

THE UNFULFILLED DONATION: THE CERAMICS COLLECTION OF THE MUSEUM OF SLAVONIA AND STJEPAN PL. ZSILLE'S GIFT

SUMMARY

The article tries to identify artifacts that were part of the larger family and personal collection of Stjepan pl. Zsille. Most of the ceramics collection (along with a few pieces of furniture) was in the process of donation to the Museum during 1941 and 1943, but the events of the war and postwar lost the trace of the existence of such a collection in the museum fund. A renewed insight into the Ceramics Collection and acquisition of items for the fund imposed the need to research the origins of museum object from the time of the Second World War.

Stjepan pl. Zsille was born in 1867 in Harastin, Hungary, and passed away in 1959 in Osijek. He completed his studies at the Commercial Academy in Pécs. Through his work as a bookkeeper and accountant, as well as his membership in numerous civic societies, he gained many wealthy and influential acquaintances. He was actively involved in sports, being a member of the first football club in Osijek and serving as the president of the Neptun Rowing Club. He was also intensely socially engaged in the Freemason lodge Budnost.

In his advanced age, in 1941, he reported his extensive collection of ceramic and glass artefacts, as well as valuable household items, to the Museum. The collection included a large number of vases, plates, and vessels from the renowned Hungarian Zsolnay factory, as well as sets of glass objects and porcelain figurines. He officially handed over the collection to the Museum in 1943. Due to a lack of storage space, the Museum kept the items in his private apartment, but marked them as the property of the state museum. Because of his affiliation with the Osijek Freemason lodge, he came under attack by the Ustaša authorities. In 1943, the Germans evicted him from his apartment. After World War II, he faced further hardships. The Communist authorities accused him of collaborating with the occupiers and sentenced him to six months of imprisonment and confiscation of his business property. His collection of ceramics, glass, and furniture was likely looted and lost in the chaos of the war.

Keywords: Ceramics Collection, Department of Arts and Crafts, family Zsille, Osijek, Second World War, Stjepan pl. Zsille, Zsolnay