even known when they entered the Museum since they were found without a number and without any information. Apart from Marijana Gušić's field researches prior to her employment at the Museum, in its entire history there were no field research for the planned expansion of the collection or additional research of the European material in the Museum holdings.

## ARRANGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL COSTUMES OF EUROPEAN COUNTRIES WITHIN THE COLLECTIONS

In the first years after the establishment of the Museum, due to the small number of professional staff, the organization of professional work was not divided based on specific topics, but

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13 The current Strategic Plan for the period from 2020 to 2025 in the mission and vision of the Ethnographic Museum, in addition to the culture and heritage of Croatia, also mentions the culture of other peoples and the world heritage. Downloaded from <https://emz.hr/pravo-na-pristup-informacijama/>, accessed June 26, 2023.

everyone was engaged in the study of several areas, and the material was not divided into collections, since they had not even been formed at that time. A document dated January 8, 1951, which is available in the EMZ Documentation, referring to an inquiry by the Ministry of Science and Culture about the possibility of protecting museum material in the event of war, provides the grouping of material into collections and its placement in the “Anti-aircraft protection” cases. In addition to collections of Dinaric and Pannonian textiles, collections of Macedonian and Oriental textiles are also mentioned, but it can be assumed that the material was systematized in this way only for the needs of the document.

During the 1960s, the increase in professional staff at the Museum led to the creation of the first specialist departments with collections. Objects of European provenance are mentioned in the list<sup>14</sup> from 1988, which lists 1,067 items, and in addition to textiles, other items are also listed, such as jewelry, Easter eggs, and household items.

Due to the unavailability and incompleteness of the documentation, it is not possible to fully track the placement of textile “European objects” in the collections of the Ethnographic Museum, but it is clear that the objects were dispersed in several collections. Thus, the Museum Documentation contains displays<sup>15</sup> of the collections from 2010 showing that this material was divided into two collections. The collection of traditional costumes outside Croatia numbered 994 objects, stating Romania, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Hungary, Austria, Greece, Russia and Ukraine as the territory of its origin. This collection also included the material of the Croatian diaspora in those countries, which today is classified as a separate collection<sup>16</sup> (cf. Bušić 2019:13). On the other hand, the Collection of traditional costumes of the Dinaric Region of Croatia numbered 6,176 items, and contained material from the territory of “Croatia (+ Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia)”<sup>17</sup>.

The Collection of traditional costumes of European countries was formed in 2015 according to the Rulebook on the internal organization and working methods of the Ethnographic Museum. Vesna Zorić, a retired museum consultant, became the manager of the Collection which consisted of costumes and parts of costumes from Albania, Armenia, Austria, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Czech Republic, Finland, Georgia, Israel, Kosovo, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Serbia, Switzerland and Ukraine. According to the Audit<sup>18</sup> Record from 2020, the Collection has a total of 2,888 museum objects (3,142 physical objects), of which 2,733 found and 155 not found inventoried objects, and 475 objects were found without an inventory number (of which 282 were museum objects with the PF mark), and four were suggested for write-off. From 2021 to 2023, the Collection was temporarily managed by Anastazija Petrović, a museum pedagogue, and in 2020 the Collection was taken over by newly hired curator Mia Čujkević Plečko.

Given the large number of objects in the Ethnographic Museum’s holdings, the material that today forms the Collection of traditional costumes of European countries was for a long time out

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14 Available in the EMZ Documentation.

15 It is not clear what the purpose of these documents was, but it is possible that they were produced for the needs of the Museum’s documentation center. Available in the EMZ Documentation.

16 Collection of traditional costumes of the Croatian diaspora.

17 This is an exact transcript from the document. Putting Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia in parentheses indicates not only that the number of objects from those countries was smaller compared to Croatia, but also their position within the collection.

18 Available in the EMZ Documentation.

of the focus of museum experts. Also, given the relatively small number of curators and restorers employed in the museum, there was no opportunity to invest the necessary time and attention in these objects which, like all other museum materials, they certainly deserve. As until recently no one systematically dealt with this material, especially because it was not unified in a single collection, only in 2018 the objects got a permanent place in the Museum.

## PRESENTATION OF TRADITIONAL COSTUMES OF EUROPEAN COUNTRIES IN PERMANENT AND OCCASIONAL EXHIBITIONS

The material that today belongs to the Collection of traditional costumes of European countries had its place in all permanent museum exhibitions, except for the one from 1972, which is still current in a reduced form.

The first permanent exhibition was opened to the public on 19 June 1922 (cf. Gjetvaj 1989:21), and we know what the exhibition looked like thanks to the guidebook *Šetnje kroz Etnografski muzej* prepared in 1927 by Mirko Kus-Nikolajev, the Museum's curator. It is evident from his presentation that "European material" was present in several places in the exhibition. Thus, he mentions "avba", a richly decorated female cap from Slovenia, exhibited in the central room on the first floor of the Museum, and a smaller collection from Bulgaria in Hall V. Hall VI was entirely dedicated to European material, exhibiting costumes from Serbia, Kosovo and Macedonia, costumes of the Hoti community from Albania and costumes from Skopska Crna Gora. In addition, weapons from Serbia and Macedonia<sup>19</sup>, material from Bosnia<sup>20</sup>, and so-called a Bosnian room, carpets from the "southern parts of our country" and material from Czechoslovakia and Bukovina (a historical province on the border of Romania and Ukraine) were also exhibited. In Hall VII, connected to the previous one, were exhibited richly decorated socks from Macedonia (cf. Gjetvaj 1989:29-31).

Changes in the schedule of the permanent exhibition came in 1934, after the death of Salomon Berger, according to the concept of Božidar Širola, Milovan Gavazzi and Vladimir Tkalčić. After the reorganization of the Museum in 1935, a new permanent exhibition was created according to the concept of the then director Ivo Franić. On the ground floor, within the "Dinaric-Balkan Collection", costumes from Southern Serbia, Skopje, Bulgaria, Romania and Bukovina, and Montenegro were exhibited, and in the section called "Lika, Primorje, Baranja" were exhibited costume parts, socks, headwear, and embroidery from shirts from Durmitor and costumes from Slovenia. This exhibition, with minor changes, remained until the beginning of the Second World War, when it was dismantled and stored in a shelter (cf. Gjetvaj 1989:38-42).

With the arrival of Marijana Gušić in the position of director in 1946, a new concept of the permanent exhibition was created, finalized in 1955. The concept followed the division of materials according to ethnographic zones, and along with textiles from Croatia, costumes from Montenegro (Zatrijebač) were also exhibited<sup>21</sup> (cf. Gjetvaj 1989:42-43).

The permanent exhibition, opened to the public in 1972 after several years of adaptation of the Museum building, was created according to the concept of the then director Jelka Radauš-Riba-

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19 All weapons today are part of the Weapon Collection.

20 Today, the Collection of traditional costumes of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

21 This exhibition, just like the previous ones, contained other objects from the Balkan region, such as jewelry, weapons, or household items, but since these objects were not part of the Collection of traditional costumes of the European countries, but of several other collections, I have not mentioned them.

rić as a collaboration of the Museum experts. The material was divided according to geographical criteria, exhibiting only material from Croatia (cf. Gjetvaj 1989:45). This exhibition, reduced and in a somewhat modified form, is still part of the Museum today.

In all previous exhibitions, emphasis was placed on presenting „our” culture, but it is important to remember that the concept of “our” culture had different meanings in different periods of time. Within the framework of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the SFR Yugoslavia, the concept of “our” culture could be understood much wider than the former and present borders of Croatia, and the aspiration of the exhibition was to show not only Croatian rural culture, but also the culture of the entire country, as well as the neighboring mainly Slavic population. Collections, especially textile ones, often play a role in determining the boundaries of a certain culture and in defining Croatian and Yugoslav culture, their mutual relations and connections with European and world cultures (cf. Brenko 2019:28.). It will be interesting to see how this material will be approached in the future permanent exhibition. The collection contains diverse objects that can illustrate certain phenomena and expand complex topics with examples beyond the borders of Croatia, showing the importance of mutual relations and the influence of different cultures.

In addition to permanent exhibitions, museums also present their materials through occasional exhibitions of smaller or larger volumes, with different themes, approaches and duration. Although the Ethnographic Museum has a long and rich history of occasional exhibitions, by analyzing the available data<sup>22</sup> it can be concluded that the heritage of European countries is mostly presented at guest exhibitions, such as *Poljska kultura (Polish Culture)* from 1967, *Norveška kroz lutku i sliku (Norway depicted through dolls and pictures)* from 1968, *Saobraćaj i transport dobara u SR Srbiji (Traffic and transport of goods in SR Serbia)* from 1976, or *Narodna umjetnost Mađarske (Folk art of Hungary)* from 1984 (cf. Gjetvaj 1989:97-114). An example of such collaboration from recent history is the exhibition *Crveni pijetao – crna kokoš: kultovi plodnosti, obredi, običaji i vjerovanja (Red Rooster - Black Hen: Fertility Cults, Rites, Customs and Beliefs)* from 2019, exhibition of the Museum of Macedonia and the Archaeological Museum in Skopje hosted by the Ethnographic Museum.

An exception was the Durmitor Collection exhibition in the Ethnographic Museum in 1930 on the occasion of the III. Congress of Slovenian Geographers and Ethnographers of Yugoslavia. Along with photographs of the Dinarides, interiors and exteriors in the Dinaric region, and a depiction of a room and a hut from Durmitor, women’s traditional costumes from the area of lakes of Drobnjak were also exhibited (cf. Gušić 1930:191). The exhibited costume testifies to an older layer of clothing in Montenegro, which was abandoned after the Zeta costume became the national costume standardized by the Montenegrin government in 1878, whereby older specimens like this were burned and became a rarity (cf. Gušić 1930:199-200). Today, these objects in Montenegro are of national importance and relate to the Montenegrin identity, so the great interest in the mentioned material and the frequent requests to see it are not surprising (cf. Brenko 2019:55). Montenegrin *džubleta*, Ukrainian embroidered shirts, Slovenian *avba*, gold-embroidered *goldhauben* caps from UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List and richly decorated Macedonian costumes are only part of the values preserved in this collection. Further processing will surely identify new hidden treasures.

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22 Gjetvaj 1989 and <http://emz.hr/Izlo%c5%bebe/Pro%c5%a1le>, accessed May 16, 2020.



Today, objects from the Collection of traditional costumes of European countries are exhibited occasionally as part of larger exhibitions of more complex themes and phenomena that cross the borders of states. The most recent example is provided by the 2019 exhibition *Kapa dolje! (Hats Off!) The story of (not) covering the head.*<sup>23</sup> Among almost 400 objects, mostly from the Ethnographic Museum's holdings, 44 objects from the Collection of traditional costumes of European countries are exhibited, and most of them have seen the light outside the Museum's storage rooms for the first time since entering the Museum. This exhibition shows how valuable material, which is otherwise neglected and marginalized, can be used in a way that fulfills one of three basic museum functions.

## INSTEAD OF CONCLUSION: THOUGHTS ON THE FUTURE OF THE COLLECTION

Although the current collection was formed only in 2015, the material that is now part of the Collection of traditional costumes of European countries has been present in the Ethnographic Museum since its very beginnings, and was partially collected even before its official establishment. The most prominent role in collecting was played by Salamon Berger, whose aesthetic criteria in the selection of materials and ideas about the possibilities of its use as inspiration for the creation of contemporary objects and as a means of exchange and trade greatly influenced the current Collection. Unsystematic and unscientific collection led to the fact that today's Collection contains a whole series of identical objects and a large number of materials without relevant data. Most of the material was collected in the first years of the Museum's existence, while later, except for a few exceptions when a large number of objects entered its holdings at once, the collections were filled with sporadic gifts or occasional purchases. Material dispersed within several different collections throughout history also influenced the unsystematized collection of objects. Up until the 1960s, in accordance with the political environment of the time, costumes, parts of costumes and individual objects were exhibited as part of the Museum's permanent exhibitions, but these objects are not presented in the current exhibition from 1972.

For any more detailed analyzes of this Collection, it is necessary to complete its processing and entry of objects into the M++ database. Vesna Zorić, a retired museum consultant, started the systematic processing of the Collection and the entry of objects into the database, which was continued by the temporary manager Anastazija Petrović, and the good practice will surely be continued by the new Collection manager, Mia Čujkević Plečko. The last audit showed certain developments, especially in relation to the number of undiscovered objects and the objects that are not inventoried, which can certainly serve as a better basis for further research of the materials in the Collection. The hiring of a new curator, who has taken over the management of this Collection, is an opportunity to continue the processing and evaluation of the objects. Establishing communication with museums and experts from the countries from which these objects came would certainly be a step forward in determining, researching and valorization of material in this Collection. Finally, this material can also be a starting point for educational programs, which, apart from being a way of presenting different European cultures, could also serve the purpose of breaking prejudices about certain peoples and promoting tolerance.

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23 Along with Aida Brenko and Mareta Kurtin, one of the authors of the exhibition is Vesna Zorić, the then manager of the Collection of traditional costumes of European countries.

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