

ZRC SAZU, UMETNOSTNOZGODOVINSKI INŠTITUT FRANCETA STELETA



# ACTA HISTORIAE ARTIS SLOVENICA

Artistic and Architectural Heritage  
of the Nobility Between Old and New Regimes

Umetnostna in arhitekturna dediščina plemstva  
med starimi in novimi režimi

28|2 • 2023

ZRC SAZU, Umetnostnozgodovinski inštitut Franceta Steleta  
ZRC SAZU, France Stele Institute of Art History

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Založba ZRC

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E-pošta / E-mail: [zalozba@zrc-sazu.si](mailto:zalozba@zrc-sazu.si)

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# The Role and Activities of Custodians of Aristocratic Collections in Bohemia in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and First Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Selected Examples

Šárka Radostová

Šárka Radostová, PhD, National Heritage Institute, Directorate General, Valdštejnské nám. 3/162, 118 01 Prague 1, radostova.sarka@npu.cz, ORCID: 0000-0002-1978-5464

Kristina Uhlíková

Kristina Uhlíková, PhD, Institute of Art History of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Documentation Department, Husova 4, 110 00 Prague 1, uhlikova@udu.cas.cz, ORCID-ID: 0000-0001-5491-2636

Abstract:

**The Role and Activities of Custodians of Aristocratic Collections in Bohemia in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and First Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Selected Examples**

1. 01 Original scientific article

In a number of European countries, entrusting the care of the extensive sets of collections owned by aristocrats to a special employee or employees had been customary since the Renaissance. The focus of this study is the period from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the end of the Second World War. Selected individuals who together represent approximately one hundred and fifty years of care for collections located in aristocratic residences are presented. The academy-trained painter František Horčíčka, the former town executioner Carl Huss and the husband-and-wife team Wilhelmina and Karl Vincenz Auersperg devoted themselves to collections in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, while professor Josef Schmoranz and lawyer Josef Polák did so in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**Keywords:** aristocratic collections, custodians of aristocratic collections, inventories of art collections, Klemens Wenzel Metternich, the Auersperg family, František Horčíčka, Carl Huss, Wilhelmina and Karl Vincenz Auersperg, Josef Schmoranz, Josef Polák, Rudolf Josef Colloredo-Mannsfeld

Izvleček:

**Vloga in delovanje skrbnikov plemiških zbirk na Češkem v 19. stoletju in prvi polovici 20. stoletja. Izbrani primeri**

1.01 Izvirni znanstveni članek

V številnih evropskih državah je bilo od renesanse naprej običajno, da so skrb za obsežne zbirke v lasti plemičev zaupali posebnim uslužbencem. Pričujoča študija se osredotoča na obdobje od začetka 19. stoletja do konca druge svetovne vojne. Posamezniki, izbrani za analizo, skupaj predstavljajo približno sto petdeset let skrbi za zbirke v plemiških rezidencah. Akademski slikar František Horčíčka, nekdanji mestni rabelj Carl Huss ter zakonca Wilhelmina in Karl Vincenz Auersperg so se zbirkam posvečali v 19. stoletju, profesor Josef Schmoranz in odvetnik Josef Polák pa v prvi polovici 20. stoletja.

**Ključne besede:** plemiške zbirke, skrbniki plemiških zbirk, inventarji umetnostnih zbirk, Klemens Wenzel Metternich, rodbina Auersperg, František Horčíčka, Carl Huss, Wilhelmina in Karl Vincenz Auersperg, Josef Schmoranz, Josef Polák, Rudolf Josef Colloredo-Mannsfeld

In a number of European countries, entrusting the care of the extensive sets of collections owned by aristocrats to a special employee or employees had been customary since the Renaissance.<sup>1</sup> The focus of this study is the period—so far examined only minimally with regard to this question—from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the end of the Second World War. The need for a deeper understanding of the role managers played in shaping collections crystallized in a detailed study of the collections and extant sources on them. The written sources include numerous archival documents, especially inventories of collections,<sup>2</sup> correspondence and receipts for purchases, transfers, sales, contracts, etc. Publications from the period are unquestionably important too, especially the abundant topographically oriented literature, the first printed guides to individual aristocratic residences and the volumes on the art-history topography of the Czech lands that began to be published in the 1890s.<sup>3</sup>

Testimony to the historical form of the collections is also provided by period drawings and photographs of the interiors of chateaux and palaces. The collections themselves are also a vital source of information on the nature of the activities of individual managers in terms of their structure, the typology of objects, their condition, the method of restoration or other modifications as well as the spaces chosen for presentation.

The individual properties and the collections amassed within them were linked to various types of noble owners. We can make comparisons between the approach of the lower and upper nobility, or even the imperial family. A separate category is formed by the approach of the state, which took over the property of the Habsburg-Lorraine imperial family following the creation of the Czechoslovak Republic after the end of the First World War.

The owner or owners of ancestral properties had a characteristic influence on the way the manager's role was defined. The range of competences entrusted to him varied primarily according to the degree of personal enthusiasm and involvement from the owner, who could but did not necessarily have to be the main builder of the collection. Often it was only a question of responsible stewardship for the collection as part of a legacy. Another major factor that had a far-reaching influence was undoubtedly the state of the family finances. The period in question was characterized by an increase in financial resources in connection with the release from serfdom in 1848<sup>4</sup> and conversely after 1918 by a significant decrease in finances as a result of the forced cession of most land holdings during land reform.<sup>5</sup> The key aspects that influenced the approach a manager took to the role entrusted to him were his personality, education, ambition and life experience. Different types of collections required specific abilities and erudition on the part of the administrator (painter, dealer, expert).

<sup>1</sup> In relation to the Czech lands, this issue has primarily been dealt with by Lubomír Slavíček. See Slavíček, “*Sobě, umění, přátelům;*” Slavíček, *Artis pictoriae amatores*; Roháček and Slavíček, *Hortus inventariorum*.

<sup>2</sup> An exhaustive study of inventories of art collections in the Czech lands is provided by Slavíček, “*Bludiště seznamů*” (including an extensive list of literature).

<sup>3</sup> *Soupis památek historických a uměleckých v království Českém* (in German *Topographie der Historischen und Kunst-Denkmale im Königreiche Böhmen*, later *Soupis památek historických a uměleckých v Republice československé*).

<sup>4</sup> Serfdom was abolished in the western part of the Austrian monarchy by a patent from September 7, 1848, and the compensation for land and labour enabled many aristocratic owners to make large-scale investments—not only into building work, but especially into business ventures. Auersperg himself very much welcomed this step. The prince summed up his support for the release of land in the political brochure *Brief eines österreichischen Edelmannes*, where, among other things, he stated: “We do not need any privileges: If we faithfully stand by our inherited land and our people, then the people will also stand by us, in the name of God, the king and the law.” See Auersperg, *Erinnerungen*, 90.

<sup>5</sup> See Uhlíková, *Šlechtická sídla*.

The aristocratic collections—many of which had only newly been transferred to the Czech lands in the 19<sup>th</sup> century—represented various motivations on the part of collectors; these were possessions amassed for the purpose of presenting the family's history in order to demonstrate its personal power and status. As the 19<sup>th</sup> century progressed, they increasingly became a reflection of a personal passion for history, typically the Middle Ages, in the spirit of Romanticism. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the prevailing theme was the voluntary assumption of responsibility for the artworks of the past accumulated by generations, a responsibility which was seen as being more towards the public, i.e. the “nation”, than towards future generations of the family.

The main type of aristocratic collections were picture galleries, and it was also common to find mixed museum-type collections that followed in the tradition of the cabinet of curiosities or *Kunstammer*, which incorporated all manner of objects and natural specimens. Most of these sets of items reflected the cosmopolitan orientation of their aristocratic owners and were characterized by the absence of a more specific tie to the region in which they were concentrated, or even more generally to the territory of the Czech lands—works of Bohemian origin were often entirely missing.

Under the influence of growing patriotic sentiments, the period from the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards saw the founding of public collections in the Czech lands on the territorial principle (Gallery of the Society of Patriotic Friends of Art, 1796; Silesian Provincial Museum, 1814; Moravian Provincial Museum, i.e. Francis Museum, 1817; Museum of the Kingdom of Bohemia, originally Patriotic Museum, 1818; and gradually also smaller regional museums).<sup>6</sup> Even the conservation of monuments in situ received new impulses and became a state matter from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. However, opening up aristocratic collections to the public only became the norm at the close of that century and until then was more of an exception. In contrast, after the creation of Czechoslovakia, this was often required by the state even in the case of private collections.

In the following part of the text, we will present selected individuals who together represent approximately one hundred and fifty years of care for collections located in aristocratic residences. The academy-trained painter František Horčíčka, the former town executioner Carl Huss and the husband-and-wife team Wilhelmina and Karl Vincenz Auersperg devoted themselves to collections in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, while the professor Josef Schmoranz and the lawyer Josef Polák did so in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; all of them are key professional and social types. Each of them also represents a certain type of collection and its status: the first is the collection of a prominent political figure in Austria, Chancellor Klemens Lothar von Metternich; the second collection is the family picture gallery of the Colloredo-Mansfelds, part of the *fideikomis* entailed estate. The third type is the Auersperg family museum at Žleby Chateau, and the fourth type is the d'Este collection of Crown Prince Franz Ferdinand, following its nationalization on the basis of the Saint Germain peace treaty.

Another, more substantial part of the nobles' property was nationalized in Czechoslovakia after the Second World War on the basis of presidential decrees issued in 1945 and subsequently, after the Communist Party's seizure of power and the establishment of a totalitarian state, after 1948. Our research was exclusively concerned with collections which were nationalized but not returned to their former owners in the restitution that followed the Velvet Revolution in 1989. However, let us return to the administrators of aristocratic collections and look at the phenomena distinguishing and characterizing individuals in the role of collections manager.

<sup>6</sup> See Slaviček, “Obrazárna Společnosti;” Slaviček, “Sběratelé.”

## The Academy-trained Painter and Restorer—Inspector of Collections

Following the practice of aristocratic collectors from the previous centuries, in 1808, Imperial Prince Rudolf Josef of Colloredo-Mannsfeld (1772–1843)<sup>7</sup> appointed the academy-trained painter František Horčíčka (or Franz Horcziczka, Prague, June 29, 1776 – April 5, 1856) first as restorer of the family picture gallery in Opočno (Opotschno) and then from 1811 as manager of the ancestral gallery in Prague (fig. 1). This “inspector well versed in art”, as he later described himself,<sup>8</sup> then a thirty-three-year-old graduate of the Prague Academy with a reputation as a portrait painter, restorer, teacher and theoretician, was a remarkable but controversial figure. It was mainly under his direction that the family’s collection of paintings from the ancestral seats in Vienna, Döbling, Udine, Dobříš (Doberschisch) and Opočno was concentrated in the Colloredo-Mansfeld palace in Prague in 1808. As early as January of the following year, Prince Rudolf Colloredo-Mannsfeld announced that the gallery was to be opened to the public.<sup>9</sup> This was done both on a visitor basis, where “entry was free every hour”, and on a practical basis for the purpose of studying and copying the paintings.<sup>10</sup> When it comes to the operation of the gallery, we have the testimony of Horčíčka himself from the foreword to an inventory from 1829.<sup>11</sup> The first ten years were dedicated to “polishing” and restoration. František Horčíčka was a recognized expert in the field of restoration, but he gradually progressed towards what was from today’s perspective a highly unconventional approach, often bordering on forgery.<sup>12</sup> Horčíčka intervened in paintings and fabricated their context. In the case of a painting of the Madonna by Lorenzo di Credi, the painter cast himself in the role of a Raphaelesque artist, as is documented by the findings of the restorer Petr Bareš, who removed softening overpainting of the face in the style of Raphael which had been added by Horčíčka.<sup>13</sup> This type of modification was fairly common in the past, but Horčíčka also attributed the painting to the famous master in the catalogue of the collection.

Modern restoration also revealed Horčíčka’s creativity in a monumental painting of a battle scene from the history of the House of Gonzaga.<sup>14</sup> Horčíčka repaired the badly damaged painting, which had already been overpainted in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, by artfully joining together the lower and

<sup>7</sup> He spelt his name with a double “n”. For the Colloredo-Mansfeld family, see Řivnáč, *Josef Colloredo-Mannsfeld*; Horčíčka and Županič, *Šlechta na křižovatce*; Lobenwein et al., *Herrschaft*.

<sup>8</sup> He studied philosophy and law and from 1800 also studied at the Prague Academy under Josef Bergler (1753–1829); in 1801, during his studies, he was repeatedly praised for his skills as a copyist and he was awarded a scholarship. From 1811 he participated in art exhibitions in Prague. See Neumann, “Malíř František Horčíčka,” Jirák, “Mezi teorií a prací,” Prahel and Machalíková, “Od restaurování.”

<sup>9</sup> The founder of the picture gallery is believed to have been Franz de Paula Gundakar, Imperial Prince of Colloredo-Mannsfeld (1731–1807).

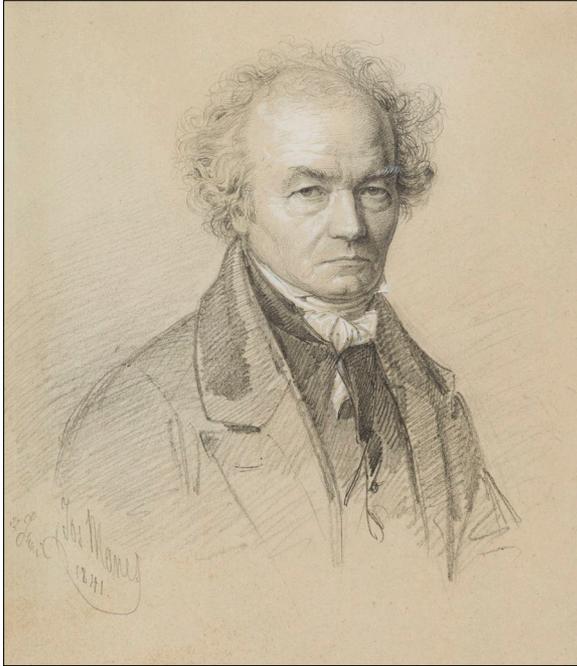
<sup>10</sup> Jirák and Buroň, *František Horčíčka*, 34–35.

<sup>11</sup> The German manuscript inventory from 1829 was compiled by Horčíčka under the title *Verzeichniss der Gemälde in der Gallerie ...* (Index of the Paintings in the Gallery...) deposited at the state-owned chateau of Opočno, inv. no. OP09169. For an edited version with a Czech translation, see Jirák and Buroň, *František Horčíčka*.

<sup>12</sup> For other cases where the name of the supposed scribe or illuminator was written into medieval manuscripts, see Prahel and Machalíková, “Od restaurování.”

<sup>13</sup> Lorenzo di Credi, (Giovanni di Benedetto Cianfanini): *Madonna with Child*, circa 1500, state-owned chateau of Opočno, inv. no. OP02522, restored by Petr Bareš (1976) and the restorers Alena and Vlastimil Berger (1980).

<sup>14</sup> Teodoro Ghisi (1536–1601), Francesco Borgani (1557–1624): *Federico II Gonzaga at the Defence of Pavia*, oil on canvas, 169 x 681.5 cm, state-owned chateau of Opočno, inv. no. OP02553.



1. Josef Mánes: Portrait of František Horčíčka, 1841, National Gallery, Prague (© Národní galerie Praha)

upper motifs and filling in the missing parts using his imagination.<sup>15</sup> He later worked in a similar way as a restorer outside of the Colloredo-Mansfeld collections too.<sup>16</sup>

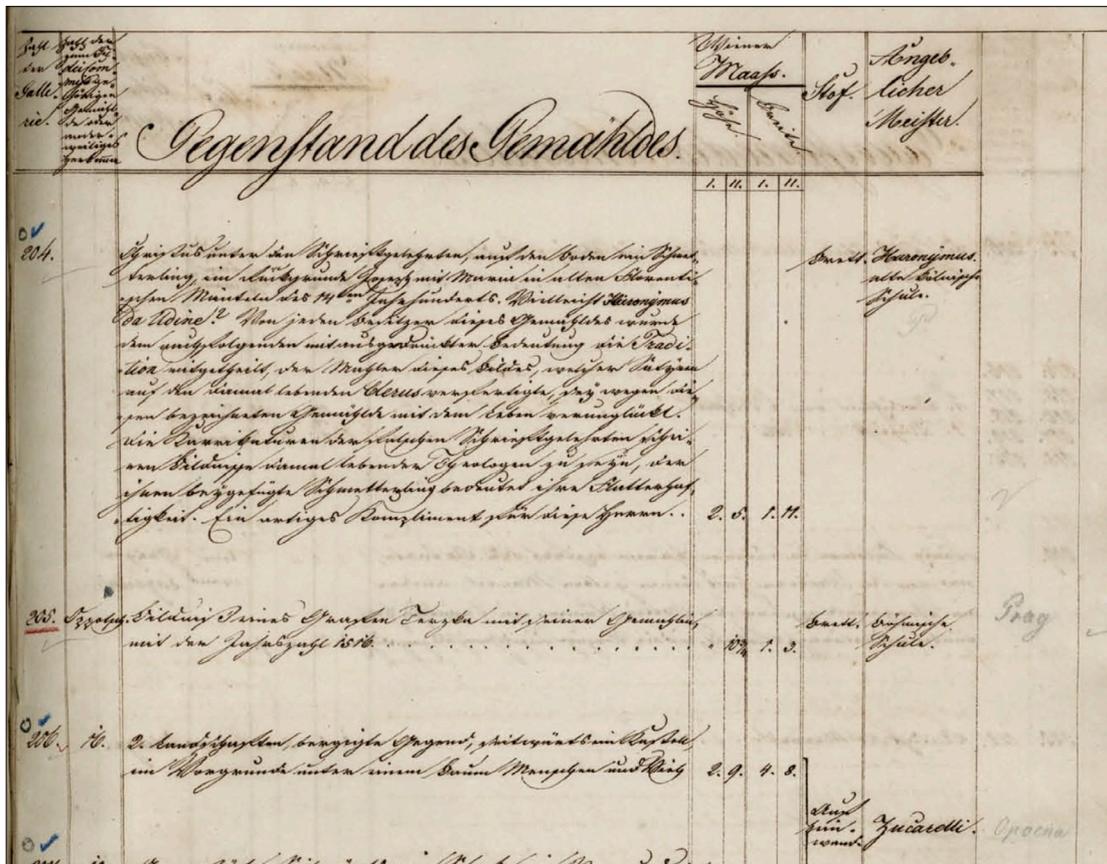
After the picture gallery was expanded by a set of paintings from the Salzburg estate of Bishop Hieronymus Franz Colloredo Waldsee (1732–1812) in 1820, the collection numbered approximately 500 items and Horčíčka prepared a careful inventory. The inventory lists the paintings in the order in which they were displayed in the Prague picture gallery and also gives the order by the year of acquisition, while in a separate column it indicates the paintings tied to the *fideikomis*, paintings from Opočno and later acquisitions. It also registers the subject of the painting, dimensions, material and “purported” author, and the inventory is enlivened with comments and interesting facts (fig. 2).<sup>17</sup> However, some of them were undoubtedly Horčíčka’s own invention.

This can be concluded from a comparison with older inventories, where the information is entirely absent. What František Horčíčka added to the inventory was primarily a contextual link to the Colloredo-Mansfeld dynasty. Thus, we can see how in a portrait of the founders of the Heiligenberg hermitage, a depiction of Heiligenberg Castle, held by the Fürstenbergs, becomes the oldest seat of

<sup>15</sup> According to the findings of the restorers Alena and Vlastimil Berger from 1974–1975, the painting bore two earlier versions of the same subject matter which differed only slightly from each other. As part of the restoration of the painting, Horčíčka linked them together and freely painted in the missing head of one of the warriors. See the restoration report deposited in the personal archive of the Berger restorers.

<sup>16</sup> He also seems to have intervened in the form of paintings from the Gallery of the Society of Patriotic Friends of Art in Bohemia (SPVU) as the co-author of authorial attributions together with Josef Burda and Václav Markovský. In 1832, he supplemented a proposal for restoration work with a preliminary budget, and the work on approximately 210 paintings took two years. He also repeatedly proposed the restoration of medieval paintings by Master Theodorik at Karlštejn Castle, operating under the belief that Theodorik had been trained in Constantinople and used the technique of encaustic painting. For more, see Neumann, “Malíř František Horčíčka,” 112–13.

<sup>17</sup> Gielis Panhedel: *Twelve-year-old Jesus in the Temple*, circa 1550, dimensions 77.5 x 60.4 cm, state-owned chateau of Opočno, inv. no. OP02631. The following note is attached to this painting, which in the catalogue is attributed to Hieronymus Bosch: “Von jedem Besitzer dieses Gemählde wurde dem nachfolgenden mit ausgedrückter Bedeutung die Tradition mitgetheilt, der Mahler dieses Bildes, welcher Satyren auf den damal lebenden Clerus verfertigte, sey wegen diesen beyzeichneten Gemälde mit dem Leben verunglückt. Die Karikaturen der falschen Schriftgelehrten scheinen Bildnisse der damals lebenden Theologen zu seyn, der ihnen beygefügte Schmetterling bedeutet die Flatterhaftigkeit. Ein artiges Kompliment für diese Herren.” See Jirák and Buroň, *František Horčíčka*, 34–35; Radostová, *Ad unicum*, 291–96 (catalogue entry no. 50 by Šárka Radostová).



2. František Horčíčka, page from the inventory, 1829, National Heritage Institute, Prague  
 (© Národní památkový ústav)

the Mansfeld family in Germany;<sup>18</sup> similarly, Horčíčka linked an unidentified husband and wife with the Trčka of Lípa family, i.e. the family that had previously owned the Colloredo-Mansfeld estate of Opočno.<sup>19</sup> He intervened more dramatically in a portrait recently attributed to Hans Krell.<sup>20</sup> The young man, apparently a bridegroom with the attribute of a pomegranate, was secondarily identified as Zdeněk Kostka of Postupice by a text on the reverse of the panel and antedated to the year 1422 in the painting itself. In this case, Horčíčka stylized the text into a form imitating an old-fashioned script that was more difficult to decipher.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Anonymous, Germany: *Portrait of the Founders of the Hermitage in Heiligenberg*, 1520–1529, 71.5 x 108, state-owned chateau of Opočno, inv. no. OP11805. See Radostová, *Ad unicum*, 241–46 (catalogue entry no. 43 by Šárka Radostová).

<sup>19</sup> Anonymous, Germany – Hans Brosamer (?): *Putative Portrait of Trčka of Lípa Couple*, 1516, oil painting on wooden panel, dimensions 29.2 x 41 cm, state-owned chateau of Žleby, inv. no. ZL5479, stolen in 1974. See Radostová, *Ad unicum*, 181–86 (catalogue entry no. 31 by Šárka Radostová).

<sup>20</sup> Circle of Hans Krell, Central Europe: *Portrait of a Nobleman*, 1530–1540, tempera painting on wooden (lime or pine?) panel, dimensions 54.60 x 40.70 cm, MF Opočno, inv. no. OP02619. See Radostová, *Ad unicum*, 267–72 (catalogue entry no. 46 by Blanka Kubíková).

<sup>21</sup> Radostová, Hlušíčková and Chmel, “The case of dual identity,” 115–18.

For the sake of completeness, we should mention that Horčíčka is also believed to be responsible for forgeries of medieval manuscripts,<sup>22</sup> where he worked in collaboration with other patriotically motivated Czech artists, employing historical methods and materials in a very convincing way. So it comes as little surprise that in the inventory for the Colloredo-Mansfeld collection, he also included a work of his own, painted in the spirit of the Ferrara Renaissance, for which he used an older panel with a different preparatory drawing.<sup>23</sup> By Horčíčka's own account, the workshop in the Prague palace was also used for copying paintings from the collection;<sup>24</sup> one such copy of the aforementioned painting of the founders is recorded in Hermína Srbová's First Republic collection in Prague.<sup>25</sup> Horčíčka notes that "128 copies in various formats" were created of a painting of the Madonna by Carlo Dolci.<sup>26</sup> There is no doubt that František Horčíčka took proper care of the paintings, kept careful records and focused attention on the collection thanks to highborn visitors and also thanks to the link to students. He probably derived no financial gain from his efforts. At the same time, his forgeries, interpretations and misleading additions and modifications, which altered the material essence and distorted the context of the works, were in keeping with the patriotic attempts of the time to provide evidence of the historical significance, antiquity and maturity of the Czech nation and its art to meet the needs of the National Revival.

### The Cheb Collector and Town Executioner—the First *kustoss*

In contrast, the Revivalist current did not impinge upon the Metternich collections at Kynžvart Castle, where, on the basis of a contract concluded in 1827 with Chancellor Klemens Wenzel Nepomuk Lothar von Metternich,<sup>27</sup> the first *kustoss*, as he sometimes proudly called himself, was Carl Huss (Brüx, January 3, 1761 – Königswart, December 19, 1836), former executioner in the town of Cheb (Eger) (figs. 3–4).<sup>28</sup> Carl Huss was granted the position of custodian in exchange for his collection of coins, which by his own account had taken him thirty years to amass. The administrator's post came with a salary, board and lodging, and heating—and all of this for life.<sup>29</sup> However, the acquisition of Huss's collection did not mark the beginning of Chancellor Metternich's activities as a collector. He already possessed objects of a diverse nature dating from antiquity to the present, and the systematic scope of the collection, which conformed in type to a cabinet of

<sup>22</sup> These were the so-called Dvůr Králové and Zelená Hora manuscripts, which were considered to be the crowning achievement of the early period of Czech literature and were an important source of inspiration for many artists during the National Revival. The dispute over their authenticity became one of the biggest scandals in Czech cultural life in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>23</sup> *Madonna with Jesus, St Elizabeth and the Young John the Baptist* (inv. no. OP02469), see Jirák and Buroň, *František Horčíčka*, 82–90.

<sup>24</sup> Jirák and Buroň, *František Horčíčka*, 34–35.

<sup>25</sup> Radostová, "Věčná památka," 233, fig. 133.

<sup>26</sup> Jirák and Buroň, *František Horčíčka*, 34–35.

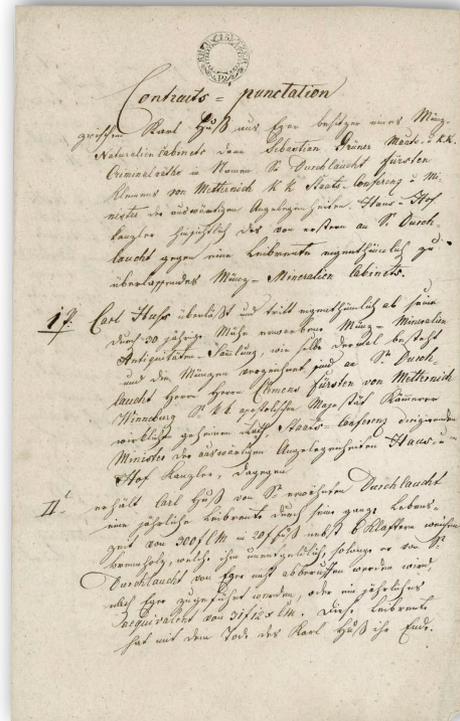
<sup>27</sup> For Klemens Metternich and the Metternich family, see Siemann, *Metternich*. See below, n. 28.

<sup>28</sup> Šedivý, "Kynžvart;" Říha, "Metternichův kabinet."

<sup>29</sup> Employment contract of Carl Huss, written in German, 14 September 1827, inv. no. KY34375, National Heritage Institute, Prague (Národní památkový ústav – NPÚ). In his notes (inv. no. KY35125), Huss specifies that he has surrendered his collection of coins to Prince Metternich without charge in return for a lifetime annuity amounting to 300 florins, 6 cords of wood and lodgings.



3. Portrait of Carl Huss, 1798,  
National Heritage Institute, Prague  
(© Národní památkový ústav)



4. Employment contract of Carl Huss, 1827,  
National Heritage Institute, Prague  
(© Národní památkový ústav)

curiosities, was also exceptional.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, Carl Huss himself represented one such curiosity along with his collection, which in addition to coins also included antiquities, executioner's tools and minerals. The fact that it was located in the Cheb executioner's house, the way it was installed in the cramped premises, and the occupation and undoubtedly remarkable personality of this man, who was the town executioner and chronicler in one, attracted the attention of visitors to the nearby spa. This was reflected in the high visitor numbers and the nobility of the guests, a list of whom is supplied by the visitor book Huss established after the collection was opened up in 1811 (fig. 5). The fame of the collection also grew thanks to Johann Wolfgang Goethe, an admirer of the collection and supporter of the executioner.<sup>31</sup> Huss built up his own collection by purchasing items at auction as well as directly from owners, and he also made acquisitions through exchanges with prominent European collectors and specialists. He continued to do so even after taking up the role of manager. The surviving correspondence shows not only Huss's good knowledge of European collections but also the systematic approach he took to adding to the collection. In doing so, he maintained

<sup>30</sup> For example, the Chancellor received purchases of work from the defunct Cistercian monastery in Waldsassen. The Benedictine monastery in Ochsenhausen, abolished in 1803, was acquired in 1805 by the Chancellor's father, Franz Georg von Metternich, as compensation for his destroyed property in the Rhineland. A number of objects are located at Kynžvart Chateau, including many of the manuscripts and early printed books from the monastery's library.

<sup>31</sup> Goethe visited the executioner's house a total of six times, and his relationship with Huss is also documented by correspondence, see Říha, "Metternichův kabinet," 96.



5. Sign marking the entrance to the Huss's museum, National Heritage Institute, Prague (© Národní památkový ústav)

a lively correspondence.<sup>32</sup> However, Chancellor Metternich ably assisted his custodian by sending him notifications of upcoming auctions with detailed instructions from his diplomatic trips. This is documented, for example, by a personal letter from Klemens Metternich to Carl Huss written in German regarding a collection of coins from the estate of Immanuel Christian Leberecht von Ampach (1772–1831), canon in Naumburg, dean of the monastic chapter in Wurzen, numismatist, collector and patron, whose collection was for sale in Berlin in 1834.<sup>33</sup> In his letter, the Chancellor asks Huss to contact his man in Berlin and authorizes him to purchase 58 coins. The relevant amount of 198 florins and 35 kreuzers will be advanced to Huss by the prince through a bank in Berlin. The correspondence also confirms Metternich's shipments of coins to Huss with instructions enclosed.<sup>34</sup> The careful inventories of Huss's collection became the model for the Metternich collection. He kept records of the collections in around 36 notebooks (over time the numismatic collection came to encompass 11,000 items), with Huss combining the viewpoints of provenance, subject and chronology. He paid special attention to the aesthetic aspect and the notebooks were uniformly provided with a cut-out paper label with an ink-and-wash drawing in his own hand and a handwritten title. Inside the notebook, the pages were simply lined and each coin was listed with a reference number, a description and its value in florins and kreuzers.<sup>35</sup> The notebooks also contain

<sup>32</sup> The correspondence is part of the collections of furnishings at the state-owned chateau of Kynžvart.

<sup>33</sup> Letter from K. Metternich to C. Huss, inv. no. KY35228, NPÚ.

<sup>34</sup> Letter from K. Metternich to C. Huss, 1833, inv. no. KY35238, NPÚ, concerns a consignment of 47 coins and medals, and the prince asks that they be signed for.

<sup>35</sup> For example, one notebook is a handwritten list of a collection of coins from North American states, East and West India and the cities of Hamburg and Bremen (inv. no. KY35500, NPÚ). These coins were collected over a period of 25 years. The label bears a dating of 1835.



6. Glass container with the ashes from the tomb of Achilles on a wooden plinth with an inscription, National Heritage Institute, Prague (© Národní památkový ústav)

colour renderings of coats-of-arms and other coloured drawings. The letters show the contribution Huss made to assembling a collection of high-quality Renaissance medal work from the mining town of Jáchymov (Sankt Joachimsthal) in the Ore Mountains, which was founded by Štěpán Šlik in 1520. In 1828, Huss listed 1,641 objects classified by material.<sup>36</sup> He was also involved in preparing items for display. One of the more curious assemblages consists of ashes from the tomb of Achilles, deposited in a glass container on a wooden plinth with the inscription “Asche aus dem im Jahre 1802 eröffneten Achilles Tumulus bei Troja”. The plinth also bears two small male heads in clay and alabaster, which were acquired separately as Achilles and Socrates and on the plinth were labelled as Achilles and Patroclus (fig. 6).<sup>37</sup> Under Huss’s direction, rooms were set aside for the collections with a separate entrance for visitors to enter the museum, as this part of the chateau was called. Following Huss’s death, the cabinet of curiosities was further expanded, and after the death of Klemens Lothar Metternich, his son Rudolf had his father’s death mask incorporated into the museum’s collections along with the glass from which the dying chancellor had last drunk. In doing so, he was consciously continuing to build the collection in accordance with the approach taken by his father and his first *kustoss*.

<sup>36</sup> *Verzeichniss aller in dem Hochfürstlich von Metternich’schen Mineralien, Waffen- und Kunst-Cabinet vorfindlichen Gegenstände*, manuscript by Carl Huss from 1828, call no. 28-C-9 (18746), library of the state-owned Kynžvart Chateau.

<sup>37</sup> Prague, National Heritage Institute, inv. no. KY02104. According to a note inside the glass container, the ashes were a gift from Marie-Gabriel-Florent-Auguste de Choiseul-Gouffier (1752–1817), French ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, who was an expert on ancient Greece and also carried out excavations: “Asche aus dem Krüge, welcher in dem Grabhügel Achylls auf der Ebene bei Troja gefunden wurde. Mir Ao 1802 von dem Gr. Choiseul Gouffier, ehem. kön. franz. Botschafter in Constat. gegeben, welcher diese Nachgrabung anstellte.”

## The Aristocratic Family as Creator and Manager of the Collection

Žleby (Schleb, Zleb) Chateau (originally a medieval castle), situated a hundred kilometres east of Prague, belonged to the eminent family of the Princes of Auersperg from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onward (fig. 7).<sup>38</sup> In the third quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the predominantly baroque property underwent a major reconstruction in the spirit of Romantic historicism, which was initiated by its owner at the time, Vincenz Karl Auersperg (1812–1867).<sup>39</sup> The young prince began the reconstruction only a few years after 1845, when he took over from his mother, Maria Gabriela Eleonora, née Lobkowitz (1793–1863), the management of the large estates he had inherited from his great-uncle, Karl Auersperg-Trautson. The key aspect that enabled or at least expedited work on the extensive reconstruction was



7. Žleby Chateau, Archive of the Institute of Art History, Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague  
(© Ústav dějin umění Akademie věd České Republiky)

the freeing up of substantial financial resources as a result of the release of his lands from serfdom. The young prince admired the world of medieval chivalry, but at the same time he was also a supporter of social and economic reforms and the revival of the Czech language.<sup>40</sup> In 1856, he became a founding member of the Viennese society *Alterthumsverein*,<sup>41</sup> whose aim was to preserve historical sources and monuments and which was instrumental in early conservation efforts within the Austrian monarchy. He found an outlet for his own artistic leanings in verse and prose,<sup>42</sup> and Žleby Chateau—which he consistently referred to as a castle—was to become in all respects the embodiment of his notions of an “ancient seat”. However, he shared these interests with a number of representatives of prominent Austrian aristocratic families of the time, for example Georg Johann Buquoy (1814–1882), Kamil Josef Rohan (1800–1892), Johann Adolf II of Schwarzenberg (1799–1888), Karl II of Schwarzenberg (1802–1858), Franz Ernst Harrach (1799–1884) and Alois II Liechtenstein (1896–1858), who were also the initiators of new buildings or reconstructions of their aristocratic seats in the spirit of Romantic historicism.<sup>43</sup> Most of them were primarily

<sup>38</sup> Auersperg is an Austrian dynasty—its princely branch had a seat in Bohemia, and this branch was divided into two lines: the older Vlašim one and the younger Žleby one. For more detail, see Preinfalk, *Auersperg*; Nohel, *Auerspergové*.

<sup>39</sup> The majority of the reconstruction work took place between 1849 and 1867. See, for example, the chapter about Žleby Chateau, in Kuthan, *Aristokratická sídla*, 76–90.

<sup>40</sup> He liked to sign himself Čeněk, and he also issued various proclamations to the inhabitants of Žleby and the surrounding area in Czech.

<sup>41</sup> “Verzeichniss.”

<sup>42</sup> His son Franz Josef Auersperg later published some of his works. See Auersperg, *Erinnerungen*.

<sup>43</sup> For more detail, see Kuthan, *Aristokratická sídla*; Horyna, “Architektura romantického;” Trnková, *Krajina, sídlo, obraz*.

inspired by the contemporary English mansions which they became thoroughly familiar with during their trips to England.<sup>44</sup>

In the case of Vincenz Karl Auersperg, both his mother Gabriela and his wife Wilhelmina (née Colloredo-Mannsfeld, 1826–1898) became fully fledged partners in these interests. The reconstruction of Žleby Chateau, headed by builder Benedikt Škvor (1805–1865), who was assisted by a later prominent representative of historicizing architecture in Bohemia, František Schmoranz (1814–1902), was in terms of ideas the work of all three members of the princely family.<sup>45</sup> The contribution of both of these artistically gifted women is clearly demonstrated by their sketchbooks<sup>46</sup> with designs for architectural details or assemblages of them, their main source of inspiration being a pictorial publication by the English architect Joseph Nash (1809–1878).<sup>47</sup>

The newly furnished interiors of the chateau were also primarily intended to evoke an atmosphere of antiquity (*Alterthums*), and here too Nash's book with its depictions of Renaissance English aristocratic seats was the main inspiration. Some of the rooms actually imitate specific interiors portrayed there (the identical location of windows and fireplaces, the decoration of the walls and ceilings and the placement of objects of the same type). The contribution made by Vincenz Karl Auersperg's mother and wife to the conception and the choice of individual objects is indisputable. The prince, who gradually became a very prominent figure in Viennese court politics and social life, regularly spent the warmer part of the year at the chateau with his family. To them the summer residence represented the embodiment of idealistic notions about the chivalric past, a prestigious ancestral monument and a private refuge from the "big" world. All of these motifs come together in the furnishing of the individual rooms. They were kitted out with stylistically appropriate furniture from other properties belonging to the family, with the most significant enrichment being the inheritance from Wilhelmina's father, Franz II of Colloredo-Mannsfeld (1802–1852). There were also numerous gifts from relatives and friends as well as objects brought back from trips around Europe or purchased from other aristocrats or antique dealers, especially in Munich and Vienna. Some of the furniture was also made according to historical prototypes.<sup>48</sup>

The aristocratic owners became not only the creators but for many years also the managers and caretakers of this extensive collection of "antiquities", as they themselves called it. Both of the princesses recorded it in detailed watercolour paintings of the individual rooms (fig. 8).<sup>49</sup> Here the more talented Wilhelmina often worked with her Viennese drawing teacher, Amalie von Peter

<sup>44</sup> All of those named had visited England, and often for a lengthy period of time. During the period in question, cultural ties were also bolstered by the political alliance between Austria and Victorian Britain.

<sup>45</sup> See Trnková, "Knights, Pilgrims," 267: "In the period of Romantic historicism, cooperation between the owner of the property, the architect and the individual creators of decor and furnishings during the modification or building of aristocratic residences was more a matter of course than an exception. The noble clients were naturally interested in ensuring they had adequate supervision of the building work and its decoration—all the more so because the outcome of these processes was, on the one hand, the shaping of their private environment and, on the other hand, the presentation of their ancestral traditions and history."

<sup>46</sup> These are now kept in Prague, National Heritage Institute, Žleby Chateau depositary, inv. no. ZL893–926, ZL2133.

<sup>47</sup> Nash, *The Mansions*. An edition of this work in several volumes by the pupil of Augustus Pugin and favourite architect of King George IV, is still preserved in the library of Žleby Chateau. However, they undoubtedly made use of other sources of inspiration as well—e.g. Ungewitter, *Entwürfe*.

<sup>48</sup> The interiors of other chateaux rebuilt in the spirit of Romantic historicism—the Buquoys' Rožmberk, the Schwarzenbergs' Hluboká or the Harrachs' Hrádek u Nechanic—were furnished in a similar way.

<sup>49</sup> Křížová, *Šlechtický interiér*; Letošníková, "Anglický romantismus;" Pospíšilová, "Historizující zámecký interiér."



8. *Wilhelmina and Vincenz Auersperg in the library of Žleby Chateau, 1845, watercolour, National Heritage Institute, Prague (© Národní památkový ústav)*

(1807–1953). Rudolf Alt (1812–1905), a popular professional painter specializing in capturing aristocratic interiors, was also invited to the chateau.<sup>50</sup>

From the turn of the 1850s and 1860s, a manuscript inventory of the furnishings of the individual spaces was gradually created, with its main authors probably being the husband and wife Karl Vincenz and Wilhelmina. The inventory of antiquities at Žleby Chateau<sup>51</sup> is very different from the standard inventories of art collections or the furnishings of chateaux and other stately homes from the time, whose creation was motivated by legal or economic reasons, or even by

<sup>50</sup> In the 1870s—i.e. not until after the death of Vincenz Karl—the interiors of the chateau were also photographically documented; however, the identity of the photographer is unknown. See Collection of Historical Photographs, Department of Documentation, Institute of Art History of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague (Ústav dějin umění Akademie věd České Republiky – ÚDU). At the time, documenting aristocratic interiors (including collections) using this modern reproductive technology was becoming a trend.

<sup>51</sup> Manuscript 1, inv. no. 8, Family Archives of the Auerspergs, Žleby and Slatiňany, Státní okresní archiv v Hradci Králové (SokA). The inventory is recorded on 103 pages close to A4 format in size and is bound in a solid brown cover decorated with gilding. It lists the furnishings of individual rooms, the order of which is largely random, and some of the rooms are missing entirely. Within each room, a description of the furniture is given first, followed by the paintings and finally smaller objects (*precioza*).

interest from the professional art-history community. In contrast, its individual entries were meant to capture the relationship of the family of owners to the object in question. Its formal characterization (material, dimensions) as well as the professional art-history viewpoint (time of creation, stylistic classification, authorship or country of origin) are played down. On the contrary, we are told which of the relations or friends donated it to the family (“schöner, großer eingelegter Tisch von Vater Colloredo”, “von meiner geliebten Gattin Wilhelmine Auersperg”) or which family residence it was transferred from. We often find a subjective aesthetic evaluation or a reference to the exceptional impression of antiquity it makes (“Heiligenbild in Holz auf Goldgrund, uralt”). There are very valuable notes on the sources of inspiration for the furnishing of the rooms (“(d)ieses Zimmer ist eingerichtet in dem Stile der Salzburgeren Schlosses (anno 1504)”) and purchases of objects (“(d)eutsche renaissance Truhe. 1848 samt einer Schüssel um 25 fl. gekauft”). The intimate nature of the inventory suggests that it was primarily intended for the actual family and its future generations rather than visitors to the castle or even their guides from among the staff.

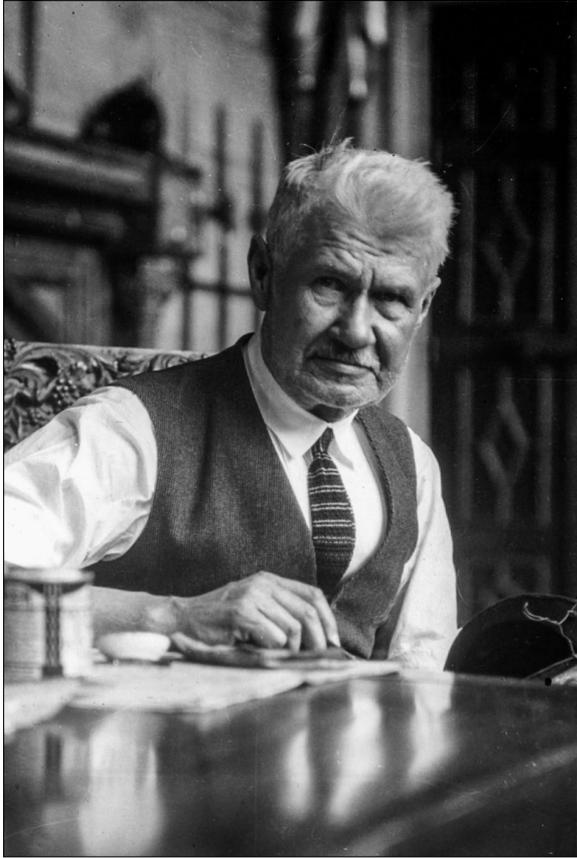
This demonstrates, among other things, that for the prince and his family the chateau largely represented a private retreat in the idealized world of a heroic past. Nevertheless, it seems that from the beginning, the intention was also to present this carefully constructed world outwardly, not only to the family’s visitors but also to the wider public visiting this region, which was being quite heavily exploited by tourists at the time. The chateau’s main social spaces were thus opened to visitors, accompanied by the castellan, very shortly after the greater part of the reconstruction was completed in the 1860s. The interest in the property is documented by the publication of a detailed, high-quality guidebook in 1888, which quickly sold out and had to be reprinted in 1890.<sup>52</sup> However, by that time, Žleby Chateau’s role as an “aristocratic apartment” was coming to an end, and it remained primarily an ancestral monument and a space for storing and presenting collections. The family of its new owner, Franz Josef (1856–1938), the oldest son of Vincenz Karl, who took possession of the property after the death of his father in 1867,<sup>53</sup> gradually moved its main residence to the less ostentatious nearby former hunting chateau of Slatiňany.

### The Former Prince’s Manager at the Time of the Republic

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Žleby began to be viewed by its owners more as a museum; the history it presented was already ceasing to be part of life. From the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and especially in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the trend of earmarking a single property for the concentration and presentation of historical collections can also be seen in a large number of other aristocratic families which owned a number of chateaux and extensive land holdings in the Czech lands, e.g. the Czernins (the chateau of Jindřichův Hradec/Neuhaus), the Hluboká branch of the Schwarzenbergs (the chateau of Český Krumlov/Böhmisch Krummau) and the Waldsteins (the chateau of Mnichovo Hradiště/Münchengrätz). Usually, this was the oldest, most architecturally interesting or most prestigious property, but one which was difficult to adapt to modern living requirements—not only for purely practical reasons but also with regard to its conservation value. The owner’s family would then use a smaller and newer property to live in, often surrounded by an extensive landscaped park, where

<sup>52</sup> Hendrich, *Hrad Žleby*.

<sup>53</sup> Initially, the property was managed by his mother.



9. Josef Schmoranz at Žleby Chateau, 1920s, Archive of the Institute of Art History, Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague (© Ústav dějin umění Akademie věd České Republiky)

they had more privacy and which they could adapt to their needs unhindered. In contrast, in the “museumized” property, they tried to ensure adequate care for the family’s historical collections, whose opening up to the public was by then becoming the norm.

Another aspect which fits neatly into this trend is the occupation of the expert who was newly appointed to oversee the Žleby collections. In 1915, Josef Schmoranz (1855–1938),<sup>54</sup> one of the sons of the architect responsible for the reconstruction of Žleby Chateau in the 1850s and 1860s, was asked to take on this role by Franz Josef Auersperg.<sup>55</sup> After studying painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, Josef Schmoranz had undertaken a number of study trips to European countries, including Italy and Belgium. Subsequently, he became a teacher of art subjects at the renowned Industrial School for Woodworking in Chrudim in East Bohemia. However, he popularized visual art even outside of this school and published several books on artistic styles, historical weapons and folk art.<sup>56</sup> He only took over the role of manager (custodian)

of Žleby’s collections and library after his retirement (fig. 9). Franz Josef Auersperg had known Josef Schmoranz practically since he was born,<sup>57</sup> and from his point of view he represented the ideal person to manage his collections—absolutely trustworthy with the right professional grounding.<sup>58</sup>

Schmoranz certainly did not disappoint him, devoting himself to the collection entrusted to him in a comprehensive way. He moved to Žleby and took over the role of guide to the chateau from the castellan. In addition, he soon prepared and in 1921 published a 63-page printed description of

<sup>54</sup> Šulc, “Josef Schmoranz.”

<sup>55</sup> All of the sons took an active interest in the visual arts, especially architecture. The eldest, František Schmoranz Jr., became the founder and first director of the School of Applied Arts in Prague.

<sup>56</sup> Schmoranz and Adámek, *Lidový nábytek*; Schmoranz, *Nauka o tvarech*.

<sup>57</sup> His father worked intensively with him over a long period on the reconstruction of the chateau in Slatiňany and was also behind most of the other building enterprises on his estate; what’s more, the family also lived in Slatiňany. In 1928, Franz Josef wrote of him that “seit längeren Jahren, in alter Freundschaft die Stelle eines Custos der dortigen Sammlungen zu ersetzen [...]”. See Letter from F. J. Auersperg to T. G. Masaryk (draft), 1928, inv. no. 101, box 5, Family Archive of the Auerspergs, Žleby and Slatiňany, SokA.

<sup>58</sup> Here a role may also have been played by the small financial demands Schmoranz made as a result of holding a state pension.

artistic objects kept at the castle.<sup>59</sup> At the time, he saw the main reason for presenting the collections to the public in these terms: they have [...] a highly significant ideal purpose: to awaken and stimulate an interest in and appreciation of beauty. The earlier an interest in and appreciation of everything beautiful is awakened, the more comfortably and powerfully a love of art and respect for old monuments develops, and without these two factors a perfect education can never be attained.”<sup>60</sup> To a large extent, the guidebook corresponds to the demands placed on a specialist publication at the time. At Žleby, Schmoranz is also supposed to have prepared the now lost manuscript *Studie zbraní všech věků* (Study of the Weapons of All the Ages), and indeed his deep interest in arms and armour is also attested by the space devoted to them and the erudite descriptions of them in the aforementioned guidebook.

Another of Schmoranz’s advantages soon became apparent: the fact that he was of Czech nationality. After the creation of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918, the aristocracy completely lost their power and to a large extent their social status; titles were abolished by law and their use was even prohibited. Large-scale land ownership—the main source of income for most of them—was reduced on average to a quarter of its original extent by land reform. The new republic made it abundantly clear to the aristocrats that their services were not required.<sup>61</sup> Most of them—partly as a protest against this situation—declared themselves German nationals, but this made their position even worse in a country explicitly presenting itself as the state of the Czechoslovak nation. The last two Auerspergs, Vincenz Karl and Franz Josef, were traditionally regarded as more “pro-Czech” by aristocratic society, but Franz Josef did not agree with the young republic’s approach to his social class, and this was probably the main reason why during the official population census the otherwise cosmopolitan nobleman claimed German nationality. By employing Czechs, he was able to partially compensate for his complicated situation, both in relation to the state administration and, in a predominantly Czech-speaking area like the vicinity of Žleby Chateau, in relation to the public as well.

Thus, for example, Josef Schmoranz was delegated by his employer to act as guide to the President of the Republic, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, during his visit to Žleby in 1928, as we learn from the surviving draft of a letter from Franz Josef Auersperg to Masaryk.<sup>62</sup> In it he puts the chateau entirely at the president’s disposal but openly explains to him that he will not personally take on the role of guide due to his disagreement with the attitude of the Czechoslovak Republic towards the nobility, or rather towards the owners of large estates.

Practically the only sphere in which the young republic had no scruples about employing the services of noblemen was the care of cultural assets. In almost all cases these were left to them during the implementation of the land reforms, but in return the state insisted that they were properly maintained and often opened to the public or at least to researchers as well. For the most part, the nobles discharged this role very responsibly; after all, that was the most effective strategy for encouraging the state administration to take a more benevolent approach during

<sup>59</sup> Schmoranz, *Hrad Žleby*.

<sup>60</sup> Schmoranz, *Hrad Žleby*, 3.

<sup>61</sup> On the position of the nobility in the First Czechoslovak Republic, see Glasheim, *Noble nationalists*; Uhlíková, *Konfiskované osudy*.

<sup>62</sup> Letter from F. J. Auersperg to T. G. Masaryk (draft), 1928, inv. no. 101, box 5, Family Archive of the Auerspergs, Žleby and Slatiňany, SokA.

the expropriation of their other landed property.<sup>63</sup> It is also within this context that we can view the open approach to detailed research into Žleby Chateau and especially its collections in the 1920s as part of a project mapping the art-history topography of Czechoslovakia organized by the Archaeological Commission of the Czech Academy of Science and the Arts and the *Gesellschaft zur Förderung deutscher Wissenschaft, Kunst und Literatur in Böhmen*. The description of the chateau by the art historian Alžběta Birnbaumová forms a large part of the volume published in 1929 and dedicated to the Čáslav district.<sup>64</sup>

### Managers in the Service of the State

Even after the implementation of land reform in the 1920s, most of the historical aristocratic residences in Czechoslovakia remained the private property of the original owners. However, properties owned by members of the ruling House of Habsburg-Lorraine were an exception. According to the Treaty of Saint Germain, all of their property in Czechoslovakia was ceded to the state.<sup>65</sup> In addition to extensive land holdings, this comprised 17 stately homes and one castle.<sup>66</sup> The state's primary interest was in agricultural land, which is why the administration of all this property was entrusted to the Ministry of Agriculture, or rather to an enterprise newly established by it: State Forests and Estates. Stately homes, including their rich collections, remained of peripheral interest for a long time, preserved in the condition their original owners had left them in. To a large extent, state support for culture was regarded by the representatives of the Czechoslovak state as a super-structural matter, and this was reflected in the extremely makeshift provision of staffing and finances in the state cultural sphere,



10. Josef Polák (right) with Zdeněk Wirth and Hugo Kretschmer in Ukraine, 1930s, Archive of the Institute of Art History, Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague (© Ústav dějin umění Akademie věd České Republiky)

<sup>63</sup> Uhlíková, *Šlechtická sídla*; Radostová and Uhlíková, "The history of furnishings."

<sup>64</sup> Birnbaumová and Jansová, *Soupis památek historických*.

<sup>65</sup> Act No. 354/1921, collection of acts and regulations from August 12, 1921, on the takeover of estates and property newly belonging to the Czechoslovak state on the basis of the peace treaties.

<sup>66</sup> Chateaus in Bohemia: Brandýs nad Labem, Chlum u Třeboně, Koleč, Konopiště, Ostrov nad Ohří, Ploskovic, Přerov nad Labem, Smiřice and Zákupy; in Moravia: Ivanovice na Hané, Hodonín and Židlochovice; in Silesia: Frýdek; and in Slovakia: Holič, Skýcov, Šaštín, Topolčianky and the castle of Vigláš.

managed by the National Enlightenment department of the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment. Under the pressure of external circumstances, its civil servants—under the leadership of the head of this department, the art historian and heritage conservationist Zdeněk Wirth (1878–1961)—eventually arrived at a rather convoluted solution in an attempt to ensure at least some form of professional care for the former Habsburg-Lorraine collections.

They entrusted this to the director of the East Slovak Museum in Košice (Kaschau), Josef Polák (1886–1945),<sup>67</sup> who, through a combination of circumstances, was the only qualified manager of art collections within the jurisdiction of the department at the time. Polák was a Prague-born lawyer of Jewish descent who had taken a systematic interest in art since his studies at the Czech university in Prague at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He and Zdeněk Wirth knew each other from the milieu of the Club “For Old Prague”, the most important and most active non-state entity focusing on heritage conservation in the pre-war period (fig. 10). With his excellent organizational, professional and linguistic skills, the extremely hard-working Polák was certainly a very suitable person for the post of manager of the former Habsburg-Lorraine collections, and Wirth had complete confidence in his professional and managerial abilities. However, Košice was a long way from Bohemia, where most of the properties were located. For this reason, Polák had to carry out the inventORIZATION of the collections—which was to become the basis for their professional administration—during his summer holiday, which was extended by the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment on an ad hoc basis. Surprisingly, this unusual arrangement remained in operation until 1938. By that time Polák had primarily managed to inventoRIZE the largest and most valuable collections from Konopiště Chateau, which had been gathered there over many years by the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, Franz Ferdinand d’Este. Until recently, Polák’s inventory in the form of a card index was still being used by the National Heritage Institute, the current administrator of the chateau,<sup>68</sup> although its origins had long been forgotten. We know that, in addition to Konopiště, Polák inspected the furniture of the chateaux in Brandýs nad Labem (Brandeis an der Elbe), Zákupy (Reichstadt) and Ploskovic (Ploschkowitz), and he informed Zdeněk Wirth about the situation at the properties and the course of the work in detail in correspondence which is still extant. For example, in a letter from November 13, 1928, he writes indignantly about the chateau in Brandýs nad Labem:

Brandýs is dreadful! I found an el Greco among the junk, propped against the corner of a bench, standing on the ground—no one in all of Europe would believe it! I also unearthed a beautiful Füger, a wonderful antique bronze (head) and many other things. I am rescuing them by having everything transferred to Konopiště for the time being. I took the Greco there myself (by car) and it is already standing in the gallery (3<sup>rd</sup> floor) on a stepladder. It is a divine thing, fully signed.<sup>69</sup>

In the 1930s, Polák also published several articles presenting more in-depth research into the most interesting exhibits from these collections.<sup>70</sup> At this time, he also designed the conception of the future permanent exhibition at Konopiště Chateau, so far opened to the public only on a provisional basis. However, according to the department of agriculture’s ideas, this was to be realized only after

<sup>67</sup> On Polák, see Veselská, *Muž, který*.

<sup>68</sup> After the Second World War, the chateau was taken over by the Czechoslovak heritage authorities.

<sup>69</sup> Letter from J. Polák to Z. Wirth, 13 November 1928, box W-A-251, vol. 1, fonds Z. Wirth, ÚDU.

<sup>70</sup> Polák, “Busta Lorenza de Medici;” Polák, “Konopištěské gobelíny;” Polák, “Činnost umělecké.”

the complete inventorization of the collections from all the Habsburg-Lorraine chateaus, and a selection of their most valuable artefacts was to be presented. However, he was unable to realize this ambitious project, for which there were minimal financial resources and Polák could not count on any other experts besides himself.

In 1938, Josef Polák, like most of the Czechs working in Slovakia, was forced to return to Prague.<sup>71</sup> After the occupation of the rest of the Czech lands by Nazi Germany, he went to work as a specialist at the Central Jewish Museum newly created by the Reich authorities.<sup>72</sup> At that time, he was also used by the Protectorate and Reich authorities as the foremost authority on the collections originating from the Habsburg-Lorraine estate, for example during the selection of objects for Hitler's museum in Linz. It was probably also thanks to him that in the end a relatively small number of objects was taken from these chateaus for this purpose. Despite the great danger Josef Polák faced because of his Jewish origins, he actively participated in the anti-Nazi resistance.<sup>73</sup> He was arrested in 1944 and died in Auschwitz in 1945.

## Conclusion

Within this study we have presented the key figures whose activities testify to the increasing attention paid to the professional care of aristocratic collections. The time frame includes the reverberation of the encyclopaedic movement, which is exemplified by Carl Huss and his employer Klemens Lothar Metternich and the collections they built up together, which in its diversity of artefacts corresponded to a cabinet of curiosities and a *Kunstkammer* in one. At the same time, this was a period characterized by the rise of patriotic sentiments and nascent Czech nationalism, as is clearly illustrated by the example of František Horčíčka's work with the Colloredo-Mansfeld collection. As a result, Romanticism and the Auersperg seat built in that spirit represented a single integrated monument evoking the gravitas, age and importance of this international dynasty. The period of the First Czechoslovak Republic, received by the nobles with a certain bitterness, which was a response to the way in which the new state threatened and encroached on their property and status, is encapsulated in a private letter from Franz Josef Auersperg to the President of the Czechoslovak Republic, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. The story of Josef Polák testifies to how difficult it was to instigate and enforce state care of expropriated cultural properties.

All of them shared a willingness and readiness to give over the relevant part of their professional and personal life to the collection entrusted to them. Responsibility for the collections and the need to present them further apparently triggered a shift towards more detailed, structured inventories of the collections, which in view of their significant financial value were usually protected by *fideikomis* status. If we compare the aforementioned inventories, we will see that each of them was designed in a completely original and independent way, with the chosen structure basically corresponding to the initiative of the manager, his education, original profession and previous

<sup>71</sup> Most of the Czech employees were forced to leave Slovakia by the end of 1938.

<sup>72</sup> The Central Jewish Museum thus became the storage place for liturgical objects, books and archival materials from the Jewish communities in the Protectorate for the period after the war and for selected objects from the property of Jews deported from Prague and the surrounding area to concentration and extermination camps. See Veselská, *Židovské muzeum*.

<sup>73</sup> Veselská, *Muž, který*, 111.

experience. Generally, the owner did not devote a great deal of attention to them, the exception obviously being the inventory of antiquities at Žleby Chateau by the Auersperg couple.

All of the collections were opened to the public and, apart from the only state-run one installed at Konopiště, also presented within more or less specialist publications. However, their publication was only tolerated, not initiated, by the owners of the collections and was given minimal financial support. The most thorough approach to making the collection accessible was the establishment of the Metternich museum, which had a separate entrance and a planned visitor route. First, as early as 1808, the Colloredo-Mansfeld picture gallery in the Prague palace was opened to the public, and important visitors were recorded there too. The Auersperg chateau of Žleby finally arrived at a similar approach after being transformed into a family museum in the 1870s.

Those engaged to manage the collections were experts whom the owners usually knew well on a personal level and trusted. Two of them only devoted themselves to these activities after they retired, which may also have been related to their lower financial demands.

Until now, the central role in creating and determining the further direction of aristocratic collections has been attributed almost exclusively to their owners. However, our research to date has come to a rather different conclusion. Even though they were often invisible actors operating in the background, the managers of the collections were of much greater significance than previously assumed. They were influential in many respects, from acquisitions, through the presentation and registration of artworks, to methods of conservation and restoration. It is our belief that in further research into historical collections and collecting, it will always be necessary to carefully consider the role of the manager, not only in terms of the contribution they made to a particular collection but also as part of a more general examination of collections and how they evolved over time.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Translated by Suzanne Dibble.

Part of this study came about as a specific objective of Výzkum druhových skupin předmětů na objektech ve správě Národního památkového ústavu, výzkumná oblast Movité památky (Research into Typological Groups of Objects at Sites Managed by the National Heritage Institute, research area: Movable Monuments), as part of the project *Umělecká díla antiky, středověku, renesance a manýrismu v mobiliárních fondech ve správě Národního památkového ústavu* (Ancient, Medieval, Renaissance and Mannerist Artworks in the Furnishings Collections Managed by the National Heritage Institute), financed through the Ministry of Culture's Institutional Support for the Long-term Conceptual Development of the Research Organization (DKRVO 99H3010130). The *Ad unicum* project edition now encompasses a total of five volumes, and within the individual monographs, emphasis is also placed on presenting the results of provenance research and the history of collecting. For the English-language publication, see Radostová, *Ad unicum*.

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## Vloga in delovanje skrbnikov plemiških zbirk na Češkem v 19. stoletju in prvi polovici 20. stoletja. Izbrani primeri

### *Povzetek*

V številnih evropskih državah je bilo od renesanse naprej običajno, da so skrb za obsežne zbirke v lasti plemičev zaupali posebnim uslužbencem. Pričujoča študija se osredotoča na obdobje od začetka 19. stoletja do konca druge svetovne vojne, ki je bilo v zvezi s tem vprašanjem doslej le zelo malo obravnavano. Potreba po poglobljenem razumevanju vloge, ki so jo imeli skrbniki pri oblikovanju zbirk, se je izkristalizirala v podrobni študiji zbirk in ohranjenih virov o njih. Med pisnimi viri so številni arhivski dokumenti, zlasti popisi zbirk, korespondenca in potrdila o nakupih, prenosih in prodajah, pogodbe itd. Nedvomno so pomembne tudi publikacije iz tega obdobja, zlasti bogata topografsko usmerjena literatura, npr. zvezki o umetnostnozgodovinski topografiji čeških dežel, ki so začeli izhajati v devetdesetih letih 19. stoletja, kot tudi prvi tiskani vodniki po posameznih plemiških rezidencah. O historični podobi zbirk pričajo tudi sočasne risbe in fotografije notranjosti gradov in palač. Tudi same zbirke so pomemben vir informacij o naravi dejavnosti posameznih skrbnikov z vidika njihove strukture, tipologije predmetov, njihovega stanja, načina restavriranja ali drugih predelav ter izbranih prostorov za predstavitve.

Posamezne nepremičnine in zbirke, zbrane v njih, so bile povezane z lastniki, ki so bili plemiči različnih stopenj. Primerjamo lahko pristop nižjega in višjega plemstva ali celo cesarske družine. Posebno kategorijo tvori pristop države, ki je po ustanovitvi Češkoslovaške republike po koncu prve svetovne vojne prevzela premoženje habsburško-lotarinške cesarske družine.

Lastnik ali lastniki rodbinskih nepremičnin so imeli značilen vpliv na način opredelitve vloge skrbnika. Obseg pristojnosti, ki so mu bile zaupane, se je razlikoval predvsem glede na stopnjo osebnega navdušenja in vključenosti lastnika, ki je bil lahko, vendar ne nujno, glavni graditelj zbirke. Pogosto je šlo le za odgovorno skrbništvo nad zbirko kot del zapuščine. Drugi pomemben dejavnik, ki je imel daljnosežen vpliv, je bilo stanje družinskih financ. Za obravnavano obdobje je bilo značilno povečanje finančnih sredstev v povezavi z odpravo podložništva leta 1848, po letu 1918 pa, nasprotno, znatno zmanjšanje finančnih sredstev zaradi prisilne oddaje večine zemljiških posesti v okviru zemljiške reforme. Ključni vidiki, ki so vplivali na to, kako je skrbnik pristopil k zaupani mu vlogi, so bili njegova osebnost, izobrazba, ambicije in življenjske izkušnje. Različne vrste zbirk so od skrbnika (slikarja, trgovca, izvedenca) zahtevale posebne sposobnosti in erudicijo.

Plemiške zbirke – mnoge od njih so bile v češke dežele prenesene na novo šele v 19. stoletju – so predstavljale različne motivacije zbiralcev; šlo je za premoženje, zbrano zato, da se predstavi zgodovina družine, da bi se pokazala njena osebna moč in status. V 19. stoletju so zbirke vse bolj postajale odraz osebne strasti do zgodovine, običajno do srednjega veka, v duhu romantike. Ob koncu 19. in v 20. stoletju je prevladoval motiv prostovoljnega prevzemanja odgovornosti za umetnine preteklosti, ki so jih zbirale generacije, pri čemer je ta odgovornost veljala bolj za javnost, tj. »narod«, kot za prihodnje družinske generacije.

Posamezniki, izbrani za analizo, skupaj predstavljajo približno sto petdeset let skrbi za zbirke v plemiških rezidencah. Akademski slikar František Horčíčka, nekdanji mestni rabelj Carl Huss ter zakonca Wilhelmina in Karl Vincenz Auersperg so se zbirkam posvečali v 19. stoletju, profesor Josef Schmoranz in odvetnik Josef Polák pa v prvi polovici 20. stoletja; vsi so bili ključni predstavniki posameznih strok in družbenih slojev. Vsak od njih predstavlja tudi določen tip zbirke in njen status: prva je zbirka pomembnega avstrijskega politika, kanclerja Klemensa Lotharja von Metternicha (dvorec Kynžvart), druga je družinska galerija slik Colloredo-Mansfeldov (dvorec Opočno), del fidejkomisnega posestva, tretji tip je družinski muzej Auerspergov na gradu Žleby, četrti pa zbirka prestolonaslednika Franca Ferdinanda (grad Konopiště), ki je bila nacionalizirana na podlagi Saintgermainске mirovne pogodbe.