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SPECIAL ISSUE EAST ASIA IN SLOVENIA: COLLECTING PRACTICES, CATEGORIZATION AND REPRESENTATION

Guest Editor's Foreword

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East Asia in Slovenia: Collecting Practices, Categorization and Representation

Nataša VAMPELJ SUHADOLNIK

Material objects are the primary components of human heritage, for they constitute the patrimony of the material and immaterial dimensions of human knowledge, "collective memory" (Halbwachs 1950), and cultural identity. The development and, especially, the "progress" of civilization are based on the exchange of ideas, knowledge, and material objects, and thus on the continuous connections between different cultures and civilizations. The rather intense levels of contact between European countries and East Asia since the 16th century accelerated economic exchange, in which East Asian objects came to the fore and quickly became the most sought-after objects of trade, exchange, and collection. This tendency increased enormously over the last two centuries, when it was encouraged and facilitated by individuals of all social strata, as well as by museums and other official institutions around the world.

The vast majority of research focuses on collections and objects of East Asian origin located in the capitals of former colonial powers in Western Europe and in other political and cultural centres, while research on East Asian collections in "peripheral" areas is still quite meagre. The exclusion of this research gives only a partial picture of the European history of collecting East Asian objects, defined by the major colonial countries and other political, economic, and cultural centres. It does not show the circulation of collectibles between different spatial levels, nor the circulation between different levels of the social scale. A complex political, social, and cultural network in collecting East Asian material culture has thus gone largely unnoticed, which can lead to a simplification of the complex picture of cultural concepts and categories, reflecting only the dominant part of cultural production.

This special issue of the journal *Asian Studies* therefore focuses on East Asian collections in Slovenia, a region that has always been on the political periphery—first within the Habsburg Monarchy, and later as one of the founding nations of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, but with little real political or administrative power. Most of the objects of East Asian origin were left as legacies of various people (sailors, missionaries, travellers and others) who travelled to China or Japan in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as a result of Austro-Hungary's newly established diplomatic relations with East Asia in 1869 (Vampelj Suhadolnik 2019). This opened the seas to a growing number of Austro-Hungarian merchant and military ships, aboard which also sailed people from Slovene ethnic territory. While some larger collections of objects of East Asian origin entered Slovenian museums after the deaths of their owners in the 1950s and 60s, individual objects found their way into museums as early as the 19th century. With few exceptions,[1] the collections were mostly put into storage, where they led a "dormant life" in depots and attics, forgotten by museum curators and academic scholars and thus deprived of their metaphorical voice. Left to oblivion, they also lack detailed object records, information on their provenance, and accurate identification and categorization. The socio-political circumstances in Slovenia during the 20th century, with two world wars and the establishment of four different states, further contributed to their oblivion and often led to the loss of the history surrounding individual objects and other collectibles.

For the above reasons, the Department of Asian Studies at the Faculty of Arts University of Ljubljana launched the three-year national research project *East Asian Collections in Slovenia: Inclusion of Slovenia in the Global Exchanges of Objects and Ideas with East Asia* (2018–2021) (No. J7-9429) (hereafter the VAZ project), supported by the Slovenian Research Agency. The project team for the first time comprehensively and systematically investigated five collections of East Asian origin and presented them on the newly developed VAZ website (https://vazcollections.si/). The website links various East Asian objects at the national level and makes them accessible to the broader public for the first time. It not only presents detailed information about each object, but also uses various curated approaches (e.g. blogs, galleries, interactive and dynamic presentations, online exhibitions) to bring a number of interesting and inspiring objects to life, revealing their stories and the identities of their owners. The work was carried out in collaboration with museum professionals and followed an interdisciplinary approach. In addition to the individual objects, the way they can be interpreted, and their connection to the people who produced them, the project also addressed the objects' aesthetic and formal characteristics.

This volume therefore presents the results of the VAZ project. It not only tells the story of a number of lesser-known individual objects and collections—most of which are still hidden from view—but also opens up questions concerning social status and material circumstances, as well as aesthetic and fashion trends that

1 The Slovene Ethnographic Museum, which houses the largest collection of Chinese objects (the Skušek collection) in the country, opened a branch for its non-European collections in the Baroque mansion Goričane in Medvode. The objects were on display from its foundation in 1964 until 1990, although only one curator, Pavla Štrukelj, was responsible for all non-European collections.

developed in areas that were not part of the former European centres of colonial power. It attempts to provide answers to the many questions that arise in the context of the project: By what routes did the objects from East Asia reach present-day Slovenia? Who were the people from the Slovene ethnic territory who travelled to East Asia on the threshold of the 20th century? How did they collect objects? What types of East Asian objects are thus specific to the Slovenian area? How do they function as collectibles? Did the objects serve as curios, souvenirs, or as prestige or aesthetic objects? How did people live with these objects in their private environments? How did they use and display them? What similarities or differences can we observe in the representative canon of collectibles as compared to that in the former major centres of colonial power? How do these objects testify to the material conditions, collecting patterns, and value concepts of their collectors? What do the objects tell us about the processes of material and ideational flows between Slovenia and East Asia? What are the most appropriate ways and methods to study, categorize, and present East Asian collections in Slovenia? How did people from Slovene ethnic lands perceive and understand different aspects of East Asian traditions, what kind of images of distant places did they create, and how did they share their knowledge and common experiences with a wider Slovenian audience?

The questions outlined above underline the contributions to this thematic issue and are based on insights into material culture and collecting history, which conceives of objects as social and cultural products, and emphasizes their circulation and recontextualization. Objects do not possess a real, ingrained, or fixed identity; their meaning is a cultural construction formed in relation to the interpretative framework of specific cultural contexts (Tythacott 2011, 7). The seminal idea that objects have a "cultural biography" was first put forward by Igor Kopytoff and Arjun Appadurai in 1986, and has since inspired several interdisciplinary studies drawing on art history, history, archaeology, and anthropology, and even economics and other social sciences. The same methodological framework has been applied to the study of objects produced in Asia, emphasizing the transcultural context, as an artefact can rarely be seen as the product of a single nation and its cultural denotation (Grasskamp and Juneja 2018; Allard, Sun and Linduff 2018; Ko 2017; Tythacott 2011). The importance of the human role and human action, as well as the relationship between human and object, must always be taken into account, since objects remain immobile without contact with humans (Tythacott 2011, 8). In recent decades, moreover, numerous studies have attempted to place the history of collecting in the global context of humanities research, thus foregrounding the question of the (dis)connection between materiality and cultural connotations (Rujivacharakul 2011). Interpretations of "East Asian" objects pose a particularly difficult challenge stemming from museological classifications and the need to classify objects according to their geographical origin, chronological sequence, or evolutionary developments of form or technique (Preziosi 1996), while museological classifications are themselves the result of the epistemological paradigms of a contemporary individual who constructs their knowledge about the external world according to the materiality of the object. As Maja Veselič (2020, 6) notes, the processes of categorization, of organizing knowledge, can already be derived from inventory books, catalogues, and similar lists, as well as from other forms of displaying objects or web portals that serve the broader transmission and dissemination of knowledge.

The following issue is therefore divided into four thematic sections that attempt to address the above questions. It begins with a section devoted to the collectibles and different types of objects that can be found in Slovenian collections of East Asian objects. It shows the status of Slovenian "collectors" of East Asian objects, what their collecting practices were, what type of objects they collected, how these objects testified to their financial means and the nature of their journeys. As such, it also touches on the relationship between collectibles, everyday objects, and souvenirs, and further discusses how objects were stored, categorized, and displayed after they were transferred to museums. This section contains three papers that shed light on the role of collectibles. While two papers—one by Chikako Shigemori Bučar and the other by Mina Grčar—deal with the formation of collecting patterns and present individual objects in two different collections, the remaining paper—by myself—discusses how to categorize the East Asian objects and where to place them within the existing taxonomy once they have entered the museum space.

Chikako Shigemori Bučar illustrates the role of small and trivial objects in the collection of Alma M. Karlin (1889–1950), a famous traveller, writer, interpreter, and collector from Celje, Slovenia, who left in November 1919 for an eight-year journey around the world. During her journey, she amassed a large number of diverse objects. As can be seen from the gift certificate, Alma's long-time friend and roommate Thea Shreiber Gammelin (1906–1988), the heir of her collection, donated as many as 1,392 non-European objects, including natural objects, to the Celje Regional Museum between 1957 and 1960 (Trnovec 2011, 57). In addition to typical collectibles such as lacquerware, *ukiyo-e* prints, and fans, Karlin's collection includes a wide range of small and trivial objects, e.g., a wall calendar, a train ticket, paper bookmarks, ceremonial wrappings, and there is even the receipt issued by a newspaper company. Chikako Shigemori Bučar extracts eight different types of these objects and attempts to contextualize them in the scope of the nature of Karlin's journey, her ability to purchase them, and her interest in ethnography. Furthermore, she addresses the issue of the "ethnological interest" and curiosity of the "Westerner" in the first decades of the 20th century in the context of East-West exchange and tries to analyse the role of souvenirs for the collector himself and for other people around the collector. It was common for travellers to bring back souvenirs that attested to the fact that their owners had visited distant places and observed "exotic" customs and other novel phenomena (Thomas 1991, 141). As such, the souvenirs are imbued with nostalgic and romantic notions, and allow their owners to document their personal histories and achievements (Pearce 1992, 76–77). Everyday objects that function as souvenirs also attest to the owner's privileged knowledge of other cultures (Tythacott 2011, 72). Such aspirations are also reflected in the journey of Alma Karlin, who aspired to broaden her horizons and thereby also gain recognition in her local community. Apart from discussing the role of such objects for the collector herself, Chikako Shigemori Bučar also addresses their relevance in reconstructing the collector's everyday life in the course of a journey. Although small and trivial, such objects reveal some important details of Karlin`s experiences in the central part of Tokyo during the Taishō period (1912–1926), where she lived for just over a year, from June 1922 to July 1923.

While Chikako Shigemori Bučar discusses the collecting practices of Alma Karlin through her interest in trivial objects, the next article in this section by Mina Grčar deals with the collecting patterns of Ivan Skušek Jr. (1877–1947), another important collector from the Slovenian region. Her focus is on Skušek's rich collection of various types of Chinese coins, from all periods of Chinese history, which have never been fully researched and evaluated before. Ivan Skušek Jr. was a senior officer in the Austro-Hungarian navy who spent almost six years (1914–1920) in Beijing due to the political situation. In Beijing, he collected Chinese objects with the intention of setting up a museum after his return home. Among the wide variety of object types he collected is a diverse collection of at least 216 Chinese coins, if not more, along with other types of ancient Chinese money. The author based her research on several recently found documents that shed light on Skušek's collecting pattern in the field of Chinese coins. Particularly valuable among them are letters to Skušek from a Franciscan missionary, Father Maurus Kluge, which illuminate Skušek's social life in Beijing, especially his interaction with other experts and connoisseurs of numismatics, and therefore give us insight into the process of building his numismatic collections, as well as the prevailing value of what kinds of coins were deemed worth collecting in the early 20th century. The paper consists of two parts; while in the first the author discusses the different types of Chinese coins in Skušek's collection and beyond, the second illustrates the circumstances and his collecting patterns, which according to Mina Grčar is closely interwoven with his social life at the time of his stay in Beijing.

The last paper in this section, written by myself, deals with the categorization and classification of the East Asian objects, after they entered Slovenian museums. As early as the 19th century, when the first objects of East Asian origin entered the Provincial Museum of Carniola—the first museum in what is now Slovenia—museums were confronted with the problem of how to categorize them. The paper offers an in-depth analysis of the various interpretations and evaluations of East Asian objects with a focus on the National Museum and the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, which was detached from the National Museum in 1923. Should these and other non-European objects be called "works of art" in recognition of their aesthetic value, or did they belong more in the realm of ethnography or anthropology because they could show how people lived in another region of the world? I examine the values and criteria by which objects were categorized and discuss this question from a comparative perspective with developments in other European countries. In contrast to the conceptual shift from "ethnology" to "decorative and fine arts", which can be observed especially in the categorization of East Asian objects in North America and the former European colonial countries, the classification of such objects in Slovenia oscillated between "ethnology" and "cultural history", with ethnology gaining the upper hand. The general reassessment of East Asian objects only gathered momentum in Slovenia in the first two decades of the 21st century with a further impetus from the Slovenian Research Agency, which announced that it would fund a three-year research project on East Asian collections in Slovenia.

The second part of the volume examines how people lived with these objects in their private environments and shows how they used and displayed them. It also examines how the objects that once adorned the interiors of their homes were transferred from a private to a public sphere, thus discussing the process of the collections' transition to the museum. It contains two papers—one by Helena Motoh and the other by Tina Berdajs—both of which focus on Ivan Skušek Jr. and his collection. Both papers further show Skušek as a systematic collector who kept detailed records of every object he purchased, paying attention to provenance, history, and authenticity. He can truly be considered the first collector of Chinese and other East Asian objects in present-day Slovenia, having built up his collection systematically by examining the objects and checking the provenance, value and significance of each. As the largest collection of Chinese objects in Slovenia, it stands out from others in its size and diversity. It consists of approximately 500 mostly Chinese objects, some of them reportedly of imperial provenance. It ranges from richly embroidered textiles, paintings, albums, Buddhist statues, ceramics and porcelain, musical instruments, photographs, and rare books, to furniture, decorative wall screens, and a model of a house. Skušek himself envisaged the museum in the style of traditional Chinese architecture, for the needs of which he even brought home a model of a Chinese house, but financial constraints prevented the establishment of such a museum. Instead, after his death in 1947, the National Museum officially took over his extensive collection, which was transferred to the Slovene Ethnographic Museum in 1963.

The paper by Helena Motoh deals with the so-called "apartment" period of the Skušek collection, an aspect that has not yet been thoroughly researched. Using the rediscovered photographs of Ivan Skušek and his Japanese wife Tsuneko Kondō Kawase (1893–1963) (known as Marija Skušek after her marriage) at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, she attempts to identify the three places where the couple lived from their return from Beijing in 1920 until their deaths. Initially, they lived in the Skušeks' parents' house at Pred Škofijo 3, and after the church wedding they moved to a larger building at Prule 19 (Čeplak Mencin 2012, 112). After World War II in 1945/46, the family was forced to move to a smaller apartment at Strossmayerjeva 3 (Marinac 2017, 171). Helena Motoh presents the couple's three apartments as a lived space whose identity is constructed through various display of individual objects and, above all, through the physical movement of the owners through the interiors of their apartments. At the same time, the way the objects are used and displayed, and the way they are traversed within a given space, help shape the identities and everyday lives of their owners. Different types of objects such as furniture, statues, porcelain, and textiles were part of their daily lives, which they not only used but through which they also lived. Therefore, the significant number of objects acquired during Ivan Skušek's six-year stay in Beijing were kept and crammed into rather small spaces that functioned as a hybrid mix of private museum storage and living space.

While Motoh's paper already touches on the mobility of the entire collection, Tina Berdajs opens up the question of the transitional process from the private to the public sphere. Inspired by Kopytoff's and Appadurai's concept of an object or cultural biography, she delves into the biography of the Skušek collection and provides a detailed insight from the creation of the collection, its transfer to today's Slovenia, and its private display in the couple's homes, to its transition to the museum space. One of the most impressive parts of the biography of the Skušek collection is precisely its numerous movements, despite its incredible size and the large proportion of some objects. Using archival material only recently rediscovered in the Slovenian Ethnographic Museum as part of the VAZ project—the four lists of objects drawn up between 1917 and 1959, an excerpt from the old inventory list from the National Museum, and photographs—Tina Berdajs not only attempts to reconstruct the original size of the collection, but also shows how parts of it were dispersed among relatives, friends, and acquaintances. She identifies four distinct "provenance" groups of Skušek's objects and shows their extremely dynamic and branching mobility after their arrival in Slovenia. Her paper further shows that not only was the original scope of Skušek's collection much larger than the collection we know in the museum today, but also that the variety of objects Skušek collected was much more diverse than the collection in the museum reveals.

The third part of this volume focuses on Marija Skušek and her significant role in transmitting Japanese culture to Slovenian audiences. It is surprising to know that, although Ivan Skušek became an avid collector of Chinese objects during his time in Beijing, with the hope of founding a museum in his homeland, and developed a specific aesthetic sensibility for Chinese cultural heritage, he never undertook a systematic and in-depth study of the objects in his collection, nor did he take an active role in communicating Chinese culture to Slovenian audiences. Their house, with the various objects displayed in rooms, became in a way the centre of the cultural and social life of the intellectual and artistic elite of Ljubljana, but it was mainly his Japanese wife Marija Skušek, also known as "Mrs Japanese", the first Japanese woman to immigrate permanently to this part of Europe (Čeplak Mencin 2012, 112), who played a significant role in transmitting Japanese culture to the locals. She gave lectures on Japanese culture and society in various cities in Slovenia and other republics of Yugoslavia, conducted classes on Japanese arts and crafts, demonstrated a Japanese tea ceremony, taught Japanese, and was involved in a variety of activities. What kind of performances she gave, how she presented Japanese culture, what objects she used during the performances, and how the objects helped her not only convey the different aspects of Japanese society but also form her own identity in a foreign country will be further discussed in this part. While the first paper by Klara Hrvatin discusses the series of lectures she gave in the 1930s, the second paper by Nataša Visočnik Gerželj examines the role of her physical appearance during dance performances and the objects she used—fans and kimonos—in conveying Japanese culture.

Using the so-called Marija Skušek Archive at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, which contains original lecture manuscripts, newspaper clippings, photographs, and correspondence, Klara Hrvatin examines the lectures Marija Skušek gave in various cities in Slovenia and Yugoslavia in 1930/1931 and 1935/1936. In her paper, she reconstructs the place and date of the lectures and provides an in-depth insight into their content. Often dressed in beautiful kimonos, speaking Slovenian with a strong accent, and performing charming dances and songs from the unknown culture of Japan, she must have aroused great interest, as did her lectures. Looking more closely at the newspaper clippings, the author can trace her appearance in the media of the time with many appreciative adjectives, e.g. such an educated and nice lady, always smiling and very polite. Hrvatin's analysis further shows that the central theme of her lectures was the position and role of Japanese women in Japan, which is unsurprising considering that most of her lectures were organized by various women's organizations. She mainly discussed Japanese ideals, what it meant to be a woman in Japan, appropriate behaviour and etiquette, and the changes in women's social status at the start of the 20th century. Another important aspect of this paper is that by examining the organizations that invited Mrs Skušek to give lectures Hrvatin also brings to light the network and social circle in which she was active, showing Mrs Skušek as an important figure in the public life of Ljubljana.

Marija Skušek's lectures were often accompanied by various performances of dances and songs. Nataša Visočnik Gerželj looks at her clothing and other accessories that she used for these and examines their role in communicating Japanese culture to the local population. She focuses particularly on her kimonos and fans as specific objects that contribute to communication in Japanese society. One particular folding fan, elegantly painted with cherry blossoms that is a type of fan known as *maiōgi* 舞扇 (dancing fan), is of particular interest. Not only for its artistic value, but also as an identifier of the type of dance Marija Skušek might have performed. In addition to the objects used in the performances, the author also focuses on the role of Mrs Skušek's physical appearance, movement, and bodily practices, as wrapping the body in a kimono not only adds a certain aesthetic value, but also contributes to a certain degree of courtesy and formality. Moreover, it is worth noting that these objects were not collectibles at the time, but personal items that Mrs Skušek wore on various occasions and used in her daily life. They were not considered works of art, but items in her wardrobe. Only with their transition to the museum did the value of the objects change from everyday objects to works of art. Nataša Visočnik Gerželj thus also discusses the transitional process and the complex relationship between the objects used on a daily basis and collectors' items, and thus the owner's cross-cultural connections.

The final part of this volume addresses the broader issues of perception and representation of various aspects of East Asian tradition as they emerge from the writings of Alma M. Karlin (1889–1950). In addition to an extensive collection acquired during her eight years of world travel, Karlin also left behind a large corpus of published and unpublished novels and other literary works, manuscripts, and journalistic articles. In fact, she saw herself primarily as a writer and craved recognition as a novelist. She not only recorded the daily life, customs, religious practices, and flora and fauna of the places she visited, but also drew on her adventures for her novels and other prose works. This material provides a very valuable insight into Karlin's understanding and perception of East Asian traditions, while also revealing the prevailing values of Western societies in relation to various aspects of non-European cultures in the early 20th century. How did she portray the countries and peoples she visited on her journey, did her descriptions differ from those of other travellers, what were her attitudes to the various practices she encountered in East Asia and how were these shaped, and, moreover, how did her understanding and attitudes relate to the academic and popular discourses of her time? Was she able to escape the established conceptual frameworks and orientalist discourses regarding East Asian cultures and societies? All these questions and more are explored and discussed in two papers by Klemen Senica and Maja Veselič.

Klemen Senica looks more closely at Karlin's description of Japan and the Japanese in the first of her three-volume travelogue entitled *Einsame Weltreise* (*The Odyssey of a Lonely Woman*), published between 1929 and 1933 by the German publisher Wilhelm Köhler, as well as passages in *Reiseskizzen* (*Travel Sketches*) published during her trip between the years 1920 and 1928 in the *Cillier Zeitung*, a local German-language newspaper in her hometown of Celje in present-day Slovenia. Moreover, he draws a parallel between Karlin's description of Japan and that of her more famous predecessor Isabella Bird (1831–1904), and sheds light on the historical, political, and ideological contexts of the time in which both women experienced Japan, its land, and its people. Thus, his analysis not only highlights similarities and differences in the two women's portrayals of Japan, but reveals that Alma Karlin was most likely familiar with Bird's travel diary when she made her own trip to East Asia. By placing the two writers' travelogues in the broader context of Western Orientalist discourse, he further distinguishes between the different types of Orientalism reflected in the two travel diaries, namely British and German Orientalism, and further illuminates that Karlin tries to avoid glorifying European moral superiority, although, despite her favourable attitude towards East Asian societies, in which she openly praised some of their aspects, she still could not completely detach herself from Western colonial discourses.

Among the many interests Alma Karlin pursued during her world voyage, religion was most prominent. The last paper in this volume, by Maja Veselič, therefore for the first time examines two versions of Karlin's unpublished manuscript entitled *Glaube und Aberglaube im Fernen Osten* (*Religion and Superstition in the Far East*), held at the National and University Library in Ljubljana. In order to more accurately capture Karlin's perceptions and attitudes towards various religious practices in East Asia, she supplemented the aforementioned manuscript with Karlin's travelogue *Einsame Weltreise*. Veselič's work consists of three main parts. In the first part, she illuminates how Karlin developed her interest in comparative religion, focusing on her life story in the early years and the prevailing ideas of her time, especially the development of Theosophical philosophy, which was one of the driving forces behind a broader interest in Asian religious traditions. The second part presents an in-depth analysis of the manuscript, summarized not in the geographical way Karlin structured her work, but in the overview of the topics to which Karlin referred. In addition, Veselič also evaluates the various sources from which Karlin gathered information and provides further evidence that she did not visit Hokkaido while in Japan, as widely believed. In the final section, she discusses Karlin's concepts and approaches as revealed in the manuscript, placing them within the broader intellectual trends of the time. She shows that Alma Karlin distinguished between beliefs and superstition, emphasizes the binary opposition between religion and superstition, while highlighting Karlin's ethnographic folkloristic approaches to religion.

This special issue of *Asian Studies* aims to contribute to the field of European global collecting history by opening new vistas in order to readdress some of the unexplored topics. By presenting East Asian material in Slovenia and reconstructing the intercultural contacts between the two territories, it sheds light on the specific position of the Slovenian territory in the history of Euro-Asian exchanges on the threshold of the 20th century. I hope you will enjoy reading it.

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SPECIAL ISSUE EAST ASIA IN SLOVENIA: COLLECTING PRACTICES, CATEGORIZATION AND REPRESENTATION

Collectibles: Collecting Practices and Categorization

Trivial Objects from Taishō Japan in the Collection of Alma M. Karlin

*Chikako SHIGEMORI BUČAR**

Abstract

Alma M. Karlin, a young woman adventurer who made her journey around the world between 1919 and 1927, stayed in Japan for a little more than a year. As a young woman without significant funds, she relied on her own ability to earn a living during her stay in the country. Among the items she brought back from Japan to Slovenia there are many small objects which are not typical "exotic objects from the Far East". They are rather small and trivial items such as a wall calendar, a streetcar ticket, children's miniature toys, a part of ceremonial wrappings, and paper bookmarks. This paper focuses on the small and untypical items Karlin brought back from Japan. Karlin's travelogue and other writings, including her notes on the unused postcards, give us some information about her life in Japan. Together with her travelogue, notes and messages on the objects in her legacy, we can reconstruct some aspects of her everyday life in Japan. Though small and trivial, such items collected by Karlin reveal some important details of her experience in the central part of Tokyo in the Taishō period.

Keywords: trivial objects, Alma M. Karlin, Taishō Japan, collecting, souvenir

Trivialni predmeti z Japonske v obdobju Taishō v zbirki Alme M. Karlin

Izvleček

Alma M. Karlin je potovala okoli sveta med letoma 1919 in 1927. Na Japonskem je živela nekaj več kot eno leto. Med predmeti, ki jih je prinesla domov z Japonske, je kar nekaj drobnarij, ki niso tipični »eksotični predmeti z Daljnega vzhoda«. So majhni in trivialni predmeti, npr. stenski koledarček, vozovnica za tramvaj, otroška miniaturna kuhinjica, vrvice za zavijanje daril in papirnata bralna znamenja. Članek opiše in analizira te drobne in netipične spominke v zbirki Alme Karlin. Skupaj z njenim potopisom in zapiski ter kratkimi beležkami na hrbtnih straneh razglednic nam ti predmeti razkrivajo podrobnosti njenega življenja na Japonskem, ki ga je večinoma preživela v središču Tokia v obdobju Taishō.

Ključne besede: drobni predmeti, Alma M. Karlin, obdobje Taishō, zbiranje, spominki

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Introduction

Alma M. Karlin, a young woman adventurer from a small Slovenian town in the newly founded Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (the former Austria-Hungarian Empire), made her journey around the world between 1919 and 1927. She stayed in Japan for a little more than a year, from June 1922 to July 1923 (the 11th and 12th years of Taishō). As a young woman without significant funds, she relied on her own language abilities to earn a living during her stay in Japan as a writer and correspondent, and sometimes as language teacher, translator and embassy worker. Among the items she brought back to Slovenia, inventoried in the Regional Museum Celje, there are certainly some typical "exotic objects from the Far East" such as lacquerware, *ukiyo-e* prints, and fans. However, many of the Japanese objects archived as Karlin's legacy in the museum are rather small and trivial, such as a wall calendar, tram ticket, miniature toys, towels, parts of ceremonial wrappings, paper bookmarks, and picture postcards. We would certainly not define them as "art objects", but rather as "souvenirs" or "memorabilia".

It is true that Karlin was financially limited and thus could not purchase fancy and expensive furniture or ceramics, but she carefully collected small items which would be insignificant for most Western collectors, and this article closely analyses some of these objects from Japan. Though small and trivial, these items reveal some important details of her experience in Japan and the life in the central part of Tōkyō in the Taishō period (1912–1926)[1]. Based on these objects and her extraordinary interest in seeming trivialities, we can ask ourselves how we judge "ethnological interest" and curiosity of the "Westerner" in the first decades of the 20th century in the context of East-West exchanges.

In the first part of the paper, Karlin's intention for her journey is reviewed, in order to subsequently answer the question of how she imagined and wished to make her own collection of objects. In the following part, some theories on "collecting" are introduced with the main focus on "souvenirs". What are souvenirs and what do souvenirs mean to the collector? What do these objects mean to other people around the collector, and the later viewers of the objects, the museum visitors and curators? In the main body of this paper, the small trivial objects from Japan in Karlin's collection are closely analysed together with the additional information found in Karlin's travelogue and other sources. In conclusion, the true value of "insignificant and trivial" objects from the Taishō Japan is explained.

1 For more about the Taishō period see Shigemori Bučar (2019, 7–9).

Living and Collecting in Japan

Japan was the country that Karlin dreamt of going to, even before setting out for her long journey around the world (Trnovec 2019, 8). During her study years in London between 1908 and 1914, she made some acquaintance with individuals from Japan, China, India, and so on, to whom she gave some language lessons. According to Trnovec (2011, 19), Karlin stayed in London and was active as an instructor and translator of German in the City School of Languages in Ealing between October 1909 and April 1911. Some exhibitions in the major British museums attracted her attention, particularly those about less known peoples and cultures, such as the Ainu of the northern part of Japan and Taiwanese indigenous peoples.[2] The Regional Museum Celje holds two postcards with the caption "Ainu Home, Japan-British Exhibition". Both postcards were actually used by Karlin for correspondence with her mother during this study period, addressed to "Frau Major Karlin, Cilli, Austria". The Japan-British Exhibition (日英博覧会, *Nichi-Ei Hakuran-kai*) took place at Shepherd's Bush in London from May 14th to October 29th, 1910. It was a large international exposition, driven by the desire of Japan to develop a more favourable public image in Britain and Europe following the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1902. Japan intended to display the country's new status as a great power by emphasising its role as a colonial power in Asia (Yamaji 2009/2010, 2–4).

Karlin, after her subsequent study years in Oslo and Stockholm, and a period of intensive language teaching in her hometown of Celje, was finally prepared for her journey around the world towards the end of 1919. At this preparational stage, she had already acquired a visa to enter Japan (Trnovec 2011, 22–24). Due to various difficult circumstances, she succeeded in arriving in Japan three years after her departure from her hometown. Already in the first part of her journey around the world, she experienced hardships, including a lack of finances. In Peru she was physically attacked several times, and when she arrived in Panama, she had no money and had to borrow some from the American Red Cross (ibid., 31). After traveling from the Central American countries to California and Hawaii, Alma Karlin finally arrived in Japan, in Yokohama, and resided in the central part of the city of Tokyo (Shigemori Bučar 2019, 12).

Karlin's travelogues are not strict records of facts, but often rather dreamy and impressionistic notes on her miscellaneous discoveries and encounters during her stays in foreign environments. All the same, we can read interesting details of her life in these, and in particular in a short part of her travelogue, some 40 pages, about Japan (Karlin 2006, 225–70). We can also imagine some additional elements of her life

2 For more on Alma Karlin and Taiwanese indigenous peoples see Veselič (2021).

in Japan through her notes on the backs of postcards and so on (Shigemori Bučar 2019, 3).

Collections, Souvenirs and Beyond

Alma Karlin's collecting activity was motivated by her longing to travel, her researching spirit and urge to learn. She wished to know distant parts of the world, discover and learn from them. She also dreamt of all things she could possibly bring home to form her own collection (Trnovec 2020, 63). According to Trnovec, the collecting activity of Alma Karlin was, due to the special circumstances she travelled under, not very systematic, but rather random and by chance. Her collection came into being in three main ways: 1. purchased, 2. collected by herself, 3. received as gifts. (ibid., 66, 72) Though it may have been less systematic in comparison to some other East Asian collections of Westerners, Karlin's collection, viewed today, after almost 100 years, is interesting to our eyes.

The activity of collecting is defined, for example, by Belk as: "The process of actively, selectively, and passionately acquiring and possessing things removed from ordinary use and perceived as part of a set of non-identical objects or experiences." (Belk 2006, 535)

Pearce (1994, 157–58), while admitting the fact that definitions tend to be self-serving and circular, gives some earlier definitions of "collecting": W. Durost, according to Pearce "one of the earliest students of collecting", stated in 1932 that a collection is determined by the nature of the value assigned to the objects, or ideas possessed; J. Alsop (1982, 70) stressed the mentality of the collector, saying "to collect is to gather objects belonging to a particular category the collector happens to fancy."; N. Aristides (1988, 330) "collection [is] an obsession organised". Pearce, considering Belk's definition cited above, stresses the essentially subjective element in collecting, the mentality of the collector who decides to include certain objects in his/her collection in a certain organised way. The time of Karlin's journey was relatively late in comparison with other Westerners' who collected Asian and Japanese exotic items (Shigemori Bučar 2020b, 91–92, 95–96), but a bit early to discuss in the context of the ethnology of collecting.

Veselič (2021 [forthcoming]) discusses the nature of Karlin's collected objects, noting that "… there are hardly any objects that would be considered representative collectors' items at that time." It is true that many of these objects are in between "the divide between collectibles and souvenirs." The distinction between "collectibles" and mere "souvenirs" may sometimes become very subtle, and seems to vary according to their spatial and temporal backgrounds.

If we turn to discussion about souvenirs, we find that collecting, or the random choice of items from visited places, is universal and yet personal, interwoven with the way we, the collectors, all try to make sense of the world, and our place in it (Potts 2018, xviii). A souvenir is a personal reassurance. When we travel to distant places, we collect "interesting" objects with which we identify ourselves.

> […] as travelers, we are by definition itinerant outsiders—strangers in strange lands—who don't possess the experience or knowledge to objectively evaluate the things we see along the way. When we collect souvenirs, we do so not to evaluate the world, but to narrate the self. (ibid., 94)

Karlin wanted to "discover", and the objects she brought home were the existential authenticity of the Other, and of herself. Seemingly small and unimportant items, together with some written information and notes, give us additional clues not only about the collector's presence at the time of acquirement of the object, but also often about the collector's attitude towards the collected object. The writing may often relate to another object or person, or activity and event, so that we may reconstruct the environment of the collector and his/her activity.

In case of Alma Karlin, she left us her travelogues and other writings in which she describes her experience during her journey. Based on her writings and earlier research about her (Stanonik 1983; Trnovec 2011), it has become known to us that Karlin stayed in Japan between June 1922 and July 1923, and that she resided in Tokyo for the most of her time in the country, and travelled through the southwestern part of Japan to depart for the Korean peninsula. The Japanese objects in her legacy are thus placed in the time period of the years 11 and 12 of the Taishō period in Japan. Based on these objects, we have also reconstructed some of her visits to temples and shrines, and certain important places for her life in Tokyo. An interview with Karlin, published in a Japanese newspaper, also helped locate her whereabouts in Tokyo (Shigemori Bučar 2019; Shigemori Bučar 2020a).

The following part of this paper introduces some "insignificant" and small Japanese objects in Karlin's legacy in the Regional Museum Celje. Some of these items have been introduced already in the exhibition in 2019 and individual studies,[3] but some additional details are given here. A particular focus is on some other small items which are taken up in this paper for the first time. They are divided into the following eight types: a) new-year greeting card; b) receipt issued by a newspaper company; c) miniature toy kitchen; d) gift wrappings; e) wooden box cover; f) paper bookmarks; and g) envelopes for postcard sets. For

3 For a thorough analysis of an ink stone from Alma Karlin collection, see Berdajs (2019).

each type, wherever possible, some explanation in relation to the Japanese culture and tradition are given, and sometimes in relation to the historical characteristics of the Taishō period.

Based on the detailed analysis of these small and trivial objects, an attempt is made to interpret the characteristics of Karlin's collecting and her "ethnological interest", which presupposes her further intention, partly perhaps not realised due to the later circumstances of her life.

Small and "Trivial" Objects

In the exhibition in Celje in 2019 entitled "Asia Utterly Bewitched Me" (Trnovec et al. 2019), various objects brought back by Alma Karlin were introduced to the public. Among the Japanese items, there were smaller, singular objects such as a wall calendar, a tram ticket, and items of miniature toys next to more impressive lacquerware and *ukiyo-e* prints.

The small wall calendar shows the month of February, 1923, when Karlin was residing in Tokyo. The tram ticket is also a concrete proof that she used the transportation to go to her workplace, most probably the German Embassy. These objects support some facts mentioned in her writings, and more details about them are given in the following sections.

a) A New Year Greeting-Card with Kewpies

Among the numerous picture postcards in Karlin's archive in the Regional Museum Celje,[4] there is one interesting, used postcard: this one is different from most of the picture postcards in the collection, because the front side shows a coloured drawing and not a photo of some tourist site or some Japanese curiosity, which is usually seen on other postcards in her collection. It is a sort of caricature, typical of the liberal Taishō period, an illustration of the originally American cupid figure, "Kewpie", created by Rose O'Neill (1874–1944), the comic-strip illustrator, and first shown in the American magazine Ladies Home Journal in 1909. O'Neill also made paper doll versions of the Kewpies. They were first produced as bisque dolls in Germany starting around 1912, and became extremely popular in the early 20th century (Digital Daiji-sen Plus 2019a; Shogakukan Random House Japanese-English Dictionary 2020).

4 Some of the numerous postcards in Karlin's collection in the Regional Museum Celje have been analysed by Shigemori Bučar (2016; 2019; 2020a), but some others still await closer analysis.

In Japan, the Kewpie was also known as a plastic or a soft rubber doll for small children. Later, an entrepreneur established a mayonnaise factory with the brand name "Kiyūpī Mayonnaise キユーピー・マヨネーズ", still known and used among Japanese even today (Digital Dai-ji-sen Plus 2019b).

The Postcard Museum in Kobe holds at least 15 postcards with similar drawings of Kewpies from the Taishō period. All of them are drawings in which some Japanese traditional custom is combined with this American figure. Some postcards in the Museum are also photographed Japanese girls playing with Kewpie dolls (Ehagaki Shiryōkan n.d.).

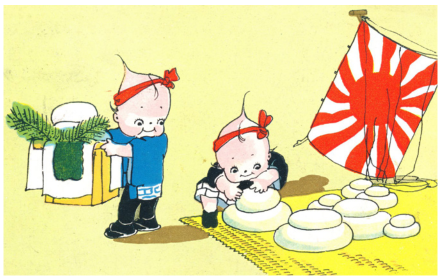

Figure 1. New-Year greeting card with Kewpies. (Source: Alma Karlin Collection, Celje Regional Museum)

Figure 2. A Gardener and Plasterers. (Utagawa Kuniteru, National Institutes for the Humanities, https://ja.ukiyo-e.org/image/metro/086-006-23)

The postcard considered here shows two cupids or "Kewpies" dressed in the style of traditional Japanese plastering workers (*sakan'ya* 左官屋). *Sakan* may be translated as "plasterer", originally the plasterer for palaces and villas of noble families in the Heian period (794–1185). Later, this naming started to be used for all professional building workers who are trained for plastering and making storehouses with thick mortar walls. The Kewpies on the postcard are typically dressed in tight trousers (*momohiki* 股引き), typical Japanese socks (*tabi* 足袋) and sandals (*zōri* 草履), along with workers' jackets (*hanten* 半纏). Their depiction is very similar to the *ukiyo-e* sketch of *sakan'ya* from the Edo period (1603–1868) (fig. 2). Since Kewpie's hair is characteristic of the figure and cannot be covered by a Japanese towel (*tenugui* 手拭い), as in the *ukiyo-e* depiction of workers from the Edo period, the two Kewpies wear red headbands (*hachimaki* 鉢巻) around their heads. They are busy making the typical round rice cakes (*kagamimochi* 鏡餅), to be put onto the alcove in a Japanese room (*tokonoma* 床の間) or the entrance of a household (*genkan* 玄関) for the New Year. Behind the workspace on the right corner is a kite or the Rising Sun Flag (*kyokujitsuki* 旭日旗), the Japanese national flag of the time and the flag of the Imperial Japanese Navy. A straw mat (*mushiro* 莚) is spread over the right half of the ground where one of the Kewpies is stacking smaller *mochi* pieces on the bigger ones, while the other Kewpie is carrying the *kagamimochi* on the typical wooden square stand (*sanbō* 三宝), usually used for Shinto offerings. The *kagamimochi* ready to be carried to the right place is decorated together with the pine branches and a piece of sea tangle (*konbu* 昆布), both needed for the festivity to symbolise long life, on white pieces of paper, all symbolic for the New Year offering.

Figure 3. The reverse of the New-Year greeting card with Kewpies. (Source: Alma Karlin Collection, Celje Regional Museum)

On the reverse of this postcard (fig. 3) we see the handwritten address of 'Miss Karlin' in Tokyo, and a short message for the occasion in English: "A Happy New Year!, Jan. 1, 1923. K. Ishimoto". A postage stamp of one and a half *sen* 一銭五厘

(*issen gorin*) is pasted in the corner. The postcard was sent within the country of Japan, which is also a rarity in Karlin's collection. In the collection, no other postcard has so far been found which was sent to her within the country of her residence.

The postal address is written in Japanese:

> 東京麹町区有楽町三の1杉本合資会社三七　カルリン様
> [=Ms Karlin, Sugimoto Co. Ltd. 37, 3-1 Yūraku-chō, Kōjimachi-ku, Tōkyô]

The ward *Kōjimachi-ku* is today's Chiyoda-ku, in the central part of Tokyo.

We can imagine that Alma Karlin was living in some company's dormitory, and the number 37 is perhaps her room number. The sender of this postcard may be one of the language students to whom Alma Karlin was giving lessons. This postcard greeting is good proof that Karlin actually experienced New Year in Tokyo, when she was living at this address, and it was the time when she was giving English language lessons (Karlin 2006, 253–55).

b) Receipt from the Newspaper House Tōkyō Nichinichi

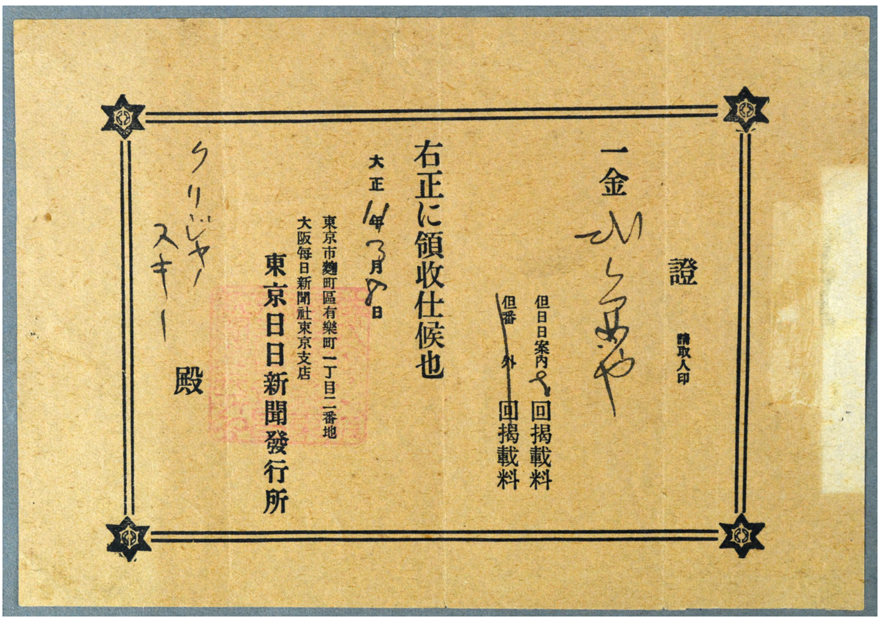
證
請取人印
一金
但日日案内　回掲載料
但番外　回掲載料
右正に領收仕候也
大正　年　月　日
東京市麹町區有樂町一丁目一番地
大阪毎日新聞社東京支店
東京日日新聞發行所
殿

Figure 4. A receipt dated March 8th, 1922, by a newspaper company. (Source: Alma Karlin Collection, Celje Regional Museum)

This piece of paper was archived together with other paper trifles in Karlin's legacy.

The receipt was issued in March 1922 (the 11th year of Taishō) by the newspaper publishing office of the *Tōkyō Nichinichi Shinbun* (former name of the *Mainichi Shinbun*, one of the largest newspapers in Japan even today). The printed and handwritten text on it reads:

> [Certificate stamp of receipt
> Amount: 20 yen
> for placing 9 (?) times information/advertisement
> ~~for placing _ times of extra articles~~
> We have duly received the amount as above.
> March 8th, Taishō 11
> 2, Yūrakuchō, Kōjimachi-ku, Tōkyō-shi
> The Tōkyō Branch of the Ōsaka Mainichi Shinbun
> The Publishing Office of the Tōkyō Nichinichi Shinbun
> To: Mr/Ms Križanoski (?)]

We are yet to find out what payment it was and why this receipt was brought back by Alma Karlin to Slovenia. The date of issue is March 8th, 1922: maybe it was an advertisement by Alma Karlin for her further activities and plans, searching for a job using her language knowledge in order to save some more money for her further journey around the world. The receipt is addressed to some person with the name "Kuridžanosuki クリジャノスキー", perhaps Križanoski or Križanovsky. This person most probably paid this sum instead of Alma Karlin, who perhaps later returned the money, thus this receipt ended up in Karlin's hands. To date, this name has not been found in Karlin's writings and we have no clue as to the meaning of this receipt.

We thus consider further why the receipt by the newspaper company is included in Karlin's legacy. The reason should be one of the following two: the payment was of a deciding importance for Karlin (supposedly made by Mr. or Ms. Križanovsky and later paid back by Karlin), or Karlin was interested in the written format of the receipt and asked to have the document so that she could include it in her collection. The second reason is weaker, because as far as we know Karlin never tried to learn the Japanese language. She was busy giving language lessons and never spoke or wrote in Japanese except for some basic nouns to name culturally specific objects and ideas.

c) Miniature Toy Kitchen

Karilin's collection also includes a very interesting miniature kitchen set. Individual kitchen items were inventoried as separate objects, but the research work revealed that some of them belong together and are parts of a miniature kitchen.[5] According to the Director of the Toy Museum in Japan 日本玩具博物館, Inoue Shigeyoshi 井上重義, miniature kitchen sets were in fashion among the more privileged families in the Kansai area (the western part of the Honshū island, in and around the cities of Kyōto, Ōsaka and Kōbe) during the Meiji and Taishō periods up to the beginning years of Shōwa (Inoue Shigeyoshi, email correspondence, April 20th, 2019). The kitchen set was usually used together with the *hina* dolls for the March 3rd Girls' Festival. The *hina* dolls are usually exhibited in the family living space, and the daughters in the family and their female friends gather in front of the dolls for the festival. In certain regions of Japan the girls could also play with the miniature kitchen which was placed in front of the main decoration of *hina* dolls. It is assumed that these miniature kitchens were produced in Kyōto and Ōsaka, since they were mainly exhibited and used in the families of the Kyōto-Ōsaka area. Some pieces of this Japanese miniature kitchen, such as a wooden cupboard, a wooden container for cooked rice, and some plates, have already been introduced in the exhibition catalogue (Trnovec et al. 2019, 36). Additional identifying pieces of the miniature kitchen are the small stove for cooking with charcoal (*shichirin* 七輪) (fig. 5), the lid of a rice-cooking pot (the pot is usually made of iron and the lid is wooden with the particular handles on the top, shown upside down in the photo, figs. 6 and 7), and the pounding mallet for making rice cakes (*kine* 杵, fig. 8).

Figure 5. A miniature *shichirin*. (Source: Alma Karlin Collection, Celje Regional Museum)

5 I am grateful to Helena Motoh for pointing out the kitchen collections in the Toy Museum.

Figure 6. A miniature pot lid. (Source: Alma Karlin Collection, Celje Regional Museum)

Figure 7. An old-style pot for cooking rice. (Source: http://www.kama-asa.co.jp/info/10076/)

Figure 8. A miniature *kine* mallet. (Source: Alma Karlin Collection, Celje Regional Museum)

Since Alma Karlin was particularly interested in such small toys and miniature objects (see also Trnovec 2019, 33–36), we still have to clarify which pieces (particularly of porcelain) are actually from Japan and belong to the kitchen set, and which ones are from other parts of the world, for example, Taiwan and other Southeast Asian cultures, and from Central America.

d) Traditional Gift Wrappings

Alma Karlin was interested in how Japanese people exchanged gifts with each other. She was obviously interested not only in what objects were favoured as gifts, but also in how these things were wrapped and presented. Among the small objects in her legacy we found the ceremonial paper strings *mizuhiki* 水引, and an envelope with a printed symbol of *noshi* 熨斗.

Mizuhiki are the decorative strings for gifts. High quality Japanese paper is cut in long strips and twisted into strings, dipped in the water in which rice has been washed (or thinned starch instead), and dried in the sun. These strings are then coloured into red, white, gold or silver. The name *mizuhiki* comes from using the water after washing rice (*mizu* (water), *hiku* (to lead, pull)). For gifts, the Japanese already started using the *mizuhiki* strings instead of simple paper stripes around wrapped gifts in the Muromachi period (1336–1573). There are several rules in using the *mizuhiki*: the string or the wrapping belt is usually composed of multiple *mizuhiki* strings, a belt is composed of an odd number of strings for auspicious events, and an even number for misfortunes. There are also many different ways of tying the belt (Hendry 1993, 15–18).

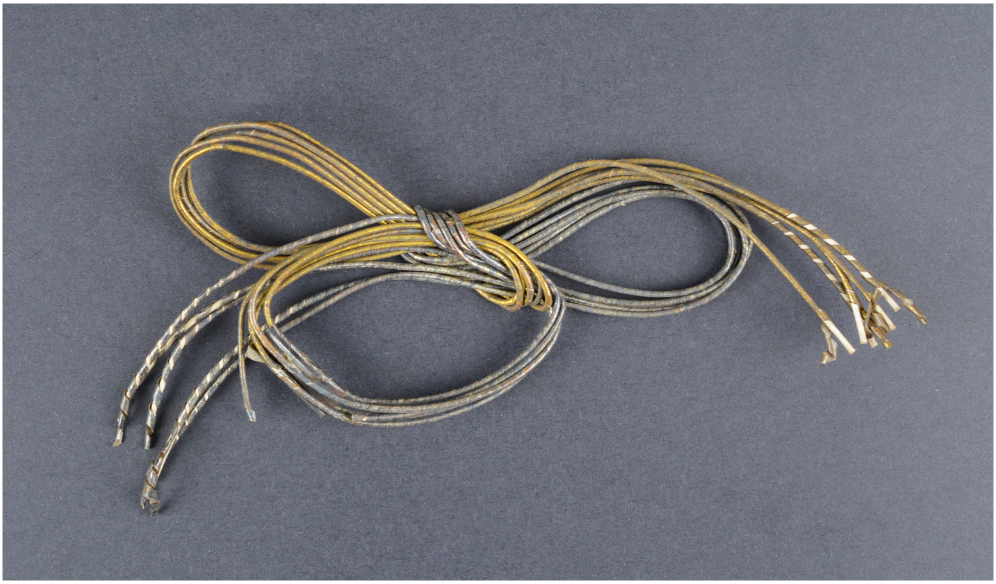

Figure 9. *Mizuhiki* strings. (Source: Alma Karlin Collection, Celje Regional Museum)

The *mizuhiki* in Karlin's legacy is composed of five strings, so it was perhaps New Year or some happy festive occasion when this was used for some gift. The colour of individual strings has now faded, but some shining gold or pale red can be observed. At the end of strings the starched surface has come off and we can see the twisted paper. The knot used for regular festive occasion is partly recognisable.

The *noshi* envelope in Karlin's collection is of the kind used for giving money on various occasions. These printed envelopes are available in any stationery shops today, and we can see that this was already the case in the Taishō period. The print depicts the *mizuhiki* strings together with the symbolic decoration of *noshi* for festive occasions.

"*Noshi*" is an abbreviation of "*noshi awabi*". *Awabi* (鮑 (abalone, the edible shellfish)) was a symbolic seafood which the Japanese attached to gifts. In the Buddhist tradition, no meat was enjoyed, including shellfish, but for other gifts outside the Buddhist tradition thinly sliced abalone pieces (*noshi awabi*) were enclosed. This symbolic attachment of a piece of yellow paper, instead of real abalone, wrapped in red and white pieces of paper, meant that it was intended for a happy occasion, and no misfortune.

Figure 10. *Noshi* envelope. (Source: Alma Karlin Collection, Celje Regional Museum)

The envelope in Karlin's collection is a regular-sized envelope called a *shūgi bukuro* 祝儀袋, a special envelope for presenting a monetary gift or a tip. It is a usual practice in Japan to use such envelopes at celebrations, for example at a wedding. Everything is printed on this envelope: in the middle the *mizuhiki* in red and silver, on the upper right hand corner the *noshi*, a piece of abalone wrapped in two-layered pieces of paper, red on the inner side, light green with some flowers outside. According to Japanese tradition the giver's name and the occasion are written on the envelope. There is no writing on the envelope in Karlin's collection, so we do not know if this envelope was actually used for some specific occasion. Alma Karlin saved this envelope as an example and reminder of the Japanese custom of giving money. On the reverse of this envelope we can see her handwritten memo in German: Geschenkkuvert mit Noshi (gift envelope with Noshi).

Karlin clearly realised that an example of such an envelope would serve as a good "souvenir", or a reminder of the unique Japanese culture as she witnessed it.

Knowledge about the traditional Japanese custom of wrapping and sending gifts was important to identify these objects, and the written information on the envelope confirms the fact that Karlin correctly understood this tradition, most probably with a help of a Japanese intellectual who explained it to her along with certain important concepts such as *noshi*.

e) A *kiri* Box Cover

The wooden board with some writing on the surface, found in Karlin's collection, is actually the top cover of some wooden box in which something important was stored, called in Japanese *kiri no hako* 桐の箱 (a box made of the princess tree or Paulownia tomentosa). The *kiri* wood or the princess tree is treasured in Japan since this material, among all kinds of wood, is the lightest, hard to break or burn, protects anything stored inside from moisture, and the grain is beautiful. This wood is typically used for furniture and storage boxes, and also for a musical instrument, the *koto*. A Japanese-style closet with drawers (*tansu* 箪笥), made wholly of *kiri* wood, has long been an important element of the bride's dowry.

The writing on this piece of board says:

> hakama, Taishō 4/5?, November
>
> ［袴　大正４（？）年11月］

This board seems to have been the top cover of a wooden box which stored a pair of Japanese trousers, *hakama* 袴. This must have been a ceremonial clothing made in the year Taishō 4 or 5 (1915 or 1916). We have to first find out if there is the bottom part of this wooden box in Karlin's legacy. And if there is no bottom part of the box nor the contents of the box (the traditional Japanese-style trousers), we have to conclude that Alma Karlin was perhaps aware of the special Japanese custom of storing special (ceremonial) clothing in such wooden boxes and wanted to have a piece of such a box to include in her collection. We should be also aware of the small size of this board: 21.4 cm x 11.1 cm x 1.2 cm. It is thus doubtful if a regular pair of trousers could be stored in a box with this small cover. Perhaps the box was meant for a small doll's trousers?

In case of this wooden board, the traditional custom in Japan was extremely important to identify the object. Without the words written on the board in the certain traditional manner, it may have been completely ignored and its function as the cover of a box remained unknown.

Figure 11. Wooden box cover. (Source: Alma Karlin Collection, Celje Regional Museum)

f) Two Bookmarks with an Envelope

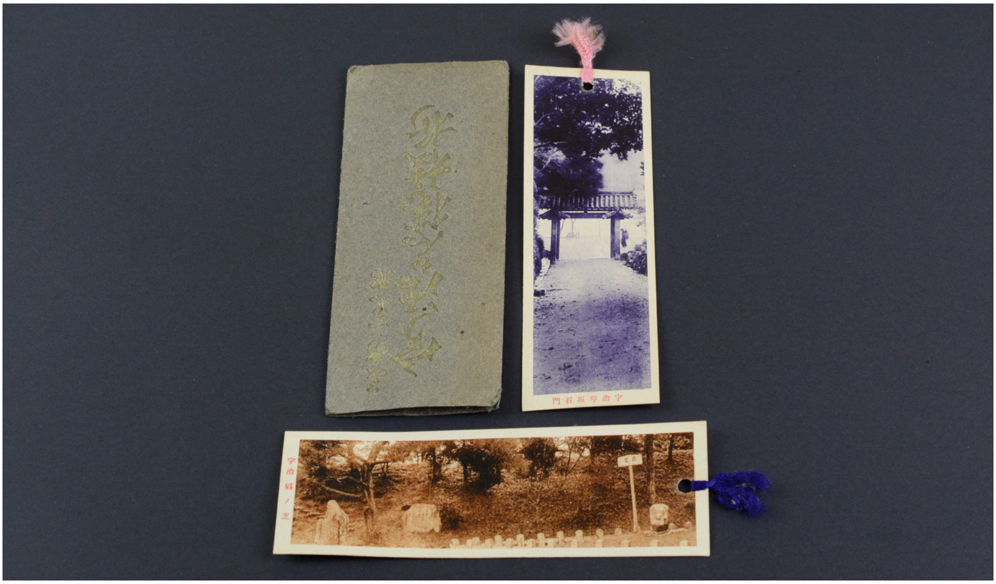

Figure 12. Bookmarks from Uji (Source: Alma Karlin Collection, Celje Regional Museum)

In Karlin's collection there are also two bookmarks. Similar to the numerous picture postcards in the collection, the bookmarks are photographs of historical sites, in this case the Uji Kotosaka Ishimon 宇治琴坂石門 (the stone gate of Uji Kotosaka) and Uji Ōgi no Shiba 宇治扇の芝 (the lawn in the form of a fan in Uji). The place names are printed in Japanese, next to each of the black and white photos. The stone gate at the bottom of the slope Kotosaka is one of the gates of the temple Kōshōji 興聖寺, built in the year 1233. The slope is particularly known for its beauty in the autumn when the maple leaves change their colours. The *Ōgi no shiba* lawn is a part of the historical and architectural site, Hōōdō 鳳凰堂. The elegant architecture in the form of a phoenix (*hōō* 鳳凰) extending its wings is a building in the temple Byōdōin 平等院, established in 1052 and today a world heritage site. In the year 1180, at the beginning of the conflict between the Taira and Minamoto clans in Japan, it is said that Minamoto no Yorimasa 源頼政, knowing that there was no way to escape from Taira no Tomomori 平知盛 who chased him to get his head, killed himself on this lawn. Therefore, this lawn is visited by Japanese tourists even today in memory of the warrior, Yorimasa (1104–1180). The photo on the bookmark also shows some small stone monuments dedicated to him (Soto Zen; Ōgi no Shiba).

Alma Karlin usually made her own notes on the back of each postcard, if the card was not used and kept in her collection. In the case of her postcards from Kyōto, her notes on their reverse sides are very brief.[6] However, the section "In Kyōto" of her travelogue, placed after the section "Sayonara" (description of her departure from Japan, or from Tōkyō), mainly writes about Uji (Karlin 2006, 270), the place of these two bookmarks, some 20 km south of the centre of Kyōto. In the travelogue Karlin does not mention any actual names of historical figures or old temples, but mentions the ancient Fujiwara clan and "buildings in the form of a phoenix spreading its wings". It is thus assumed, that Karlin did visit Kyōto and other places in the southwest of Japan, but rather briefly after saying goodbye to the German Embassy and her acquaintances in Tōkyō. (Shigemori Bučar 2019, 28). Based on Karlin's writing, we can assume the existence of a Japanese intellectual who accompanied and informed her about the meaning of the Heian period in relation to the city of Kyōto and its surroundings. On the reverse of both bookmarks we see Karlin's handwriting in pencil:

> Tor des Koshoji-Tempels (Gate of the Kōshōji Temple)
>
> Samurai Yorimasa nach seiner Niederlage gegen die Familie Heike beging hier Selbstmord.
>
> (The samurai Yorimasa committed suicide after his loss against the family Heike.)

Karlin's handwritten notes show that she was correctly informed of the historical details of the places she visited. We can even feel a part of someone's intention of how and with which visits to explain some details of Japanese history.

g) Envelopes of Picture Postcard Sets

Another interesting characteristic of Alma Karlin's collection, in relation to the numerous picture postcards, is that she (and the subsequent keepers of her collection) took care of the envelopes of various series of postcards. So far we have found eight such envelopes, as follows, with the number in parenthesis showing how many postcards are in the set, whenever known:

1) Jōge Hachiri 上下八里 (Hakone);
2) Ise Meisho 伊勢名所 "Ise and Futami";

6 Wieder ein Tempel. / Auch ein Tempel in Kioto. / Kinkaku-tempel / Der Heiantempel in Kioto (Shigemori Bučar 2019, 31).

3) “Farmers Life at Japanese Country” 田舎の生活 (10);

4) “Kyoto Viewes (sic!)” 京都名勝 (10);

5) 大正十年四月二十日通信事業創始五十年記念絵葉書 (2) (Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Postal Communication);

6) Tokyo Meisho 東京名所 (handwritten in pencil: 16 cards??);

7) 日光中禅寺情趣 “Souviner (sic!) of Nikko”;

8) 東宮殿下臺湾行啓記念 (Commemorating his Imperial Highness the Crown Prince’s Visit to Taiwan).

Among them, the most interesting and informative in relation to the time of Karlin’s sojourn in Tokyo are the two envelopes for historical commemorations (Numbers 5 and 8 above). Publication of commemorative postcards became popular in Japan after the Russo-Japanese War in 1904/1905 (Satō 2002, 39–41).

Figure 13. 50th Anniversary of Postal Communication. (Source: Alma Karlin Collection, Celje Regional Museum)

Figure 14. Crown Prince's visit to Taiwan. (Source: Alma Karlin Collection, Celje Regional Museum)

The 50th anniversary of modern Japanese postal communication was celebrated in the 10th year of the Taishō period, i.e. one year before Karlin arrived in Japan. We can see that Karlin received this set of postcards as a gift, as it is handwritten on the envelope from a person with the name Ogawa (?).

The Crown Prince (later Emperor Hirohito of the Shōwa period) visited Taiwan in April 1923. That was when Alma Karlin was still staying in Tōkyō, but she later visited Taiwan in the same year, so she either already possessed a series of postcards from Taiwan while in Japan, or acquired it later when she herself visited Taiwan. There was great public interest in the Crown Prince's visit, particularly because Taiwan was under the Japanese rule between 1895 and 1945. The picture postcards for this occasion were published by the Taiwan Art Association 臺湾藝術協会, as printed on the envelope.

Trivial Objects: Characteristics and Significance

The types of objects in a collection suggest the particular interests of the collector, their way of thinking and values.

As for the small and seemingly trivial objects considered in this paper, their characteristics can be summarised as small in size, light in weight, inexpensive, and parts of a whole. At least in relation to these physical characteristics, these objects may be called "trivial" in the sense of "(seemingly) insignificant". We can assume that they were included in the collection because of practical reasons, as they could be brought home without posing any great transport problems.

However, we must also consider the significance of these small objects. Karlin purchased the tram ticket in order to go to her workplace. A receipt issued by a newspaper house is also in the collection, since Karlin most probably had some close connection to this payment, and thus the piece of paper meant something special to her. As for picture postcards, they were very popular in Japan and Asia in general towards the end of 19th century and the first decades of the 20th. Karlin was also an eager collector of postcards of the touristic sites she visited, and they were cheap and readily available at the time of her journey in Asia. As a writer, she used some of these postcards to illustrate her texts. And we are convinced that she also bought the paper bookmarks from Uji, the place which she describes also in her travelogue, for much the same reasons. As for other trifles, we can imagine that they were acquired as gifts, such as the wall calendar and New Year greeting card, most probably given by her students or acquaintances.

Moreover, we can also notice, at least with some of the small objects collected in Japan, that Karlin was particularly interested in the traditional customs of the nation, such as how to wrap and exchange gifts, and how to store ceremonial clothes. Karlin had a strong urge to acquire new knowledge, and a particular ethnological interest in people's lives. Her interest was thus different to the *Japonisme* which was, at that time in the 1920s, perhaps already out of fashion.

Conclusion

The collection of Alma M. Karlin in the Regional Museum of Celje consists of many small objects of personal interest, the "souvenirs" of a female adventurer who had first-hand experience of life in Japan, mostly in the middle of the capital city of Tōkyō in the interwar years.

They were thus to the collector herself reminders of her personal experience. As we have seen in the definitions of "collecting" and "souvenirs", the activity of choosing what to collect and bring home is a subjective matter. It was perhaps also Karlin's intention that she would eventually reveal more details of some of her souvenirs in her writing and/or exhibitions which she never realised.

And why are these trivial items interesting for us? They faithfully narrate the details of the traditional customs and popular culture of Japan exactly in the years 1922 and 1923, the 11th and 12th years of the Taishō period, more than 60 years after the country opened itself to the world. The Russo-Japanese War was already history, and the society was rapidly developing and the people's lives were rather liberal and democratic. The capital city enjoyed its modernity, peace and the harmonious coexistence of tradition and new ways of life, although this was soon to be interrupted by the Great Kantō Earthquake, which hit Tōkyō in September 1923, just a few months after Karlin had left Japan and continued her journey to Korea and China.

These small objects in Karlin's collection are certainly "souvenirs", that is, Karlin's personal choice of what to remember from her daily life in Japan. For viewers of the museum collection, they may seem to be a set of somewhat random items, for souvenirs are the authentication of a traveller's unique experience. The true value of these "insignificant and trivial" objects from Japan, when the collector is not the owner anymore, lies in the hands of museum visitors and curators. This collection is probably the only one in Slovenia to teach us the small details of life in Taishō Japan, through the eyes of the person who actually experienced it. Some items reveal Karlin's sharp ethnographic eyes for the traditional customs of Japan (the ceremonial wrappings, *kiri* box cover), others tell us of very contemporary things towards the end of Taishō period, that perhaps even Karlin herself was not aware of (the Kewpie postcard, the receipt format, memorial postcard envelopes).

It is also worth noting and admiring the fact that the small, trivial and seemingly insignificant objects, such as paper strips and pieces of wood, were carefully and faithfully conserved in the collection of Alma Karlin's legacy in the museum. This collection, as it is known to us at present, gives us quite detailed information about life in Japan, mainly in the capital city of Tōkyō, in the years 1922 and 1923.

Acknowledgement

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Ivan Skušek Jr. and His Collection of Chinese Coins

*Mina GRČAR**

Abstract

Ivan Skušek Jr. (1877–1947), whose collection of Chinese and Japanese objects has been the subject of research and interest in recent years, can be considered the first collector of East Asian objects in the Slovene ethnic space to have built his collection systematically, examining and verifying the provenance, value, and significance of each item. His extensive collection can compare to Western European collections of East Asian objects while at the same time bearing a stamp of local uniqueness pertaining to the European periphery. Skušek's legacy includes an important collection of Chinese money from all periods of Chinese history, which is introduced in this paper for the first time.

A crucial distinction between this and other collections of Chinese coins is that evidence exists that tells us how Skušek collected the coins, and reveals a lot about his sources and advisors. It has long been known that during his stay in Beijing Skušek befriended many influential and knowledgeable people, including a Franciscan missionary, Fr. Maurus Kluge, who assisted him in assembling his numismatic collection. The paper presents the cooperation between the two in the light of a recent find—the original list and summary appraisal of the most valuable part of Skušek's numismatic collection and Kluge's letters to Skušek.

Keywords: Ivan Skušek Jr., numismatics, numismatic collection, ancient Chinese coinage, collecting history

Ivan Skušek ml. in njegova zbirka kitajskih kovancev

Izvleček

Ivana Skuška ml. (1877–1947), čigar zbirka kitajskih in japonskih predmetov je v zadnjih letih postala predmet številnih raziskav in velikega zanimanja, lahko štejemo za prvega zbiratelja vzhodnoazijskih predmetov v slovenskem etničnem prostoru, ki je svojo zbirko gradil načrtno ter preverjal provenienco, vrednost in pomen vsakega predmeta. Njegovo obsežno zbirko lahko primerjamo z nekaterimi zahodnoevropskimi zbirkami vzhodnoazijskih predmetov, pri čemer jo zaznamuje tudi lokalni pridih evropske periferije. Skuškova zapuščina vključuje tudi pomembno numizmatično zbirko kitajskega denarja iz vseh obdobij kitajske zgodovine, ki je v pričujočem članku predstavljena prvič.

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Slednjo od ostalih zbirk kitajskih kovancev najočitneje ločijo pričevanja o načinu, kako je Skušek kovance zbiral, ter o njegovih virih in svetovalcih pri zbiranju. Že dolgo je znano, da se je Skušek med bivanjem v Pekingu spoprijateljil s številnimi vplivnimi in učenimi ljudmi, vključno s frančiškanskim misijonarjem Maurusom Klugejem, ki mu je pomagal pri oblikovanju numizmatične zbirke. Prispevek predstavlja sodelovanje med njima v luči nedavne najdbe – izvirnega seznama in povzetka najdragocenejšega dela Skuškove numizmatične zbirke ter Klugejevih pisem Skušku.

Ključne besede: Ivan Skušek ml., numizmatika, numizmatična zbirka, kitajski kovanci, zgodovina zbirateljstva

Introduction

Ivan Skušek Jr. (1877–1947) was an outstanding and open-minded collector, enthusiast and visionary. He was one of the most important collectors of East Asian objects who came from the territory of present-day Slovenia. While his extensive and varied collection in its entirety includes objects commonly found in large collections around the world and can compare, at least to some extent, to Western European collections of East Asian objects, it also bears the stamp of local peculiarity and uniqueness pertaining to the European periphery. It is an often neglected fact that Skušek's legacy includes an important collection of Chinese coins originating from all periods of Chinese history, which has never been fully researched and assessed.

The purpose of this paper is to introduce the collection, outline recent work on it, and highlight Skušek's collecting practice, drawing on several recently found documents: a list of Skušek's coins in German, a summary and assessment of his collection—a document titled *Summary* ("Abridgement" in the original) *of Mr. I. Skušek's Collection of Chinese Coins*, *to Be Sold Eventually*, and letters to Skušek from a Franciscan missionary, Fr. Maurus Kluge. Based on these materials it was possible to identify two key aspects to Skušek's coin collecting, which will be analysed in two separate sections of the paper. The first aspect to be delved into are the types of Chinese coins, which were, according to the letters, particularly interesting and valuable at the time, while specimens of these can indeed be identified in Skušek's numismatic collection. The second aspect to be analysed pertains to the circumstances and ways Skušek collected Chinese coins, which are closely intertwined with his social life at the time of his stay in Beijing.

The author's research into Skušek's collection of Chinese coins is being made within the scope of the VAZ project, the goal of which is to produce the first comprehensive and systematic inventory, identification, categorization, analysis, and digitization of the East Asian collections held at various Slovenian museums. We started looking at Skušek's coin collection in 2019 when the international symposium, *From Centre to Periphery: Collecting Chinese Objects in Comparative Perspective*, was organized by the project team. One of the invited speakers was Dr. Helen Wang, Curator of East Asian Money at the British Museum, who agreed to view the collection and provide us with some basic material to start the research, as well as advise us on ways of examining individual coins.

At the time it was known that Skušek originally kept a list of his entire collection, including his coins, but this was long believed to have been lost. However, in June 2020, several documents were surprisingly rediscovered in a pile of written and printed materials relating to Ivan Skušek Jr. They included four variations of the list of his objects, a list of his coins and the *Summary*, a document confirming their authenticity, and, perhaps even more unexpectedly, a number of letters from Fr. Maurus Kluge.

The paper is based on the study of Skušek's numismatic collection performed by the author at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum (SEM) with the help of Mag. Ralf Čeplak Mencin, the museum's Curator of Asia and Oceania, the list and the *Summary* of Skušek's coins, the existing museum inventory book, and Kluge's letters to Skušek. The letters were transcribed from German cursive handwriting into a more legible German and translated into Slovene by Lect. Mag. Niko Hudelja from the Department of History at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana.

Ivan Skušek Jr., His Stay in China, and His Collecting Zeal

Ivan Skušek Jr. lived in an outstandingly varied and dynamic era, both for East Asia and the rest of the world. He left home at the onset of modernity, right before the outbreak of WWI, spent his time in China during what was probably one of the most turbulent periods in Chinese history, and returned to Ljubljana to witness a world distinctly different from the one he had left behind seven years earlier. To grasp the significance of his legacy and his vision, it is important to understand the circumstances in which he assembled his collection.

The early 20th century was a period of rapid and radical political, social and economic change for East Asia and Europe, especially the East European periphery that was still ruled by the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In Japan, the Taishō era (1912–1926) followed the sixty years of the Meiji era (1852–1912), which had seen rapid modernization according to the Western model. In China, the political and intellectual climate of the late 19th and early 20th centuries was characterized by a profound self-doubt and cultural criticism (Dessein 2014, 50). With the country in political, social and economic turmoil, many progressive Chinese intellectuals advocated the modern ideals of democracy, social equality, personal freedom, and equal rights for women, and demanded the end of certain traditional practices (Saje 2004, 107–13). Meanwhile, cities on the East China coast, forced to open their ports to Western European and American capital, began to evolve into large cosmopolitan hubs, where the traditional and modern intermingled, a new bourgeois class flourished, and increasing numbers of foreign visitors arrived. The socio-political developments in the Euro-American and East Asian space in the late 19th and early 20th centuries thus encouraged contacts and exchange between these parts of the world. Among other things, this situation stimulated the circulation of a range of East Asian objects brought to Europe by travellers, collectors, diplomats, merchants and other individuals who, for various reasons, travelled to East Asia at that time (Vampelj Suhadolnik 2019, 100–103).

Compared to colonial powers such as Great Britain and France, the Habsburg Monarchy, which included the territory of present-day Slovenia, entered the East Asian space relatively late (ibid., 103–105). As the result of both Opium Wars, countries with growing colonial empires (Great Britain, France, Russia, Japan and the USA) acquired trade monopolies and privileges in the defeated China. By the end of the 19th century the race for new colonies and trade monopolies was joined by Germany and the Habsburg Monarchy. In 1897, Germany acquired the port of Qingdao and its hinterland as its concession, as China was forced to cede the territory to Germany for 99 years. While the Habsburg Monarchy did not obtain any colonies in Asia, it did establish stable diplomatic bonds with China, which allowed it to trade there in peace (Čeplak Mencin 2012, 101). These circumstances encouraged the first wave of travellers from the Slovene ethnic space to East Asia. We can distinguish several groups of travellers who set out on journeys to East Asia at the time. Most of them were seamen in the service of the Austro-Hungarian Navy as officers or just ordinary sailors, and served on Austrian warships and merchant ships. They were often joined by Franciscan and Salesian missionaries who ventured to East Asia with the intention of spreading the Christian faith or were driven by a desire to learn about distant places and their cultures. In addition, the missions of Austro-Hungarian ships were often accompanied by diplomats, researchers, scientists and other experts. Meanwhile, with the route of connection having been set, travel to East Asia was also made possible for individual travellers and adventurers (Marinac 2017, 14–18). All these groups of people represented a colourful crowd of individuals who, for very different reasons, ventured into the distant world of East Asia. They would return home with exciting stories and vivid memories that they would further support with the various curious objects they brought from their trips.

The number, quality and size of East Asian objects that these individuals bought or otherwise collected on their travels were subject to their status, their economic power, and last but not least, the nature of their travels, their personal interests and tastes. Smaller, cheaper items, such as postcards and examples of the so-called export art, intended as souvenirs for foreign visitors, were accessible to ordinary seamen, individual travellers and adventurers. Meanwhile, seafarers of higher ranks, diplomats and various professional associates often had an opportunity for genuine contact with wealthy locals and their lifestyles. In addition, their purchasing power was much higher, so they could afford the purchase and transportation of larger and much more valuable items (Vampelj Suhadolnik 2019, 113–17). Ivan Skušek Jr., an Austro-Hungarian Navy officer, who found himself confined in Beijing during WWI, was a very exceptional man of the latter category. In almost seven years of living in Beijing he became an avid collector and regular visitor to Beijing antique markets, systematically and enthusiastically assembling his collection. He returned to Ljubljana in 1920 with an impressive collection of precious items and collector's rarities from China, which is now held by the Slovene Ethnographic Museum.

Ivan Skušek Jr. was born on June 17, 1877, in Metlika, as one of four children of Ivan Skušek Snr., an Austro-Hungarian tax officer. After finishing his studies, he joined the Austro-Hungarian Imperial Navy, where he was soon promoted to naval officer of the first rank. After a number of voyages across the Mediterranean, the Black and Red Seas, he was employed as an official at the Ministry of War in Vienna. In July 1913, he boarded the Austro-Hungarian cruiser SMS Kaiserin Elisabeth as an intendant (accountant, cashier and economist). The ship left the port of Pula, bound for Japan, and arrived at the German concession of Qingdao on the Chinese coast on July 22, 1914 (Čeplak Mencin 2012, 98–99).

In Europe, WWI broke out on July 28, 1914. Shortly after that, on August 23, Japan declared war on Germany, demanding that it cede the port of Qingdao to Japan. The SMS Kaiserin Elisabeth with her 12 officers, including Skušek, and 240 seamen, had to join the German forces in Qingdao. Kaiserin Elisabeth sank on November 3, 1914, after weeks of fighting (ibid., 102). The conflict was resolved with the German and Austrian surrender and Qingdao fell into Japanese hands. The defeated German and Austrian soldiers were taken into confinement in Japan, while their officers, including Ivan Skušek, were taken into confinement in Beijing. Skušek must have arrived in Beijing by the end of November and retained his position of chief intendant officer even though he was confined, being in charge of supplying food and other necessities for his fellow officers in confinement. For this reason, he was issued a pass that enabled him to exit the confinement camp and move freely around Beijing. As he walked the streets of Beijing, he must have noticed the abundance of small antique stores that sold cheap, accessible Chinese antiquities of all sorts. He also knew how to make money when purchasing necessities for the officers, which enabled him to start buying and collecting a variety of objects (ibid., 101–105). Living among the higher social strata of Westerners in the diplomatic quarter in Beijing, Skušek met a number of interesting people of different nationalities, and built connections with knowledgeable and influential individuals, which in turn helped him to access and purchase larger and more valuable objects for his collection.

Figure 1. Ivan Skušek and Tsuneko Kondō Kawase in Beijing, between 1918 and 1920. (Source: Photo Archive of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana; the original is kept by Janez Lombergar, Ivan Skušek Jr.'s grandnephew)

During his years in Beijing, Ivan Skušek also met a young Japanese woman, a florist, who would become his wife, Tsuneko Kondō Kawase (1893–1963) (fig. 1). Tsuneko had been married to a German chief customs official, Paul Heinrich Schmidt, and had two children with him, a son Matthias (1912–1933) and a daughter Erika (1914–1958). By the time she met Ivan Skušek, she obviously no longer lived with Schmidt, who had left the family for reasons unknown to us. Skušek married Tsuneko on June 12, 2020. The family first visited Tsuneko's mother in Japan, then returned to Beijing where he prepared his precious antiquities for transportation, before the four of them left for Europe. They finally reached Ljubljana on September 8, 1920, with numerous crates of valuable objects arriving a little more than a month after the family (ibid., 109–11).

The cases contained enormous quantities of precious, rare Chinese antiquities and works of art: paintings, sculptures, ceramics and porcelain, lacquered objects, textiles and other items of clothing, hats and footwear, musical instruments, coins, fans, snuff bottles, tobacco and opium pipes, and other objects for everyday use, larger objects such as furniture, large ceramic garden sets and architectural models, as well as books, albums, photographs and postcards. Among other things, Skušek can be considered one of the first Westerners to be interested in Chinese furniture: he developed an artistic appreciation of its elegant lines and richly carved motifs and started treating pieces of furniture as precious collecting items (Vampelj Suhadolnik 2020, 53–54). Most of the objects in the collection date from the Qing dynasty (1644–1912), with quite a few of them very likely originating from the Forbidden City (Čeplak Mencin 2012, 105, 113–15).

When buying in Beijing antique shops and assembling his collection, Skušek was driven, among other things, by the desire to establish a museum of Chinese culture in his homeland. His vision was to bring the cultural, civilizational, and technological achievements of China closer to his fellow Slovenes and dispel the mostly negative stereotypes about the Chinese that were prevalent in the media at the time. Unfortunately, his plan never materialized due to financial constraints (Vampelj Suhadolnik 2019, 115–16). Insisting on keeping the collection as a whole, Ivan Skušek stored most of the objects in his and Tsuneko's apartment in Ljubljana and bequeathed the entire collection to the National Museum, which later handed it over to the Slovene Ethnographic Museum (Čeplak Mencin 2012, 115). After his passing in 1947, the collection remained in their family apartment until Tsuneko's death in 1963. In his written memoir, Franci Skušek recorded what his brother Ivan had told him about his stay in Beijing. His records mention that Ivan kept a detailed list of all the objects in the collection, along with the prices in Chinese dollars he paid for them. However, the list was believed to have been lost soon after the collection arrived in Ljubljana.

After its arrival at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum in the 1960s, the collection, including the numismatic assemblage, was partly inventoried by Dr. Pavla Štrukelj (1921–2015), the previous curator of the museum collection. Unfortunately, the inventory was never completed nor was the collection thoroughly researched until the VAZ project was initiated in 2018. Research and reconstruction of the original collection would have been a lot easier with the list of objects mentioned by Franci Skušek, but it was not available. In 2020, exactly one hundred years after Skušek's return and the arrival of the collection in Ljubljana, several documents were discovered by chance among other written materials related to Skušek (Berdajs 2021, 144–45).[1] They included four versions of Skušek's list of objects, although these do not mention the prices of items like the original list supposedly did. However, they do cite numerous precious pieces of porcelain, silk garments, lanterns, furniture and other visually arresting artefacts most of which had been known to have belonged to Skušek. Meanwhile, the newly discovered documentation even included materials pertaining to Skušek's collection of Chinese coins, probably the most unresearched part of his legacy to date. These encompassed a detailed list of Chinese coins in German as well as a summary and assessment (the *Summary*) of the same coins in English, confirming their authenticity and signed by Skušek himself. Another precious find was a number of handwritten letters from the missionary Kluge to Ivan Skušek that reveal a great deal of hitherto unknown facts about Skušek's stay in Beijing and the nature of his collecting practices, especially those related to numismatics. The letters give us a breakthrough and insight into Skušek's collection of Chinese coins.

Chinese Numismatics in China and Europe

In the most general sense of the word, numismatics is the study or collection of currency, including coins, tokens, paper money and related objects. The history of coin collecting might be as long as the history of using coins as currency. In Europe, according to some sources, Caesar Augustus collected old Roman coins as early as the 1st century BC. Meanwhile, Petrarch is credited as the first Renaissance collector. Coin collecting started to emerge as a popular pastime of European royalty and nobility, which is why numismatics is often called the "hobby of kings". Numismatics as a field of systematic research began to flourish in the 18th and especially 19th centuries, when the first professional numismatic societies began to emerge (Yu and Yu 2004, 2).

1 The life and collection of Ivan Skušek Jr. are also discussed by Klara Hrvatin (2021) and Nataša Visočnik Gerželj (2021) in this volume.

Numismatics may have an even longer tradition in China, which is not surprising with regard to the long and varied history of Chinese currency that spans more than 3,000 years. The earliest known catalogue of Chinese coins, *Quanzhi* 泉志 by Hong Zun 洪遵 (1120–1174), published in 1149, was probably the first numismatic catalogue in the world (Wang 2012, 417). Collecting and researching coins was a scholarly pursuit, and Chinese numismatics flourished in the late 19th century, especially in the field of the "inscriptions on metal and stone" (*jinshi xue* 金石學), with scholars sharing not only their knowledge, but also rubbings of coins in their collections (Jankowski 2018, 119–49). Numismatics continued to develop in the first half of the 20th century, at the time Skušek was staying in Beijing. Even the great literary modernist Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881–1936) researched Chinese coins during his employment at the Ministry of Education, while working on the restoration of the Imperial Library and the plans for the Museum of History. He bought coins in the antiques market, researched numismatic works, and as one of his manuscripts from 1913 reveals, intended to extend Hong Zun's *Quanzhi* from the 12th century down to the 19th century (Wang 2012, 417–18).

Despite its prominence in China, Chinese numismatics as a field of study still seems to be somewhat obscure in the Euro-American space. The earliest European work on Chinese money was probably Marco Polo's (c. 1254–1324) famous description of Chinese paper money, which is often considered as evidence that he did actually go to China. From the 1700s on, when cultural and trade contacts between East Asia and European colonial centres were established, it was mostly merchants, forgers, academics, missionaries and other individuals who took interest in the study of Chinese money. Even in the 18th and 19th centuries people studying Chinese coins in the West still came from very different walks of life—sinologists, missionaries, merchants, doctors, surgeons, botanists, officials, bankers, military men, explorers, aristocrats and others—each with their own interests and motivations. Along with the development of numismatics as a field of scientific research and the establishment of professional numismatic societies, more people took interest in Chinese money and started collecting Chinese coins purely from a scholarly perspective. By the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, some important collections arrived in Europe and the United States. At the time, significant contributions to Chinese numismatics and numismatic collections in Europe were made by Westerners living and working in China for various reasons (ibid., 399–415).

As a European collector of Chinese coins, Skušek belongs to a group of people who were often quite distinguished in their particular fields in China, but generally not known for their interest in coins. As with the practice of collecting East

Asian objects in general, the field of Chinese numismatics in the West has been mostly limited to the former colonial centres, while it never developed to such an extent in other, peripheral regions of Europe. This makes Skušek's collection all the more remarkable.

Description and Scope of Skušek's Collection of Chinese Coins

Although Ivan Skušek's numismatic collection was partly inventoried by Dr. Štrukelj in 1966, it has never been properly examined and assessed. In 2019, we decided to tackle it within the VAZ project, starting with the coins listed in the inventory book, since only these can be confirmed to have belonged to Skušek. According to the inventory by Dr. Štrukelj, Skušek's collection boasts an assemblage of at least about 216[2] Chinese coins and other types of ancient Chinese money. The specimens included originate from almost all periods of Chinese history, ranging from spade (*bubi* 布幣 or *buqian* 布錢) and knife coins (*daobi* 刀幣 or *daoqian* 刀錢), ant-nose money (*yibi qian* 蟻鼻錢), often called ghost's or death's face money (*guilian qian* 鬼臉錢), dating from the Zhou dynasty (1046–221 BC), to round coins with a square hole, *fangkong qian* 方孔錢 or cash coins, which were the standard form of coins from the Qin dynasty (221–206 BC) to the end of the Qing dynasty. The collection even contains several exquisite and extremely rare coins from the Wang Mang 王莽 (reigned 9–23) period. As in most Western collections of Chinese money, the majority of the coins originate from the Qing dynasty, including the so-called "rebel coins". The latter include coins issued in the early Qing dynasty by the rebellious military leader Wu Sangui 吳三桂 (1612–1678) in 1674, and later by his grandson and successor Wu Shifan 吳世璠 (1663–1681) in 1679, as well as coins minted and circulated in parts of China under the Taiping rule during the years of the Taiping Rebellion (*Taiping Tianguo yundong* 太平天國運動) (1850–1864). There are also two silver commemorative coins from the early 20th century portraying President Yuan Shikai 袁世凱 (1859–1916) (*Summary* 1946). Additionally, there are some strings of coins and silver ingots, and at least one coin-sword or *bixie jian* 辟邪劍 from the Qing dynasty, all confirmed to be part of Skušek's collection as well.

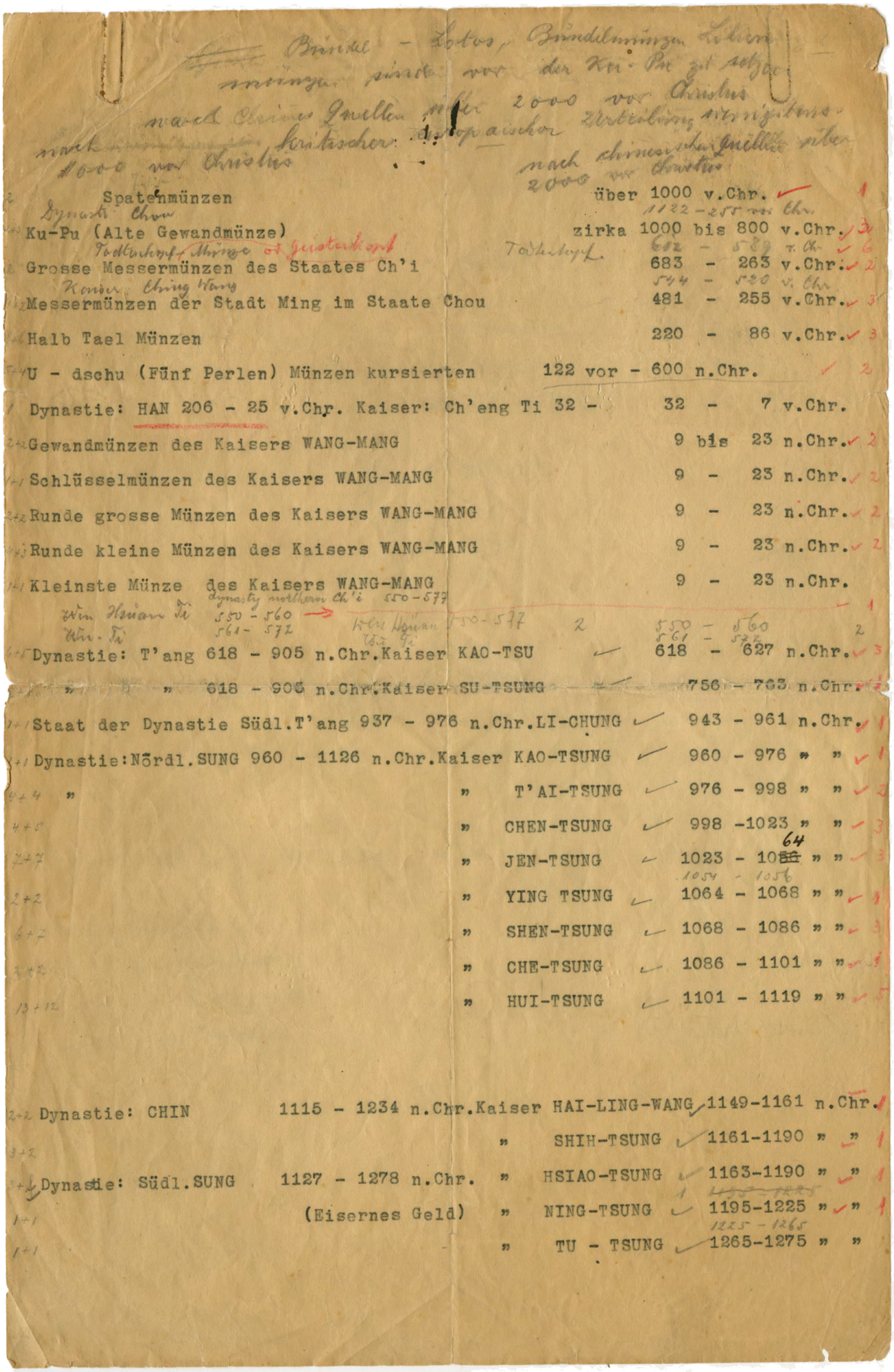
The discovery of a typed list of Skušek's coins in German (figs. 2 and 3), the *Summary* (figs. 4 and 5), and the letters from Fr. Kluge provide useful supporting

2 The 216 coins bear the inventory numbers from the Slovene Ethnographic Museum (the Goričane Museum) and are listed in the inventory book by Dr. Pavla Štrukelj, which confirms they were definitely part of Skušek's collection. It is possible that some other groups of coins (the Slovene Ethnographic Museum keeps about 1200 Chinese coins altogether) belonged to him as well, but this has not been possible to confirm to date.

material, invaluable in the process of researching the collection. The *Summary* document found alongside the German list cites 123 coins of types that correspond to the coins on the list and confirms their authenticity. We can read on the final page of the document: "All pieces are real coins; for example, there are no amulets; the collection covers a period of more than 3,000 years and includes some of the most remarkable types of Chinese coins" (*Summary* 1946). The text further highlights rare pieces, such as "spade money and ghost's face coins [i.e. ant-nose coins]", which "are known in the numismatic literature as extremely rare; one can find them only by chance" (*Summary* 1946). The *Summary* is typed in English and was signed by Ivan Skušek on June 30, 1946 (the year before he died), at Strossmayerjeva Street in Ljubljana, where the family lived after WWII (Motoh 2021, 135). Did he intend to sell his coins? What seems likely as well is that he wished, for some reason, to have this part of his collection officially documented and assessed.

Even more remarkably, the items from the list and the *Summary* correspond exactly to the 123 coins listed in the 1966 inventory by Dr. Štrukelj, which seem to suggest that Dr. Štrukelj still had Skušek's lists or the *Summary* available when she inventoried the coins. The remaining 93 coins in the inventory book include some rare specimens of spade and knife money, round *huanquan* 环钱 money or "ring coins" from the Zhou dynasty. Why did Skušek not include these coins in his *Summary*? For the time being, it is still hard to answer this question with certainty. Perhaps he only included those coins that he knew to be authentic.

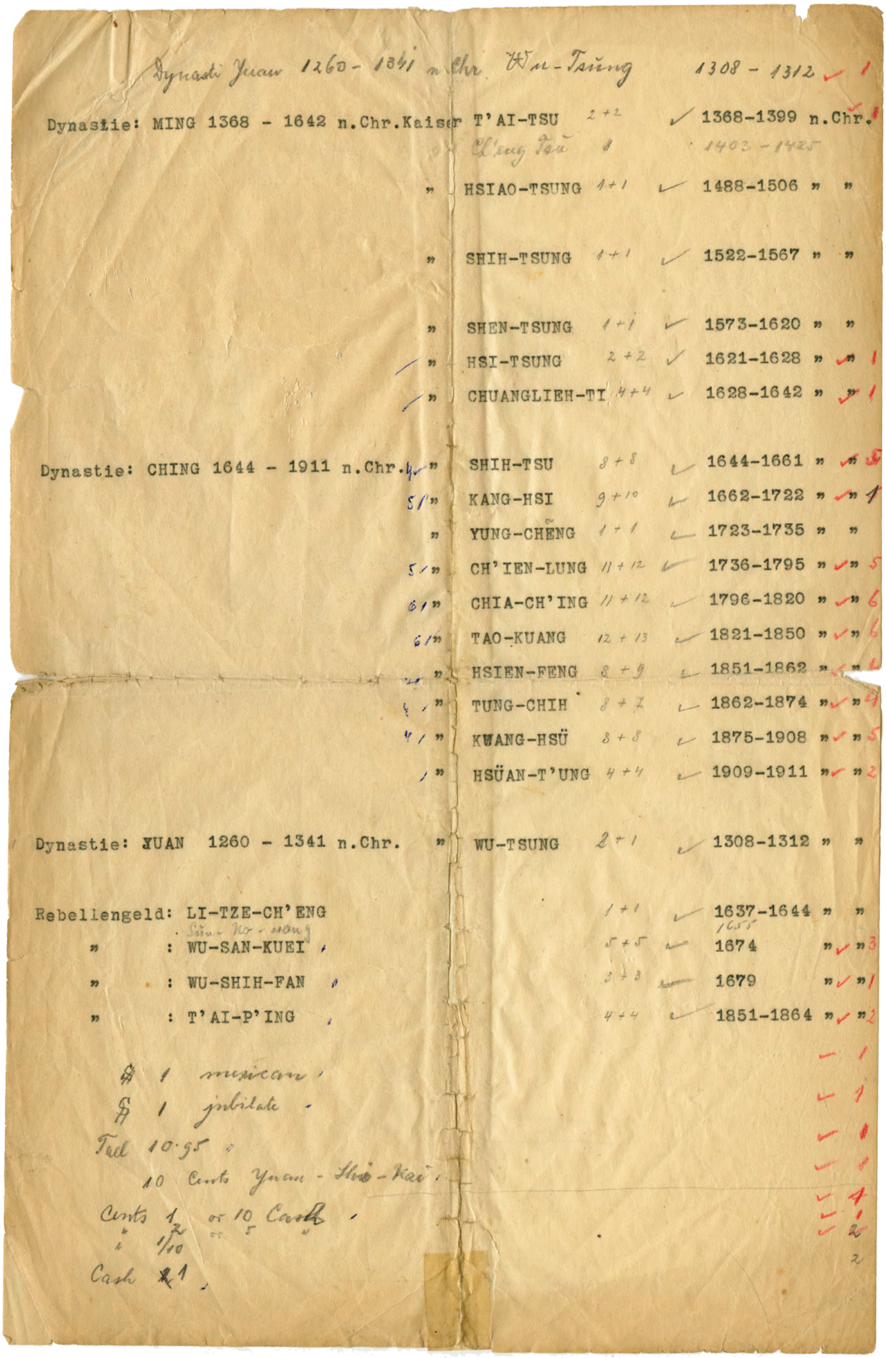
With this possibility in mind, we are faced with another, essential question pertaining to Skušek's numismatic legacy. How was he able to collect such a representative collection of Chinese coins from all periods of Chinese history? And where did he acquire so much knowledge of Chinese coins? These are the questions that can be answered, at least to some extent, on the basis of the letters written to Skušek by the missionary that he became acquainted with during his stay in Beijing, and who helped him with his numismatic collection. However, that person remained a somewhat mysterious figure until the remarkable discovery in June 2020—the letters that revealed his identity as Father Kluge, as well as unveiled the nature of their association and cooperation on their Chinese coin collections.



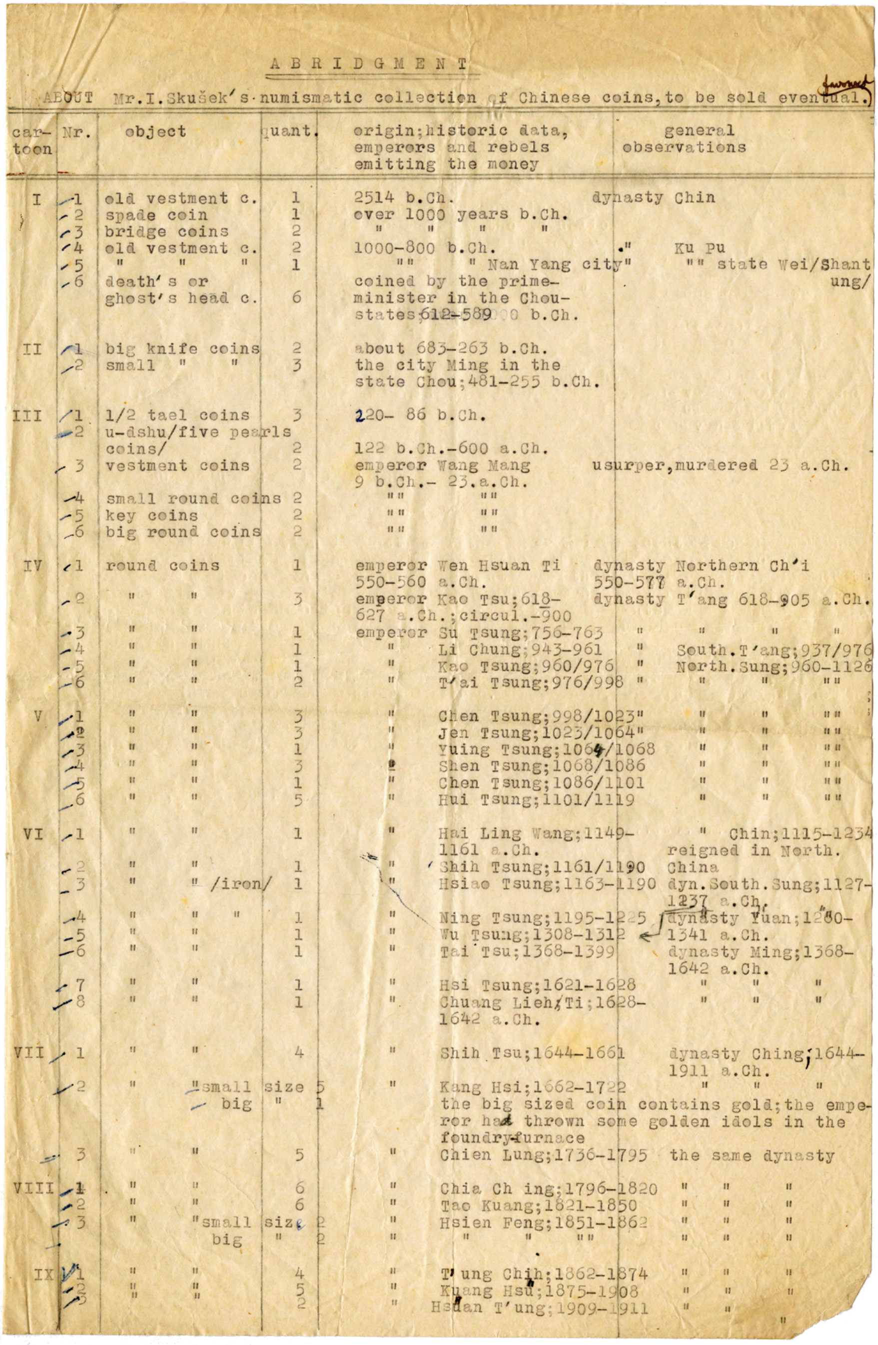
Bündel – Lotos, Bündelmünzen Lilien münzen sind vor der Ku-Pu zu setzen
nach Chines. Quellen über 2000 vor Christus
nach kritischer europäischer Zerteilung wenigstens
2000 vor Christus
nach chinesischen Quellen über 2000 vor Christus

Spatenmünzen über 1000 v.Chr.
Dynastie Chou 1122–255 vor Chr.
Ku-Pu (Alte Gewandmünze) zirka 1000 bis 800 v.Chr.
Todtenkopf Münze od Geisterkopf Todtenkopf 682 – 589 v. Chr.
Grosse Messermünzen des Staates Ch'i 683 – 263 v.Chr.
Kaiser Ching Wang 544 – 520 v. Chr.
Messermünzen der Stadt Ming im Staate Chou 481 – 255 v.Chr.
Halb Tael Münzen 220 – 86 v.Chr.
U – dschu (Fünf Perlen) Münzen kursierten 122 vor – 600 n.Chr.
Dynastie: HAN 206 – 25 v.Chr. Kaiser: Ch'eng Ti 32 – 32 – 7 v.Chr.
Gewandmünzen des Kaisers WANG-MANG 9 bis 23 n.Chr.
Schlüsselmünzen des Kaisers WANG-MANG 9 – 23 n.Chr.
Runde grosse Münzen des Kaisers WANG-MANG 9 – 23 n.Chr.
Runde kleine Münzen des Kaisers WANG-MANG 9 – 23 n.Chr.
Kleinste Münze des Kaisers WANG-MANG 9 – 23 n.Chr.
dynasty northern Ch'i 550–577
Wen Hsüan Ti 550 – 560
Wu Ti 561 – 572
Dynastie: T'ang 618 – 905 n.Chr.Kaiser KAO-TSU 618 – 627 n.Chr.
" " " 618 – 906 n.Chr.Kaiser SU-TSUNG 756 – 763 n.Chr.
Staat der Dynastie Südl.T'ang 937 – 976 n.Chr.LI-CHUNG 943 – 961 n.Chr.
Dynastie:Nördl.SUNG 960 – 1126 n.Chr.Kaiser KAO-TSUNG 960 – 976 " "
" " T'AI-TSUNG 976 – 998 " "
" CHEN-TSUNG 998 –1023 " "
" JEN-TSUNG 1023 – 10~~56~~ 64 " "
" YING TSUNG 1064 – 1068 " "
" SHEN-TSUNG 1068 – 1086 " "
" CHE-TSUNG 1086 – 1101 " "
" HUI-TSUNG 1101 – 1119 " "

Dynastie: CHIN 1115 – 1234 n.Chr.Kaiser HAI-LING-WANG 1149-1161 n.Chr.
" SHIH-TSUNG 1161-1190 " "
Dynastie: Südl.SUNG 1127 – 1278 n.Chr. " HSIAO-TSUNG 1163-1190 " "
(Eisernes Geld) " NING-TSUNG 1195-1225 " "
" TU – TSUNG 1265-1275 " "



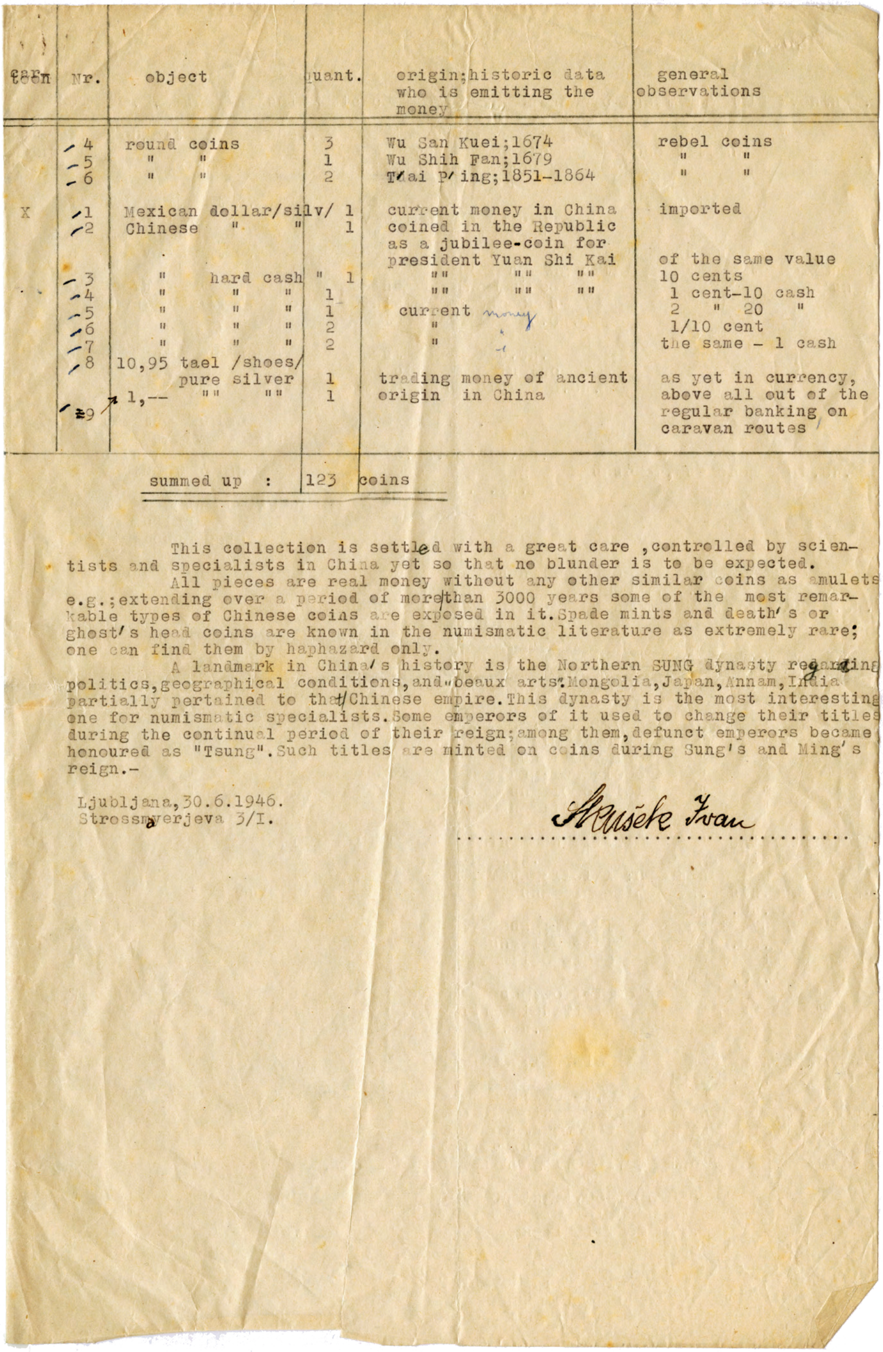
Figures 2 and 3. A list of Skušek's coins from various periods of Chinese history, written in German (possibly prepared by Fr. Maurus Kluge). Photo by the author. (Archive ofthe Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana)



A B R I D G M E N T

ABOUT Mr.I.Skušek's numismatic collection of Chinese coins, to be sold eventual. journal

car-toon	Nr.	object	quant.	origin; historic data, emperors and rebels emitting the money	general observations
I	1	old vestment c.	1	2514 b.Ch.	dynasty Chin
	2	spade coin	1	over 1000 years b.Ch.	
	3	bridge coins	2	" " " "	
	4	old vestment c.	2	1000-800 b.Ch.	" Ku Pu
	5	" " "	1	"" " Nan Yang city"	"" state Wei/Shantung/
	6	death's or ghost's head c.	6	coined by the prime-minister in the Chou-states 612-589 b.Ch.	
II	1	big knife coins	2	about 683-263 b.Ch.	
	2	small " "	3	the city Ming in the state Chou; 481-255 b.Ch.	
III	1	1/2 tael coins	3	220- 86 b.Ch.	
	2	u-dshu/five pearls coins/	2	122 b.Ch.-600 a.Ch.	
	3	vestment coins	2	emperor Wang Mang 9 b.Ch.- 23.a.Ch.	usurper, murdered 23 a.Ch.
	4	small round coins	2	"" ""	
	5	key coins	2	"" ""	
	6	big round coins	2	"" ""	
IV	1	round coins	1	emperor Wen Hsuan Ti 550-560 a.Ch.	dynasty Northern Ch'i 550-577 a.Ch.
	2	" "	3	emperor Kao Tsu; 618-627 a.Ch.; circul.-900	dynasty T'ang 618-905 a.Ch.
	3	" "	1	emperor Su Tsung; 756-763	" " " "
	4	" "	1	" Li Chung; 943-961	" South.T'ang; 937/976
	5	" "	1	" Kao Tsung; 960/976	" North.Sung; 960-1126
	6	" "	2	" T'ai Tsung; 976/998	" " " ""
V	1	" "	3	" Chen Tsung; 998/1023	" " " ""
	2	" "	3	" Jen Tsung; 1023/1064	" " " ""
	3	" "	1	" Yuing Tsung; 1064/1068	" " ""
	4	" "	3	" Shen Tsung; 1068/1086	" " ""
	5	" "	1	" Chen Tsung; 1086/1101	" " ""
	6	" "	5	" Hui Tsung; 1101/1119	" " ""
VI	1	" "	1	" Hai Ling Wang; 1149-1161 a.Ch.	" Chin; 1115-1234 reigned in North. China
	2	" "	1	" Shih Tsung; 1161/1190	
	3	" " /iron/	1	" Hsiao Tsung; 1163-1190	dyn. South. Sung; 1127-1237 a.Ch.
	4	" " "	1	" Ning Tsung; 1195-1225	dynasty Yuan; 1280-1341 a.Ch.
	5	" "	1	" Wu Tsung; 1308-1312	
	6	" "	1	" Tai Tsu; 1368-1399	dynasty Ming; 1368-1642 a.Ch.
	7	" "	1	" Hsi Tsung; 1621-1628	" " "
	8	" "	1	" Chuang Lieh Ti; 1628-1642 a.Ch.	" " "
VII	1	" "	4	" Shih Tsu; 1644-1661	dynasty Ching; 1644-1911 a.Ch.
	2	" " small size big "	5 1	" Kang Hsi; 1662-1722 the big sized coin contains gold; the emperor had thrown some golden idols in the foundry-furnace	" " "
	3	" "	5	" Chien Lung; 1736-1795	the same dynasty
VIII	1	" "	6	" Chia Ch ing; 1796-1820	" " "
	2	" "	6	" Tao Kuang; 1821-1850	" " "
	3	" " small size big "	2 2	" Hsien Feng; 1851-1862 " " " ""	" " " " " "
IX	1	" "	4	" T'ung Chih; 1862-1874	" " "
	2	" "	5	" Kuang Hsu; 1875-1908	" " "
	3	" "	2	" Hsuan T'ung; 1909-1911	" " "



carton	Nr.	object	quant.	origin; historic data who is emitting the money	general observations
	4	round coins	3	Wu San Kuei; 1674	rebel coins
	5	" "	1	Wu Shih Fan; 1679	" "
	6	" "	2	T'ai P'ing; 1851-1864	" "
X	1	Mexican dollar/silv/	1	current money in China	imported
	2	Chinese " "	1	coined in the Republic as a jubilee-coin for president Yuan Shi Kai	of the same value
	3	" hard cash "	1	"" "" ""	10 cents
	4	" " "	1	"" "" ""	1 cent-10 cash
	5	" " "	1	current money	2 " 20 "
	6	" " "	2	"	1/10 cent
	7	" " "	2	"	the same - 1 cash
	8	10,95 tael /shoes/ pure silver	1	trading money of ancient origin in China	as yet in currency, above all out of the regular banking on caravan routes
	9	1,-- "" ""	1		

summed up :	123	coins

This collection is settled with a great care ,controlled by scientists and specialists in China yet so that no blunder is to be expected.

All pieces are real money without any other similar coins as amulets e.g.;extending over a period of more than 3000 years some of the most remarkable types of Chinese coins are exposed in it.Spade mints and death's or ghost's head coins are known in the numismatic literature as extremely rare; one can find them by haphazard only.

A landmark in China's history is the Northern SUNG dynasty regarding politics,geographical conditions,and "beaux arts".Mongolia,Japan,Annam,India partially pertained to that Chinese empire.This dynasty is the most interesting one for numismatic specialists.Some emperors of it used to change their titles during the continual period of their reign;among them,defunct emperors became honoured as "Tsung".Such titles are minted on coins during Sung's and Ming's reign.-

Ljubljana,30.6.1946.
Strossmayerjeva 3/I.

Skušek Ivan
....

Figures 4 and 5. *Summary* of Skušek's numismatic collection of Chinese coins, written in English and signed by Ivan Skušek Jr. on June 30, 1946, in Ljubljana. Photo by the author. (Archive of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana)

Skušek and His Acquaintance with Fr. Kluge

There is a total of nine letters written by Kluge in a neat German cursive and addressed to Ivan Skušek. They span the period from November 17, 1918, the time shortly after WWI and the surrender of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (November 11, 1918), to December 31, 1919. To date, only Kluge's letters to Skušek have been found, but these are eloquent enough for us to discern the context, nature and topics of their correspondence. The letters give us a genuine insight into the post-WWI circumstances as experienced by foreigners in China, and reveal new information about Skušek. For example, all of the letters were addressed to *Kommissar* Ivan Skušek in the Dutch Legation—at that point, he was apparently an employee at the Dutch Embassy. While his name on the envelopes is often written as *Kommissar* Ivan Skušek (fig. 6), Kluge always starts his letters with a very respectful address, greeting him as "Your Excellency, Dear Mr. Skušek!" (*Hochgeehrtester, lieber Herr Skušek!*).

Figure 6. An envelope containing a letter from Kluge addressed to *Kommissar* Ivan Skušek as an employee of the Dutch Legation. Photo by the author. (Archive of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana)

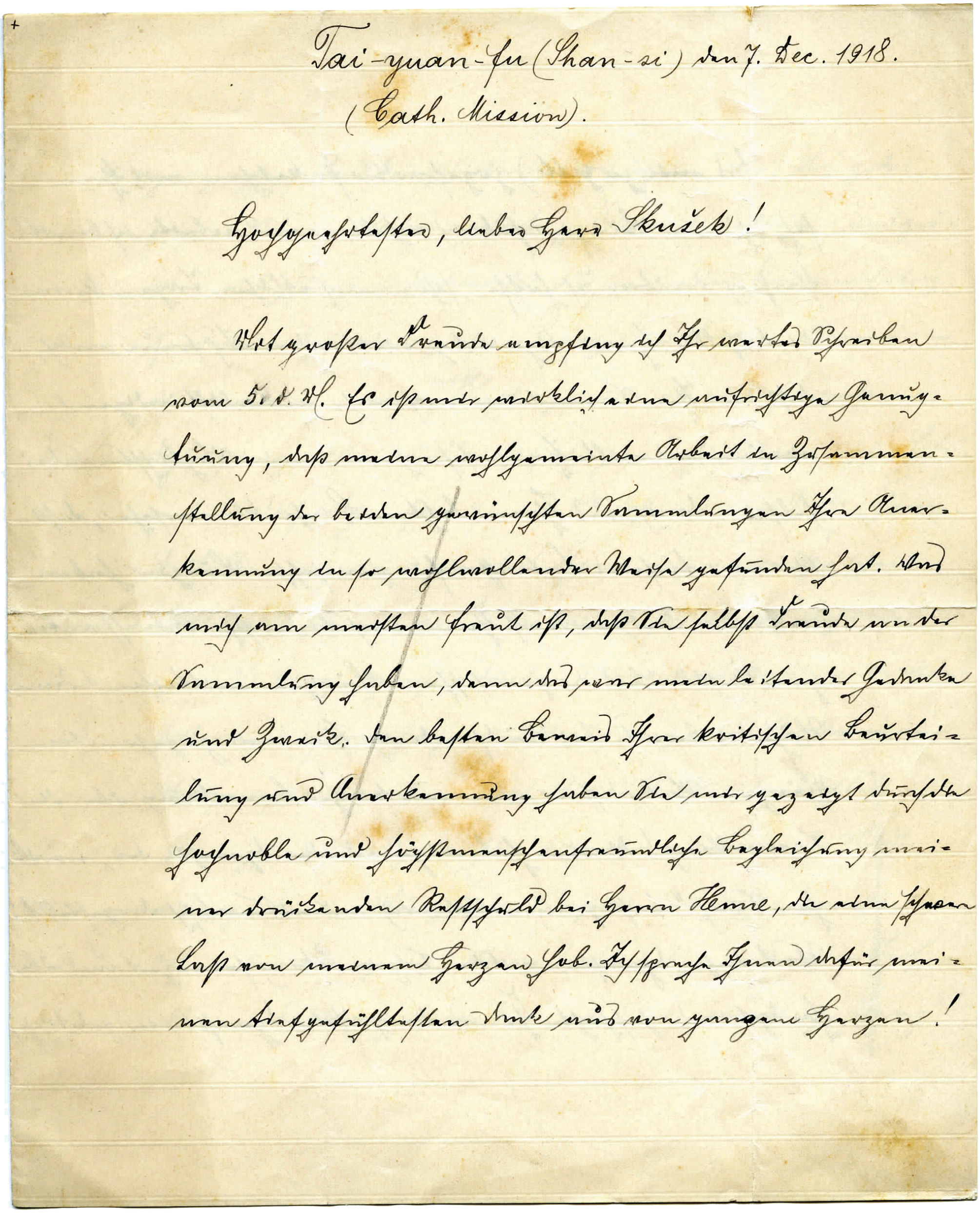
The closing greetings in the letters reveal that Skušek was still accompanied by his subordinate officer Lieutenant Gayer at the time. Kluge concludes the letters "With best wishes to you and Mr. Gayer" (*Mit besten Grüßen an Sie und Herrn Gayer*). In the letter written on January 24, 1919, he also adds "the good Mrs. Schmidt" (*die gute Frau Schmidt*) to his final greeting, while two later letters, dated February 15 and March 4, 1919, even mention her children: "With the most cordial greetings to you, Mr. Gayer and the good Mrs. Schmidt and her two little children" (*Viele recht herzliche Grüße an Sie, H. Gayer und die gute Frau Schmidt u. Ihre beide Kinderchen*).

The letters are always signed as "Your devoted" (*Ihr ergebenst*) or "Your most devoted" (*Ihr ergebenster*) "Fr. M. Kluge" [Father Maurus Kluge] (fig. 7). Furthermore, they always cite the Catholic Mission of Taiyuan (*Tai-yuan-fu (Shan-si), (Cath. Mission)*) as the location of writing (fig. 8), which leads us to assume that he was a Franciscan belonging to the Taiyuan Diocese (*Tianzhujiao Taiyuan jiaoqu* 天主教太原教區), predecessor of the present-day Taiyuan Archdiocese (*Tianzhujiao Taiyuan zongjiaoqu* 天主教太原總教區) in Shanxi Province.

According to Dr. des. Thomas Richter from the Library of Internationales Katholisches Missionswerk in Aachen[3], Father Maurus Kluge was indeed a Franciscan missionary who worked in Northern China in the early 20th century (fig. 9 shows his file-card from the Internationales Katholisches Missionswerk library). Born on October 5, 1873, in Silesia, archdiocese of Breslau/Wroclaw, he became a member of the Franciscan order (OFM) in 1892 and was sent to China in 1912. He boarded the S.S. Derfflinger, bound for China, which left Naples on January 10, 1913. He worked in the Taiyuan diocese in Northern Shanxi for many years, including the time he was in touch with Skušek. It is very likely that he occasionally travelled to Beijing, which can be conjectured on the basis of his letters to Skušek, in which he mentions his "visit to the camp" (*mein Besuch im Lager*) (probably the confinement camp in the diplomatic quarter) several times. However, no detailed information on his trips or stays in the capital could be found in the library archives.[4]

3 To establish Kluge's identity, we contacted the Monumenta Serica Institute in Bonn/Sankt Augustin, known for its extensive library on Chinese culture and archaeology, including the contributions to the field by various missionaries who lived and worked in China in the past. Dr. Dirk Kuhlmann from the library of Monumenta Serica Institute and his colleague, Dr. Barbara Hoster, kindly helped us contact the Internationales Katholisches Missionswerk (Pontifical Mission Society/Oeuvre Pontificale Missionnaire) in Aachen and the director of its library, Dr. des. Thomas Richter. The library holds abundant materials on different Catholic orders in Germany, including a large card index of approximately 12,000 file-cards on German missionaries. The cards contain information on missionaries born between1850 and 1920, most of whom were members of religious orders and natives of the German dioceses (i.e. the Germany of 1871, excluding Bavaria, and sometimes also including dioceses in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, such as Litomerice, Prague, or Olomouc). They were written by the former librarian, P. Franz Baeumker (1884–1975) who collected pieces of information from various journals. One of these file-cards indeed concerned Father Maurus Kluge (fig. 9).

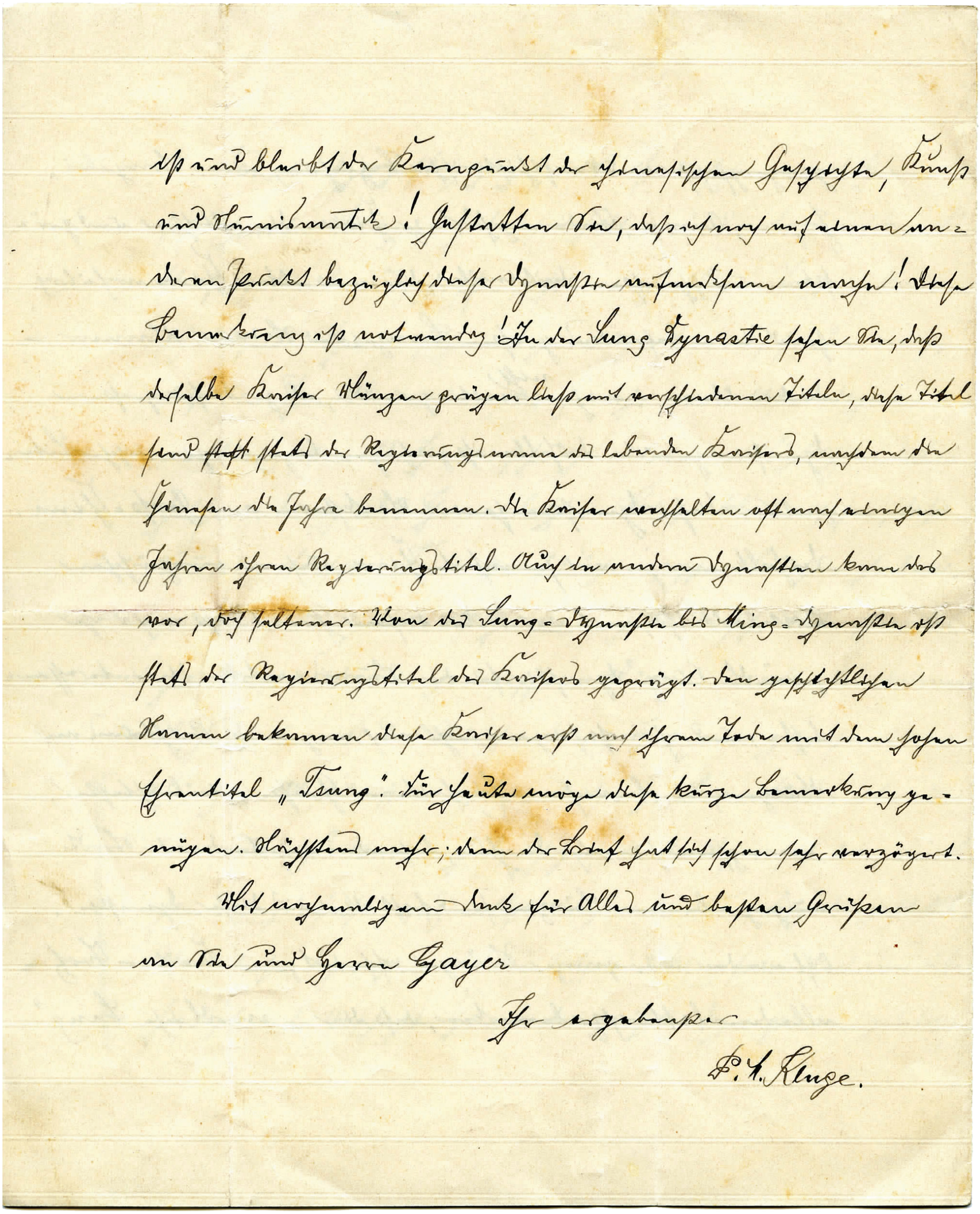
4 Personal correspondence with Dr. des. Thomas Richter, director of the Internationales Katholisches Missionswerk library, November 2020.



Tai-yuan-fu (Shan-si) den 7. Dec. 1918.
(Cath. Mission).

Hochgeehrtester, lieber Herr Skušek!

Mit grosser Freude empfing ich Ihr werthes Schreiben vom 5. d. M. Es ist mir wirklich eine aufrichtige Genugthuung, dass meine wohlgemeinte Arbeit der Zusammenstellung der beiden gewünschten Sammlungen Ihre Anerkennung in so wohlwollender Weise gefunden hat. Was mich am meisten freut ist, dass Sie selbst Freude an der Sammlung haben, denn das war mein leitender Gedanke und Zweck. Den besten Beweis Ihrer kritischen Beurteilung und Anerkennung haben Sie mir gezeigt durch die hochnoble und höchstmenschenfreundliche Begleichung meiner drückenden Restschuld bei Herrn Henne, die einen schweren Last von meinem Herzen hob. Ich spreche Ihnen dafür meinen tiefgefühltesten Dank aus von ganzem Herzen!



ist und bleibt der Kernpunkt der chinesischen Geschichte, Kunst
und Numismatik! Gestatten Sie, daß ich noch auf einen an-
deren Punkt bezüglich dieser Dynastien aufmerksam mache! Diese
Bemerkung ist notwendig! In der Sung Dynastie sehen Sie, daß
derselbe Kaiser Münzen gießen ließ mit verschiedenen Titeln, diese Titel
sind stets statt der Regierungsname des lebenden Kaisers, nachdem die
Chinesen die Jahre benennen. Die Kaiser wechselten oft nach einigen
Jahren ihren Regierungstitel. Auch in anderen Dynastien kommt das
vor, doch seltener. Von der Sung-Dynastie bis Ming-Dynastie ist
statt der Regierungstitel des Kaisers geprägt. Den geschichtlichen
Namen bekamen diese Kaiser erst nach ihrem Tode mit dem hohen
Ehrentitel „Tsung". Für heute möge diese kurze Bemerkung ge-
nügen. Nächstens mehr; denn der Brief hat sich schon sehr verzögert.
Mit nochmaligem Dank für Alles und besten Grüßen
an Sie und Herrn Gayer
Ihr ergebenster
P. A. Kluge.

Figures 7 and 8. The opening and final pages of one of Kluge's letters to Skušek, written on December 7, 1918. Photo by the author. (Archive of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana)

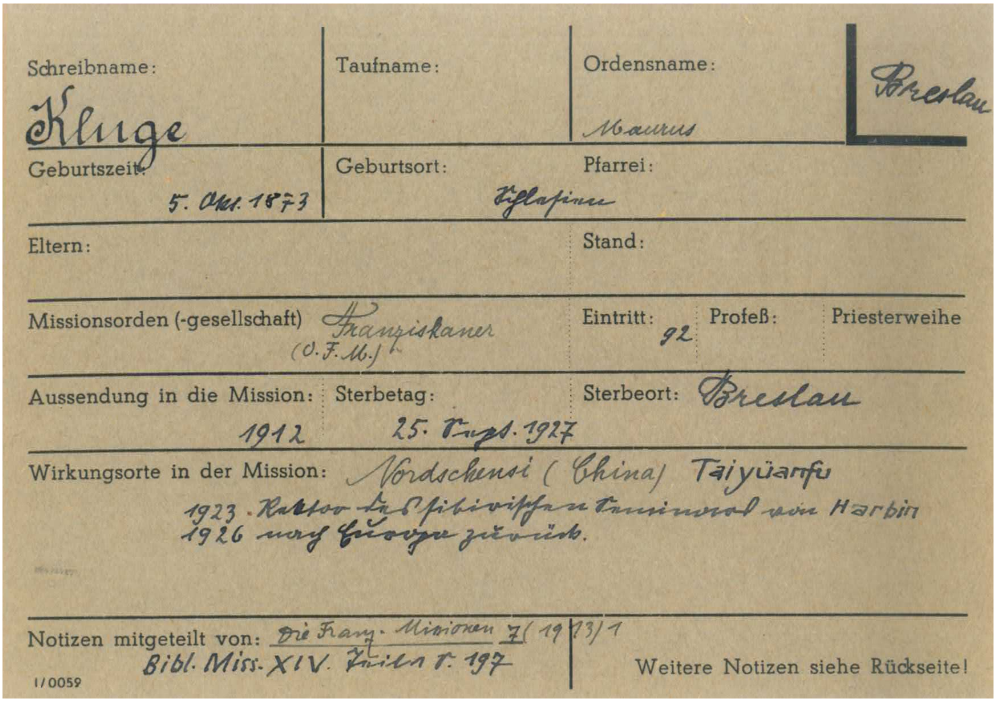

Schreibname: Kluge
Taufname:
Ordensname: Maurus
Breslau
Geburtszeit: 5. Okt. 1873
Geburtsort: [illegible]
Pfarrei:
Eltern:
Stand:
Missionsorden (-gesellschaft) Franziskaner (O.F.M.)
Eintritt: 92
Profeß:
Priesterweihe
Aussendung in die Mission: 1912
Sterbetag: 25. Aug. 1927
Sterbeort: Breslau
Wirkungsorte in der Mission: Nordschensi (China) Taiyüanfu
1923 Rektor des Bischöflichen Seminars von Harbin
1926 nach Europa zurück.
Notizen mitgeteilt von: Die Franz. Missionen 7 (1913) 1
Bibl. Miss. XIV. [illegible] 197
Weitere Notizen siehe Rückseite!
1/0059

Figure 9. The file-card on Fr. Maurus Kluge. (Source: Internationales Katholisches Missionswerk e. V., Pontifical Mission Society/Oeuvre Pontificale Missionnaire Library, Aachen)

On the basis of the information provided by the Internationales Katholisches Missionswerk, we learned that Kluge was in fact not German, but rather Polish. This confirms the information contained in his letters to Skušek. In one of them he hints at the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire after WWI and the possibility of his repatriation to Poland, which he refers to as his homeland. Franci Skušek's records mention that Kluge was an amateur archaeologist knowledgeable about Chinese history (Skušek n.d.). The letters seem to reveal two crucial aspects of Skušek's coin collecting—one pertaining to certain specimens that were deemed most valuable Chinese numismatic artifacts at the time, the other underlining the importance of Skušek's social life in his collecting practices, i.e. showing how Skušek and Kluge cooperated in assembling their respective numismatic collections, how they searched for valuable specimens, discussed them, and consulted experts, both Chinese and European, in order to confirm their authenticity and estimate their value.

Types of Coins Discussed by Kluge and Skušek

Kluge's letters are sprinkled with mentions of ancient Chinese coins he considers most valuable in the world of Chinese numismatics. The remarkable coins from the Wang Mang period, for example, have always been most sought after among collectors of Chinese money, Kluge being no exception. Describing specific types of coins, he touches upon the Wang Mang coins several times. In a letter, dated February 15, 1919, he brings up two rare coins, as he writes:

> Ich wollte Ihnen nämlich zusenden meine Schlüsselmünze mit dem goldenen "ein Messer" = "i dao" im Kopfe, dann eine andere, etwas verschiedene in Gestalt, die offenbar sehr viel Gold enthält.
>
> I wished to send you my key-coin with the inscription *yi dao*, "one knife", in gold on the top part of the coin, and then another, rather different in shape, which obviously contains a lot of gold.

Based on the description he gives we can assume he is writing about coins from the Wang Mang period. With the interregnum period of Wang Mang, large, unique spade coins and knife coins, used in the second half of the Zhou dynasty, reappeared for a short while. Due to their large denomination and size, ornate and meticulous minting techniques, the content of gold or silver and, last but not least, their rarity, these coins are still among the most valuable numismatic artifacts worldwide today (Hartill 2017 [2005], 86–90). Knife coins from the period can sometimes be somewhat reminiscent of keys in shape and are occasionally referred to as "key-coins" (*yaoshi bi* 鑰匙幣 or *yaoshi qian* 鑰匙錢), which is also the expression used by Kluge. Indeed, three such key-coins (*Schlüsselmünzen* in German) from the Wang Mang period can be identified in Skušek's collection of coins as well as on the list, in the *Summary*, and the inventory book (figs. 10 and 11).

Figures 10 and 11. A specimen of the Wang Mang period "key coin" (the obverse and the reverse of the coin). Photo by Blaž Verbič. (Source: Skušek Collection, Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana)

Apart from the Wang Mang period coins, Kluge seems to cherish Song dynasty (960–1279) pieces in particular. For instance, he advises Skušek to buy Song dynasty coins as some of the most valuable specimens from Chinese imperial history, citing the dynasty, more specifically the Northern Song dynasty (960–1127), as "the most prominent dynasty in China's history in political, geographical and art-historical terms" (*in der Geschichte Chinas die größte Dynastie in politisch, geographisch, und kunsthistorischer Beziehung*) and as "a turning point in the history of Great China" (*ein Markstein von Groß-China*). In his letter, written on December 7, 1918, he continues about the coins from the period:

> Aus diesem Grunde ist auch diese „nördl. Sung" Dynastie für den Numismatiker die interessanteste, und ich muß sagen wohl auch wegen des Reichtums an Münzen, weil reich an Einheit und Größe, die leichteste, wenigstens für mich. Die hier, besonders im Norden der Stadt ausgegebenen Münzen sind fast alle aus dieser Dynastie. Oft werden mir ganze Stränge offeriert zum Kauf. – Trotzalledem bitte ich zu bemerken, daß die „nördl. Sung" ist und bleibt der Kernpunkt der chinesischen Geschichte, Kunst und Numismatik! Gestatten Sie, daß ich noch auf einen anderen Punkt bezüglich dieser Dynastie aufmerksam mache! Diese Bemerkung ist notwendig! In der Sung Dynastie sehen Sie, daß derselbe Kaiser Münzen prägen ließ mit verschiedenen Titeln, diese Titel sind stets der Regierungsname des lebenden Kaisers, nach dem die Chinesen die Jahre benennen. Die Kaiser wechselten oft nach einigen Jahren ihren Regierungstitel. Auch in anderen Dynastien kam das vor, doch seltener. Von der Sung Dynastie bis Ming Dynastie ist stets der Regierungstitel des Kaisers geprägt. Den geschichtlichen Namen bekamen diese Kaiser erst nach ihrem Tode mit dem hohen Ehrentitel "Tsung". (Kluge 1918)
>
> That is why the "Northern Song" dynasty is the most interesting period also for numismatists, and, because of the richness of its coins, which are of large denominations and sizes, also the most pleasant to study, at least for me. Almost all the coins offered here, especially in the northern part of the city, originate from this dynasty. Often whole series of these coins are offered for sale. Nevertheless, we should bear in mind that the "Northern Song" dynasty is and remains the core of Chinese history, art and numismatics! Let me point out one more thing in relation to this dynasty! And this is important! In the Song dynasty, we notice that the same emperor had coins minted with different reign titles. These titles

> always refer to the reign title of the living emperor, after which the Chinese name the years. It was common for Song emperors to change their titles after a few years. This also happened in other dynasties, but less frequently. From the Song dynasty to the Ming dynasty, it was always the reign title of the emperor that was minted on the coins. It was only posthumously that the emperors obtained their historical names, which always contained the high honorary title of "Zong".

As Kluge correctly observes, *cash* coins[5] from all the imperial dynasties were normally minted with the same reign title throughout the reign of an individual emperor, while it was not unusual for Northern Song emperors to change currency several times and name it after different periods of their reigns. With their meticulous fonts[6] and minting techniques, these coins are much sought after and highly valued among numismatists (Hartill 2017 [2005], 125–59). Indeed, we notice no less than 19 Song dynasty coins cited on the list and on the *Summary* about Skušek's numismatic collection. They list *cash* coins issued by the following Northern Song dynasty emperors: Taizu 太祖 (r. 960–976) (one coin), Taizong 太宗 (r. 976–997) (two coins), Zhenzong 真宗 (r. 997–1022) (three coins), Renzong 仁宗 (r. 1022–1063) (three coins), Yingzong 英宗 (r. 1064–1067) (one coin), Shenzong 神宗 (r. 1068–1085) (three coins), Zhezong 哲宗 (r. 1085–1100) (one coin) and Huizong 徽宗 (r. 1100–1125) (five coins) (figs. 12–14).

5 Round cash coins with a square hole in the centre, *fangkong qian* 方孔錢, were an established form of currency from the Han dynasty (202 BC–220 AD) on. In 621, the Emperor Gaozu 高祖 (reigned 618–626) of Tang (618–907) introduced a new standard, the so-called *tongbao* 通寶, which means the "currency in circulation" or simply denotes the currently valid coin (*tong* 寶 meaning "to circulate", "to be uniform" or "universal", and *bao* 寶 meaning "wealth" or "money") (Cao 2014, 1–7; Hartill 2017 [2005], 103). *Tongbao* coins were minted in a wide range of variations and values in the following periods of Chinese history, as they remained the standard currency until the end of the Qing dynasty. The coins normally bore a four-character inscription arranged around the square hole, the two characters read from top to bottom denoting the title of the imperial reign (*nianhao* 年號), during which the coin was issued, while the *tong* 通 and *bao* 寶 characters are read horizontally from right to left. The whole inscription thus literally means "money in circulation at the time of the Emperor X". Song dynasty coins were somewhat special in this respect, as the four-character inscriptions on the obverse are sometimes read clockwise, starting with the character at the top and ending with the character at the left (Cao 2014, 15).

6 Apart from the regular script or *kaishu* 楷書, they used various scripts for the same types of coins, such as the seal script or *zhuanshu* 篆書, the "clerical script" or *lishu* 隸書, the "grass script" or *caoshu* 草書 and the "running script" or *xingshu* 行書.

Figures 12–14. Northern Song dynasty coins. Photo by Blaž Verbič. (Source: Skušek Collection, Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana)

Other letters by Kluge touch upon types of coins dating from periods of Chinese history even earlier than the Wang Mang interregnum. In the letter dated November 25, 1918, he writes about an entire collection of ancient Chinese coins that Skušek probably bought from him, and even mentions the prices of these items:

> Für einen wirklichen Spottpreis erhalten Sie damit eine wissenschaftlich signierte Sammlung der markantesten chinesischen Münzen, sich erstreckend über einen Zeitraum von 3000 Jahren. Die Spatenmünze allein, die so rar ist, daß viele Numismatiker sie nur aus Abbildungen kennen, hatte vor dem Krieg z. B in Tsingtau den Mindestwert von 7½ Dollar. Die Münzen vor Christus bis einschließlich Wang Mang in jeder der beiden Sammlungen haben mich selbst etwa 20 Dollar gekostet. (Kluge 1918)
>
> For a ridiculous price, you can get a scientifically verified collection of some of the most striking Chinese coins from a period spanning over three thousand years. The spade coin alone is so rare that many numismatists know it only from illustrations—it would have fetched at least seven and a half dollars in Qingdao before the war. Coins from before Christ up to the end of Wang Mang ['s rule] in each of the two collections cost me some 20 dollars.

We cannot say with certainty what type of a spade coin Kluge refers to in this letter and from what period it originates. It is important to note that spade money was used during the Eastern Zhou dynasty, i.e. the Spring and Autumn Period (771–476 BC) and especially during the Warring States period (475–221 BC). At the time, Chinese bronze money came in various shapes, mostly as miniature bronze replicas of everyday objects (Saje 2002, 108–109). Three main types were most commonly used: coins shaped like a spade (*bu*布) were used in the states of Zhou 周, Wei 魏, Han 漢 and Qin 秦, money in the shape of a knife (*dao* 刀) was used in the state of Qi 齊, while the states of Zhao 趙 and Yan 燕 first used knife money before switching over to spade coins. As already mentioned, spade coins reappeared during the Wang Mang period. Several different spade coins can be identified on the list, the *Summary*, and the inventory of Skušek's coins as well as identified in his collection. These include 16 specimens of "old spade coins" from the Zhou dynasty and four issued by Wang Mang. The coin mentioned by Kluge could thus be any of these items (figs. 15 and 16).

Figures 15 and 16. Two specimens of spade money. While the first coin originates from the Warring States Period (the state of Wei 魏, 425–344 BC), the second one is the famous "robe coin" from the Wang Mang period. Photo by Blaž Verbič (Source: Skušek Collection, Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana)

Meanwhile, already in his first letter, dated Nov 17, 1918 Kluge advises Skušek to purchase a coin from the Western Han dynasty (*Xi Hanchao* 西漢朝) (206–24 BC):

> … eine sehr schöne, große, echte Münze 37 vor Chr. zum Verkauf ausliegt, die ein wunderschönes Schaustück in Ihrer Sammlung wäre. Dieselbe ist rund und hat den Durchmesser von etwa 12 ctm. Diese Münze ist rar und ist genau in meinen Büchern verzeichnet. Doch der Mann will wenigstens 8,00 Dollar haben. Wenn ich Glück und Geld habe, hoffe ich dieselbe für 5,00 Dollar zu erstehen, wenn mir keiner zuvorkommt. Wenn Sie nun wünschen, daß ich diese schöne große Münze für Sie kaufe für 5 oder höchstens 6 Dollar, so bitte ich, mir bald zu schreiben. Es wäre ein schönes Gegenstück zu der großen

> "Gewandmünze", die Sie bereits besitzen; diese Ihre große "Gewandmünze" ist eine Münze des Usurpator kaisers "Wang Mang" von 9–23 nach Chr., die auch ein selten schönes Stück ist. (Kluge 1918)
>
> … a beautiful, large, genuine coin dating from 37 BC is available for purchase, and would be a wonderful showpiece for your collection. It is round, and has a diameter of approximately 12 cm. This coin is rare and looks exactly as described in my books. The man wants at least eight dollars for it. With some luck and money, I could get it for 5 dollars, unless someone purchases it before me. If it is your wish that I buy this large and beautiful coin for you for 5 or at most 6 dollars, please write to me soon. It would be a nice stand-out piece along with the large "robe coin" [spade-coin] that you already own, which is a coin of the usurper Wang Mang, of AD 9–23, and also an extraordinarily beautiful specimen.

The coin Kluge is describing is most likely a *wuzhu* 五銖 ("five grain") coin issued in the late 1st century BC, but the size of 12 cm is too large, while 12 mm would be too small. We find this piece listed in all the above mentioned sources pertaining to the collection of coins Skušek brought to Ljubljana, but cannot identify the piece itself. Further, the excerpt mentions another coin that can be found in Skušek's collection—the already mentioned spade coin, or "robe coin", as Kluge names it. Spade coins from the Wang Mang period are somewhat reminiscent of small robes in their shape, which is why they are sometimes referred to as "robe coins" (*bu* 布in *buqian* 布錢 also meaning "cloth" in Chinese).

In a letter dated December 15, 1918 Kluge brings up yet another rare coin type:

> Vor drei Tagen habe ich Ihnen Ihre schönen Münzen signiert zugesandt, habe auch einige seltene Exemplare hinzugefügt einerseits aus Dankbarkeit, anderseits in der stillen Hoffnung, von Ihren drei sehr schönen Spatenmünzen ein Exemplar z.B. das am Kopfe beschädigte und von Ihren vielen Geisterkopfmünzen eine oder andere erhandeln zu können. Die letzteren Münzen war ich erstaunt zum ersten Male in Wirklichkeit zu sehen, auch diese massive Sorte der Spatenmünzen waren mir neu. (Kluge 1918)
>
> Three days ago, I sent you your beautiful coins examined and verified, and also sent some rare specimens, on the one hand out of gratitude, and on the other hand in quiet hope that I might obtain one of your three splendid spade-coins, for example the one damaged on the obverse, and one of your ghost-face [ant-nose] coins. I was astonished to see the latter for real for the first time, while this massive kind of spade-coins was new to me as well.

Kluge again mentions Skušek's spade coins, although we cannot say with certainty whether these are the coins included in Skušek's collection as we know it today. The other type of coins, mentioned in the excerpt, are the aforementioned "ant-nose" or "ghost-face coins", more than 20 of which can be identified in Skušek's collection and all the newly found documents (figs. 17 and 18). This type of money was used in the state of Chu 楚 during the Warring States Period and is considered an utmost rarity in the world of Chinese numismatics (Hartill 2017 [2005], 1–79).

Figures 17 and 18. Two specimens of the rare "ant-nose money" or "ghost money" (the obverse). Photo by Blaž Verbič. (Source: Skušek Collection, Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana)

Kluge's letters thus provide insight into the types of coins popular among collectors of Chinese money at the time. Despite a few historical inaccuracies that we encounter in his writing, we can assume that he had quite a good grasp of Chinese history and numismatics. The types of coins he mentions as worth collecting are still considered some of the rarest, most valuable and sought-after Chinese numismatic artefacts today. Further, the letters also give us a glimpse of the collecting practices among foreigners who were staying in East Asia at the time. More specifically, they reveal Skušek's way of collecting objects.

Ivan Skušek's Practice of Collecting Chinese Coins

Until the discovery of the supplementary material, we did not know how exactly Skušek collected these coins. The combination of the list in German, the *Summary* in English, and the letters from Kluge reveal Skušek to have been a systematic collector who paid attention not only to the provenance, history and significance of each item, but also to its authenticity. How was Skušek able to assemble this collection? Where did he acquire his knowledge of Chinese coins and other types of Chinese antiquities? The letters by Kluge show us that the answer is to be found in his social life in Beijing.

The notes written by Franci Skušek throw light on his brother's life in Beijing. With these notes and general knowledge about foreigners in Beijing at that time, we can imagine the environment in which Ivan Skušek Jr. put together his collection. As an officer of the defeated army, Skušek was probably taken from Qingdao to the diplomatic quarter in Beijing, which was situated within the city walls, close to the Forbidden City, the imperial walls, the commercial Hadamen Road (*Hadamen* 哈德門) and the walls of the "Manchu town". After the Opium Wars and until 1911, most of the powerful Western forces had established their legations in this quarter, including Great Britain, Germany, Austro-Hungarian Empire, Belgium, Spain, the USA, France, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Russia, Sweden, Portugal, Denmark and Brazil. Life in this part of the city was entirely different from the everyday reality beyond its walls, where local Chinese lived. The quarter provided an abundant and diverse social life with numerous banquets, sports competitions, receptions and so on, and included two hospitals, a number of schools, banks, hotels, parks and a polo pitch, churches, customs and post offices, a police station, various other buildings and military barracks. During WWI, the German military barracks were transformed into a camp, where Skušek and his fellow officers were taken (Čeplak Mencin 2012, 103–104).

Despite being in confinement, the German and Astro-Hungarian officers were still privileged to some extent. Ivan Skušek was allowed to exit the camp at any time, move freely around Beijing, and enjoy the colourful social life in the foreign quarter. We know from Kluge's letters that he was an employee of the Dutch Legation at the time, which in turn would explain how he had access to the highest circles of foreigners living in the diplomatic quarter as well as how he acquired the financial resources to buy antiques and was able to store them appropriately. And perhaps even more importantly, it was probably at that time that he become acquainted with numerous interesting, learned and influential people. For example, according to his brother's records, Ivan Skušek knew Sir Reginald Fleming Johnston (1874–1938), the English teacher of the last Chinese emperor, Puyi 溥儀 (1906–1967, ruled 1908–1912), and the only foreigner allowed into the Imperial Palace (Skušek n.d.). It was most likely through his social connections that Skušek purchased numerous Chinese antiquities, probably not just from Chinese, but also from Europeans (Čeplak Mencin 2012, 103–105). Maurus Kluge must have been among the people Skušek met in Beijing. The letters Kluge wrote to Skušek do not say when or how exactly the two met, however, they are very eloquent of the ways they helped each other with their numismatic collections and reveal Kluge to be quite an expert in Chinese history. As we have seen, Kluge's letters provide a detailed insight into the collecting trends in the realm of Chinese numismatics of the time, while they also speak volumes of Ivan Skušek's collecting practices as well.

What we can observe in the letters is that Skušek and Kluge exchanged entire collections and individual coins and consulted other experts for assessment, authentication and verification of each item. It is obvious that Kluge also advised Skušek on what to collect and educated him on Chinese history. As we have seen, for example, he advised him to buy Wang Mang and Song dynasty coins as some of the most valuable items. In his first letter (at least the first one of those we have), dated November 17, 1918, immediately after the war, Kluge writes about a collection of numismatic charms as well as two collections of coins he had sent, or was going to send, to Ivan Skušek:

> Vor einigen Tagen sandte ich an Sie die Amuletten-Sammlung. Ich nehme an, daß Sie dieselbe richtig erhalten haben und hoffe, daß dieselbe Ihnen gut gefällt. Diese Tage, wo hier Siegesferien waren habe ich nun auch die beiden Münzensammlungen fertiggestellt und sind dieselben versandfertig. Ich will dieselben jedoch erst absenden, nachdem ich die Na(ch)richt von Ihnen erhalten habe, da ich nicht weiß, wie jetzt der Hase läuft. Bitte schreiben Sie mir gütigst, ob ich dieselbe abschicken soll, denn ich glaube, unter den jetzigen traurigen Umständen für uns ist mein Weihnachtsbesuch im Lager zum wenigstens sehr zweifelhaft. (Kluge 1918)
>
> I sent you a collection of amulets a few days ago. I suppose you have received it by now and I hope you like it. In the past few days, when we've been having a victory celebration holiday here, I have prepared both coin collections and they're ready for shipment. I won't send them until I receive a message from you, since I am not acquainted with how things stand now. Please notify me if I should send them, for I think that in the present unfortunate circumstances, my Christmas visit to the camp, if nothing else, is at least questionable.

The following letters reveal that Kluge not only advised Skušek, but also sent him coins to be assessed and verified by Skušek's "Chinese confidant". At this point, we learn from the letters that Skušek had a knowledgeable Chinese acquaintance who checked and verified the authenticity of the coins. Kluge calls him "Your confidant" (*Ihr-Gewährsmann*) or "Your Chinese coin expert" (*Ihr chinesischer Münzenkenner*) and confirms in his letter dated January 24, 1919 that the Chinese confidant is certainly very knowledgeable and can be trusted:

> Ihr Gewährsmann hatte ganz recht und ich bin jetzt überzeugt, daß er die chinesische Numismatik sehr gut versteht und daß Sie seinen Angaben unbedingt Glauben schenken können. (Kluge 1919)
>
> Your confidant was absolutely right, and I am now convinced that he understands Chinese numismatics very well and that you can trust his opinion completely.

In the same letter, he writes about an exceptionally old and rare coin, asking for some more help from Skušek's "confidant". From the point of view of today's Chinese numismatics, we cannot be certain about the historical accuracy of his description and dating of the coin. However, the excerpt from the letter still provides an invaluable insight into the nature of the two enthusiasts' cooperation on their numismatic collections:

> Als Dank für die vielen mir erwiesenen Liebenswürdigkeiten bitte ich Sie eine sehr alte, echte Münze, welche wohl ganz richtig der Dynastie Hsia 2205–1766 vor Chr. zugeschrieben unter dem Kaiser Yü 2205–2197 vor Chr. Die Zeichen, reine Urzeichen der chinesischen Schrift, sind unleserlich, es sei denn, daß Ihr Gewährsmann dieselben lesen kann. Bitte zeigen Sie ihm diese Münze und schreiben Sie mir, was er davon halte. Das ist die schwarze Münze, von der ich Ihnen sagte, daß dieselbe Ihnen noch fehlt. – Dieselbe wird betrachtet als eine aus der ältesten Münzperiode Chinas. Ich bin sehr neugierig, was Ihr chinesischer Münzenkenner darüber sagen wird und ob er die Zeichen wird lesen können. (Kluge 1919)
>
> In gratitude for your many kind gestures, I offer you a very old, genuine coin, rightly attributed to the Xia dynasty (2205–1766 BC) and the reign period of Emperor Yu (2205–2197 BC). The markings, genuine antecedents to the Chinese script, are illegible unless your confidant can read them. Please show him this coin and let me know what he thinks of it. It is the black coin that I told you about and that you were still missing. This coin belongs to one of the oldest periods of Chinese coins. I am very curious what your Chinese coin expert will have to say about it and whether he will be able to read the markings.

The earliest coins in the Skušek collection date from the second half of the Zhou dynasty, i.e. the Spring and Autumn Period and particularly the Warring States Period. Meanwhile, no coins have been attributed to the Xia dynasty. The old, black piece described by Kluge has not been found in Skušek's collection, and is not mentioned in any of the three references to the collection (the list, the *Summary,* and the inventory book). However, what is important in this excerpt is the way both Skušek and Kluge sought for sources of knowledge on Chinese coins. It is true that early pieces of Chinese money bore inscriptions in the seal script (*zhuanshu* 篆書), which is very difficult for non-experts to read, therefore, they needed the help of Skušek's Chinese expert.

In a subsequent letter, dated February 15, 1919, Kluge similarly writes about the aforementioned knife coin from the Wang Mang period, as he cannot confirm its authenticity himself:

> Ich glaube fast, es sind die Münzen, von denen Ihr Gewährmann sagt, es gibt eine falsche und eine echte. Wenn ich hier bleibe, sende ich Ihnen dieselben zur Ansicht zu, einerseits, um ein Urteil von maßgebender Seite zu hören, dann aber besonders, um Ihre Sammlung durch in die Fugen fallende, markante Stücke eventuell zu bereichern. Die goldhaltige Münze besitze ich schon lange, wurde aber erst nach meiner letzten Rückkehr von Peking auf dieselbe wegen ihres angeritzen Goldglanzes und der abweichenden Form aufmerksam, besonders da Ihr Gewährsmann gesagt hat, es gibt eine falsche und eine echte davon. Also, bitte, zuerst teilen Sie mir den Empfang u. die Begutachtung der empfangenen Münzen mit, dann werden wir des Näheren über weitere markante Münzen ehrlich und kameradschaftlich verhandeln. (Kluge 1919)
>
> I am certain that these are the coins your confidant mentioned, where one is fake and the other genuine. If I stay here, I will send them to you for inspection, on the one hand to hear an expert opinion, but especially to enrich your collection, in case that is possible, with remarkable pieces. I have owned the gold coin for a long time, but I started paying more attention to it after my last return from Beijing because of its inlaid gold and unusual shape, especially since your confidant had said there was one fake piece and one genuine specimen. Therefore, I would like to ask you first of all to confirm that you have received the coins and inform me about the expert assessment of them, then we can negotiate and discuss these remarkable coins in detail and in an honest, friendly manner.

The letters Kluge wrote to Skušek thus give us a thorough insight into how they chose Chinese coins for their collections, systematically checking authenticity and provenance for each item, and, more broadly, also into Skušek's collecting practices in general. We do not have similar documents that would reveal his correspondences with other collectors, connoisseurs and experts with regard to other categories of collectibles. Nonetheless, based on the letters from Kluge, we can assume that he took a similarly systematic, careful approach to collecting other types of objects. His collecting practices were probably closely related to his social life in Beijing, as he must have assembled objects for his collection with the help and advice from the various learned people he met there.

Apart from the background of some rare pieces in Skušek's collection and the cooperation between Skušek and Kluge, the letters also reveal the circumstances of that time. Both collectors came to China from the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, from the South-East and East European periphery, Skušek from Slovene and Kluge from Polish ethnic territory. It is possible that a shared origin connected them even more closely than their collecting. After WWI and the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, they both faced the threat of repatriation, as evident from Kluge's letters. In the letter dated February 15, 1919, he speculates about this issue:

> Ich habe zwar schon die Ordre erhalten, vor dem 28. d. M. in Shanghai zu sein, doch werde ich wohl hier bleiben, da nach einem vorgestrig abendl. Telegramme an unsern Bischof mein Name bereits auf der Liste steht für "recommanded for exemption" seitens der italienischen Gesandtschaft. Darnach werde ich wohl hierbleiben. Mir persönlich ist eins wie's andere recht! (Kluge 1919)
>
> I have already received the order to be in Shanghai by the 28th of this month. However, I will probably stay here, since a telegram to our bishop the evening before yesterday had my name on the list of those "recommended for exemption" in the Italian Legation. Therefore, I will most likely stay here. Personally, I am all right with either way.

In the following letter, written five days later, on February 20, 1919, he happily writes to Skušek:

> Ich bin von der Repatriierung d. 17. d. M. auf Betreiben unseres Gouverneurs mit Empfehlung der italienischen Gesandschaft dispensiert worden. Sie bleiben natürlich als Beamter der holl. Ges. auch. Wie ist es mit Herrn Gayer? Hoffentlich bleibt er auch. So können wir weiter wegen Münzen sprechen. (Kluge 1919)
>
> On the 17th of this month, I was exempted from repatriation at the instigation of our governor and with the recommendation of the Italian Legation. As an official of the Dutch Legation, you will of course stay as well. What is the situation with Mr. Gayer? Let us hope he stays too. Then we can keep talking about coins.

Mr. Gayer and several other of Skušek's subordinate officials were indeed repatriated. Twelve days later, on March 4, 1919, Kluge writes:

> Nun weiß ich, daß Sie wohlauf sind, aber mit Arbeit zu sehr überladen. Wie werden Sie allein die Unmenge von Arbeit schaffen, wo Ihnen die beiden Unterbeamten genommen sind? Das viele Sitzen, Schreiben und Rechnen ist oft kein Spaß! Sie werden die ganze Arbeit sicherlich schaffen, doch ich fürchte mit einiger Benachteiligung Ihrer Gesundheit. (Kluge 1919)
>
> Now I know you are healthy but overloaded with work. How will you be able to manage the vast amount of work, when both of your subordinate officials have been taken away from you? So much sitting, writing and doing accounts is no joke! You are certainly capable of doing all the work, albeit, I fear, with consequences for your health.

Neither of the two men was repatriated at the time. But with the repatriation of many others around them, both of them faced changes. Skušek married Tsuneko, went to Japan with her and then returned to Ljubljana with his new family. Maurus Kluge remained in Taiyuan until 1923, when he was appointed rector of the Siberian seminary in Harbin. In 1926, he returned to Europe, and died on September 25, 1927, in Breslau/Wroclaw.[7]

Ivan Skušek, Tsuneko and her two children left for Europe in June 2020. They took a train from Beijing to Tianjin, where they boarded a Chinese ship, sailed to Nagasaki, boarded a Japanese ship, sailed further to Singapore, and from there across the Indian ocean to Aden, across the Red Sea, through Suez to the Mediterranean. Having finally reached Trieste, they took a train to Ljubljana, where they arrived on September 8, 1920 (Čeplak Mencin 2012, 111). Ivan Skušek returned home after seven years in East Asia and brought a family with him. A little more than a month later, a number of crates full of curious, precious objects arrived: Ivan Skušek's impressive collection, including its numismatic part.

Conclusion

Although specific to Skušek's coin collecting, the letters from Fr. Maurus Kluge tell us how such a rich, extensive, systematic, and in every way representative collection of East Asian objects came into being. In other words, Kluge's letters give

7 Personal correspondence with Dr. des. Thomas Richter, director of the Internationales Katholisches Missionswerk library, November 2020.

us an insight not just into the process of building Skušek's numismatic collection, but also into his collecting methods in general. It is very likely that he consulted several experts and connoisseurs for the various types of objects he was interested in, just as he did with the coins.

Skušek's wish to make his Chinese antiquities and curiosities available to the general public is clear from his decision to leave the collection to the National Museum after his death. He believed that the museum would be able to appreciate and preserve it, as well as ensure it would be presented appropriately to the public. Ivan Skušek Jr. died in 1947, and his collection formally passed into the possession of the National Museum of Slovenia in 1950. The collection remained in the Skušeks' apartment, with Tsuneko appointed the honorary custodian. After her passing in 1963, the collection was moved to the National Museum, which then handed it over to the Slovene Ethnographic Museum in 1964. In the following years it was partly inventoried by Dr. Pavla Štrukelj. The Ethnographic Museum opened a branch unit at the Goričane Baroque mansion, the so-called Museum of Non-European Cultures, where it installed a permanent exhibition of Skušek's collection. The inventory of 216 coins from the collection suggests that these specimens were kept on 15 separate boards or tables (one to 17 coins per table), possibly as part of the permanent exhibition at the Goričane Mansion (Berdajs 2021). This is supported by the handwritten numbers on papers associated with distinct groups of coins. The exhibition remained open until 1990, when restoration work on the mansion started. The Skušek collection, including the numismatic assemblage, has been kept in the museum stores at Metelkova Street in Ljubljana ever since (Čeplak Mencin 2012, 117). With the exception of a temporary exhibition, *Encounters with China—200 Years of Slovenes Discovering Chinese Culture*, curated by Ralph Čeplak Mencin and displayed at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum in 2006, the majority of objects have remained in the museum stores. Therefore, one of the aims of the VAZ project is to thoroughly research and reconstruct Ivan Skušek Jr.'s collection. With the discovery of the lists of objects, previously believed to have been lost, that research has been made much easier, especially as far as the numismatic part of the collection is concerned.

The list of Skušek's coins, typed in German, includes pencil notes and corrections in Fr. Maurus Kluge's handwriting, which suggests that it was prepared or at least obtained by him. The fact that the inventory book by Dr. Štrukelj lists 216 coins, with the first 123 coins corresponding exactly to the ones listed in the *Summary* document, suggests that Štrukelj still had the *Summary* and the list of coins available. It is important to note that these 216 coins are most likely only part of Skušek's entire collection of Chinese coins. Starting in 2020, I have been working together with the curator Ralf Čeplak Mencin and so far have fully examined and photographed about 900 new coins. These include some Ming dynasty (1368–1644) coins, while the majority of coins originate from the Qing dynasty, particularly from the Qianlong 乾隆 period (1735–1796) (*Qianlong tongbao* 乾隆通寶). We even discovered more than 50 Japanese coins with the inscription *Kan'ei tsūhō* 寛永通寶, issued during the Edo period (1603–1868), which are known to have been present in certain parts of China during the Qianlong period (Feng and Wang 2003 [1980]). Although these curious coins are not listed in the existing inventory or the list of Skušek's coins, it is likely that they belonged to him. In short, the exquisiteness, rarity and value of the coins, both those proven to be part of his collection and those possibly having belonged to him, once again confirm Skušek as an exceptional collector and connoisseur.

Even Kluge's letters to Skušek reveal how highly the missionary thought of Skušek as an acquaintance and fellow collector. One of the letters, dated February 15, 1919, reads:

> Glauben Sie mir, Sie sind im Besitze einer sehr respektablen Sammlung chinesische Münzen. (Kluge 1919)
>
> Believe me, you are in possession of a very respectable collection of remarkable Chinese coins.

Indeed, Kluge might have been one of the first people to notice and respect Skušek's insight, curiosity, enthusiasm and open mind, as well as his vision of presenting China to his fellow countrymen. In his last letter, written on December 31, 1919, in which he also wishes him a "a Happy New Year from the bottom of my heart" (*wünscht von Herzen ein glückliches Neues Jahr*), he praises him as follows:

> Sie sind ein großer, hell- und weitsehender Prophet! (Kluge 1919)
>
> You are a great visionary and a farsighted prophet!

And that indeed is what Skušek was—an outstandingly progressive and foresighted man of remarkably broad horizons and great vision. He can rightly be considered the first collector of Chinese objects in the Slovene ethnic space to have built his collection systematically, researching and verifying the background of each object while also keeping a detailed list of his purchases. His collecting zeal and methods clearly reflect his goal of establishing a private museum where the collection would be on display for his fellow Slovenes to see. His extraordinary legacy remains to be studied more deeply by experts, not least its impressive numismatic assemblage.

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Between Ethnology and Cultural History: Where to Place East Asian Objects in Slovenian Museums?

*Nataša VAMPELJ SUHADOLNIK**

Abstract

While a few larger collections of objects of East Asian origin entered Slovenian museums after the deaths of their owners in the 1950s and 60s, individual items had begun finding their way there as early as the nineteenth century. Museums were faced early on with the problem not only of how to store and exhibit the objects, but also how to categorize them. Were they to be treated as "art" on account of their aesthetic value or did they belong, rather, to the field of "ethnography" or "anthropology" because they could illustrate the way of life of other peoples? Above all, in which museums were these objects to be housed?

The present paper offers an in-depth analysis of these and related questions, seeking to shed light on how East Asian objects have been showcased in Slovenia (with a focus on the National Museum and the Slovene Ethnographic Museum) over the past two hundred years. In particular, it explores the values and criteria that were applied when placing these objects into individual categories. In contrast to the conceptual shift from "ethnology" to the "decorative and fine arts," which can mostly be observed in the categorization of East Asian objects in North America and the former European colonial countries, the classification of such objects in Slovenia varied between "ethnology" and "cultural history," with ethnology ultimately coming out on top. This ties in with the more general question of how (East) Asian cultures were understood and perceived in Slovenia, which is itself related to the historical and social development of the "peripheral" Slovenian area compared with former major imperial centres.

Keywords: National Museum of Slovenia, Slovene Ethnographic Museum, East Asian objects, museum classification, ethnology, cultural history, art

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Med etnologijo in kulturno zgodovino: kam umestiti predmete iz Vzhodne Azije v slovenskih muzejih?

Izvleček

Medtem ko so večje zbirke vzhodnoazijskih predmetov v slovenske muzeje vstopile po smrti lastnikov v 50. in 60. letih 20. stoletja, so posamezni vzhodnoazijski predmeti pot do muzejev našli že v 19. stoletju. S tem so bili muzeji soočeni s problemom hrambe in razstavljanja teh predmetov, predvsem pa z vprašanjem kategorizacije. Ali naj bi jih zaradi njihove estetske vrednosti obravnavali kot »umetnost« ali pa raje spadajo na področje »etnografije« ali »antropologije«, saj ponazarjajo način življenja drugih ljudi? Predvsem pa, v katere muzeje pravzaprav sodijo?

Ta prispevek prikaže poglobljeno analizo tovrstnih vprašanj, pri čemer se osredotoči na primer Narodnega muzeja in Slovenskega etnografskega muzeja v zadnjih dvesto letih. Posebej izpostavi vrednote in merila, po katerih so bili posamezni predmeti razvrščeni v različne kategorije. V nasprotju s konceptualnim premikom iz »etnologije« v »dekorativno ali likovno umetnost«, kar lahko opazujemo v kategorizaciji vzhodnoazijskih predmetov v Severni Ameriki in nekdanjih evropskih kolonialnih državah, je klasifikacija teh predmetov v Sloveniji nihala med »etnologijo« in »kulturno zgodovino«, pri čemer so večjo noto dobivale etnografske oznake. To je povezano tudi z bolj splošnim vprašanjem, kako so bile (vzhodno)azijske kulture videne v Sloveniji, kar je samo po sebi povezano z zgodovinskim in družbenim razvojem »perifernega« slovenskega prostora v primerjavi z nekdanjimi večjimi imperialnimi središči.

Ključne besede: Narodni muzej Slovenije, Slovenski etnografski muzej, vzhodnoazijski predmeti, muzejska klasifikacija, etnologija, kulturna zgodovina, umetnost

Introduction

After opening its doors in 1821, the Provincial Museum of Carniola—the first museum in present-day Slovenia and the predecessor of the National Museum—went on, in the first ten years of its existence, to acquire Chinese and Japanese porcelain dishes, seven ivory figurines and a series of twelve colour paintings depicting Chinese warriors (Deschmann 1888, 164; Štrukelj 1980–1982, 138–39). In subsequent years the museum acquired even more Chinese and other non-European objects, and later also individual collections. Austria–Hungary's establishment of diplomatic relations with China, Japan and Siam in 1869 opened up new opportunities for travelling to East Asia.[1] As a result, an increasing number

1 As a member of the Eight-Nation Alliance that brought the Boxer Rebellion (1899–1901) to an end, the Austro-Hungarian Empire also gained the right to a concession in Tianjin. For more on the Austrian Concession in Tianjin see Lee Chinyun (2001, 74–92), and Lipuščček (2013, 42–44).

of Chinese and Japanese objects arrived in Slovenia via various routes, later entering Slovenian museums as donations or purchases. The acquisition of these objects confronted the museum staff with the conceptual problem of where to place them within the existing taxonomy of their institution and, thereby, also with questions relating to the interpretation of non-European objects. Should they be labelled as "art" in recognition of their aesthetic value or did they belong, rather, to the field of ethnography or anthropology since they could show how people lived in another region of the world?

Shifting between these disciplinary boundaries in the search for the most appropriate methodological framework was not unique to the Slovenian area, though, but reflected broader European colonial policy and imperialism. At around this time there emerged a new kind of institution: ethnographic museums, which housed many non-European objects for the purpose of studying, classifying, evaluating and occasionally exhibiting these "exotic" items—mostly in ways that were influenced by colonialist thought. The rise of ethnology promoted the perception of such objects as carriers of ethnographic information about the cultures that had produced them. The information thus obtained was regarded as the most "objective" available, and the objects themselves were seen as metonyms for the entire culture from which they originated (Tythacott 2011, 142). By the turn of the twentieth century the classification framework had changed and the objects were now perceived chiefly as artworks, especially in the United States (Conn 2000), whereas the situation in Europe was more complex. The evaluation of non-European objects there fluctuated between science and art, with the boundary between the two being quite fluid. As a result of archaeological expeditions and the growing number of excavated artefacts that entered museums in the early twentieth century, archaeology came to play the role of a medium facilitating the transition of an object's status from ethnological item to artwork and *vice versa* (Lee 2016, 5–6). This is especially true of the classification of Asian objects, which have generally been treated differently from other non-European artefacts. Craig Clunas (1997, 421) shows that as early as the mid-nineteenth century there was a tendency to set apart objects made in China, Japan and India from the material culture of other more "primitive" peoples, as may be seen, for example, in David Mather Masson's guide *The British Museum, Historical and Descriptive* (1850). Asian artefacts were regarded as superior to those of other non-European cultures and enjoyed a status that was comparable, albeit still not equal, to that of European culture.

Drawing on the taxonomic categories described above—categories that influenced significantly the early perception of non-European cultures in Western societies—the present paper will explore the classification and general perception of

East Asian objects in Slovenian museums. Focusing on the National Museum of Slovenia (the country's principal and oldest museum) and the Slovene Ethnographic Museum (which was detached from the National Museum in 1923), we will examine the values and criteria used to place these objects into categories. In contrast to the conceptual shift from "ethnology" to the "decorative" and "fine arts" based on a diachronic approach to Asian art that may largely be observed in the interpretation of East Asian objects in North America and the former European colonial countries, the classification of such objects in Slovenia oscillated between "ethnology" and "cultural history", with ethnology coming out on top. A general reevaluation of East Asian objects did not gain momentum in Slovenia until the first two decades of the twenty-first century. This ties in with the more general question of how (East) Asian cultures were understood and perceived in Slovenia, which is itself related to the historical and social development of the "peripheral" Slovenian area compared with former major imperial centres. Accordingly, the paper will also consider various elements that influenced the perception of East Asian cultures and how these were categorized, taking into account the historical and social context of both the Slovenian area and the wider European region. This is followed by a discussion of how East Asian art was gradually institutionalized and assimilated into the scientific disciplines of Sinology and Japanology, which were officially established as academic programmes at the University of Ljubljana in 1995. Finally, some thoughts are offered on the "privilege of periphery."

The Provincial Museum of Carniola: Between Ethnology and Cultural History

Very soon after the Provincial Museum of Carniola in Ljubljana, the capital of the region then known as Carniola, was founded in 1826 by decree of the Austrian emperor Franz I, the first East Asian objects found their way into the museum (see fig. 1). Chinese and Japanese porcelain coffee saucers were donated as early as 1833 by the Countess von Hohenwart and the Baroness von Lazzarini (Deschmann 1888, 164). In the same year, Baron Karel Smledniški contributed seven Chinese ivory and wooden figurines, while three years later, the provincial councillor Thomas Plushk from Villach donated a series of twelve colour paintings depicting Chinese warriors (Štrukelj 1991, 167). In subsequent years the museum acquired further Chinese and Japanese objects, and later also individual collections. Among the latter it is worth mentioning the collection of the missionary Peter Baptist Turk, who sent several Buddhist and Daoist statues, as well as other religious objects, to the museum in 1912 and 1913. Renamed the National

Museum of Slovenia in 1921, the institution became, in 1957, the custodian of a very large collection of various Chinese objects that had been bequeathed to the nation by the former Austro-Hungarian naval officer Ivan Skušek Jr. In addition to Chinese objects, the museum also acquired several other non-European objects from North America, Africa, other areas of Asia and islands in the Pacific Ocean, donated mostly by missionaries, travellers, sailors and diplomats.

Figure 1. Heinrich Wettach: Provincial Museum of Carniola, aquarelle, around 1900. (Source: Wikimedia)

The main principles used in categorizing Asian and other non-European objects in the second half of the nineteenth century can be inferred from the guide to the Provincial Museum of Carniola published in Laibach (Ljubljana) in 1888 (*Führer durch das Krainische Landes-Museum Rudolfinum in Laibach*), whose author was the museum's curator, the Carniolan politician and scholar Karl (or Dragotin) Deschman (1821–1889). Through a thorough overview of the collections and individual objects, the guide reveals the basic classification of the objects. In addition to archaeology and the natural sciences, special emphasis is placed on ethnographic and cultural-historical objects. The categories of "art" or "decorative arts" *per se* were apparently not yet established, but a separate section, albeit only five pages long, is devoted to paintings and archival materials (pamphlets, drawings, miniature paintings and other documentation). Porcelain, majolica and glass are listed under a separate heading in the table of contents, but are described under the section of cultural-historical objects. In such a classification, the objects of East Asian origin are placed under the ethnographic and cultural-historical categories.

The guide thus makes a distinction between ethnographic and cultural-historical objects, but the definition of both categories is still rather vague. Although there is a certain intertwining of the two in that the ethnographic objects were subsumed into the section on cultural-historical objects, the table of contents at the start does list the cultural history and ethnographic sections separately. The latter section comprises Asian and other non-European collections (mainly donations by missionaries and travellers), while the cultural history section includes individual objects of Chinese, Japanese, Indian and Turkish origin. These are mostly richly decorated export porcelains and metal products, especially weapons inlaid with gold and silver, donated to the museum by Carniolan aristocrats.

The distinction between the two categories was based on the objects' provenance, rather than on their origin. Thus, further examination reveals that the justification for including objects in the category of cultural history was whether they had once been owned by prominent and wealthy members of Carniolan society. Among the recorded donors we find the historian and politician Henrik Costa; Count Franz von Hohenwart, who was the museum's first warden from 1831 to 1836, and his wife; the patron of the arts Viktor Smole; the Baroness von Lazzarini; and Baroness Barbara von Rechbach. The individual objects of Asian origin assembled by them can be regarded as a legacy of the *Kunstkammern*, or "cabinets of curiosities", special rooms showcasing extraordinary objects that had fascinated the European aristocracy ever since the Renaissance, and of Baroque *chinoiserie*. Legitimacy for according to these objects a status comparable to that of European ones was determined by their being a kind of symbolic heritage of the Carniolan elite. This is confirmed by the display of the objects. While individual Asian objects of local provenance were housed alongside the European objects, the ethnographic collections were placed in a separate room, together with Carniolan handcrafted and industrial products from earlier periods but in separate display cases.

In the fourth exhibition room, in addition to metal and partly wooden products of Carniolan origin, the same showcases were also used to display, for example, a Japanese chandelier in the shape of a turtle carrying a heron; an Indian iron shield; two Indian axes with silver inlays; two Indian sabres with silver handles and blades inlaid with gold; Chinese iron stirrups with inlaid silver and brass floral decoration; and, a donation from Henrik Costa, Chinese cutlery (Deschmann 1888, 124–32). Between displays of carvings, wooden ornaments, images of Christ and crucifixes, we also find two Chinese cups with figures; five Chinese figurines made of ivory; a Chinese boat; and, donated by Baroness Barbara von Rechbach, a Chinese comb (ibid., 132–40). The special exhibition room for majolica, ceramics, porcelain and glass also housed richly decorated Chinese and Japanese porcelain: visitors here could admire seven Japanese vessels of various shapes; a large, elaborate Chinese bowl with a cover; a cylindrical Chinese tureen; a Japanese and a Chinese porcelain plate in bright colours with gold ground, both of which had been donated by Count Franz von Hohenwart; a Chinese cup with animal motifs from the Countess von Hohenwart; ten smaller Japanese cups (used for drinking coffee) from the Viktor Smole collection (fig. 2); and a Japanese coffee cup that had once belonged to the Baroness von Lazzarini (Deschmann 1888, 159–67).

Figure 2. Porcelain dish from Viktor Smole's collection. (Source: National Museum of Slovenia, Ljubljana)

The provenance of the above-listed East Asian objects from the collections of members of the Carniolan elite was the decisive factor that put them into the category of cultural history at the museum. To some extent, this suggests a recognition of their aesthetic value and a perception of these objects as representative samples of "Chinese" or "Japanese" art. In contrast, objects donated or sent by missionaries and other travellers were placed among the ethnographic collections. Ethnology was still a vaguely defined term in the second half of the nineteenth century, but it tended to be equated with the study of non-European peoples. In this respect, scholars from the Slovene ethnic region, which was part of the Habsburg monarchy, followed mainly the German conceptual scheme of culture (Hudales 2003, 74). The application of an ethnographic lens only to exotic objects brought back by missionaries and travellers further betrays the influence of Western colonial politics and imperialism. For the objects served as carriers of scientific information about "primitive" cultures and as evidence of the alleged backwardness of the societies that had produced them. We may conclude that while the non-European collections contributed by missionaries and travellers were used primarily to obtain more or less accurate information about the social life and customs of foreign peoples, Asian objects of "Carniolan provenance" in the museum were treated in those years as proof of the refined cultural and aesthetic tastes of the local elite. Ethnology or ethnography was shaped by missionaries and travellers; cultural history by aristocrats and arising middle class.

The Slovene Ethnographic Museum: (East) Asian Objects as Carriers of Ethnographic Information

Although separate categories of "art" or "decorative art" were not included in Deschmann's guide, the terms such as "art", "historical art objects", "art collections", "works of art" are used repeatedly in the guide, usually referring to the collections of wealthy individuals acquired by the museum or to various European/Slovenian paintings and sculptures. Furthermore, the *Handbook for Art Development in Austria* (*Handbuch der Kunstpflege in Österreich*), published in Vienna in 1902, fourteen years after Deschmann's guide, also clearly lists the Provincial Museum of Carniola as one of the institutions dealing with art. The museum was to cover natural sciences, history, ethnology, cultural history and art history, all with a focus on Carniola (Weckbecker 1902, 446; see also Kos 2020). This also emerges from a somewhat later *Guide to the Collections of National Museum*, published in Ljubljana in 1931. Apart from a lengthy part on archaeology, the section on fine arts, presenting mainly paintings and sculptures, was included as a separate category, written by the art historian France Stelè, one of the pioneers of the art historical discipline in Slovenia. This reveals that "art" as a classification entered Slovenian museums in the early twentieth century, though the term was mostly tied to paintings and sculptures.

As Kos (2020, 23) notes, two major events further determined the museum's orientation and collecting policy: the detachment of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum from the National Museum in 1923 and the establishment of the National Gallery in 1918, which received more than six hundred works of art (mainly paintings and sculptures) from the National Museum. The criteria for dividing the objects among the three institutions were not entirely clear, but the scope and nature of the museums were thus further defined. The National Gallery was to become the main "art" museum in Slovenia, housing mainly paintings and sculptures; the National Museum was to preserve archaeological and historical objects of cultural heritage that would contribute to the strengthening of national identity, and the Ethnographic Museum was to study objects of ethnographic value.

While a large number of paintings and statues were transferred to the National Gallery, most of the East Asian objects were transferred to the Ethnographic Museum, including various Chinese Buddhist and Daoist statues sent to the museum by the Franciscan missionary Peter Baptist Turk in the early twentieth century.

The creation of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum thus marks the next stage in the interpretation of Asian artefacts. Except for individual Asian objects of "local provenance" that had been separated from other non-Western collections already in Deschmann's guide, the new museum took over all Asian and other non-European collections. It is worth noting that it was mainly individual ceramic and porcelain pieces that were not transferred and, accordingly, are still kept in the National Museum (as part of its ceramics collection). Most of the other items listed by Deschmann ended up in the Ethnographic Museum. From the guide to the cultural history collections of the National Museum published in 1931 it is clear that the bulk of the East Asian material is no longer housed there; the chapter on handicrafts just mentions briefly, in the section on ceramics, that the collection also contains "a few pieces of Chinese and Japanese porcelain" (Mal 1931, 146). This suggests that in Slovenia, too, the medium of porcelain had attained the special status of a "relic" of the European aristocracy (and of its obsession with exotic objects made of unknown material), but the categorization was still in flux. Interestingly, the Ethnographic Museum listed in its inventory a large Chinese bowl with colourful genre scenes that had originally been acquired by the Provincial Museum of Carniola as part of Viktor Smole's legacy (Štrukelj 1980–82, 139). However, the bowl is in fact still housed at the National Museum together with the other ceramics. The fact that some porcelains were meant to be or actually were transferred to the Ethnographic Museum, while others remained in the National Museum, clearly illustrates inconsistency in the criteria used to categorize—and ultimately house—East Asian porcelain.[2]

The period from the establishment of the Ethnographic Museum in 1923 to 1964, when the Museum of Non-European Cultures was set up as a separate branch in Goričane, may be described as the second phase of the interpretation of East Asian objects in Slovenia. The dominant note during this period was sounded by ethnography. While the distinction made between ethnology and crafts or decorative/applied arts (these being a partial successor of cultural history) was applied

2 It is also possible that all East Asian porcelains were intended for the Ethnographic Museum. Boris Orel (1953–1954, 144), who became director of the Ethnographic Museum in 1945, pointed out irregularities in the transfer: certain objects taken over and inventoried by his museum had remained in the National Museum for unknown reasons. (Some of the objects had been inventoried, others not, but were still intended for the Ethnographic Museum). Owing to the ambiguous and incomplete documentation, it is difficult to verify this now.

to porcelain, all other non-European collections were categorized as belonging to the field of "ethnography" and many of them were subsequently transferred to the so-called ethnographic collections of America, Africa and Asia (Promitzier 2003, 295). During these years the Ethnographic Museum was mainly oriented towards constructing a Slovenian national identity by extolling the manifestations of folk culture in local architecture, interior design, ornamentation and national dress.[3] This is eloquently demonstrated by the reports on museum work in the periodical *Etnolog* (see Rogelj Škafar 1993, 46–52), and also by the mounting of permanent exhibitions. While sixteen rooms were allocated to the display of Slovenian collections, there were only two rooms for the non-European objects (ibid., 9).

As early as 1924, the art historian Stanko Vurnik was appointed a curator at the Ethnographic Museum, but he applied the art-historical method of classification by stylistic types mainly to the study of objects of folk culture. As a result, objects of non-European origin were pushed into the background. Tina Palaić (2019, 189) points out, though, that one should bear in mind that very few new non-European objects found their way into the museum at that time. Nevertheless, the range of non-European objects that it received from the National Museum was certainly not negligible. As previously mentioned, the National Museum had acquired a large collection of Buddhist statues and other religious objects from Hankou and Shanghai in China that were sent to the museum in 1912 and 1913 by the missionary Peter Baptist Turk. These were duly categorized as ethnographic material and later transferred to the Ethnographic Museum.

Another example of how East Asian objects were viewed from the angle of ethnography is provided by the inter-institutional transfer of the Skušek collection to the Ethnographic Museum. In 1957, the National Museum had officially taken over an extensive collection of diverse Chinese objects assembled by the Austro-Hungarian naval officer Ivan Skušek Jr. (1877–1947) during his almost six-year stay in Beijing between 1914 and 1920 (fig. 3). However, in January 1963 the entire collection was transferred to the Ethnographic Museum (Štrukelj 1980–82, 140). Bogdana Marinac (2020, 8) reveals that there were discussions on establishing a museum of Chinese art in the coastal city of Piran, but it was the touristic potential of such a museum, rather than the cultural and artistic values of the collection, that interested the local politicians. The Villa Istria in Portorož, near Piran, was to have housed the collection, but Skušek's Japanese widow, Tsuneko Kondō Kawase (married name: Marija Skušek) (1893–1963), who after his death had offered the collection to Piran, decided to abandon that plan owing partly to the unresolved ownership of the house. As a result, the entire collection ended up in the National Museum. This was

3 For more information on the Ethnographic Museum's role in this process, see Rogelj Škafar (2003).

in fact what Ivan Skušek himself had wished: "If I die, the museum will get the collection. No one else would be able to appreciate it." (Skušek, n.d.)

Although the subsequent transfer of the Skušek collection from the principal state institution devoted to Slovenia's historical heritage to a museum housing folk and ethnographic treasures was linked to the acquisition of the Baroque mansion Goričane in Medvode, where the Ethnographic Museum opened a branch for its non-European collections, it does reflect how it was seen as more appropriate to display Chinese objects alongside other non-European objects, rather than alongside local historical artefacts and national art.

Figure 3. Ivan Skušek and Tsuneko Kondō Kawase in Beijing, between 1918–1920. (Source: Photo Archive of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana; the original is kept by his great nephew Janez Lombergar)

The Museum of Non-European Cultures: A Return to the Concept of Cultural History

Significantly, the transfer of the Skušek collection to the Ethnographic Museum stimulated interest in the non-European objects housed there. The relevant collections had already begun to attract greater attention in the first decade after

World War II, following the appointments of the ethnologist Boris Orel as director of the museum in September 1945 and of Pavla Štrukelj, also an ethnologist by training, as a curator in 1955. Štrukelj systematically examined and re-inventoried all the non-European objects, made the material available to researchers for study purposes and acquired new objects (Palaić 2019, 190–91).[4] In 1964, the Museum of Non-European Cultures was set up as a branch of the Ethnographic Museum for the preservation, study and display of objects from non-Western cultures.

The creation of this new institution opens the third phase in the interpretation of Asian objects in Slovenian museums, when there was a return to an emphasis on cultural history. This must partly be understood against the background of the Non-Aligned Movement that emerged as part of the post-World War II wave of decolonization, and the resulting political and ideological atmosphere. After the split between Tito and Stalin in 1948, Yugoslavia was forced to adapt to the polarized world of Cold War and gain its sovereignty. Yugoslav president Josip Broz–Tito (1892–1980) found the alternative mode in the united force of developing countries to support each other in national development and oppose all forms of colonialism and imperialism. It was officially launched in Belgrade in 1961. The former Yugoslavia thus entered into various forms of cooperation with other members of the Non-Aligned Movement, which brought political self-confidence and economic benefits. One of the connecting factors in the Movement was culture: many of the member countries condemned cultural imperialism and emphasized cultural diversity as a means of overcoming Eurocentric tendencies in art (Piškur 2019, 15–16). This gave new impetus to ethnographic museums, cultural and artistic exchanges, exhibitions and other initiatives. While in Belgrade, the capital of Yugoslavia, a museum dedicated exclusively to African art was established, the Museum of Non-European Cultures near Ljubljana became the first Yugoslav institution whose mission was to acquire, preserve and display non-European collections (Palaić 2019, 194; Piškur 2019, 17).[5]

Although the favourable political atmosphere increased interest in non-European collections, the lack of staff at the new museum and the striving to organize as many exhibitions and events as possible, which was part of general efforts to promote the image of the Yugoslav State, made systematic research difficult. From its foundation in 1964 right until 1990, when renovation of the Goričane mansion began, only one curator, namely Pavla Štrukelj, was responsible for all non-European collections. The scope of the work she carried out is

4 For more information on Pavla Štrukelj and her work, see Palaić (2020).

5 For more on the links between the collections policy of the Museum of Non-European Cultures and the Non-Aligned Movement, see Palaić (2019).

astonishing. In addition to reinventorying the older collections and cataloguing new acquisitions, she curated as many as 83 exhibitions with rich accompanying programmes during her 26 years at the museum (Palaić 2020, 25). But this intensive tempo and her involvement in the preparation of so many exhibitions prevented her from conducting more in-depth research.

Drawing on analysis of Štrukelj's texts, Tina Palaić (2020) argues that despite the anticolonial attitude of the Non-Aligned Movement, the perception of non-European collections among the museum staff in the second half of the twentieth century continued at least partly to be informed by a colonial discourse, where Slovenian collectors were portrayed as "white protagonists" and a distinction was made between Slovenians and "Others". In this regard it is interesting to see Štrukelj returning to Deschmann's concept of cultural history when categorizing the Skušek collection. At the same time, she also viewed the collection from an ethnographic perspective, which points to a certain inconsistency and ambiguity in the criteria she used (Štrukelj 1965–1966, 57). This is apparent, among other things, in Štrukelj's discussion of a Manchurian garment depicting a dragon with five claws (fig. 4). After a brief report on the owner of the collection, her article focuses exclusively on a detailed analysis of the clothing and places it in the context of China's historical, social and cultural development. As references she cites foreign experts, including the renowned American historian and sinologist Edward Schafer, whose research had focused on Chinese contacts with neighbouring peoples and cultures during the Tang dynasty (618–907). She describes the garment as "a significant piece of clothing from the Chinese imperial court of the nineteenth century," adding that it was of a value "rare in our country" (ibid., 58). By acknowledging "high art in the embroidery of fabrics and other clothing" (ibid., 63), which China in addition to science had developed very early on in its history, she elevates the Qing court garment to the category of decorative art. However, aesthetic values most likely were not the decisive criterion in her categorizing. In Štrukelj's research papers on Chinese objects one can recognize a combination of approaches based on ethnography, decorative art and cultural history. If for Deschmann in 1888 the main criterion had been the link to the Carniolan elite of the early nineteenth century, which had sought to gain even higher status by collecting exotic objects, for Štrukelj it was the provenance of the Skušek collection from the Chinese imperial court that brought prestige to the individual objects and by implication to the museum as the new institutional owner.

Figure 4. Chinese robe with dragons with five claws. (Source: Skušek collection, Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana)

When restoration work began on the Goričane mansion in 1990, Chinese and other non-European collections were moved to the depository, which meant that exhibitions and research activities based on the East Asian collections had largely to be interrupted. Further degradation of the collections followed after the closing of the Museum of Non-European Cultures in 2001, which coincided with the denationalization of the Goričane mansion. The collections have since then been transferred to the new premises of the Ethnographic Museum on Metelkova Street in Ljubljana (Čeplak Mencin 2012, 117), where they still more or less lie dormant in a depository. There was a short-term revival of interest in the objects in 2006 thanks to the organization of the 16th biennial conference of the European Association for Chinese Studies in the Slovenian capital and, in particular, the initiative of Professor Mitja Saje from the Department of Asian Studies at the University of Ljubljana to stage a larger exhibition that would present cultural contacts between Slovenia and China to international sinologist colleagues. Ralf Čeplak Mencin, the curator of the exhibition, followed the conceptual design of "classical" ethnological collections, focusing on the stories of the collectors, but he also selected objects from as many as twelve different

Slovenian public and private institutions in order to offer a panorama of the culture and art of China (see also Šmitek 2007, 275–76). This landmark exhibition can be regarded as the first step towards the gradual institutionalization of Chinese art as a field of study in Slovenia, which began to develop in parallel with the new academic discipline of Sinology at the Department of Asian Studies in the University of Ljubljana.

The Absence of an "Art Discourse" in Slovenian Museums: Archaeological and Imperial Objects and the Role of Collectors

The incorporation of East Asian material culture into the Western aesthetic canon occurred in Europe in the early twentieth century, although the boundaries in museum taxonomy between ethnography, archaeology, decorative arts and oriental antiquities were not rigid. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, East Asian collections in Slovenian museums were situated by scholars mainly in the realm of ethnography, with occasional forays into cultural history. The initial classification points to a separation of non-European collections from individual Asian objects of local (that is, Carniolan) provenance: the latter were mostly the legacy of a fascination with Chinese products as "exotic", which gave them pride of place in the nobility's "cabinets of curiosity".

An ethnological thrust was also noticeable in the missionary exhibitions and fairs that were once common in all major European and American cities. During the international fair held in Ljubljana in 1930, one pavilion hosted a "missionary and ethnological exhibition". Alongside the many objects collected by missionaries in Africa, Asia, America and Oceania, the ethnological section also included objects that had nothing to do with such missions. These were Chinese objects, such as furniture, screens, chandeliers and porcelains, many of which had been lent to the exhibitors by Tsuneko Skušek, the Japanese wife of Ivan Skušek, and were presented in one Chinese and one Japanese room (Motoh 2020, 37). This would further suggest that Asian objects were perceived as purely ethnological records of the cultures that produced them. A review of the history of missionary exhibitions organized in Slovenia until World War II undertaken by Helena Motoh (2020) reveals that later exhibitions in the 1930s also showcased diverse "ethnological" objects from China and Japan, including Buddhist statues, Chinese furniture and textiles, coins, books and even paintings. These exhibitions' emphasis was on the Slovenian missionaries who as part of a small nation had contributed significantly to the international missionary movement, whereas the aesthetic values of the Asian objects on display remained largely unnoticed.

The treatment of East Asian objects as belonging to the realms of ethnography or ethnology continued in later decades, and it may be seen in other Slovenian museums too. For example, the collections of Asian and South American objects stored at the Celje Regional Museum have likewise been placed into the category of ethnology. Under the same category are listed objects that were sent or brought to Celje by Alma Karlin (1889–1950) from her eight-year travels around the world. Similarly, the objects brought home by sailors from voyages in East Asia and other world regions that are now stored at the "Sergej Mašera" Maritime Museum in Piran are included in the category of ethnology. To this day, (East) Asian material in Slovenia has been studied mainly from an ethnological angle, rather than from that of art history. The only exception is the collection of Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints that are classified as "art history" at the Celje Regional Museum. This classification was most likely inspired by hierarchical Western notions of art, according to which paintings represent the highest form, but the fact that these prints still remain unexplored by art historians indicates that they are not seen as equal to other paintings and graphics of European origin.

What are the reasons for the absence of an "art discourse" in the Slovenian museum and academic community? To answer this question, let us first turn to the European market and developments in other European countries. A conceptual shift in the perception of East Asian objects, as may be observed in former European colonial powers, was accelerated by the wave of entirely new objects that found their way into Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The political upheavals in China and the triumph of British troops in the Opium Wars of the mid-nineteenth century literally "opened" Chinese space to foreigners. The sacking of the Summer Palace in Beijing by an Anglo-French expeditionary force in 1860 further enabled artefacts of imperial provenance to enter the European market for the first time. The first of many auction sales of looted items marked "from the Summer Palace at Pekin" took place in London the following year (Pierson 2014, 227). It is estimated that around 1.5 million objects from the palace were looted or destroyed, some of which are now stored in 2,000 museums in 47 countries around the world (Macartney 2009 in Tythacott 2018, 12). The range of objects in question does not reflect Chinese aesthetic ideals, since the looters left behind masterpieces of painting and calligraphy while taking away objects of higher monetary value. Still, the objects were advertised as "trophies" and "treasures" from a "celebrated" location, which elevated them to symbols of Western power (Pierson 2018, 74). Further Chinese objects reached Europe as a result of the plundering and destruction of imperial residences and princes' palaces after the Boxer Uprising between 1900 and 1901, the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911 and the conversion of the Forbidden City into the Palace Museum in the 1920s, which was accompanied by major theft and embezzlement (Yeh 2011, 178–79). The appearance on the market of exquisite and high-quality artefacts with a unique provenance, which differed greatly from the Chinese export art designed to cater to the aesthetic criteria of the European elite, helped to transform the understanding of Chinese material production in the West.

Another major factor that accelerated the change in emphasis in the interpretation of East Asian objects from ethnology, via decorative art or archaeology, to art was the archaeological material unearthed during the construction of China's first railways in the early twentieth century and during archaeological expeditions led mostly by foreign experts. All these developments, to which one should add the aesthetic revolution sparked by cubist and surrealist artists, who celebrated the spontaneity and vitality they discovered in the "exotic" cultures of non-European peoples (see Clunas 1997, 428; Tythacott 2011, 162), along with the new material production it inspired, forced the museum and academic community to reconsider their focus on a definition of human civilization based on Renaissance ideals. In this process, the status of Chinese objects *vis-à-vis* those from rapidly modernizing Japan also changed. Japanese objects that had initially been accorded a higher status were now considered to be greatly indebted to Chinese culture, and the interpretation of Chinese objects as artworks gained further momentum. While all later products, particularly those from after the Qianlong Emperor's reign, were seen as reflecting a degradation of Chinese culture, objects from early periods of Chinese history were praised as evidence of superior "civilizational" achievements (Clunas 1997, 429; see also Beattie and Murray 2011, 42–43).

Furthermore, imperial objects were imbued with the narrative of the victory of the European order over Chinese "disorder", of the technologically advanced West over the backwardness of Chinese society. These dynamics led to greater emphasis on the materiality of the objects and their aesthetic dimensions, but at the same time denied a "civilizational" role to the Chinese, who were seen as crude savages, idle and dull (see also Pagani 1998, 28). In a discussion of the Goncourt brothers' collecting strategy, Ting Chang (2011) concludes that they valued "Chinese objects" exclusively for their materiality, ignoring altogether the social background of how they were produced. This attitude is also reflected in the rejection of contemporary tendencies in Chinese art and in indifference towards the inhabitants of modern China, as evidenced by the emphasis on historicism and rarities in gallery displays in the West (see also Lee 2016, 6). This sociopolitical and cultural discourse encouraged an increasingly systematic collection of Chinese objects, which, drawing on Eurocentric notions of China and driven by market economy principles, became particularly pronounced at the turn of the twentieth century. The main features of these objects that whetted collectors' appetite were the historical period to which they belonged and their archaeological connections. Large-scale archaeological excavations, in particular, shaped the dynamics of the art market, contributing to the emergence of collectors of East Asian artefacts as a new type of collector and to a reappraisal of the objects on the strength of their distinct aesthetic properties.

The presence of archaeological material and artefacts of imperial origin in the European art market, therefore, catalysed the major cultural shift towards the perception of Chinese objects as "decorative or fine art" in most of Europe. The absence of such material in Slovenian collections, in contrast, accounts for the continuing use of "ethnographic" labels. With the exception of a few Chinese coins dating back to the Warring States Period (475–221 BC), there is no archaeological material at all in East Asian collections in Slovenia. Most of the objects date from the nineteenth and the early decades of the twentieth century; some have been dated to earlier periods, but further studies are needed to verify this. Artefacts of imperial provenance offered for sale at various auctions in London and Paris from 1861 onwards also failed to reach the Slovenian ethnic territory, which was then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The latest research on East Asian objects kept in various Slovenian museums indicates that these were obtained mainly via direct contacts between individuals from the Slovenian area and East Asia.[6] Objects obtained indirectly (for example, by purchase at auctions or through personal contacts) did of course circulate among the elite and higher nobility to a certain degree—as indicated by a samurai armour, lacquered cabinets, porcelain dishes and other items in the museums—but the Communist policy of confiscating valuable objects from noble families and wealthy individuals after World War II means that researching their provenance is now almost impossible. Most of the objects were thus obtained directly by purchase in East Asia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, facilitated by the growing presence of the Austro-Hungarian military and merchant ships in East Asia.

The Austro-Hungarian Empire was a multinational state with several important cultural and scientific centres, but in comparison with other European imperial powers its navy was still quite small in the first half of the nineteenth century. Its colonial interests were oriented primarily towards the Balkans, where it formally annexed Bosnia in 1908. Not until the latter half of the nineteenth century did Austria–Hungary begin to expand its navy and to turn to East Asia in search of cheap raw materials and new markets—especially after the opening

6 For a more comprehensive overview of East Asian objects and collections strategy in Slovenia, see Vampelj Suhadolnik (2019; 2020).

of the Suez Canal in 1869 had given it a slight advantage over the other naval powers. Already in September of that year it concluded a trade agreement with China and opened a consulate in Shanghai. Increasing numbers of merchant and military ships sailed into East Asian waters, there by securing for Austria–Hungary a share—albeit a small one—of the eastern Chinese territories. The Habsburg Empire's foothold in East Asia also created opportunities for sailors, missionaries, travellers, diplomats and others to travel to East Asia, including some individuals from the Slovenian area who brought back numerous objects. The range of these objects is considerable, reflecting the type of access enjoyed by the individuals in question, their purchasing power, the context in which the exchanges took place and also their aesthetic ideals. They are mostly smaller objects of a commemorative nature and belong to the category of export art that was generally available in large East Asian ports. Objects from earlier periods or from the inner market are rare.

An exception to this general rule is the collection assembled by the senior naval officer Ivan Skušek Jr. Owing to political circumstances, he remained in Beijing for almost six years (1914–1920). During this period, he developed a specific aesthetic sensitivity for the Chinese heritage and systematically collected relevant objects with the intention of setting up a Chinese museum upon his return home. His collection contains a number of high-quality objects of reportedly imperial provenance. Indeed, in other circumstances, Skušek and his collection could well have played a similar role in the institutionalization of Chinese art in Slovenia to that of Sir Percival David and his private collection in England, Henri Cernuschi and Émile Guimet in France, Ferenc Hopp in Hungary and Charles Lang Freer in the United States, among others. Just as the merchant Nathan Dunn had opened the first museum of Chinese objects in the United States in 1838,[7] so Ivan Skušek also planned to build the first museum of Chinese culture in his homeland. Like Dunn, Skušek adopted an encyclopaedic approach to collecting[8] and was keen to reproduce the Chinese heritage by displaying it in a museum. Skušek was in fact even more ambitious, since he wanted the museum building to be a large-scale construction in the style of traditional Chinese architecture: to that end he even brought back a model of a Chinese house (fig. 5). Moreover, he seems to have wanted to display the objects set against authentic interiors of the homes of the Chinese elite, as suggested by his purchase of decorative walls of the type

7 For more details of Nathan Dunn's Museum of Chinese objects, see Conn (2000).

8 The Skušek collection comprises a wide range of objects. In addition to paintings, Buddhist statues, ceramics, porcelains, textiles, musical instruments, rare books, photographs, albums and many other smaller objects of everyday use, there are also larger objects, such as furniture, decorative wall screens and a model of a Chinese house.

that embellished Chinese rooms. He also had a special interest in richly carved wooden furniture. His acquisition of a three-volume album containing professional photographs and detailed architectural analysis of the Forbidden City, published by Tokyo Imperial University in 1906, further testifies to his interest in interior design and architecture. If he had succeeded in constructing a Chinese museum in Slovenia based on authentic Chinese architecture and interior design, it would have been a truly unique achievement not only in Slovenia but also in Europe as a whole.

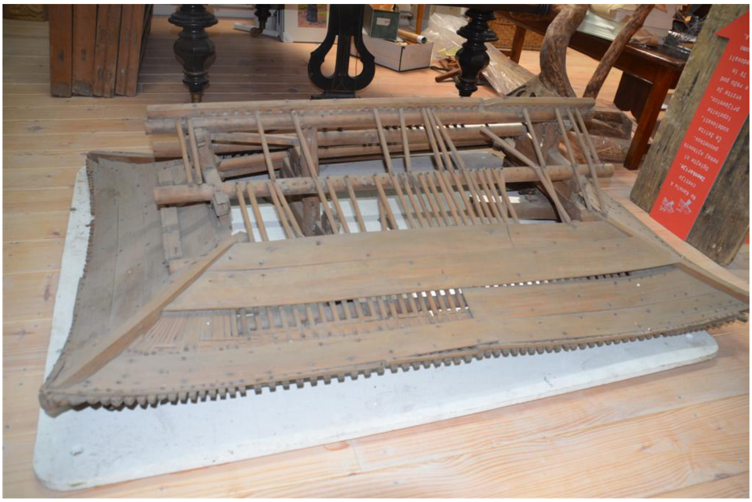

Figure 5. Roof of the Chinese house model. (Source: Skušek Collection, Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana)

A significant role in classifying East Asian objects as artistic material and in the gradual institutionalization of Chinese art in Europe was played by individual collectors, whose private interest prompted them to study closely the objects in their collections and to ascribe aesthetic values to them. They began to organize exhibitions and publish magazines, journals, catalogues and monographs. In England, this tendency went even further with the foundation of the Oriental Ceramic Society in 1921. Through various public activities, this group of collectors and other enthusiasts influenced the thrust and perception of East Asian ceramics collection in Great Britain among not only museum professionals and the academic community, but also the wider public. Endowed with considerable financial means, some of these collectors supported further study and research. In particular, thanks to the funding of Sir Percival David, a degree course in Chinese art history was established at the University of London in 1930—the first such academic programme in art history in Great Britain (Pierson 2011, 132).[9] An equally significant role was played by Charles Freer and other collectors in the United States. By bequeathing his collection to the nation and helping to found what is now the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., the former contributed greatly to the recognition of Asian material as art in the United States (Conn 2000). At around the same time, in 1915, the American School of Archaeology was established in Beijing with the aim of training people to interpret Eastern art in the West and *vice versa* (Shin 2016, 249). The use of private funds to establish such public institutions, which to a certain extent also served as research centres, can be observed in France as well.

Ivan Skušek, in contrast, despite his eagerness to establish a museum—he even bought a piece of land in a northern district of Ljubljana for that purpose—never undertook a systematic and indepth examination of the objects in his collection. During his stay in Beijing he had developed a very positive attitude towards Chinese culture and begun to champion Chinese art, but after returning to Slovenia his desire to resume service in the navy proved stronger (Skušek n.d.; Čeplak Mencin 2012, 115–16). Financial problems put an end to his original plans to found a museum. This must also be the reason why he tried to sell certain pieces of Chinese furniture from his collection to museums in the United States and Europe, as revealed by the drafts of several of Skušek's letters that are preserved in the Slovene Ethnographic Museum.

The re-evaluation of East Asian objects in the Slovenian area on the basis of aesthetic criteria was therefore halted or slowed down. To a certain degree, the focus of such efforts shifted to the domestic environment. For in the following years Skušek's home was frequented by the intellectual and artistic elite of Ljubljana (fig. 6). It is very likely that in this way Chinese aesthetics left their mark on the work of the city's leading architect, Jože Plečnik (1872–1957), who was a regular visitor to Skušek's flat and was much taken by its ceramic roof statues and garden furniture (Lombergar 2002). Skušek's wife, the Japanese Marija Skušek (Tsuneko Kondō Kawase), whom he had met in Beijing, also played a significant role in transmitting East Asian culture to the wider Slovenian public. Owing to the lack of documentation, it is difficult to assess the extent to which she influenced the selection and purchase of objects in Beijing, but after settling down in Slovenia she became very socially active and was an important mediator between Japanese and Slovenian culture.[10] After her husband's death in 1947 she took over custody of the collection.

9 For more details of the institutionalization of Chinese art in Great Britain, see Pierson (2011).

10 For more on Marija Skušek and her role in transmitting the knowledge of the Japanese (East Asian) culture to Slovenian and Yugoslav audience, see Hrvatin (2021) and Visočnik Gerželj (2021).

Figure 6. Ivan Skušek's flat in Ljubljana. (Source: Photo Archive of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana)

A stronger impetus for the reinterpretation of East Asian objects came from the ethnologist Pavla Štrukelj, who was responsible as curator for the Skušek collection after its transfer from the National to the Ethnographic Museum. She acquainted herself with Western concepts and ideas about non-European cultures, as is evident from her citing of foreign experts as references in her work. She quickly recognized the value of individual objects in the collection, particularly their (putative) imperial provenance. In her scholarly papers she described some as "exquisite" and "high-quality" artefacts, which suggests that she had accorded to them the status of (decorative) art. The institutionalization of Chinese art, therefore, continued at least partly within the boundaries of ethnology. In other respects, Pavla Štrukelj had taken up Deschmann's cultural-historical approach to the categorization of the collections, though now with a focus on the imperial "status" of objects.

To some extents developments in Slovenia must have been also influenced from across the Atlantic by Ivan Jager (1871–1959), a Slovenian architect and urban planner who settled in the United States after assembling an enviable collection during his rather short stay in East Asia in 1901. In contrast to Skušek, Jager eagerly studied Japanese art, architecture and philosophy, which he skilfully used in his work after arriving in Minneapolis in 1902. Although he remained in contact with some Slovenian fellow architects and artists, and to a certain extent influenced their oeuvre, the great physical distance prevented any major contribution by Jager to the reevaluation of East Asian material in Slovenia as "fine art." He bequeathed his collection to the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, but except for a short exhibition of his *ukiyo-e* prints in 2005, it has remained largely hidden from the public.

In addition to the above-mentioned factors, the absence of an "art discourse" should also be understood in the light of the specific situation of the Slovenian area. Always on the political periphery—initially within the Habsburg monarchy, later as one of the founding nations in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, but with little real political or administrative power—in Slovenia the tendency towards strengthening provincial and national identity was quite prominent. As pointed out by Hudales (2003, 67–68), already at the time of the foundation of the Provincial Museum of Carniola, its mission had been to collect and display everything that might serve to extol the history of Carniola, its capital Ljubljana and particularly the industry of its inhabitants. When looking at the different categories applied to Asian objects it is necessary to take this into account. As already mentioned, whereas Asian objects brought by missionaries and travellers were classified as ethnographic, those of local provenance were treated as belonging to the realm of cultural history. The possession of exotic Asian objects as a legacy of the global phenomenon of *chinoiserie* testified to Slovenia participating in the broader historical, social and cultural development of Europe: they could thus be placed together with the "regional" symbols that helped to build provincial and national identity. In contrast, Asian and other non-European collections assembled by missionaries and travellers served to demonstrate Slovenia's position on the "evolutionary" scale in relation to other peoples. The boundary between the two approaches was rather vague, which is also reflected in how most objects of Asian origin were re-categorized and transferred from the National Museum to the newly established Ethnographic Museum.

The striving to consolidate national identity—and, accordingly, to emphasize the continuous development of Slovenian/Slavic art and its being part of a wider European context—manifested itself in January 1920, when the chair for art history was established at the University of Ljubljana. Alongside the chair for Slovenian philology and history, the art history professorship was among the first to be set up within the newly founded university, whose main concern in those years was to strengthen its Slovenian character (Golob 2020, 9). Not surprisingly, given that the Austro-Hungarian Empire had been dissolved in 1918 and a new state—the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes—established, the Slovenian national movement was very active culturally and politically. The main goal of the Art History Society, founded in Ljubljana in 1921, was similarly "to promote the study of art history, particularly in Slovenia, and to make appreciation of art and its history more widespread," as argued by Vojeslav Molè (1886–1973), who together with Izidor Cankar (1886–1958) and France Stelè (1886–1972) was one of the pioneers who helped to establish art history as an academic discipline in Slovenia (Molè in Golob 2020, 62). The study of Slovenian and especially South Slavic art—including the development of the necessary methodology and terminology, modelled on the Vienna School—was thus situated in the broader context of Western European art. In an extensive monograph on the development of the discipline of art history in Slovenia over the past hundred years, Nataša Golob (2020) argues that later generations of art historians continued developing the thematic, theoretical and methodological framework for their research along those lines. The emphasis on (Western) European and Slovene or South Slavic fine arts has continued to this day, whereas sensitivity to the aesthetic value of East Asian objects has not generally been fostered.

Instead of a Conclusion: The Institutionalization of East Asian Art in Slovenia and the "Privilege of Periphery"

The circulation of delicate and exquisite Asian objects in the European market led to a reevaluation of the Western aesthetic canon, into which such objects were now admitted for the first time. However, preference was given to objects from earlier periods, in which Western connoisseurs looked for "primitivist" features. They found these in the formal and chromatic simplicity of ceramic vessels from the Song dynasty, various pottery figures from the Han and Tang dynasties, grave objects and, particularly, in the graceful lines of Buddhist sculptures (Tythacott 2011, 163). In accordance with Western notions of the hierarchy of the arts, in which painting (especially oil paintings with figural motifs) was rated highest, Chinese and Japanese paintings were admitted into the category of visual art, albeit, as Clunas (1997, 423) has shown, into the subcategory of prints and drawings. This "canonization" was further encouraged by the institutionalization of Chinese (East Asian) art in Europe, with a significant role played in this process by private initiative, which to a certain extent helped to shape the collections policy of museums.

This process has been slower in Slovenia. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, East Asian collections were classified mostly as ethnological material, with occasional shifts to cultural history. This can be attributed to three key factors: the lack of high-quality artefacts of imperial or archaeological provenance, especially in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; the insufficient financial means of private collectors in the interwar period, which prevented further specialization; and the orientation of art history as an academic discipline towards an emphasis on national identity, with legitimacy conferred by the integration of Slovenia into the broader context of Western artistic development. In contrast to the colonial history of England and France, where East Asian collections were to some extent tokens of national and imperial identity, the political marginalization of the Slovenian area led to a tendency to promote national identity and to celebrate folk culture. East Asian collections did not play a major role in consolidating Slovenian national consciousness: they consequently remained excluded from the evaluation of individual objects as artworks and continued to be mostly stored at the museum depots.

While the exclusion of such material from the discourse of art history can be understood in the light of political events during the twentieth century and the strengthening of nationalistic and state-building tendencies, the fact that even after the Bologna reforms of higher education in Slovenia in the first decade of the twenty-first century, non-European art was still not included in the syllabus of degree courses in art history is noteworthy. It points to the still dominant Eurocentric orientation of art history as an academic discipline in Slovenia. Indeed, efforts to institutionalize East Asian art only really got under way in 1995 with the introduction of Sinology and Japanology programmes at the newly established Department of Asian Studies in the Faculty of Arts of the University of Ljubljana.

Some momentum in this process has also come from ethnologists. While Pavla Štrukelj revived Deschmann's cultural history-based approach when studying high-quality, valuable artefacts of imperial provenance in the Skušek collection, her successor Ralf Čeplak Mencin, also a professional ethnologist, has proposed setting up a dedicated museum of Asian and African art. A tendency to treat the objects in the Skušek collection as artworks may also be discerned in the way that foreign experts in the field of Chinese art have been invited to evaluate the collection: William Watson from the British Museum was invited to do so in 1962, and Yi Hongzhang, a Chinese expert and curator at the Palace Museum in Beijing, in 1994 (Čeplak Mencin 2012, 114). Thanks to the combined efforts of sinologists and ethnologists, the process gained new momentum, leading to the organization of the already mentioned exhibition *Encounters with China*, which opened in Ljubljana in 2006 (fig. 8). As noted by Zmago Šmitek (2007, 275), the exhibition did not limit itself to the past but also raised questions that were relevant to contemporary China. A further development in the reinterpretation of Chinese objects and their artistic value was stimulated by the accompanying exhibition of contemporary art mounted by six graduates of the School of Drawing and Painting (in the Academy of Fine Arts and Design) under the leadership of the Chinese–Slovenian artist Wang Huiqin. In addition to the Chinese objects presented in the main exhibition, the accompanying smaller one explored the interplay of Slovenian contemporary art and Chinese visual production.

Figure 7. The exhibition *Encounters with China: Traces of Chinese Cultural Heritage in Slovenia* at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum in 2006. Photo by Marko Habič.

Prior to that, a dual degree programme at the Faculty of Arts had enabled the younger generation of students to specialize in Sinology or Japanology and in art history, providing them with solid foundations for subsequent work in the pioneering field of East Asian art. The first university-level course on Chinese art in Slovenia was introduced in 2003 as an optional course within the undergraduate programme in Sinology. As part of the Bologna reforms, this optional course was transformed into a regular one, and the master's programme in Sinology was expanded to include a regular course on Chinese art. The latter offered master's students the opportunity to familiarize themselves with museum work by becoming involved in the analysis of individual objects of East Asian origin. The establishment of these two new courses was a further step towards the institutionalization of Chinese art in Slovenia.

In 2018, a further stimulus came from the Slovenian Research Agency, which announced that it would fund a three-year research project on East Asian collections in Slovenia. The project was intended to situate within the global context the history of collections of East Asian objects in Slovenia and their cultural connotations. Overseen by the Department of Asian Studies, the project team comprehensively and systematically investigated five collections of East Asian origin for the first time. The work was done in cooperation with museum professionals and followed an interdisciplinary approach. In addition to individual objects, the way they can be interpreted and their connection with the people that produced them, the project also addressed aesthetic and formal characteristics. The findings from the project have challenged the boundaries between the traditional categories of "fine arts", "anthropology" and "ethnology", leading to a reassessment of the existing museum taxonomy in the light of a broader understanding of world cultures and our human heritage.

Ivan Skušek himself had already exemplified such a universal approach—not only through the encyclopaedic nature of his collection but also with his vision of a museum built in traditional Chinese architectural style that would display, say, an opium pipe or another everyday object next to a richly carved mirror on a pedestal in the form of two lions of supposed imperial provenance, thereby transcending traditional divisions between academic disciplines. It is precisely such initiatives that can help to facilitate, both in Slovenia and elsewhere in Europe, a reappraisal of the material production of the classical "Other"—a process that is reflected, for example, in the renaming of ethnographic museums to "museums of world cultures".[11] The national database created as part of the abovementioned project provides a systematic and analytical overview of all East Asian objects in Slovenia.[12] The database presents this material in digital format as part of the cultural heritage at both the national and global level. This is a further step in the reevaluation of Asian objects, since it means omitting the selection phase in which it is decided

11 To give but a few examples: the Wereldmuseum in Rotterdam, the Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen in the Netherlands, the Weltmuseum in Vienna and the Världskulturmuseerna in Sweden. For further discussion of the universality and cosmopolitanism of museums, see Fiskesjö (2007).

12 Database of East Asian objects in Slovenian museums is available at the following website: vazcollections.si.

whether or not an object is of "better" or "higher" quality and thus belongs to the realm of the decorative or fine arts.

In this sense, the fact that the Slovenian area was historically on the political periphery—a status that continued in the new countries established particularly after World War I—can be seen as an advantage. Being a small country without a colonial past does not necessarily imply a "privileged epistemological point of view", as Bojan Baskar (2015, 75) has argued and as may be seen in the classification of non-European material as "ethnology" in Slovenia. Nevertheless, Slovenia's specific circumstances did make it possible to present the East Asian material in the country's museums using a more systematic and universal approach. It is these very circumstances that have raised awareness of the need to undertake, through the above-mentioned project, a comprehensive review of collecting culture and the perception of such objects in Slovenia—something that has not generally been done at the national level for most countries, though specific collecting practices have been studied at the local level. Above all, Slovenia's peripheral position has facilitated appreciation of these objects as being part of the universal heritage of human culture. Such an appreciation is particularly strong in the peripheral areas of former European empires, where the systematic investigation of national and local museums and private collections has started only recently.[13]

The "privilege of periphery" further manifested itself in the initiative to set up a global association of experts in Asian art, which was prompted by the lack of opportunities in Slovenia for direct contacts and discussions with international colleagues that would facilitate the exchange of ideas. The European Association for Asian Art and Archaeology (EAAA), the first international academic society of this kind in the world, was duly founded in Ljubljana in 2013. By 2020 it already had almost 300 members.

The institutionalization of East Asian art in Slovenia, which took place mainly in the first two decades of the twenty-first century, was made possible by a number of historical, socio-political and cultural factors that were specific to the peripheral situation of the Slovenian area in earlier historical periods. These factors created a favourable atmosphere for the reevaluation of Asian art from a broader perspective, transcending existing conceptual boundaries. Important new developments may therefore often originate from the periphery, rather than from the core.

13 Similar initiatives are under way in Switzerland, led by the University of Zurich (Thomsen 2015), and in Scotland, under the auspices of National Museums Scotland (n.d.).

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SPECIAL ISSUE

EAST ASIA IN SLOVENIA: COLLECTING PRACTICES, CATEGORIZATION AND REPRESENTATION

Lived Spaces: Private Display and Transfer to Public Institutions

Lived-in Museum: The Early 20th Century Skušek Collection

*Helena MOTOH**

Abstract

The paper focuses on an aspect of the history of the collection of Ivan Skušek Jr., an early 20th century Slovenian collector that has not yet been looked at thoroughly, namely, its "apartment" period, the time when the collection was on display in three consecutive apartments Ivan Skušek Jr. and his Japanese wife lived in. Due to the failed plans to establish a museum, the collection ended up being on display in lived spaces for the entire period between their arrival to Ljubljana and Marija Skušek's passing, all together for 43 years—much longer than it was ever displayed in museum settings. The paper focuses on the way a lived space functioned as a setting for the display of the collection and how this combination created a place for communication, appropriation and knowledge acquisition—how the collection was lived in, lived with and lived through. The analysis thus reflects on the implications of the setting of the lived-in museum: how it impacted the collection and its parts, how it conditioned the lives of its owners and how this mode of presentation influenced the reception of the visitors. In the second part of the paper, the analysis is based on specific material—Skušek's archive that was recently analysed in the Slovenian Ethnographic museum collections, including a number of photographs of the interiors of the apartments.

Keywords: Ivan Skušek, Tsuneko Kondo-Kawase/Marija Skušek, lived-in museum, apartment museum, early 20th century East Asian collections

Muzej v stanovanju: zbirka Ivana Skuška ml. z začetka 20. stoletja

Izvleček

Članek se ukvarja s specifičnim vidikom zgodovine zbirke Ivana Skuška ml., slovenskega zbiralca z začetka 20. stoletja, ki še ni bil podrobneje raziskan – z obdobjem, ko je bila zbirka razstavljena v treh stanovanjih, v katerih sta zaporedno živela Ivan Skušek ml. in njegova žena. Ker so načrti, da bi iz zbirke naredili muzej, propadli, je bila zbirka v bivalnih prostorih razstavljena vse od takrat, ko je par prispel v Ljubljano, do smrti Marije Skušek, skupaj 43 let – kar je precej dlje, kot je bila zbirka kadarkoli razstavljena v muzejskem prostoru. Članek se osredotoča na to, kako je bivalni prostor deloval kot prizorišče

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razstavljene zbirke in kako je ta kombinacija ustvarila prostor za komunikacijo, apropriacijo in pridobivanje vednosti – kako so živeli v zbirki, z zbirko in skozi zbirko. Zato se analiza osredotoča na implikacije bivalnega muzeja: na to, kako je to vplivalo na zbirko in njene dele, kako je določalo življenje njenih lastnikov in kako je tovrstna predstavitev določala to, kako so zbirko sprejemali obiskovalci. Drugi del članka temelji na analizi specifičnega gradiva – nedavno analiziranega Skuškovega arhiva iz zbirk Slovenskega etnografskega muzeja, ki vsebuje več fotografij interierjev stanovanj zakoncev Skušek.

Ključne besede: Ivan Skušek, Tsuneko Kondō-Kawase/Marija Skušek, bivalni muzej, muzej v stanovanju, vzhodnoazijske zbirke z začetka 20. stoletja

Many people who lived in Ljubljana in the middle of the 20th century remember a particular apartment room in an old villa a few hundred meters from the main food market. In a house that is today a public kindergarten ended the story of a very unusual couple, Ivan Skušek Jr. (1877–1947), former officer of the Austrian-Hungarian Navy, and his Japanese wife, then known as Marija Skušek (1893–1963). This was not the first apartment they lived in, and in all of them they arranged their living space into what seemed like a museum display. After her husband passed away just two years after the end of WWII, Marija Skušek kept the apartment and the layout of her living room, stacked full of furniture and objects, that seemed unusual and exotic to her visitors. Tsuneko Kawase Kondō, as she was called before having been baptised Catholic and marrying Skušek, might have been the most exotic part of this apartment, a Japanese woman from China, often dressed in luxurious silk kimonos, speaking in strongly accented Slovene and telling stories of the unknown cultures of Japan and China and about the collection of furniture, porcelain items and other objects in her house.

According to the diary of his brother, Skušek dreamed of building a museum for the collection—he even bought land to build it on—where Tsuneko would be the permanent on-site guide for the visitors (as reported by his brother, see Skušek n.d.). After Skušek passed away, the idea to make his collection into a museum was officially considered a few times. In 1950, just after her husband's death, Marija Skušek seems to have negotiated donating the collection to the government of the People`s Republic of Slovenia.[1] A published newspaper report elaborates on the plans to make a Chinese house according to the carpenters' wooden house model in the collection and to exhibit the whole collection in it (*Tovariš* 1950, 668). At approximately the same time, talks were also held between Ms. Skušek and the Municipality of Piran for the collection to become a museum in a coastal villa (Marinac 2020, 8). However, neither of these plans were realized. Yet

1 Then part of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia.

another plan was made a decade later, when the collection—then already in custody of the National Museum—was planned to be moved onto the second floor of the baroque Schweiger House in Ljubljana Old Town, where the Municipial Cultural Council envisioned opening Museum of East Asian Cultures (*Ljudska pravica* 1959, 6). This plan was never realized either, so in 1964, a year after Marija Skušek passed away, the collection, now stored in a few different places, eventually changed hands again and became the property of the Slovenian Ethnographic Museum, where it is still kept today. After partly being on display in the former venue of the museum, Goričane Mansion near Ljubljana, this outstanding collection has mostly been kept in storage for the last thirty years. The Skušek Collection has been curated by two successive museum curators—Pavla Štrukelj and Ralf Čeplak Mencin—who have also published on its different characteristics (*e. g.* Čeplak Mencin 2012; Štrukelj 1966). A thorough analysis of the collection, which consists of more than 500 objects, as well as a research into Skušek's collecting practices, have been one of the aims of the national research project *East Asian Collections in Slovenia* for the past three years, and the findings have been published in national and international publications.[2]

In the present paper I will focus on an aspect of the history of the Skušek Collection which has not yet been looked at thoroughly, namely, its "apartment" period, the time when the collection was on display in the apartments of Ivan and Marija Skušek in the three locations they lived in. Due to the above-mentioned failed plans to establish a museum, the collection ended up being on display in the lived spaces of Ivan Skušek Jr. and Marija Skušek for the entire period between their arrival to Ljubljana and her passing, all together for 43 years—much longer than it was ever displayed in museum settings. I will be interested in the way a lived space functioned as a setting for the display of the collection and how it created a place for what Lefevbre would dub "*connaissance*" (*cf.* Elden 2004, 190)—communication, appropriation and knowledge acquisition. Further, I will be interested in how the collection was lived in, lived with and lived through. To do this, I will draw upon the conceptualizations of the lived space as drawn by Lefevbre, while incorporating Appadurai and Kopytoff's thing-centred approach. In the first part of the paper I will thus sketch a methodological approach to the apartment collection and see how it can be reflected upon in a theoretical framework. The dialogic structure the apartment collection opens between the hosts and the guests, although it is not limited to this interaction only, but is established on an even

2 The findings from this project have been published in thematic issues of the following journals: *Poligrafi* 2019, vol. 24, nos. 93/94 ("Meeting East Asia"); *Bulletin of the Slovene Ethnological Society* 2020, vol. 60, no. 1 ("Non-European Collections in Slovene Museums"); *Ars&Humanitas* 2020, vol. 14, no. 2 ("Ideologies and Practices of Collecting and Exhibiting").

more basic level between the objects and the owners/users themselves. The analysis will thus reflect on the implications of the setting of the lived-in museum: how it impacted the collection and its parts, how it conditioned the life of its owners and how this mode of presentation influenced the reception of the visitors. In the second part of the paper, the analysis will be based on specific material—Skušek's archive that was recently analysed as part of the Slovenian Ethnographic Museum's collections, including a number of photographs of the interiors of Skušeks' apartments, of the couple and their friends within those settings and also a detailed inventory of the objects in their last apartment. The purpose of the analysis of the photographs will first be to identify the settings and link them with the known biographical references about the residences of the Skušek couple. In doing so, the arrangements of the main collection pieces will also be identified when possible, and these considered in order to reflect upon the specific situation of the lived-in museum and the implications of this.

Lived-in Museum

Apart from providing necessities for the members of the household, apartments and/or houses also serve an important function in providing a well-structured and regulated link with the outside world. As emphasized by authors such as Miller (2001), Hurdley (2006), Money (2007) and others, the process of self-realization and identification that takes place inside one's home in contact with the outside world is not only dialogical in a verbal sense, but importantly includes a material element as well, namely the "objects" in the living space. Some objects of course have more representative value than others. Not only are the possessions often distinguished by the presentability criteria, with some objects being reserved only for special occasions when visitors are present, but some objects are ascribed a special demonstrative status—souvenirs, artwork and valuable pieces. Classified as "objectified cultural capital" in Bourdieu (1986, 246), artwork and representative cultural pieces also serve to add to the symbolic value of their owner. In the case of Skušek's large, exquisite, valuable and aesthetically pleasing East Asian collection, all these functions were doubtlessly at play. Their apartments that contemporaries from Ljubljana remembered were articulations of Skušek's multifaceted cosmopolitan identity, his former high-ranking military position and the high ambitions he nurtured[3]—although did not realize—until the end of his life.

3 One of his most important goals was to again serve in the navy (of the new Kingdom of Yugoslavia), which he never succeeded in doing.

The purpose of the display, however, was not only performative and intended for the visitor's eye. The collection pieces, furniture and everyday objects were also used, and this aspect should not be overlooked when viewing their home as an attempt at a museum. Compared to a museum or any formal exhibition, the space of a house or a living room for that matter is, in essential terms, a *lived space*. This term, coined by Henry Lefebvre in his works—most notably the *Production of Space* (Lefebvre 2013)—originated in Lefebvre's intention to overcome the essentially Cartesian duality of *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, or as he developed his argument, that of conceived space and perceived space (Zhang 2006, 220). Lived space balances between the reduced idealism of purely conceived space and materialism of perceived space. Lived space, as Elden points out using Lefebvre's own well-chosen French term, is the place of *connaissance* (encompassing "knowledge" as well as "acquaintance") (Elden 2004, 190). Lived space is the place of subjectivity, of experiences and of sense-making, the process in which a subject makes sense of its objects and itself as an objective reality. Lived space is not an empty abstract container for these processes, but is constructed through them. In this way I would like to reflect upon apartment exhibits such as Skušek's. It is too limiting to view the apartment exhibits simply as more spatially condensed, less organized and less rational versions of museum displays. They are also not, despite their superficial similarity, simply modern versions of cabinets of curiosities. The objects of lived-in collections are used as part of everyday life—be it furniture, porcelain, textiles or figurines. Even more, the owner not only uses the objects and lives with them, but also lives through them. The objects themselves also have their agency, what Appadurai wrote of as of "things-in-motion that illuminate their human and social context" (Appadurai 1986, 5). Practically speaking, not only has the Skušek collection of Chinese furniture and other objects shaped the identity of its owners in the perception of the world outside their home, but we can imagine it also shaped the everyday practices of their lives. The material reality: types, height, width and ergonomics of the furniture, shapes of porcelain, luminosity of lanterns and many other aspects of the collection they lived in also actively determined their lives there. We can even claim that although the objects were the same in the Skušek apartments and later in the museum the two realities of the collection are not the same, nor is the lived space display only a deficient version of the museum. The fact that the objects were used should not be judged by standards of museum display as simply damaging malpractice, endangering the completeness and intactness of the objects which should be preserved. Instead, the lived space can be understood as a "natural habitat" of functional objects, much more than a museum setting can ever be.

Nevertheless, the setting in which these objects were placed was very different from their original "home". Instead of a Beijing palace or the mansion of a high

Chinese official, these pieces were now crammed inside apartments in a small Slovenian city and lived with according to the lifestyle of a moderately rich Ljubljana family of the time. These processes made the biography of things (Kopytoff 1986, 67) radically more complex—it entailed recombination, transformation, repurposing and alterations, all of which also made the apartment collection essentially different from that of a museum. The objects were themselves adapted to be used as part of the lifestyle of the Skušeks, while also themselves determining the lived space, experienced spatial reality of their owners and shaping the way they lived inside their collection. An interesting comparison can be made to the example of a collector "gone-native", Sophus Black, whose life inside a collection is analysed by Minna Törmä (2021). The period and origins of the objects in the Skušek and Black collection are surprisingly similar, both men have obviously developed a liking for exquisite furniture, porcelain and Buddhist figures. Even more importantly, both collections were used as furniture and equipment inside a lived space. The reasons and circumstances, and therefore also the outcomes of a similar inclination, were however markedly different. Most importantly, for Black going native seems to have been a logical consequence of having had lived in China for a long period of time, during which adaptation to the Chinese ways of living went hand in hand with progressively Chinese interiors of his homes. What started as mere decoration pieces slowly took larger portion of his homes, especially when living outside the expat communities. Skušek on the other hand can hardly be said to have "gone-native". The years he lived in China he was mostly limited to the confined areas for the prisoners of war, and developed his interest in Chinese objects from the perspective of a buyer/collector. The situation was even more complex with his wife. An ethnic Japanese who spent her childhood in Japanese occupied Manchuria and early adulthood in Beijing in what seems to have been a mostly Japanese expat community,[4] her attitude towards the Chinese lifestyle must have also been complex to say the least. Anyhow, we can imagine that her first-hand understanding of Chinese habits and lifestyles still surpassed her husband's. When the collection was shipped to Ljubljana, Tsuneko Kawase Kondō soon took on an active role of being simultaneously the alleged owner of the collection[5] and an actor playing in it. She even performed together with her daughter at commercial fairs where the collection was exhibited (Motoh 2020, 37), and at other social events where she would stage a Japanese environment and then perform certain

4 This can be assessed from a large number of photographs showing her life before she met Skušek, which are also part of the same archive, kept by the Slovenian Ethnographic Museum.

5 The couple forged a story according to which she inherited the objects from her father, allegedly a court architect. While the story was not too credible, it was still adopted in media and general public and successfully served to silence any doubts about where and how Skušek bought the items (Čeplak Mencin 2012, 109).

Japanese actions (a tea ceremony, etc.) (*cf. Jutro* 1927; fig. 1). After Skušek passed away, she also took on the role of curator and was finally the person who successfully negotiated the transition to museum ownership that kept the main part of the collection together.

Figure 1. Tsuneko Kondō Kawase performing a tea ceremony. (Source: *Jutro*, June 2, 1927)

Finally, it was the lived-in situation of the collection that made it memorable and informative to the many visitors. The objects were seen and interpreted by being used, which presented the cultures of East Asia in a more complex way compared to what a standard, distanced museum display would allow.

The Moving Collection

One of the most fascinating parts of the history of the Skušek Collection is how it was moved many times despite its incredible size and the immense proportions of its largest objects. Due to the number and size of pieces in the collection, the fact that Skušek was able to store them in the time he was living in China and then to arrange the shipping is already incredible.[6] The recently unexpectedly rediscovered photo archive shows us the collection displayed in lived spaces in a few different settings. The photo collection is neither organized nor labelled, with all different photographs found mixed in several envelopes, so the dates and locations are only

6 For the details of shipping packages, see Berdajs (2021).

to be identified by analysis of the photographs and are not available from other, external sources. In the analysis I will especially focus on those photographs which show the collection as displayed in lived-in settings, out of which approximately 10 show larger arrangements of collection pieces, one shows the Skušek couple with visitors, nine show Marija Skušek in the rooms, and two show her with her visitors in the rooms. Four locations can be identified from the photographs: a larger empty setting, which is most probably some sort of a storage room, and three apartment settings, out of which photos of living rooms prevail. What the first group of photos represents—set in an empty space with an obviously provisionally spread rug underneath them—is unclear. They could have been taken in a storage room when still in China, or were perhaps taken to record the objects before shipping. If this was not the case, they were most probably taken when the boxes were being unpacked in Ljubljana. When the objects were shipped through Hamburg to Ljubljana, the shipping and subsequent storage was done by the "Špedicija Balkan" transport company,[7] which had an office and large storage rooms at Dunajska cesta 33[8] (see fig. 3).

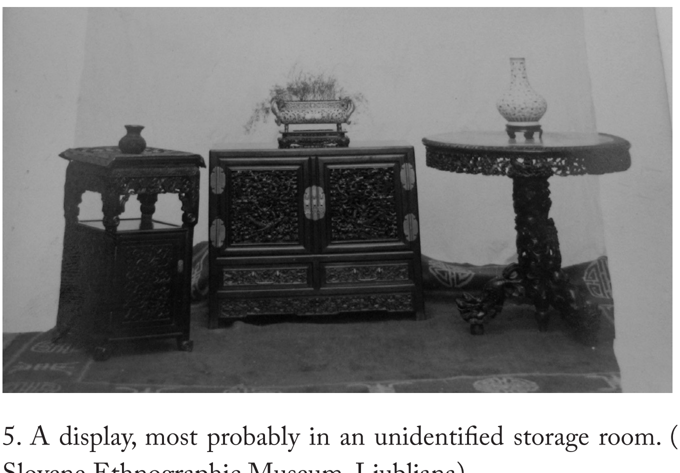
Figure 2. House at Pred Škofijo 3. (Source: Krisper, *Sistory: Zgodovina Slovenije,* 1950)

Figure 3. Newspaper advertisement for "Balkan" transport company. (Source: *Slovenec,* October 28, 1910)

7 Information from the handwritten memoirs of Franc Skušek (Skušek n.d.).

8 Not the Dunajska cesta 33 of today, due to the change in the length of Dunajska cesta and the fact that the street has been renamed several times over the years.

In Ljubljana the Skušeks lived at three locations, at Pred Škofijo 3, at Prule 19 and at Strossmayerjeva 3. Upon their arrival in Ljubljana, the couple first moved to Skušek's parents' home on the first floor of the 16th century building at Pred Škofijo 3[9] (see fig. 2).The diary of Franc Skušek reports that he was helping his brother with unpacking most of the boxes "in a smaller space on the way to the attic" (Skušek n.d.), "except for the extremely large boxes" (ibid.), which were still kept unpacked at Špedicija Balkan warehouses. We can only speculate that the auxiliary rooms in Skušek parents' apartment might be the location of the storage room photos (see figs. 4 and 5).



Figures 4 and 5. A display, most probably in an unidentified storage room. (Source: Photo Archive of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana)

9 The house at Pred Škofijo 3 (today Ciril-Metodov trg 3) is a multi-apartment 16th century building, also known as Codelli Canonry.

One of the earliest photos in the collection, judging by the rather young age of Ivan Skušek Jr. and Tsuneko Kondo Kawase, shows the couple in a living room setting with a man in uniform and a woman (see fig. 6). The two can be identified as King Alexander's adjutant, Velja Dimitrijević, and his wife.

Figure 6. The Skušeks with the Dimitrijevićs. (Source: Photo Archive of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana)

The diary of Skušek's brother claims that Ivan Skušek Jr. tried to re-enter the navy after having retired from it with the dissolution of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, and that Dimitrijević was a connection he hoped would help him achieve this ambition it. He allegedly (Skušek n.d.) even tried to curry the favour of the new king by sending an offer through Dimitrijević to give him a large carved mirror frame that he claimed to be from the Imperial Palace in Beijing—an offer that King Alexander had never responded to. A tiny detail on the uniform worn by Dimitrijević can help us date the photo to the first place where the couple stayed on their return from Asian, namely, Skušek parents' apartment at Pred Škofijo 3. In the written mentions of Skušek's connection to Dimitrijević (sometimes misspelled "Dimitrović") it is noted that he was a colonel (ibid.). One of the few mentions of Adjutant Velja Dimitrijević in Slovenian newspapers, an article titled "Sokolska slavnost v Beogradu" in daily *Slovenski narod* on April 13th 1926 also refers to him as a "colonel". The photo, however, shows him with two-star epaulettes, indicating that he has not yet reached the rank of colonel—which would be marked by three stars. The photo must thus be dated pre-1926, and was therefore taken in the Pred Škofijo 3 apartment.

As is evident from the two couples' partly staged photograph—with Dimitrijević holding chopsticks and his wife a Japanese parasol in one hand and a fan in the other—the room occupied by the Skušeks was full of items from the collection. Among the recognizable furniture we see the rose chair Dimitirijević is sitting on, the Korean chest of drawers behind Skušek and a silk screen in the neighbouring room which can be seen through the door. A silk lantern is hung just above the table, a vase is visible behind in the corner, a (now lost) lamp in the shape of a Japanese woman is behind on the chest of drawers. The Chinese table is decorated with two Buddhist figures, an enamelled "Smiling Buddha" and a bronze Buddha statue, both of which are still in the collection today.

The same room is shown in another photo (see fig. 7), where a lower, ornately carved table with a mirror frame is shown while the mirror itself is covered (or perhaps replaced) with a textile. The corner arrangement of a textile wall decoration and the set of bells,[10] as well as the door itself, show us that this is the same setting—the living room in Pred Škofijo 3. Skušek's collection of Buddhist statues is displayed on a sideboard. According to the 1965 museum inventory, the collection included 22 statues, and the display on the sideboard and in front on a small table shows at least 19 of them. The arrangement also includes two vases and a large metal vessel, listed as a "Mongolian stove" (possibly an incense burner).

The arrangement of Buddhist statues on the sideboard seems to be a permanent element in Skušeks' displays of the collection. We see them again in photos which belong to the second and third groups of photographs, most probably corresponding to the second and third apartments they lived in. The indirect key for the grouping of these photographs is the age of Tsuneko Kondō Kawase. In one group of photos we see her at a very old age, so they were almost definitely taken in the last of the three places where the couple lived, the apartment in the "del Cott's villa" in Strossmayerjeva 3. The exact year when they moved to Strossmayerjeva 3 is unclear,[11] but it most probably happened after the end of the WWII when the building seems to

10 Both also part of the collection.

11 Some sources (Čeplak Mencin 2012, 112) even claim that she moved there after the death of Ivan Skušek Jr. in 1947, while some testimonies (*cf.* diary of the author's grandmother, Milena Motoh, n.d.) remember them both living in the Strossmayerjeva 3 house in December 1946.

have been nationalized from its former owners, the descendants of Gustav del Cott and his wife Hermina del Cott. In any case, Tsuneko must have been only around 50 years old when the couple moved from Prule 19 apartment, while the mentioned photos show her considerably older. The del Cott's villa at Strossmayerjeva 3 was built in summer 1904 (*Slovenec* 1903a–1903f, 1904) as a replacement for the old del Cott's villa which was pulled down for the building of the new Gymnasium building. Del Cott's villa had a beautiful garden, decorated with one of the most famous historical fountains in Ljubljana, the 17th century Neptune fountain (Steska 1924, 145).

Figure 7. Interior with a display of Buddhist statues. (Source: Photo Archive of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana)

Only two photos can thus be claimed to likely represent the second apartment the couple lived in after coming to Ljubljana, the apartment at Prule 19 (see fig. 8). The three-floor building into which they moved after having a church wedding on Easter Monday, 18th of April 1927 (Čeplak Mencin 2012, 112), was newly built just four years previously and had six apartments of around 100 m^2 each.[12]

12 *Cf.* the information available on the national public portal about real-estate in Slovenia (http://prostor3.gov.si).

Figure 8. Second location: Prule 19. Photo by Helena Motoh.

Figure 9. Third location: Strossmayerjeva 3. Photo by Helena Motoh.

It is unclear which of the six apartments they lived in, but they must have had considerably more space than in the Pred Škofijo 3, where the couple together with Tsuneko's two children (and eight Pekingese dogs) shared the apartment with Skušek's parents and siblings. In two photos that show the same living room at two different times and with slightly different arrangements (figs. 10 and 11) we again see the sideboard with Buddhist statues—obviously important pieces in Skušeks' eyes—in the background behind the central table. One of the two photos shows Tsuneko sitting at the table with a dog in her lap and another woman sitting next to her. The table seems to be the same as the one in the photo with the Dimitrijevićs, while the chairs also belong to the collection. A wood-and-glass lantern hangs above the central table, while the photo also shows other pieces from the collection: a narrow cabinet to the right of the sideboard. In one of the two photos from Prule 19, we see a decorative set of swords to the left of the table with Buddhist statues, while on the other photo there is the Korean high chest of drawers on that spot. It is also interesting that on the photo with the two ladies, the mirror frame of the table is still covered in fabric, while on the second photo the mirror has obviously been installed.

Figures 10 and 11. Interiors. (Source: Photo Archive of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana)

None of the other photos can be linked to the Prule 19 apartment with any certainty, but can be linked to the last apartment of the Skušeks lived in, on the first floor of the villa at Strossmayerjeva 3 in the Poljane quarter of the central Ljubljana (see fig. 9). These photos give us more detail about how they lived with the collection, also showing more different views of the apartment. Another important document was also found in the archive, the *Partial Inventory of the Furniture and Things of Marija Skušek, Ljubljana, Strossmayerjeva 3/I* (Delni seznam 1950). The inventory is signed by Marija Skušek and was made on August the 6th 1950, just three years after the death of her husband. The reason for making the list is unclear, perhaps it might have been related to inheritance issues in the family, extensively written about by Franci Skušek (Skušek n.d.). Another possible reason may have been Marija Skušek's plans to sell the collection to the Slovenian government, which also took place in 1950 (*Tovariš* 1950). The inventory is divided into four sections: Rooms I, II and III, and a list of objects. At the end of the inventory there is an interesting remark: "In addition to these there are innumerable other small objects and 10 large boxes that have not been opened (for 30 years) due to the lack of space". Despite the unopened boxes, the inventory lists an incredible number of items of furniture for each room.

> Room I [living room]: 2 display cabinets, 1 large sideboard (*kredenca*)[13], 1 small long table, 1 table for Buddhas, 1 small cabinet, 1 marble table, 1 Korean cabinet, 1 large book cabinet, 1 writing desk, 1 round table from the imperial palace, 3 carved chairs, 4 porcelain garden chairs, 7 carved wooden tableaus, 5 large porcelain flower pots, 2 porcelain lamps, 6 porcelain vases, 2 carved frames for handicraft, 5 handmade paintings, 2 woodcuts, 11 roof figures, 2 hand warmers, 1 silver flower stand, 2 small carved tables, 1 gong with stand, 1 Japanese gong, 4 roof bells, 4 bronze vases, 1 bronze sculpture of a Japanese woman.
>
> Room II [single bedroom]: 1 single bed, 2 large standing mirrors approx. 900 kg, 1 small standing mirror, 2 night tables, 1 Mongolian stove with a stand, 1 small carved table, 1 small low table, 1 little chair, 3 chairs, 1 large porcelain vessel, 1 small carved cabinet, 1 "head of the cabinet" [*glava od omare*], 1 Chinese screen – tapestry.
>
> Room III [double bedroom]: 1 large double bed, 2 large cabinets, 1 small table, 2 chairs, 6 large flowerpots, 2 small flowerpots, 2 small flowerpots broken, 1 porcelain container for tea, 1 long low cabinet.

13 From the Italian word *credenza*, a kitchen sideboard or a cabinet with upper vitrines for plates and glasses.

> [Other objects]: 15 Buddhas, 1 human-skull drum, ? pigeon whistles, ? small vases, 2 Chinese instruments, 2 opium pipes, 1 brass mirror, 1 abacus, 3 stone seals, 1 water pipe, 3 *bučke za grille* [cricket flasks], 1 compass, 2 cutlery sets, 3 fans, 2 bottles painted from within, 1 thermometer, 1 *čajnica* [perhaps tea box], 6 Chinese clothes, 2 pairs of Chinese shoes, 3 mandarin hats, 10 Boxer weapons, 1 tiger skin, 4 folders of paintings, 3 giant albums of architecture, 15 lanterns, rather broken from the last moving, 1 model of a house. (Delni seznam 1950)

Several photos that can be associated with the last Skušek apartment, and some of them also show Marija Skušek (once in the company of another woman) dressed in Japanese clothes (see figs. 12–15). It is possible to link the photos to the list from 1950. For example, in some photos we see two pieces of the furniture from section I of the inventory list, one next to the other—the edge of the large carved sideboard (one adorned with Buddhist statues) and the display cabinet. On top of the display cabinet we see large porcelain flowerpots and bronze bells, while the shelves show a number of pieces from the collection—many of them also included in the inventory list (e.g. Tibetan skull drum, opium pipes and lamp, cloisonné stand and pot, etc.). Another photo of the larger room arrangement also survived, which is of much worse quality, but still very informative. It shows the room with a table in front (the same one as in the previous two settings) and a mix of Chinese and European chairs. The display—a combination of porcelain vessels and Buddhist statues—is also visible, along with a reflection in the mirror, indicating a folding screen on the other side of the room. Photos of another room also exist, which show an elderly Marija Skušek standing next to the bed, in front of a smaller mirror on a carved stand, which means that the photo could correspond to Room II in the inventory list.

Figures 12–15. Interiors. (Source: Photo Archive of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana)

Life and the Collection

The Skušeks' collection, which served not only as decoration but as predominant furnishing of the three apartments where the couple lived, is a good example of how the lived space setting completely changes how the collection works and how it is perceived. Although Skušek perhaps planned to display the objects in a museum setting re-creating the Chinese original interiors (Vampelj Suhadolnik 2020, 53), the objects he bought, however, were primarily functional, although of very high quality and artistic nature. The collection consists of many pieces of furniture, lots of ceramic utensils, clothes, and textiles—all functional everyday objects. Only a smaller number of objects cannot be categorized as such, e.g. Buddhist statues, several paintings/prints and curiosities that were perhaps never used (a wooden pillow, a skull drum, etc.). The setting that Skušek put them into upon his return to Ljubljana was therefore much more natural than any of the museum settings they were later in.

The density of pieces in the three apartments was incredible. As we see in the previously quoted lists, this must have made the rooms they lived in feel like crammed, hybrid spaces, a mixture of a museum storage room and a living space. It also explains why almost no additional furniture can be seen on the photos—with the exception of a few chairs and a small table, almost everything else can be identified as pieces from the collection.[14] The couple, Tsuneko Kawase's children (from a previous marriage) and many visitors, were thus led to live *in*, *with* and *through* the collection, accommodating the collection for their needs and habits, while also accommodating their habits (and, with Bourdieu, their *habitus*) to the lived space created by the collection. The accommodation of the collection to its inhabitants we can discern especially in the arrangement of Chinese furniture to meet the living style and demands of an upper middle-class Ljubljana family of that time. Not only the use, but also the combinations of the furniture and objects were made in this hybrid fashion as well. Even the names of the furniture reflect the accommodation, using the local terminology used for the items. The mirror cabinet, for example, is listed as a *kredenca* (see note 12), using the smallest common denominator, and the tapestry folded screens are listed are described as *gublen*[15]. In return, the furniture and utensils must have required their users to perform tasks differently, whether this meant sitting in Chinese chairs, sleeping in canopy beds or using the Chinese containers and tools for everyday purposes. The in-between situation that Marija Skušek (born

14 For a very good description of the analytical work identifying provenance, origin, production period and other data of material objects from East Asia, see Berdajs (2019).

15 In other words a Gobelin tapestry, as pronounced in the local dialect of the time.

Japanese and having lived for a long time in China) found herself in relation to these objects is also extremely interesting, but perhaps today impossible to entirely reconstruct.

Moreover, compared to a museum setting or even to a "period room" setting, where lived spaces are recreated, the collection objects in lived spaces do not have the aura of "sacred" and untouchable museum artefacts. They are not under the ban of being touched, used, neglected, worn out and modified in ways that suit their owners. The hypothetical "original state" of an object, in which the museum pieces are supposed to be preserved forever, is replaced in a lived space museum by a more transient identity and faced with the threat of wear, tear, repair and disintegration. The living space collection pieces are also more likely to change hands, given as a present or souvenir to visitors and friends, something which often happened with the items in the Skušeks' collection. With a touch of poetic licence, we could say—compared to the illusion of their eternal life in museum settings—that a lived space makes the collection objects alive with every aspect of this condition, including their potential transformation, mobility and imminent disintegration or discardment. Compared to the intentional and analytic setting museum setting, the objects of lived-in collections are also not isolated, but function in forced communication with one another, in assemblages which could be functional, aesthetic or random. Finally, the thus lived lives of objects in the lived space setting are an integral part of the information about objects and the collection, or, perhaps better said, of their biographies. For the Skušek Collection there is a photographic archive and information about the collection and thus we can indeed see that the lived-in situation was crucial for the biography of the collection in many ways. Most importantly, it affected the adaptation of the objects to the needs of the Skušeks' lifestyle and, vice-versa, shaped how their lives were lived in this museum-like setting. On the other hand, the limitations and possibilities imposed upon the couple who lived in a museum-like setting can be seen in particular in the agency of Marija Skušek as the "actor" inside the collection, at the same time living and performing (see also Visočnik Gerželj 2021), a double identity which affected so many of her contemporaries and helped them get an immediate opportunity to understand and get to know the cultural elements of East Asia.

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Retracing the Footsteps: Analysis of the Skušek Collection

*Tina BERDAJS**

Abstract

The paper presents preliminary research into the original scope of the Skušek Collection, based on four lists and an old museum inventory entry of the collection of Asian art collected by Ivan Skušek Jr. during his six-year stay in China between 1914 and 1920. Furthermore, it presents the cross-referencing of the mentioned documents with the first inventory record when it was formally taken over by the National Museum of Slovenia in an attempt to recreate the original scope of the collection. Through analysis and comparison of these records and with support of photographic sources this research attempts to put objects of the Skušeks' original collection into four different groups based on provenance research. Through several case studies it gives new insights into the dynamics of the largely unknown parts of history of the collection, and the paths some of the individual objects travelled over several decades in the first half of the 20th century.

Keywords: Ivan Skušek Jr., Slovene Ethnographic Museum, East Asia, collecting, provenance research

Po stopinjah: analiza Skuškove zbirke

Izvleček

V pričujočem prispevku so predstavljene preliminarne raziskave prvotnega obsega Skuškove zbirke na podlagi štirih seznamov in enega starejšega muzejskega inventarja zbirke azijskih predmetov, ki jih je Ivan Skušek ml. zbiral med šestletnim bivanjem na Kitajskem med letoma 1914 in 1920. Članek poskuša s primerjavo omenjenih dokumentov s prvim uradnim inventarnim zapisom ob prevzemu zbirke s strani Narodnega muzeja Slovenije poustvariti prvotni obseg zbirke. Z analizo in primerjavo teh zapisov ter z opiranjem na fotografske vire poskuša predmete izvirne Skuškove zbirke razvrstiti v štiri različne skupine, ki temeljijo na preliminarnih raziskavah provenience. Z več študijami primerov daje nov vpogled v dinamiko večinoma neznanih delov zgodovine zbirke ter prikaže poti posameznih predmetov skozi več desetletij prve polovice 20. stoletja.

Ključne besede: Ivan Skušek ml., Slovenski etnografski muzej, Vzhodna Azija, zbirateljstvo, raziskovanje provenience

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Introduction

The present paper offers the first insight into the rediscovered lists of the Skušeks' collection written in the time before the carefully chosen objects became public property as a museum collection called the Skušek Collection. Today, this collection of Asian material culture is kept at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum. The majority of the objects are currently kept in museum storage, and only smaller part of the collection is included in the permanent exhibition. However, before the current work little was known of the size of the original collection or the objects in it before it was formally taken over by the museum. Any lists of the collection before that time were considered lost or misplaced until June 2020, when several of them were rediscovered inside misplaced boxes in the museum storage. Together with the lists, some of the Skušek family's photographs were also re-discovered.

The article thus presents, compares, and analyses four lists of objects compiled between 1917 and 1950 and an excerpt from the so-called "old inventory book" of the National Museum of Slovenia, which took over the collection after Skušek's death before it was given to the Ethnographic Museum in 1964. In the first part of the paper basic information on Ivan Skušek Jr. (1877–1947) and his stay in China, as well as his collection of Asian objects which he brought with him when he returned to Ljubljana, are presented. The following part analyses four different lists and the "old inventory book" excerpt. The first three lists are the so-called "packing lists", where items are listed as the content of individual transportation (or storage) crates; the fourth list is a list of objects that Skušek's widow exhibited in her last apartment; the so-called "old inventory book excerpt" is an excerpt from the old inventory book of the National Museum of Slovenia[1] made at the official handing over of the collection.

All together these sources tell us how the nature of the collection has changed over decades and in many cases also reveal the interesting stories and paths of

1 What we know today as the Ethnographic Museum of Slovenia used to be part of the museum institution which is today the National Museum of Slovenia. The Ethnographic Museum became independent in several stages: first was establishment of the Ethnographic Institute inside the National Museum building in 1921, followed by the split from the National Museum and establishment of Royal Ethnographic Museum (Kraljevi etnografski muzej) in 1923, the latter being renamed to the Ethnographic Museum in 1941. In 1964 the museum was renamed the Slovene Ethnographic Museum (Palaić 2019, 187–91). That same year the collection the Skušek Collection came to the National Museum and was, due to its nature, transferred to the Ethnographic Museum (as seen in the old inventory book of the National Museum of Slovenia). For some time all of the collections designated as 'non-European' have been kept and displayed at the Museum for Non-European Cultures Goričane, a branch of the Ethnographic Museum. After its closure, the Skušek Collection was transferred to Ljubljana and is today still held by the Ethnographic Museum of Slovenia (ibid., 194–95).

specific objects. The research has confirmed that the original scope of the collection Skušek and his wife brought from China was significantly larger than the "Skušek Collection" which is today kept at the Slovene Ethnographic museum. The reason for this is a partial dispersion of the collection among Skušeks' friends, acquaintances, and relatives. This subsequently caused an interesting phenomenon of individual objects, once owned by the Skušek family, coming to the Slovene ethnographic museum via other people, or individual objects once part of the original scope of the Skušeks' collection being kept in collections of other institutions. Based on the research of the collection itself, comparing different sources, and individual object provenance in Slovenia, we can classify all the known objects into four different "provenance" groups: a) objects handed over to the Slovene Ethnographic Museum as the Skušek Collection; b) objects which came to the Slovene Ethnographic Museum through other, known and unknown channels; c) objects which were found in collections of other public institutions (e.g. other museums, buildings under government administration such as castles etc.); and d) objects whose current ownership or location are still unknown.

The findings are supported by photographs of objects and interiors from the Skušeks' private collection, which came to the museum with other documentation and objects, and museum photographs of objects from the Skušek Collection kept by the Slovenian Ethnographic Museum. Through the comparison of the reconstructed collection on the basis of documents and the lists written before the museum takeover I am therefore attempting to reconstruct the original collection of the Skušek family through analysis, cross-reference, and several case studies of individual objects and the at least parts of biographies which we can extrapolate from available information and documents.

Ivan Skušek Jr. and the Skušek Collection

Ivan Skušek Jr. was a I. class navy officer in the Austro-Hungarian navy. He was also one of the most important Slovene collectors of East Asian objects.[2] His career began as he concluded his studies and got employed by the Naval Ministry in Vienna. In 1913 he boarded an Austro-Hungarian army ship, a torpedo cruiser called "Kaiserin Elisabeth", as a Commissary Officer in charge of finances (Čeplak Mencin 2012, 98–99; Marinac 2017, 151). After Japan declared war on Germany and Austria-Hungary in 1914, the cruiser was ordered to sail to the

2 His collection encompasses objects mostly from China and Japan, but also from Korea, Tibet, and Mongolia.

Chinese port of Qingdao to help the army protect the German concession located there. After a devastating defeat in November of the same year, the Austrian and German officers were taken captive. Most of the prisoners were taken to Japanese internment camps, but officers and non-military personnel were captured by Chinese forces and taken to Beijing. Among them was Ivan Skušek Jr. (Čeplak Mencin 2012, 101–103; Marinac 2017, 156; Lipušček 2013, 41–43).

Even working as a Commissary Officer in an internment camp, Skušek had been granted some privileges, such as permission to move freely around the city (Čeplak Mencin 2012, 103). This enabled him to meet influential people and make important connections, as well as come into contact with objects of Chinese arts and crafts being sold around Beijing.

During his time in China, Skušek had no contact with his relatives back home. According to Ralf Čeplak Mencin (2012, 99–100), curator in charge of the Skušek Collection at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, the family went without any kind of contact for the six years of Skušek's internment. The only time he wrote home was in 1919 to inform them he was "alive, healthy, and soon returning home". Today we know that he was able to send and receive post, but the reasons for his lack of communication with his family at home are not known. Recently rediscovered[3] and translated letters[4] from a German missionary, Father Maurus Kluge (1873–1927), sent to Skušek in 1918 and 1919, give us some insights into Skušek's life during that time.[5] Their primary correspondence was concerning their mutual interest in ancient Chinese coinage and the exchange of information as well as physical coins. While there are none of Skušek's replies, the letters from Father Kluge shed some light on Skušek's deep interest in collecting Chinese art as well as active connections with "experts" in the field with whom he was apparently regularly meeting in Beijing.

Another piece of Ivan Skušek's transformation from a navy officer into a passionate collector of East Asian objects can be found through the written diaries of his younger brother, Franci Skušek, who talked to him regularly after his return from China. He wrote about Ivan Skušek going around Beijing and buying numerous Chinese antiquities:

> Uncountable shops sold various old objects, books, painted fans, furniture, paintings, vases, gods made of porcelain and other objects of art,

3 The letters were rediscovered inside misplaced boxes in the museum storage of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum.

4 The letters were translated from German to Slovene in 2020 by Niko Hudelja (Department of History, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana).

5 For more information on Kluge and his correspondence with Skušek see Grčar (2021).

> bronze statues, clothes, lanterns, standing or hanging, made of brass or artistically carved hardwood. In the southern part of Beijing there were roads where only shops of these kinds of objects stood [...] (Skušek, n.d.)[6]

It is known that Skušek was persistently building up his collection over several years of his stay. As discussed in this article, he had already accumulated a considerable amount of objects by 1917. However, the question of where this growing collection was stored over several years of his stay in Beijing still remains unsolved. Similarly mysterious is the question of the role of his Japanese wife, Tsuneko Kondō Kawase (1893–1963) (married name Marija Skušek), in accumulating this collection.

Tsuneko Kondō Kawase and Ivan Skušek met in Beijing between 1917 and 1919. The first time she is directly mentioned is in Father Kluge's letter, where he sends his regards to the "good Ms. Schmidt[7] and the children" (Kluge 1919) in a letter written on 4th March 1919. That same year, Skušek also mentioned her in the letter he sent home to his family, telling them he is bringing home a Japanese woman and two children (Čeplak Mencin 2012, 110). In July of the same year they reportedly visited her family in Gifu, Japan, then returned to Beijing and started preparations for return back to Europe. They married in June of 1920, the same month they embarked on an almost three-month long trip to Slovenia. Ivan Skušek with his wife and her two children (Mathias and Erika) therefore returned home on 8th September 1920. Roughly a month later, in October of the same year, the crates with the collection Skušek amassed in China arrived in Ljubljana by train.

The crates travelled from Beijing to Ljubljana separately from their owner(s), and arrived in two train carriages from Hamburg. From Beijing they were first transported by train to Tianjin, from the port they were shipped overseas to Hamburg, and from Hamburg, again by train to Ljubljana (Čeplak Mencin 2012, 110). Ivan's brother Frantček (or Franjo) wrote in his diaries that some of the crates were brought directly to their home, and some of the bigger crates were taken to storage (Skušek n.d.). He writes:

6 In the original: "Nebroj trgovin je prodajalo razne stare predmete, knjige, poslikane pahljače, pohištvo, slike, vaze, bogove iz porcelana in druge umetnine, kipe iz brona, oblačila, lestence stoječe ali viseče iz medenine ali iz umetniško izrezanega trdega lesa. V južnem delu Beijinga so bile ceste, kjer so bile samo prodajalne starih predmetov [...]" (Skušek, n.d.).

7 Tsuneko Kondō Kawase was previously married to a man named Paul Schmidt, a German Customs Officer stationed in Qingdao, with whom she had two children (Čeplak Mencin 2012, 110).

> [with Ivan] We were opening the crates almost every day in the afternoon, when I was free, and every Sunday [we were opening them] the whole day through. (Skušek n.d.)[8]

Ivan Skušek apparently had the intention of building a museum of Chinese art on the outskirts of Ljubljana, where his collection would be exhibited and where his wife "Tsu" would be the curator and guide (Čeplak Mencin 2012, 113). His dream of the museum sadly never came to pass, but the family did fill up their whole apartment with the objects he bought in China. They regularly accepted guests and proudly showed off various curiosities, and their home soon became the "centre of cultural and social life of Ljubljana's intelligentsia and art world" (Čeplak Mencin 2012, 113; Vampelj Suhadolnik 2019, 128).

Ivan Skušek Jr. died in 1947, and sometime before his death the family moved for the last time to a new apartment. Tsuneko Kondō Kawase, surviving both of her children, lived there until her death in 1963. The Slovene Ethnographic Museum keeps several photographs of the Skušek Collection as it was exhibited inside the family's homes.[9]

The Skušek Collection was initially a bequest by Ivan Skušek to the National Museum of Slovenia, however it formally came into their possession only in 1950, three years after Skušek's death. At first, the collection remained in the family's home, and upon a formal agreement Tsuneko Kondō Kawase became its honorary custodian. We know today that during this period the collection's objects became dispersed to some degree, mostly through gifts to family, friends, and acquaintances. Some objects were quite possibly also lost during the several moves of the collection into new homes. After Marija Skušek's passing in 1963, the collection was officially transferred to, and partially exhibited by, the National Museum of Slovenia. Through comparison of the lists of the original scope of the collection and the first inventory list of objects made at the museum, it is quite clear that only a part of Skušek's collection was actually bequested. In 1964 the "Skušek Collection" was given over to the Slovene Ethnographic Museum where it has remained ever since (Čeplak Mencin 2012, 112–17).

Today, the Skušek Collection is one of the 21 identified collections of East Asian art held in Slovene museums and other public institutions, and also one of the biggest (Vampelj Suhadolnik 2019, 131). Most of the objects are of Chinese origin,

8 In the original Slovene: "Zaboje sva z Ivanom odpirala skupaj vsaki dan popoldne, ko sem bil prost in vsako nedeljo celi dan" (Skušek, n.d.).

9 The exact dates of the Skušek family moving from one residence to another are not completely clear. For more information see Motoh (2021).

fewer are Japanese, one object (presumed) Mongolian, and one (presumed) Korean.[10] The overwhelming majority are dated to China's Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) and the following Republican period (1912–1949). The objects were of both higher and lower price range, and it is clear one of the main criteria guiding Skušek in acquiring objects was their diverse nature and wish for representation of as many different forms of art as possible.[11] In the collection we find such objects as big ornate pieces of furniture, architectural ceramics, Chinese imperial porcelains, coinage, Buddhist sculpture, several lacquer objects, clothing, and books, as well as a wide array of objects intended for everyday use, including a Japanese tea set, Chinese snuff bottles, dining utensils, a thermometer, and decorated make-up boxes. A special part of the collection is represented by Tsuneko Kondō Kawase's personal clothing—several beautifully made kimonos, which were clearly added to the collection just before it was taken to the museum.[12]

The collection has long been known only from museum inventory books, and its original scope was thus unknown. With the rediscovered lists written by Skušek himself and old inventories of the National Museum of Slovenia compiled with the help of his wife, we have, for the first time, an insight into the actual number of objects that Skušek accumulated and brought from China in 1920.

Lists and Inventories of the Skušek Collection

The following part presents and comments on the lists and inventories of the collection Ivan Skušek Jr. accumulated during his stay in Beijing in the years 1914 until 1920. The first and earliest list (List 1) was written in 1917, three years after Skušek arrival and internment in China. The second (List 2) and third lists (List 3) have many similarities. They both include a complete number of packing crates, their dimensions, and very rudimentary descriptions of inventory listings. List 3 is written in Slovene, and is, unlike List 2, dated to 1920. However, due to these two lists' near-identical contents it is safe to assume that the second and third lists both date to the approximate time period of Skušek's journey back to Europe. The fourth list (List 4) is a record of the collection's objects exhibited at Tsuneko Kondō Kawase's apartment from the year 1950 (after Ivan Skušek's death), and

10 A Mongolian oven (*mongolischer Ofen*) and a Korean cabinet (*koreanischer Kasten*) were recorded as such in all the presented lists and inventories, although their provenance is yet to be researched and confirmed.

11 For research on collecting practices of Skušek, see Vampelj Suhadolnik (2020).

12 In several photographs kept at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum she is shown wearing this clothing well into her old age.

the last reference (or document) is the entry from the old inventory book of the National Museum of Slovenia, which took over the objects that gained the name the Skušek Collection. All the lists, except the museum inventory, originally span over only two pages, and are either typed or handwritten in Slovene or German.

Apart from the four mentioned lists and an entry, another list of purchased objects existed. It was first mentioned by Franci Skušek in his diaries, where he wrote about his brother Ivan checking off the objects they unpacked together on a list. This list supposedly had every item in every crate recorded together with all the prices (in dollars) Skušek paid for each individual object (Skušek n.d.). Another clue we have is a citation from a list in a paper written by the former curator of the collection, Pavla Štrukelj. Her paper published in 1966 mentions a small notebook, owned by Tsuneko before her death, which reportedly had every object recorded from the time of transport from Beijing to Ljubljana. She cites it as "1 Mandarinmantel gold" (Štrukelj 1966, 57). However, no list fitting these descriptions has yet been found, and therefore it is currently presumed lost. If it were to be found it would likely represent the most detailed list of the collection in existence.

List 1: *Pakungsschema* (Beijing, 24th August 1917)

The first list is written by Skušek (*K. u. K. Marinekommissär 1. Kl. Johann Skušek*) and it is titled as "Packing list" (*Pakungsschema*). The list was written in Beijing (Peking) and is dated to 24th August 1917. The language is German. This is the earliest known written document of the objects which Skušek collected during his stay in Beijing between 1914 and 1917. This source (from here on referred to as 'List 1') gives us a list of forty numbered crates (e.g. *Kiste No 1*) followed by a detailed list of objects kept inside each individual crate. While this list does not record the dimensions the crates, it does give the most detailed register of their contents.

All different kinds of objects in these forty crates are counted, for example "one small narrow cabinet, two small wood carvings made of black wood" (*Einekleines male Kredens, 2 kleine Holzschnitzerein aus Schwarzholz*). This would give a good approximation of the number of objects the collection consisted of originally. However, two main issues arise as we study the list. The first issue is that several objects were, at the time, taken apart and stored in separate crates. Examples of this are two large wooden stands with ten decorative weapons, namely spears.

These are stored in five separate crates,[13] where all of the parts are counted individually, which gives the approximate number of individual components, but the actual number of objects themselves would in many cases still be hard to determine. The second issue is that some objects (or components) are often described too generally and it is not possible to determine exactly what object the names represented or part of what object certain components were. Example of the first are several different decorative wooden interior walls usually only described as "carved wall section" (*geschnitzte Wandabteilungen*), and an example of the second are components of furniture pieces which were taken apart, such as "two doors of the big cabinet" (*2 Türen von der grossen Kredens*). For the former, we cannot determine which decorative wooden interior wall was held in which crate, and for the latter, we cannot determine which cabinet the doors initially belonged to.

Despite some generalizations in the listings, the extensive entries for each crate's contents as well as actual numerical amounts of objects provided are of great importance in researching the Skušek Collection today, and give us some insight into how extensive it originally was. The list also tells us that by 1917 Skušek had already amassed a great number of objects of many different varieties. It also implies he was storing them for at least a few years in numbered crates (*Kiste*), most probably in preparation for an eventual move or change of location. It seems he was not expecting to settle in Beijing or intend to stay for a prolonged period of time.

List 2: *Verzeichnis und Dimensionen meiner Privateffekten* (no date)

The second list analysed in this paper (List 2) was, like List 1, most likely written by Ivan Skušek, or at least according to his narration. It was written in German, but is not dated and it is not completely clear where it was originally compiled. A location is given on page one next to the name of Ivan Skušek Jr.—"Laibach" (Ljubljana). At first impression this could indicate one of two things: either the list was compiled in Ljubljana, or that the list was created in Beijing and sent to Ljubljana. The missing dating makes it difficult to determine where or approximately when List 2 was written.

List 2 is titled "List and dimensions of my personal belongings" (*Verzeichnis und Dimensionen meiner Privateffekten*) with additional information of the crates'

13 Crate no. 1 held red horsehair decorations for the spears (*rotes Rosshaar für Boxerwaffenstangen*), crate no. 6 held ten spear handles (*10 Boxerwaffenstangen*), crate no. 12 held two stands for spears (*2 Boxerwaffengestelle*), crate no. 19 held ten spear-tops (*10 Boxerwaffen*), and crate no. 23 held four feet of the mentioned stands (*4 Füsse vom Boxerwaffengestell*).

dimensions, their volume, and their contents typed next to it. Next to the title of the list there is also an addition of "Belonging to the Embassy guard".[14] The inventory lists the 40 crates recorded on List 1, as well as additional 35 crates, bringing the complete count 75. Crates 41 through 75 are also additionally numbered with roman numerals, starting at 1. Crate no. 41 is therefore also numbered as "I", crate no. 42 as "II" etc. Four subsequent columns list each crates dimensions (*Dimensionen in cm*), its volume (*Inhaltim m3*), followed by a 2–3 digit number handwritten in pencil, and finally, the contents (*Anmerkung*). Nataša Vampelj Suhadolnik (2021, personal correspondence) shows that the numbers handwritten in pencil represent the weight (in kilograms) of each individual crate. The weight of the crates would, of course, be a piece of crucial information regarding the transport by ship and especially the transport by train. This data is a strong indicator that List 2 was actually compiled in Beijing and somewhat predates List 3 (discussed below).

In contrast to the detailed listing of contents in List 1, the contents recorded on List 2 seem much drier and more basic. In most entries only one or two objects are written down, and the rest are missing or labelled simply as curiosities (*Kurios*), e.g. "1 table and curiosities" (*1 Tisch und Kurios*). Based on the emphasis given to the measurements of crates and barely any attention given to the contents themselves, we can presume List 2 was written in Beijing or in any case before the transport of the objects.

List 3: *Seznam in obseg moje selitvene imovine* (Ljubljana, 20th October 1920)

The third list presented (List 3) is very similar in its contents to List 2. List 3 was handwritten in cursive by Ivan Skušek (signed at the end) in Ljubljana and is dated 20th October 1920. It is written in Slovene and originally titled "List and dimensions of my moving property" (*Seznam in obseg moje selitvene imovine*). The first column lists the number crates, and the numbering is identical to that used on List 2. The second column lists the dimensions of the individual crates, and the third and last column records the contents. While List 3 is almost identical to List 2, it still gives an exact date of when it was created, which roughly coincides with the timeframe of when the collection was supposed to arrive by train from Hamburg to Ljubljana. Another important difference is the lack of the weight of the crates, which might suggest that by this point the weight of individual crates was not considered that important anymore. It is safe to assume it was written at

14 In the original German: "*zugehörig zur Gesandschaftsschutzwache*".

approximately the same time as Skušek's objects arrived at Slovenia (at the time part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes). One of the more important differences among the mentioned lists (1, 2, and 3) is that the record of crates' contents in List 3 is somewhat more detailed than in List 2, but less detailed than in List 1 (e.g. see Table 1).

Table 1: Contents of crate no. 20 as recorded in three different packing lists.

	List 1	**List 2**	**List 3**
Crate no. 20	2 chairs, 1 Mongolian Oven, 2 doors of the large cabinet, 2 doors of the bookcase, 2 Buddhas[15]	Buddhas, chairs, wooden objects[16]	2 chairs, oven, doors, Buddhas[17]

List 4: *Delni seznam pohištva in stvari Marije Skuškove* (Ljubljana, 6th August 1950)

The fourth list is a rather short record of the objects Marija Skušek had displayed in her last home located on the Strossmayer Street 3/I in Ljubljana (List 4). It was originally typed up in Slovene language and is titled "Partial list of furniture and things of Marija Skušek (*Delni seznam pohištva in stvari Marije Skuškove*). It is dated 6th August 1950. It lists 216 objects set mainly in three rooms: 71 objects in the first room, 17 objects in the second, 20 objects in the third, and 98 objects with no designated room. The objects are mostly smaller items (compass, opium pipes, statues of Buddha, porcelain lamps, decorative roof tiles) or pieces of furniture intended for practical use as well as display purposes. The arrangement of the objects in the rooms is further confirmed by several photographs of the apartment interiors, which show the rooms filled up to the ceiling with objects of East Asian art (fig. 1). At the end of the list there is also a comment about additional 10 crates, which were supposedly unopened for 30 years due to lack of space. Where exactly these crates were stored is unknown, but it gives an interesting insight into how the collection was treated. It shows that by 1950 not all of the crates seem to have been opened since their transport to Ljubljana, or maybe not even since before that.

15 In the original German: "*2 Sessel, 1 mongolischer Ofen, 2 Türen von der grossen Kredens, 2 T*üre*nvom Bücherkasten, 2 Buddhas*".

16 In the original German: "*Buddhas, Sessel, Holzwaren*".

17 In the original Slovene: "*2 stola, peč, vrata, Bude*".

Figure 1. Chinese display cabinet at the Skušeks' home filled with smaller East Asian objects. (Source: Photo Archive of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana)

Old inventory Book of the National Museum of Slovenia—Skušek Collection

The "old inventory book" was compiled at the National Museum of Slovenia when the Skušek Collection was formally taken over. The inventory is composed of 373 entries with measurements of objects and Marija Skušek's commentary. According to notes, it was officially recorded at the beginning of 1950, and the collection in this inventory is labelled as the "Chinese-Japanese Collection of Kondo-Kawase Tsuneko, married Maria Skušek that she brought in 1920 from Peking to Ljubljana" (Old inventory book of the National Museum).

While the list itself is invaluable for research into the history of the collection, it also brings up the questionable attribution of the collection to Tsuneko Kondō Kawase.

After the death of her husband she remained the key person who could give information on the collection of objects she, quite literally, lived with for decades. The curator Pavla Štrukelj wrote, based on Tsuneko Kondō Kawase's words, that the collection originally belonged to her father, Count Kagijiro, with whom she supposedly lived in Beijing while he accumulated the objects of Asian art and built the collection, and later gave it to Tsuneko and Ivan upon their wedding (Štrukelj 1966, 57).

There are at least three accounts which expose this story as a fabrication. First is the list of the already packed 40 crates of objects written by Ivan Skušek himself in 1917 (List 1). If Ivan already had more than half the collection recorded three years before the wedding, it is not possible for it to have been a wedding present in 1920. Second is the letters of Father Kluge, which reveal Skušek's passion for not only collecting objects, but also actively acquiring knowledge about them. Third is Ivan's brother's notes, where he writes that while they were at home unpacking the crates Ivan was also sharing information about the individual items with his wife, since she was seeing the objects for the first time (Skušek n.d.). This information reveals several fabrications which persistently surrounded the Skušek Collection after Ivan Skušek's death. Therefore, while the inventory of objects recorded in the old inventory book excerpt is important, much data regarding the dates and ways of acquisition provided by Tsuneko Kondō Kawase herself is highly questionable and should not be taken at face value.

The inventory is, of course, important, especially in regard to the actual objects that ended up as part of the museum collection. It also tells us that many objects from the original scope of the collection did not make it into what is today, under the curatorship of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, officially called the Skušek Collection. They most probably stayed with various family members as mementos, or were given by Skušeks' to friends and acquaintances. It is also quite possible some objects got misplaced or lost during several relocations of the collection before it finally ended up displayed and stored at the Museum of non-European Cultures Goričane, and later at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum.

Reconstructing the Skušek Collection—Analysis of Lists, Inventories, and Photographs

Through the study of the presented lists we get the clearest insight yet into the actual size of the collection at the time it was brought to Ljubljana. Despite rather basic information on the contents on the packing lists or inventories, we can still determine different types of objects based on their use and/or materials they were made of. The most extensive and widely represented is the furniture[18] (see Table 2).

Table 2: Furniture types as they were packed for transport and recorded on Lists 1–3.

Type of furniture	**Objects and packing crates**
Tables and desks	7 bigger and 4 smaller tables (some disassembled) packed in crates no. 23, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 37, 50, 57, and 71.
Chairs	14 chairs (7 pairs), packed in crates no. 12, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, and 35.
Screens	Unknown number, some disassembled, packed in crates no. 44, 64, and 67.
Cabinets, closets, and frames	12 individual objects, most disassembled, packed in crates no. 1, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 17, 21, 24, and 40. Several parts (doors, shelves etc.) stores in 10 other crates.
Beds	Unknown number (at least 2), all disassembled, packed in crates no. 41, 42, 47, 48, 49, 65, and 66.
Standing mirrors	Unknown number (at least 3), all disassembled, packed in crates no. 18, 23, 25, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, and 59.
Ovens	2 ovens, 1 disassembled, packed in crates no. 20, 26, and 39.
Wooden lanterns	Unknown number, all but 2 disassembled, packed in crates no. 1, 3, 5, 7, 17, 18, 19, 24, 41, 42, 43, 50, 64, 67, 69, and 71.
Brass and other metal lamps	9 lamps, some disassembled, packed in crates no. 3, 17, and 32.
Weapons' stands	2 stands each holding 5 spears, all disassembled, packed in crates no. 1, 6, 12, 19, and 23.
Decorative carved interior walls	Unknown number of pieces, all disassembled, packed in crates no. 4, 6, 18, 27, 31, 32, 33, 34, 38, 62, 63, and 64.

The above table demonstrates how only one type of object can be divided into several sub-types. Moreover, due to the fact that many objects recorded on the lists were disassembled in expectation of transport and were also not assembled back together after Skušeks' return to Europe, it is, in many cases, very hard to determine the exact number of objects making up this group.

There are many objects most of which could be comfortably sorted into a wider group of "object for everyday use" or "for use in leisure time", such as opium pipes, snuff bottles, an abacus, ivory boxes, dining utensils, painted and embroidered fans, a riding crop, a racket, several ash trays, etc. In most cases it is hard or practically impossible to determine the exact number of objects of certain groups, either

18 For more information on Ivan Skušek Jr. and his collecting of Chinese furniture see Vampelj Suhadolnik (2020).

because many objects were disassembled during the process of storage and transport, or because there was no count given and only the title of a group of objects was given. Due to no additional information, besides the basic title of the object, it is also hard to determine which crate individual objects were stored in, unless there is only one object of its kind, such as the thermometer of cloisonné lamp stand (*1 Cloisonné Lampengestell*).

Determining the original scope of the collection is challenged also by the several objects recorded as a single entry, the first such example being the numismatic collection. On Lists 2 and 3 it is only inventoried as "Chinese coins" (*chines. Münzen*), however the two entries do not indicate an actual number of individual objects included. All of the Chinese coinage[19] is therefore collected as one single entry, which represents a larger number of objects. The coins accumulated in this collection were only inventoried individually after coming to the museum. The previous curator, Pavla Štrukelj (1921–2015), listed 216 individual coins kept on 15 separate tables (one to 17 coins per table) while recording the Skušek Collection in the *Acquisitions Book of Non-European Objects SEM, 1965*.

The second example is a "metal box of used silks and old brocade" (*1 Blechkiste mit alter gebrauchter Seide und alten Brokaten*). Studying Lists 1 through 4 we can see there are no individual entries on any pieces of clothing or other fabrics. The only reference to any fabrics is the above mentioned entry of a "metal box". It is therefore safe to conclude that all clothing items and other fabrics from the Skušek collection were stored in this one place (at least) during transport. We can only assume the actual contents (or number of objects) of the "metal box" on the basis of objects listed on old inventory book excerpt where we can see the museum received at least four embroidered silk curtains, four brocade and silk coverings, three embroidered skirts, six women's long-sleeved embroidered upper garments, and an embroidered male robe, supposedly of Imperial origins (Čeplak Mencin 2012; Štrukelj 1966).

A side-by-side comparison and cross-reference analysis of all the presented lists also shows that a surprisingly large number of objects have never made it on to the list of the official inventory of the Skušek Collection kept at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum today. As mentioned before, many of the objects had already been gifted to family members and friends of Skušek's even before the collection reached any museum. After Tsuneko Kondō Kawase's death a large number of objects was taken over as what is now called the Skušek Collection, first by the National Museum of Slovenia, then they were, due to the nature of the collection,

19 Coins from this numismatic collection are dating from the Zhou (1046–256 BCE) to the Qing Dynasties (1644–1912).

given over to the Ethnographic Museum and displayed in its branch location at Goričane. After the closure of Museum for Non-European Cultures Goričane the collection was relocated again several times through different storage locations until finally ending up at the present location at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum in Ljubljana. There is no doubt that some of the objects might have become lost or displaced during those moves. With this information, as well as with the help of information held in the old inventory books of the National and Ethnographic Museums, we can clearly see that the objects, which compose the Skušek Collection at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum represent only a part of a greater whole.

Apart from analysis of the aforementioned lists and inventories of the National Museum and the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, photographs of the Skušek family and their collection represent another relevant material for reconstructing the full collection. This analysis revealed four different groups of objects that were originally owned by Skušek based on the different paths and processes that brought them to their current locations: a) objects handed over to the Slovene Ethnographic Museum by Marija Skušek which were later inventoried as the Skušek Collection; b) objects which came to the Slovene Ethnographic Museum through other channels; c) objects in the collections of other institutions (e.g. other museums, buildings under government administration, such as castles); and d) objects whose current ownership or location are unknown.

The first group is the most extensive. It generally includes the objects which were included in the old inventory book excerpt and, of course, were more or less obviously also a part of Lists 1 through 3.

One such object is the so-called Mongolian oven. It is already recorded on List 1, which means Skušek had bought it and had it packed for transport by 1917. It is also one of the objects recorded on List 4, which means it was displayed inside the Skušeks' home in 1950. This is also confirmed by several photographs of the oven inside the residence surrounded by other objects (fig. 2).

Similarly, the abacus, thermometer, and compass are also recorded on List 1, two of them on List 3, but none of them on List 2. It seems that in this case they were put under the umbrella group of undefined "*Kurios*" on List 2. All three are again given on List 4 as being present in the apartment in 1950. This is also confirmed by a photo of the objects being exhibited on the shelves of an open Chinese display cabinet (fig. 1). All of the objects mentioned above are now kept in the Skušek Collection at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum.

Figure 2. Mongolian oven displayed inside the Skušeks' apartment. (Source: Photo Archive of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana)

The second group of objects represents the items which were originally a part of the Skušeks' collection and found their way to the Slovene Ethnographic Museum via other channels or people, and not bequested by Marija Skušek. Therefore these objects are physically stored inside the same museum, but officially do not belong the Skušek Collection. They do not form a separate collection, but are currently labelled as "Collections of Asian objects". Skušek and his wife often gifted objects to their family, friends, and acquaintances, whose descendants donated or sold their heritage to the museum. That these objects once belonged to Ivan Skušek is further confirmed by List 1 and old inventory book excerpt, as well as Skušek's photographs which show several of these objects.

The first such example is a bulbous porcelain lamp, (fig. 3).[20] This was confirmed when the new photographs of Skušek family's home interior and collection were found with the aforementioned lists. One of those images (fig. 4) shows a series of porcelains set up on top of a cabinet. One of the displayed pairs is also a pair

20 This group of objects is currently awaiting more in-depth and detailed research on provenance and acquisition.

of bulbous porcelain lamps on stands, the upper part being identical to the one mentioned above.

Figure 3. Upper part of a Chinese porcelain *famille verte* lamp, 19th century, China, overglaze enamel on porcelain. (Source: Storage of the Asian, Oceanian and Australian museum collections, Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana)

Further study of available sources showed that Lists 1 through 4 as well as the old inventory book excerpt record two pairs of porcelain lamps (*2 Porzellanlampen*) and one pair of porcelain lamps on stands (*2 Porzellanlampen mit Sockel*). Only one pair has been officially given over to the museum as part of the Skušek Collection. The mentioned bulbous lamp could originally have been part of pair mentioned on the lists. Through a study of the "Acquisition book of non-European objects" compiled by the previous curator of the collection Pavla Štrukelj, an entry indicating the possible acquisition of this painted porcelain bulb has been found. It records a "Chinese vase" bought in April 1982 from Mrs. Ljudmila Vidic living on Strossmayer Street 10 in Ljubljana (Štrukelj n.d.). Without the base, the bulb itself does indeed look like a small bottom-less vase, thus it is very possible that this entry refers to the object discussed here. Another hint pointing to its origin is the person who sold it living on Strossmayer Street, which means she was quite possibly a neighbour of Marija Skušek. The object was therefore definitely a part of the Skušeks' original collection, but came to the museum via another person.

Figure 4. Porcelain objects displayed on a carved Chinese cabinet inside the Skušeks' apartment. (Source: Photo Archive of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana)

The second example is a partial set of miniature Japanese figurines made of painted ceramic and fabric (fig. 5). The miniature dolls are part of a set of *hina-ningyō* 雛人形, ornamental dolls displayed on raised platforms covered in red fabric in time of the Japanese festival Hinamatsuri 雛祭り, also called Doll's Day or Girls' Day, which is celebrated yearly on March 3rd. These miniature figurines, the same as the porcelain lamp, are kept at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum separately from the official Skušek Collection. At the moment it is unknown how the dolls ended up at the museum, although the photographs of the Skušek family's collection taken at their home show the dolls were indeed part of it (fig. 6). From the picture we can also see that some of the dolls from the set are missing today. The remaining figurines are an example of objects ending up at the museum through unknown channels.

Figure 5. Japanese miniature dolls *hina-ningyō*, 19th century, Japan, painted earthenware and fabric. (Source: Photo Archive of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana)

Figure 6. Japanese miniature dolls *hina-ningyō* at the Skušek's apartment (lower left corner). (Source: Photo Archive of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana)

While these objects were originally part of the large collection Skušek brought from China, their individual stories contain additional information and their ways of ending up in a museum differ from the objects which were accepted by the museum as part of what is today known as the "Skušek Collection". In fact, for most of these objects which came to the museum in later years through known or unknown channels, the only direct connection to the Skušek family is the newly discovered photographs. Without those, the vague entries on the discussed lists as well as the rather dry entries in the museum's Acquisitions book would not suffice to make a reliable conclusion of how these objects made it from East Asia to Europe and ended up in a museum. Therefore, despite at one point being in Skušek's ownership, this group of objects should be treated appropriately as a separate group and researched with great care and attention to their individual stories as they did not make their way into the museum collection as actual part of the official Skušek Collection, but as gifts from several different people over several decades.

The third group of objects is similar to the second one, although the object has not ended up at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, but instead at Strmol Castle which today serves the protocol needs of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia. The castle is located some kilometres northwest of Ljubljana and it is one of only two castles in the whole country that retain the furniture and various interior equipment which belonged to the last private owners before the building was nationalized. So it is known the furniture inside the building was accumulated by the last owners, Rado (1901–1944) and Ksenija Hribar (1905–1944). On the first floor of the castle, in the anteroom, stands a carved wood Chinese table with an inlayed marble plate on top. It was previously labelled as a "Biedermeier table" (Leben 2013, 60), but it is actually a piece of finely carved Chinese furniture. Suggestion that the only collector of Chinese furniture in Slovenia, Ivan Skušek Jr., was possibly friendly with the Hribars', turned out to be true. The table in question was therefore confirmed to have been brought to Ljubljana by Skušek, as evident on List 1,[21] confirmed to have been kept and exhibited at the Skušeks' home through photographic sources (fig. 7), and found its way to the residence of Rado and Ksenija Hribar at Strmol Castle (fig. 8).

21 The table was disassembled and the bottom was stored in crate no. 26 (*3 Drachenfüsse vom runden Marmortisch*), and the top plate was stored in crate no. 30 (*1 Platte vom kleinen runden Marmortisch*).

Figure 7. Photograph of a round table with triple-dragon foot at an unknown location. (Source: Photo Archive of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum)

This connection opens up several new questions, such as how did this table ended up in the castle, were these people good friends, and thus was the table Skušek's gift, or did Hribar buy it? The bare fact that an object that was part of Skušek's collection found its way to a home of a very well-known and prominent couple of 20th century Slovenia definitely merits further research.

The last group is objects, which based on Lists 1-4, never made it into a museum, and, as of now, have also not been located at any other collection of a public institution. They are most probably still in the private hands of Skušek's descendants or other people who received them as a gift from Ivan or Marija Skušek. Some of the examples would be relatively easy to identify, such as a pair of Japanese Satsuma-style decorated vases, at least three Chinese Mandarin official hats, several books, and standing brass lamps. However, there are a few objects we can confirm are now "lost", meaning their whereabouts are unknown to us, but are most probably privately owned. One of such objects (or a set of objects) is a Japanese tea service (*1 japan. Teeservice*) which was listed as one of the two tea services on List 1. It is only known to us through a photograph taken by a member of the Skušek family (fig. 9).

Figure 8. Round table with triple-dragon foot at Strmol Castle. Photo by the author. (Source: Strmol Castle)

Figure 9. Photograph of a Japanese tea service at the Skušeks' apartment. (Source: Photo Archive of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum)

A more prominent example is the surprisingly famous tiger-skin rug. It was first recorded on List 1 being packed in crate no. 37 containing, among other things, "1 tiger and 2 wildcat's furs" (*1 Tiger- und 2 Wildkatzenfelle*). It is also listed on List 2 as "furs" (*Felle*), List 3 as "skin of tiger" (*koža tigra*), and List 4 as "tiger skin" (*tigrova koža*). Some people still remember the tiger fur exhibited at the Skušeks' apartment (Helena Motoh, personal communication, 2020), as List 4 would also suggest, but it was also part of a public exhibition in 1930 (Motoh 2020, 37).

That year's Ljubljana Grand Fair also hosted a so-called 'Missionary exhibition' of objects brought back home by Slovene missionaries working abroad. As Helena Motoh writes, "the objects for the ethnological department were provided by Tsuneko Skušek, who, with her furniture, screens, lanterns, tiger skin, and porcelain equipped one Japanese and one Chinese room" (fig. 10) (Motoh 2020, 37).

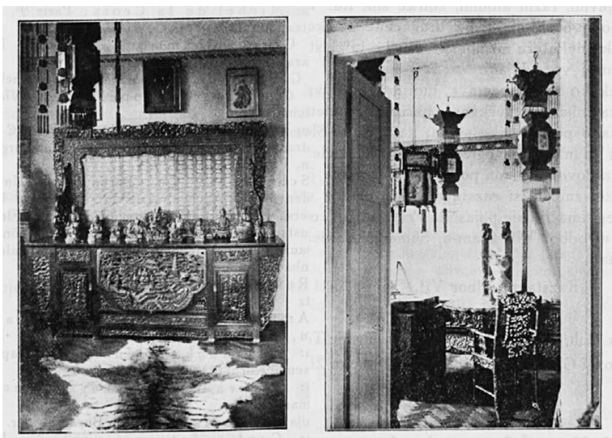

Figure 10. Chinese Room at a Missionary Exhibition, Ljubljana Grand Fair, 1930. (Source: Dular 1930, 88–89)

It is therefore clear that many objects (some seemingly quite well known in the past) have not ended up in the museum collection as part of the Skušek Collection, but were remarkable enough to be noticed on their own accord and remained in the memories of people who encountered them for decades to come.

Conclusion

The research into the objects themselves and their provenance, through several case studies presented in this paper, sheds new light on a museum collection with a very dynamic history. The findings based on the analysis of photographs, the four lists, and the excerpt from the old inventory book of the National Museum of Slovenia tell us that the official Skušek Collection is only part of a greater whole, of a bigger story, spanning further than only the Skušeks' home and connecting more people than just one family. The number of objects was originally more than the approximately five hundred we know as the "Skušek Collection" today. Through this research we also see that the variety of objects which Skušek collected was more diverse than the objects kept at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum imply.

While these findings give us several answers, they, at the same time, also raise even more new questions. How did the Skušeks' decide what type of objects they would gift to others? Who were the objects were gifted to, and what kind of relationships did Skušek and his wife have with these people? Did they see the objects as works of art, or did they consider them merely exotic curiosities? While this paper presents a preliminary analysis and an entry point into further studies of newly discovered documents, letters, and photographs, much work still remains to be done and many aspects of the collection are still to be researched.

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SPECIAL ISSUE
EAST ASIA IN SLOVENIA: COLLECTING PRACTICES, CATEGORIZATION AND REPRESENTATION

The Role of Marija Skušek in the Transmission of Japanese Culture to a Slovenian Audience

The First "Mrs. Japanese" of Slovenia between the Two World Wars: Marija Skušek and Her Series of Lectures on Japanese Women

*Klara HRVATIN**

Abstract

The paper's main aim is to bring forward Marija Skušek (born Tsuneko Kondō Kawase 近藤常子(1893–1963) and her presentations and transmission of Japanese culture to the Slovene (at that time Yugoslav) public as the first Japanese citizen who was naturalised in Slovenia. It focuses mainly on the period from 1920, when she first entered the country, until the Second World War, drawing special attention to one of her main activities—giving lectures in the years 1930–1931, and on a smaller scale 1935–1936, mostly presented to the public under the title "A Japanese about a Japanese Woman". Such lectures testify to the Japanese-Slovenian cultural exchanges, and the cultural milieu in Slovenia in which she acted. The author takes into consideration newspaper and journals sources discussing her activities and in particular the data available from the "Archive on Marija Skušek–Tsuneko Kondō Kawase", recently re-discovered at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum of Slovenia, where her original lecture's manuscripts, correspondence, newspaper clips and photos are collected.

Keywords: Marija Skušek (Tsuneko Kondō Kawase), Skušek Collection, Japanese culture, women's movements, Franja Tavčar

Prva »Madam Japanka« v Sloveniji med svetovnima vojnama: Marija Skušek in serija njenih predavanj o japonski ženi

Izvleček

Glavni cilj pričujočega prispevka je predstaviti Marijo Skušek, rojeno Tsuneko Kondō Kawase 近藤常子 (1893–1963), kot prvo Japonko, ki se je naturalizirala v Sloveniji, in njeno posredovanje japonske kulture slovenski (takrat jugoslovanski) javnosti. Osredotoča se predvsem na obdobje od leta 1920 – od prihoda Tsuneko Kondō Kawase v Slovenijo – do druge svetovne vojne, pri čemer posebej izpostavi vpogled v njene glavne dejavnosti, ki pričajo o japonsko-slovenski kulturni izmenjavi in kulturnem okolju v Sloveniji, v katerem je delovala. Natančneje, pod drobnogled bo vzeta njena serija predavanj v letih 1930–1931 in v manjšem obsegu 1935–1936, ki so bila javnosti večinoma predstavljena kot »Japonka

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o japonski ženi«. Osnova za članek je nedavno odkriti arhiv v okviru projekta VAZ – »Arhiv o Mariji Skušek – Tsuneko Kondō Kawase« v Slovenskem etnografskem muzeju, v katerem so zbrani tudi njeni izvirni rokopisi predavanj, dopisovanja, izrezki iz časopisov in fotografije.

Ključne besede: Marija Skušek (Tsuneko Kondō Kawase), Skuškova zbirka, japonska kultura, ženska gibanja, Franja Tavčar

Introduction

Known also by her nickname "Mrs. Japanese", Marija Skušek, born Tsuneko Kondō-Kawase (近藤常子1893–1963),[1] was the first Japanese person to be naturalized as a citizen of Slovenia (at that time part of Yugoslavia). She promoted Japanese culture and language and was crucial for the cultural exchange and friendship between the two countries from the 1920s to 1960s. Recently renewed attention has been paid to her within the project VAZ,[2] which in order to reconstruct the East-Asian collections in Slovenia examines the so-called Skušek Collection—the collection she and her husband, the naval officer Ivan Skušek (1877–1947), brought from China to Slovenia in 1920, presently in the custody of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum.

Her activities in promoting Japanese culture and the objects from the mentioned collection are recorded in newspapers and other sources mostly in the period after she married in church, accepting all Christian sacraments in 1927, when she adopted Slovenian name—Marija Skušek.[3] To start with, we can notice her participation in presenting Japanese culture and artefacts in the form of a "Japanese corner", sometimes called a "Japanese room", for exhibitions. Among the earliest known is the exhibition "Pogrnjene mize" (Exhibition of Set Tables) in 1927. Soon after we can read about her presentation at a Japanese Evening at Union Hotel Ljubljana with a lecture titled "Whoever suffers and even sheds tears, brings light and happiness to the whole family", which represents the beginning of another of her activities—lecturing on Japanese culture in the early 1930s.

1 Original Kawase, although also Kavase is used according to some sources including the name we can find on her marriage certificate from 1927. As for her name Tsuneko in Chinese characters, we can find information on her as well on the name written in kanji as 近藤恒子 (as for example in *Kotobanku*).

2 For more on the VAZ project and database of East Asian Collections in Slovenia, see https://vazcollections.si.

3 The name which she would often use after coming to Slovenia on her documents and photos, as well as on lecture manuscripts was as well Marija Tsuneko Skušek マリヤ常子スクシエキ.

Some of the sources even state that she gave more than three hundred lectures in her lifetime (Hanahusa 1987, 12).

The basis for the current article is the recently re-discovered archive within the framework of the project VAZ—"Archive on Marija Skušek – Tsuneko Kondō Kawase" at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, where her original lecture manuscripts, correspondence, newspaper clippings, photos, and so on are collected. What it aims to highlight is an examination of Marija Skušek's role in transmitting[4] the knowledge and perception of Japanese culture and society to Slovenian and also a Yugoslav audience, focusing on the period from 1920—from the time she entered the country until WWII. More precisely, it will take into consideration her series of lectures spanning in the years 1930–1931 and on a smaller scale 1935–1936, mostly presented to the public as "A Japanese about a Japanese Woman". Based on her original manuscripts, we will try to reconstruct the content of the lectures, their possible locations (places, institutions) and dates. At the same time, we give an insight into what kind of cross-cultural content the Slovene audience could learn about and try to take a closer look of what such activities reveal regarding the cultural milieu in which Marija Skušek acted.

Her lectures were richly represented in the newspapers of the time, but to this day there has been no research that focuses on an analysis of her role as a lecturer during the interwar period. In this regard, the author intends to examine her original manuscripts for the lectures, as well as newspaper and journals sources discussing her activities. More specifically, this study will draw from the "Archive on Marija Skušek – Tsuneko Kondō Kawase", and on a smaller scale the "PMS-MP Archives, Anton Lenarčič: Letters and Records Related to the Collection of Antiquities and Artworks from the Chinese Skušek Family" from the Maritime Museum "Sergej Mašera" Piran.

Background: The Story, or Stories, of Marija Skušek

If we look for Marija Skušek in Japanese or Slovene reference books, online encyclopaedia and databases[5] then we can find the following information about her life. Born in Gifu Prefecture, Japan, she would later move to Northeast China. She met her husband presumably in Beijing, where she probably moved with her

4 On transmission of Japanese culture by Marija Skušek to Slovene audience see also Visočnik Gerželj (2021).

5 Such as *Slovenian biography* (SAZU) (Štrukelj 2013) or the Japanese *Kotobanku*, a digital version of the Japanese name dictionary, and the Japanese *Webcat Plus* database.

family after the Russo-Japanese War.[6] Among her major activities in Slovenia, Marija Skušek was a head nurse for the Red Cross and active council member, receiving the group's highest award in 1962. She is also briefly mentioned as a promoter of cultural exchanges between Japan and Slovenia, and a lecturer on Japan. The fact which stands out in her bibliography is her marriage in 1927 (April 18), when she accepted all the Christian sacraments and took on a Slovenian name—Marija Skušek.

More details on Marija Skušek's life before she came to Slovenia are given by Ralf Čeplak in his book *V deželi nebesnega zmaja: 350 let stikov s Kitajsko* (2012, 109–112). Before travelling to Slovenia, she and Ivan Skušek had a civil marriage, while they would arrive in Slovenia on 8 September 1920, together with her children—son Matthias Schmidt (1912–1933) and daughter Erika Schmidt (1914–1958)—which she had had from a previous marriage with the German senior customs official Paul Heinrich Schmidt. The combination of rail and ship travel took three months, starting with a train ride from Beijing to Tianjin, then the family continued the journey aboard different ships to Nagasaki, Singapore, across the Indian Ocean to Aden, Suez, Marseille, and Trieste, and finally by train to Ljubljana, where Marija Skušek would stay until her death in 1963, surviving her whole family. With the exception of her last trip home, probably in 1919, when she visited her mother in Gifu, together with Ivan and her children, she never went back to Japan, even though in her later years she clearly expressed a wish that "I would like to see Tokyo again. After all those years" (Govc 1963, 7).

The collection of hundreds of valuable Japanese and Chinese artefacts, some which could have possibly come from the Chinese Imperial Court, travelled to Slovenia via a different route, initially by train to Tianjin, then by sea to Hamburg and finally by train to Ljubljana (Čeplak 2012, 110). Throughout her and Ivan's marriage a constant ambition was to build a museum where they could store all their antiquities[7] they had brought from China, but they were faced with too many obstacles and unfortunately their plans were never realized. Ivan Skušek taught his wife Marija as much as possible about the artefacts. As he said himself:

> Tsu will receive guests in a Japanese kimono. I will explain to them the origin and age of the exhibited objects. When I would not be at home, she will do that. I've been teaching her systematically for a while now, so she kind of got into the subjects and memorized them. (Skušek Franci n.d.)

6 For more on the history of China's relations with Slovenia at the time, see Lipuščček (2013).

7 The project was supported by architect Jože Plečnik, with whom the couple had a good relationship (Marinac 2017, 170).

After Ivan Skušek's death in 1947, Marija Skušek tried to secure a suitable place for the collection on her own, as well as a stable financial situation when acting as its custodian. To protect the collection, she applied for help at the Institute for the Protection and Scientific Study of Cultural Monuments, which inventoried 373 objects (Marinac 2017, 171; *Stara inventarna knjiga Narodnega muzeja* n.d.), with some parts of it taken to the Modern Gallery and Slovene National Museum. Everything seemed ready for the collection to finally get its own place and for Marija Skušek to receive a monthly annuity, but finally Maria and the family decided to decline the offer as they considered the proposed payment too low. Later, in 1955, she tried to bring the collection under the auspices of the Maritime Museum "Sergej Mašera" Piran. Then the Villa Istrica in Portorož was chosen as s a possible new home for the collection as well as living quarters for Marija Skušek as its custodian, but as the building was still owned by an Italian optant the Skušek family decided not to move the collection there (see Marinac 2017, 170–72). After her death in 1963, the collection was taken over by the Slovene National Museum, which in turn handed it over to the Slovene Ethnographic Museum in 1964.

In the 1970s, the Skušek Collection and its relation to Marija Skušek were mostly studied by the ethnologist Pavla Štrukelj (Štrukelj 2013). In 1955, Štrukelj was employed as a curator for non-European collections at the Slovenian Ethnographic Museum in Ljubljana, while in the period 1964–1990 she ran the Museum of Non-European Cultures in Goričane Castle, where the Skušek Collection was exhibited as the largest and permanent exhibition until 1990 (Čeplak 2012, 117; Marinac 2017, 172). Štrukelj was also in charge of the collection's inventory (*I. inventarna knjiga muzeja Goričane* n.d.). Some additional facts about the collection management and the Skušek family itself have been gathered by Ralf Čeplak (2012, 98–117), who replaced Pavla Štrukelj after she retired as curator of the Asian, Oceanic and Australian museum collections at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, as well as curator at the Museum of Non-European Cultures in the Goričane Castle until 1990, when the museum was closed for renovation. We can also find interest in Marija Skušek from the Japanese side. In the 1990s, Ms. Ruriko Hanahusa 花房るり子, then Ruriko Chida 千田るり子, lived in Ljubljana, studying at the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Ljubljana. She was eager to carry out research on Marija Skušek, met her husband's relatives and obtained various materials, but finally decided not to continue with the research owing to the frictions within the family (Shigemori Bučar, email to the author, January 28, 2021).[8]

8 The activities of Marija Skušek were also recorded in Japan and she would also write articles on Slovenian culture for Japanese newspapers such as *Asahi Shinbun* (Kondō 1957). Recently, we could find her name also in the publication by Tadao Kumada—*Amazing Japanese! Ancestors who Crossed the Sea (A Supplementary Volume)* (*Sugoi zo Nihonjin!- Zoku, umi o watatta gosenzosamatachi* すごいぞ日本人!—続・海を渡ったご先祖様たち) (Kumada 2009).

In research that has been conducted to date, as well as in newspaper articles on Marija Skušek, a number of views or constructs were formed, especially with regard to her family roots and the period before her arrival in Slovenia. For example, certain assumptions about her family having noble roots (as she is in many sources mentioned as a daughter of court architect Kondō-Kawase Kagijiro), that some of the items from the collection were her father's legacy, the suggestions she might have been a geisha in the past, as well as other matters for which there is no relevant evidence. This article will not deal with such issues, or provide new information on them.

Marija Skušek's First Series of Lectures in 1930 and 1931: Original Transcripts and Venues

It is hard to imagine what an attraction Marija Skušek was in the 1920s and 1930s when the citizens of Ljubljana watched her walking in a Japanese kimono along the city streets. What is certain is that she was simply loved by the people in Slovenia and beyond, and often described as a "gallant woman from Ljubljana" (*Slovenec* 1930b), "an educated and nice lady" (*Slovenski narod* 1936), "Ljubljana's Japanese lady" (Kajzer 1995, 304), "always smiling and full of her unique politeness" (*Ljubljanski dnevnik* 1963), on the basis of which we can conclude that she was generally well accepted. Some sources go even further, noting her nicknames of "Lady Japanka (Mrs. Japanese)", "Okasan (mother)" (Govc 1963), "teta Tsu (aunt Tsu)" (*Ljubljanski dnevnik* 1963), which also speak of her close ties with the Slovene people.

Her series of lectures on the Japanese woman and her role in a rapidly changing society, Japanese culture and customs attracted much attention in Slovenia in the 1930s. Regarding Marija Skušek's manuscripts, as well as newspaper reports on her events, there had to be at least twenty lectures at the time in Slovenia and nearby. The first lecture was held in Ljubljana, on January 24th in 1930, were Marija Skušek lectured at the District Workers' Insurance Office (fig. 7), invited by the General Women's Association in Ljubljana (Splošno žensko društvo v Ljubljani), the first Slovenian organization for women's rights that was founded in 1901, which mostly fought for women's suffrage, education and work.

> An interesting lecture accompanied by slides. On Friday 24th, at 8 o'clock this month (January, 1930), a Japanese lady Mrs. Marija Skuškova-Kondō is to present a lecture On a Japanese woman at the Okrožni urad za zavarovanje delavcev (District Workers' Insurance Office) in Miklošičeva

Street. As a wife of a bank director, she has lived in Ljubljana for a long time, but she is in constant contact with her homeland and even contributes to their journals. She intends to give an insight into the life of a Japanese woman, her customs and traditions and her striving to improve her position. For her colourful presentation, she will be dressed in a precious kimono. Admission is free for everyone, with only 3 dinars to be paid for heating and lighting. (Skušek, Marija n.d.)

Figure 1. Marija Skušek (1893–1963), making a radio show on Japan at the beginning of the 1930s. (Source: Photo Archive of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana)

For the presentation she prepared 15 typed pages of text on the topic (ibid.). According to the media reports, she began with a short introduction in Japanese and also concluded her presentation in Japanese, and before finishing the lecture she also had a few words to say about the Japanese characters and writing system (fig. 10). The front page of the lecture text was entitled *endai* 演題, meaning "the subject of the lecture/speech", and in the right corner she signed it with her distinct signature Marija Tsuneko Skušek (マリヤ常子スクシエキ) (fig. 3).

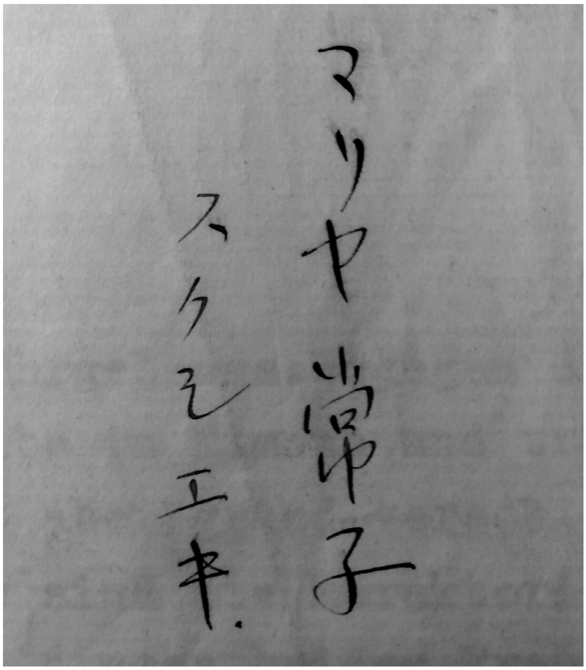


Figure 2. Marija Skušek's distinct signature Marija Tsuneko Skušek (マリヤ常子スクシエキ) written in katakana except for the name Tsuneko, on her prepared draft for the lecture entitled *endai* 演題, the subject of the lecture/speech, from around the 1930s. Photo by the author. (Source: Archive of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana)

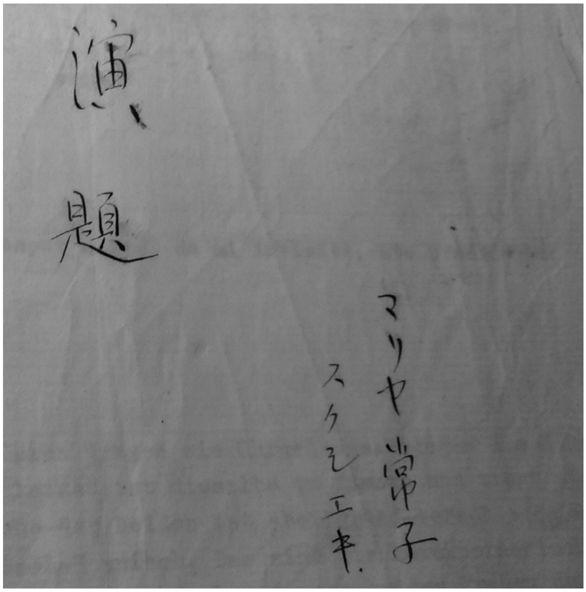


Figure 3. A photo of the cover page of the text Marija Skušek prepared for the lecture. Photo by the author. (Source: Archive of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana)

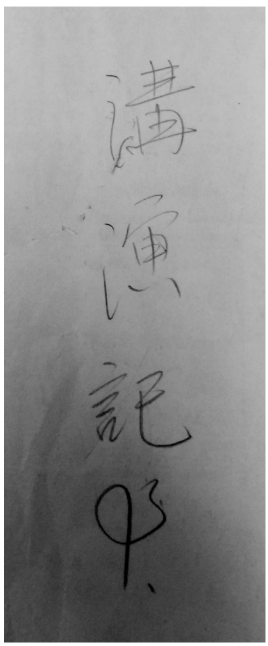


Figure 4. Marija Skušek's handwritten title *kōenkiji* 講演記事 (clippings of newspaper articles on her lectures). Photo by the author. (Source: Archive of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana)

Based on her original scripts, kept at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum—"Archive on Marija Skušek–Tsuneko Kondō Kawase", it is clear that she had very carefully prepared two versions of the speech, one in German, one in Slovene. She used both, depending on the occasion and the place where the lecture was held. We know she could speak Japanese, Chinese and German,[9] with which she became acquainted in China, as well Slovenian, but at her earlier presentations she chose to speak German, as it was the language she could communicate in better than in Slovenian, while for her later performances she started to use Slovenian as well.

> Mrs. Lecturer will hold her lecture as on Tuesday in German, although she also speaks Slovene, for the reason, as she herself said, because the Slovene language was the hardest for her to learn and to handle, as it is the most difficult of all languages. (Skušek, Marija n.d.)[10]

Characteristic of the text for her speech in Slovene were the marks with an acute accent (/) with which she marked the stress of each word, which would make the pronunciation easier (see footnote 15). Be it in Slovene or German, her lectures were very well received, and in many cases, she had to make further appearances due to the great demand, as we can read below.

> At the request of those 300 visitors, who had to return because the hall was already full after 6 o'clock, Mrs. Tsuneku Marija Skušek responded most readily to their wish, so she will repeat her lecture on Thursday, 20th of November 20 at the Pučko sveučilište. (Skušek, Marija n.d.)[11]

On the back page of the German version of the text we can find the dates and places of the lectures that she carefully wrote down (fig. 5), but which do not give the whole picture of the frequency of her lectures, and neither do they include the timetables of her lectures to be given afterwards. She travelled quite far and told her story in different places and at different institutions (figs. 6–8). Especially well noted was the first lecture in Ljubljana. From a letter sent to her and signed by Janko Kukovec (the head of the People's University

9 As Marija Skušek was previously married to German customs official Paul Heinrich Schmidt, she could handle German well.

10 "Gospodja če predavačica održati svoje predavanje kao i u utorak na njemačkom jeziku, premda govori i slovenski, s razloga, kako je sama rekla, jer je slovenski jezik najtežje naučila i najmučnije vlada s njime od svih jezika."

11 "Na želju onih 300 posjetnika, koji su se morali povratiti jer je dvorana bila več prepuna posilje 6 sati, gdja Tsuneku Marija Skušek odzvala se najpripravnjije njihovoj želji, pa če ovo svoje predavanje opetovati u četvrtak 20. studenov u Pučkom sveučilištu."

of Maribor from 1924 to 1941), inviting her to give a lecture at the university after hearing about the success of her lecture in Ljubljana (Kukovec 1930), we can learn the public was eager to hear from her. Her lectures were highly valued and she was mentioned as an honoured lecturer of the institution together with lecturers such as Prof. Josef Strzygowski, Prof. Aleksej Jelačić, Miss Fanny Susan Copeland, Alma Karlin, and others (Potočnik 2020, 621). Besides lectures in Slovenia, she travelled to Graz in Austria and different parts of Yugoslavia. In Zagreb she was scheduled to give only one lecture, but she was so popular she gave it four times in one week (see poster of Marija Skušek's lecture in Zagreb, fig. 13).

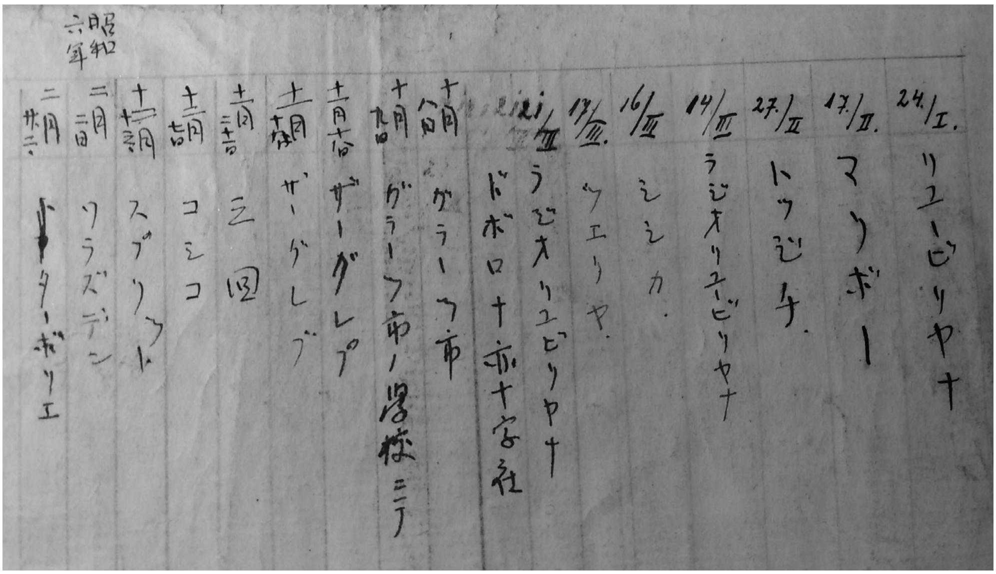


Figure 5. Dates and places of the lectures written by Marija Skušek as a note on the last page of the German language text of her speech entitled *endai* 演題, on "A Japanese woman". Photo by the author. (Source: Archive of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana)

Table 1: Slovene and English transcription of the Japanese text in fig. 5. It includes the dates and as well the places of the lectures. The venues (halls) are added in brackets, where they could be verified.

Date of performance	Place of performance (hall)
1930	
24.1. 1930	Ljubljana (*Dvorana okrožnega urada za zavarovanje delavcev na Miklošičevi cesti* (District Workers' Insurance Office in Miklošičeva street))
17.2. 1930	Maribor (*Ljudska univerza (Kino Apolo)* (People's University (Cinema Apolo))
27.2.1930	Tržič
14.3.1930	Radio Ljubljana
16.3.1930	Šiška (*Samostanska dvorana* (Monastery Hall))
17.3.1930	Celje (*Ljudsko vseučilišče v trgovski šoli* (People's University in the School of Commerce)
21.3.1930	Radio Ljubljana
	Dobrna (?) Red Cross Society
8.10.1930	Graz
9.10.1930	Graz
18.11.1930	Zagreb (*Pučko otvoreno učilište Zagreb* (Public Open University Zagreb)[12])
18.11.1930	Zagreb (*Pučko otvoreno učilište Zagreb* (Public Open University Zagreb))
21.11.1930	Zagreb (*Pučko otvoreno učilište Zagreb* (Public Open University Zagreb))
7.12.1930	?
11.12.1930	Split (*Narodno pozorište* (National Theater))
1931	
2.2.1931	Varaždin (*Pučko otvoreno sveučilište Varaždin*) (Public Open University Varaždin))
?.2.1931	Trbovlje (?)

12 The institution known today as the Public Open University Zagreb (*Pučko otvoreno učilište Zagreb*—POUZ), which was previously called the Moša Pijade Workers' (and People's) University (*Radničko (i narodno)* sveučilište "Moša Pijade"—RANS).

Figure 6. Union Hotel Ljubljana, the venue of the Marija Skušek's lecture in 1930 (on 6th January), presented as part of a Japanese Evening. (Source: Grand hotel Union)

Figure 7. District Workers' Insurance Office on Miklošičeva Street (the arched entrance marks today's Health Insurance Institute of Slovenia), the venue for the first of Marija Skušek's series of lecture in 1930–1931. (Source: Wikipedia 1928)

Figure 8. The building of the first studio of Radio Ljubljana (on the site of a former salt warehouse on Bleiweisova Street in Ljubljana). (Source: Wikipedia n.d.)

On the Content: Japanese Women, their Rights and Women's Movements

The aforementioned lectures presented different topics concerning Japanese society and women, giving especially detailed information on the position of Japanese woman at that time. Also, on the level of the presentation, Marija Skušek would along the presentation show slides of Japan, in some instances she would also present Japanese dances and songs, while she would give her lectures in a kimono, which probably added to their appeal (see fig. 1). The version of the text of her presentation recently found in the "Archive on Marija Skušek – Tsuneko Kondō Kawase" was entitled as *endai*[13] (演題, meaning "the subject of the lecture/speech") as already mentioned, and has no certain title. When we read about in the media of the time, and particularly newspaper and radio announcements, it was usually referred to in the Slovenian media as a lecture called "A Japanese about a Japanese Woman", or "Woman in Japan" or in German language media as "Eine Japanerin über die japanische Frau". She used this text as a basis for most part of her lectures (Skušek, Tsuneko Marija n.d., 1–15). Concerning the topic of the lecture, we could divide it into three major thematic parts. She would mostly discuss 1) Japanese ideals for womanhood, 2) women's changing social position in the late 19th to early 20th century, and 3) insights into Japanese women's etiquette and the Japanese language. In the second thematic part of the lecture, she included two subtitles, namely "Women's Schools" and "A Woman in Public Life", while the third thematic part included the subtitles "The Woman, the Walk of a Japanese Woman" and "The Age of a Japanese Woman".

At first the audience could learn about the differences between Chinese and Japanese ladies, which Marija Skušek felt Europeans tended to confuse: their differences regarding dressing and customs in relation to wearing jewellery, emphasizing that compared to a Chinese lady a Japanese woman has "healthy legs" (Skušek, Tsuneko Marija n.d., 1). She characterizes Japanese women with the attributes "boundless patience, blind obedience, grace, generosity, and great sacrifice in all circumstances" (ibid.). She asks the audience not to think she is praising herself as a Japanese woman, and further mentions that famous scholars and world travellers share her views, noting the description of Japanese women given by Lafcadio Hearn (1850–1904),[14] pointing out that a "Japanese woman forgives a hundred times and sacrifices a thousand times, while she calmly endures the greatest contempt" (ibid., 1–2).

13 The author uses the same term, *endai*, when referencing Marija Skušek's lecture manuscript (see Skušek, Tsuneko Marija n.d.).

14 Lafcadio Hearn (or Koizumi Yakumo 小泉 八雲, 1850–1904) was a writer of Greek-Irish descent who was married to a Japanese woman and known for his books on Japanese culture.

She continues with 10 pieces of advice, in which spirit Japanese women are taught to live or are advised before they get married, in which we can find all the necessary things a Japanese woman has to take into consideration before getting married. Below are the first three of the ten pieces of advice, as mentioned by Marija Skušek. They are taken from the original text of her lecture, as it was typed and edited with the acute accents (/). We can see as well how she added the readings in katakana for some words, as well as Chinese characters for some names and words, so she could pronounce them more easily.

> 1. When you get married, the house of your parents is no longer your home, but your home is only that of your husband. You must definitely forget your father's house, your birth house. You left it and you can't return anymore.
>
> 2. The main person in your new home is your husband. You can never in any way object to him. You should not even think about it. You have to read every wish in his eyes and listen to him blindly. Even if your husband would do you wrong or put you in trouble, you must never be angry with him for that, but try to calm him down with a kind face and the most beautiful words and give him the right of way in everything. Avoid any quarrel with him.
>
> 3. If your husband gets into trouble, violates the law or harms it, you must never think that you are allowed to do the same thing. You must always remember that you are walking the pure path of a woman, and avoid everything that could inevitably lead you to fail in your faithful wife duties. (Skušek, Tsuneko Marija n.d., 2–3) [15]

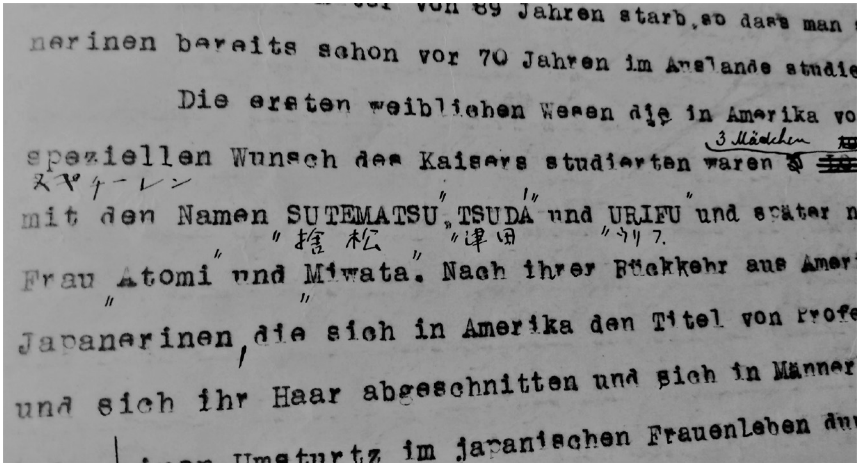
All of three pieces of advice tell us how a woman has to be devoted to her husband after marriage, without equal rights; she should not be jealous, lie or disobey her husband, and respect him as well as his parents (Skušek, Tsuneko Marija n.d., 2–4). With all the rules she has been given a Japanese woman learns to act humbly, and in many cases has to accept a life of what she calls "self-denial"

15 "1. Ko se omožíš, híša tvójih stáršev ni več tvoj dòm, ámpak tvoj je samó dóm tvójega možá. Očétovo híšo, rójstno híšo móraš vsékakor pozabíti. Zapustíla si jo in se nič več ne móreš v njo vrníti.
2. Glávna oséba v tvójem nóvem dómu je tvoj mož. Móžu nikákor in níkdar ne smeš ugovárjati. Na to níti mísliti ni. Vsáko žéljo mu móraš z očí bráti in ga slépo slúšati. Nej bi ti mož stóril še táko krivíco ali nepríliko, se za to nikákor ne směš nanj jezíti, ampak skušaj ga s prijaznim obrazom in z najlepšo besedo pomiriti in mu v vsem práv dáj. Vsákega prepíra z njim se popólnoma ìzogíbaj.
3. Če bi mož zašél na nápačna póta in zákon kŕšil ali mu škodovál, nikakor ne sméš mísliti, da sméš mórda ísto, kár je stóril on. Védno móraš pómniti, da hódiš po čísti póti žéne, in se vséga izogibati, kar bi ti móglo tvójim dolžnóstim zvéste žéne iznevériti."

(Skušek, Tsuneko Marija n.d., 2–4). For example, a woman has to wait for her husband to come home, even if he is very late, and follow the old Japanese custom "in the case that the husband brings a geisha to the house, she should not show her resentment but accept her husband's companion in the friendliest way possible" (ibid.). She even mentions the habit of geishas visiting homes for the new year bringing gifts to their best clients and thanking the wives for their husbands having visited her, and hoping they will be able to do the same in the following year (ibid.). When a Japanese woman marries, she becomes her husband's property, and only if her husband's parents allow it can she visit her old home and her parents, and if anything goes wrong or she cannot handle the burden of married life, she gets a small *harakiri* knife, which can "aid her" (ibid.).

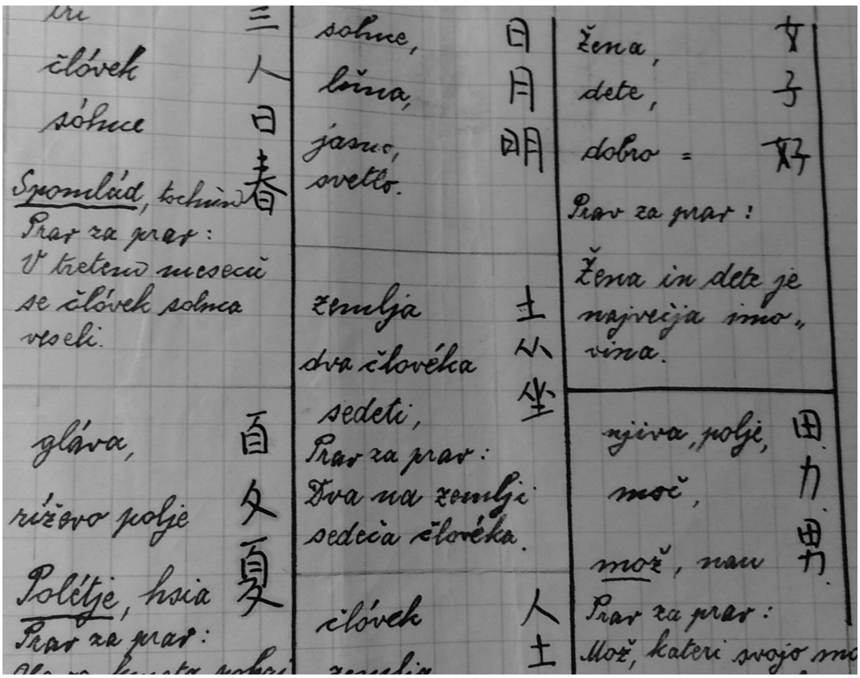
The above advice could remind us of Neo-Confucian thought and values based on *The Great Learning for Woman* (女大学, *Onna Daigaku*), which was often gifted to new brides as a textbook directed toward their moral education. It is usually attributed to the author and Neo-Confucianist philosopher Kaibara Ekke 貝原益軒 (1630–1714), following the Neo-Confucian intellectual orthodoxy of Edo period (1603–1867) Japan, imposing total subordination of women to the needs of the husband. If not directly related to this text, it could be related to some other textbooks form the same genre of morality texts known under the name *joshiyō ōrai* (女子用往来), written for women in the Edo period. Texts of this kind were widely published and circulating in the cities of Edo, Kyoto, Osaka, Nagoya, Sendai and Mito (see also Doi 2011, 4). The same texts, however, were strongly criticized by the progressive intellectuals in Japan in the Meiji period (1868–1912) when the country started to modernize, as they presented a poor picture of women's status in Japan in comparison with the West, when one measure of the degree of modernity in a country was how women lived (ibid., 1). It could also remind us of the educational ideal of *Ryōsai Kenbo* (Good Wife, Wise Mother), which appeared in the latter part of the Meiji period, which imposed an ideal traditional role for woman as a symbol of cultural identity, one criticized by feminists for its denial of women's equality in education, work, and marriage.

In the continuation of the lecture, including the sections which she entitles "Women's Schools" and "A Woman in Public Life", she takes a completely different stance, emphasizing what we could call "the modern Japanese woman" and the tendency to search for a better social position and the new possibilities in the emergence of feminist movements.



von 89 Jahren starb, so dass man
nerinen bereits schon vor 70 Jahren im Auslande studie
Die ersten weiblichen Wesen die in Amerika vo
3 Mädchen
speziellen Wunsch des Kaisers studierten waren
mit den Namen SUTEMATSU, TSUDA und URIFU und später n
Frau Atomi und Miwata. Nach ihrer Rückkehr aus Amer
Japanerinen, die sich in Amerika den Titel von Profe
und sich ihr Haar abgeschnitten und sich in Männer
Umsturtz im japanischen Frauenleben du

Figure 9. The part of Marija Skušek's text from her prepared speech in German, where she mentions women who defined Japanese education at the beginning of 20th century. Photo by the author. (Source: Archive of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana)



tri 三
človek 人
sólnce 日
Spomlád, tchun 春
Prav za prav:
V tretem mesecu
se človek solnca
veseli.
gláva, 百
riževo polje 夂
Polétje, hsia 夏
Prav za prav:

solnce, 日
luna, 月
jasno, 明
svetlo.
zemlja 土
dva človéka 人人
sedeti, 坐
Prav za prav:
Dva na zemlji
sedeča človéka.
človek 人
土

Žena, 女
dete, 子
dobro = 好
Prav za prav:
Žena in dete je
največja imo-
vina.
njiva, polje, 田
moč, 力
mož, nan 男
Prav za prav:
Mož, kateri svojo mo

Figure 10. An excerpt from Marija Skušek's notes explaining Japanese characters, which she would introduce at the end of her lectures, such as (framed text): "earth" (土), "two people" (人人), "to seat" (座), "in other words: two on the earth seating man". Photo by the author. (Source: Archive of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana)

The section "Women's Schools" indicates Marija Skušek was trying to demonstrate the rights of Japanese woman in comparison to the woman rights in America, with a focus on education, with women being able to attend regular educational institutions such as high school and college, along with education being provided for midwives and sister nurses, and finally a school for members of the church. She put special attention on a school for the higher nobility or so-called school for princesses, which would have separate facilities for each girl, while every big city in Japan at that time also had school for maids, where they could learn geography, history, arithmetic and literature, besides handicrafts and housework (Skušek, Tsuneko Marija n.d., 7).

Furthermore, she gives an outline of Japanese women and their rights in the early 20th century, mentioning among other things that Japanese women were "allowed to elect men to state and municipal assemblies, while they are not allowed to be elected themselves" (Skušek, Tsuneko Marija n.d., 8) in the year 1925. An important part in her speech are the depictions of women acting to achieve women's rights concerning equality, education, social protection and the abolition of low tea houses or brothels. She takes the position of a woman who would like to change the inequality between the sexes, and gives an insight into the active women's movements and individuals. She highlights Japanese women's associations "with 3,639 branches and 1,300,000 members across the country" (ibid.), consisting of respected pedagogues, editing journals with scientific and educational content. She also mentions some changes in the social position of women in Japan such as regulation of the position of unmarried mothers according to the European model (protecting mothers while fathers are forced to pay support).

Moreover, she praises Japanese women who were able to study abroad, either in America or England. Among the first who received a college degree from a foreign institution she mentions Princess Ōyama Sutematsu 大山捨松 (1860–1919) (born Yamakawa Sakiko 山川咲子), Tsuda Umeko 津田梅子 (1864–1929), and Uryū Shigeko 瓜生繁子 (1862–1928). These were all pioneers of women's education, who as students joined the Iwakura mission and went abroad for their studies. Besides those names, she also noted Atomi Kakei 跡見花蹊 (1840–1926), a Meiji period educator, calligrapher and painter, who founded the Atomi school in Kanda, known today as the oldest women's university in Japan, along with Masako Miwada 三輪田眞佐子 (1843–1927), the founder of Miwada Girls' High School (三輪田高等女學校) in Kudan-kita, Tokyo, which is today known as Miwada Gakuen (三輪田学園中学校). Both "educated in the Confucian tradition and were among the first to promote education for girls" (Mehl 2001, 579), and "although they did not fight for woman's rights in opposition to the state and were not led by Western ideas, they helped to redefine the role of women, linking it to the well-being of the nation" (ibid.). Both women contributed significantly to the modernization of Japan, but receive little attention from scholars nowadays (Mehl 2001, 579).

In the field of medicine as well, she discusses two figures, Ogino Ginko 荻野吟子 (1851–1913), admired as the first woman in Japanese history to receive a license to practice Western medicine in 1885, and Takahashi Mizuko 高橋瑞子 (1852–1927), who received a licence in 1887 (Nakamura 2008, 3).

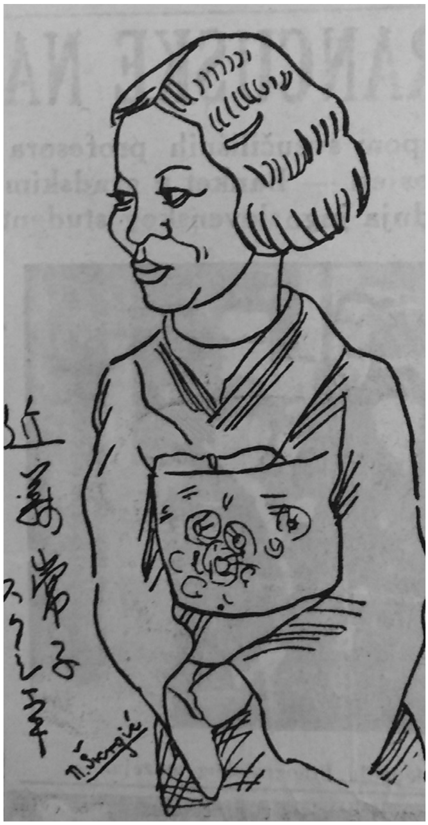


Figure 11. A caricature of Marija Skušek with her autograph published in a Croatian magazine in 1930. (Source: Novosti 1930)

Next, or what we could define as the third major topic of her lecture, Marija Skušek would take some time to talk about certain customs in Japan, such as the practice of removing the natural eyebrows and repainting them higher on the forehead (she probably had in mind so called *hikimayu* (引眉), and the custom of teeth blackening (so called *ohaguro* (お歯黒)), which were both essential for a married woman in order to show that she was married. She mentions that such customs were still in use around 30 years before (Skušek, Tsuneko Marija n.d., 12), while officially they were prohibited in 1870. She then mentions the habit of honorific forms of address for the husband and males in general, including newborn boys. Moreover, when walking into a room when a baby boy was sleeping it was inappropriate for a woman to walk around his head, and so she could only walk around the baby's feet (ibid., 12–13).

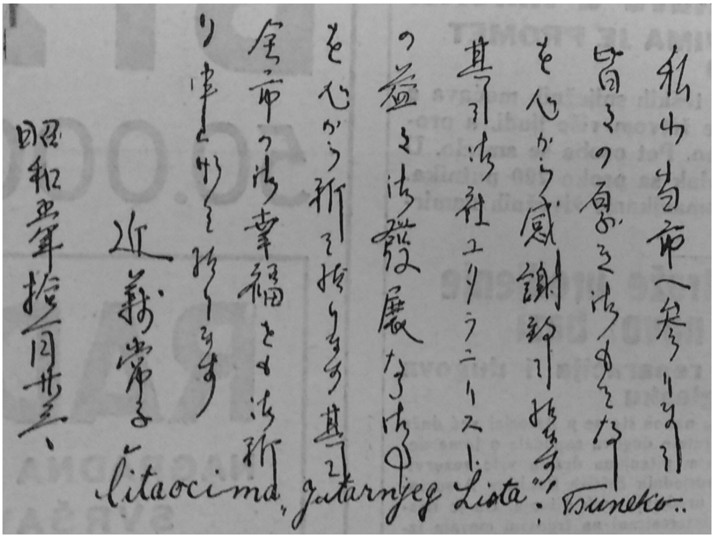


Figure 12. Inscription written by Marija Skušek for the readers of the newspaper *Jutranji list* and the people of Zagreb in 1930 after her well received lectures. (Source: Jutranji list 1930)

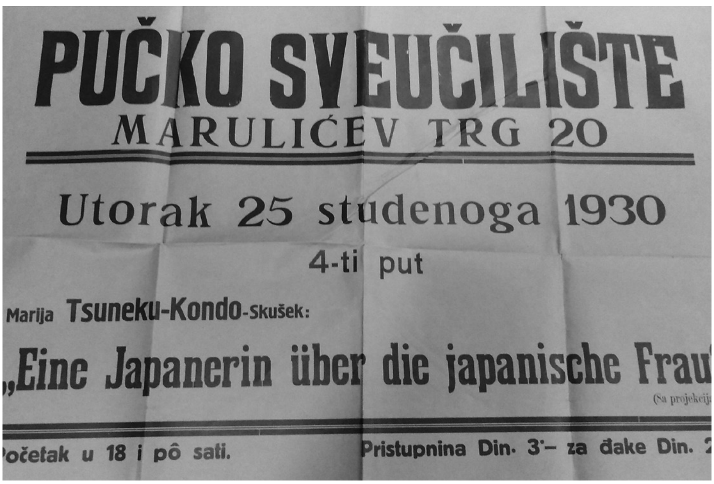


Figure 13. A poster for Marija Skušek's lecture (November 25, 1930) in Zagreb, its fourth repetition. Photo by the author. (Source: Archive of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum)

In the last part of the lecture she has four independent titles in her notes. In "The Woman", she discusses the old habits of make-up, the permanent hair style and a special "high bolster made from camphor wood with a low elongated pillow" (Skušek, Tsuneko Marija n.d., 14) on the top of it used by a Japanese woman to keep her hair in shape (probably she had in mind a *takamakura* (高枕)). In "The Walk of a Japanese Woman", she defines the etiquette of a woman and the posture when walking, in "The Age of a Japanese Woman" she discusses how the age of a woman is defined by her dress, the colour of her clothes and hairstyle, as well as customary ways of greeting. Of the Japanese holidays she chooses to describe Dolls' Day, and the habit of preparing special dishes to offer to the dolls, and the roots of the holiday, which she relates to a 100-year old custom of the Imperial family, were dolls were used as charms to ward off evil spirits. By setting the dolls afloat down a river they hoped that they would carry bad fortune away with them (ibid.,15). Before concluding the lecture, she would explain a little about the Japanese writing system and some characters, as seen in fig. 10.

To sum-up the content of the lecture, we could see that the main thread of the manuscript was the presentation of Japanese women in various ways, while above all we could get an overview on their position and rights in the late 19th to early 20th centuries. In particular, the audience would gain an insight into women working to gain rights on education and social protection, and the effort to abolish brothels, among other things, while also presenting some of the regulations that had changed concerning women's rights, which were made according to the European model. Looking at her lecture from the perspective of the 1930s, when radio had only just started with in Ljubljana, we might only imagine how attractive the topics were to audiences, on one side bringing forward serious issues such as women's position in Japanese society, but at the same time also touching upon more common or popular topics such as Japanese women's behaviour, way of walking, dressing, hairstyles, make-up, etc. Moreover, since Japanese women were the main focus of the lecture,— some publications would go so far as to introduce Marija Skušek as a "a well-known Japanese feminist", or something similar, but to learn more about this we would have to carry out further analyses on the organizations at which she was invited to lecture.

On Marija Skušek's Second Series of Lectures in the 1935 and 1936

Of course, the abovementioned series of lectures in the 1930–1931 were not the only lectures Marija Skušek would present. Until WWII, she continued with her lectures and newspaper reports from the time suggest she was especially active in 1935 and 1936, and also gave some in 1937. We can find reports on her lectures held in Maribor, Zagorje and Jesenice, but probably there were more. The topics of these were similar to her first series of lecture described above, but with certain differences.

In the lecture in Maribor, for example, where she would speak in Slovene in 1935 (having lectured there for the first time in 1930), she adds various new pieces of information on Japan, with regard to its development or new characterizations of the people there, and in this way gives a broader view on Japanese life. And while she does discuss male-female relations, she does not centre the lecture around women's rights or organizations, as in the earlier series of lectures in 1930–1931. Another feature of these lectures is the inclusion of performances, which included dance and music, although sometimes these were already included in her lectures in early 1930s.

Her presentations of dances are mentioned to in newspapers as follows: "Mrs. Tsuneko has at the end, as much as she could do it without music, showed some characteristic Japanese dances" (*Novosti* 1930), or "but in the end she will show a few Japanese dances" (*Nova doba* 1930a). We also read about this in a report from the People's University of Maribor from 1930.

> One of the most resounding events of this season (the second half of the 1930s) was the Japanese evening. In two consecutive shows Marija Skuškova presented Japan. Visitors were also enchanted by the singing and dance. (Dolar in Potočnik 2000, 622)

The inclusion of dance and music in her presentations is more common in her later presentations, notably in 1935 and 1936, while in some of them she would perform with her daughter.[16] The author assumes that that was due to the fact that her daughter—Erika Skušek, later Erika Schmidt—had by then already finished her studies at the Conservatory in Ljubljana, today known as the Academy of Music,[17] where in 1930 she started studying piano and solo singing (PMSPM Archives). That is also the period before she would get married,

16 For more on Marija Skušek and the characteristics of her dances, see Visočnik Gerželj (2021).

17 The Conservatory is today known as the Academy of Music in Ljubljana. Until 1926 it operated under the auspices of the Glasbena matica Society, and in 1939 it grew into the Academy of Music. We can read about Erika Schmidt's performance: "Accompanied by the orchestra, Franci Šturm, Erika Schmidt, Zorka Sodnik, Dušan Šantel, Roman Koch, Olga Primic, Anica Zajec and Rizanda Stare presented a four-hand piano playing on four pianos. They performed Dvořák's Slavic Dances in C major, Op. 46, no. 1, and Bach's Concerto for 4 Pianos, BWV 1065 also accompanied by an orchestra." (Pintarič 2020, 93)

which she did in 1937 to Anton Lenarčič, so she could be still more involved in her mother's lectures.

> She showed all kinds of those Japanese hieroglyphic characters and then she [showed] three Japanese dances, which reflected the grace, serenity and fantasy from the land of smiles. The second part of the program was carried out by her daughter Miss Erika Skušek, who first showed slides of musical instruments and then played on the piano the songs *Spring Rain* and *The Song about the Lion.* (*Mariborski večernik* 1935)[18]

What kind of instruments they presented, the characteristics of the songs the Slovene public could hear, remain subjects for further research.

Concluding Thoughts

Looking at the period of approximately 20 years, from the time Marija Skušek arrived in Slovenia in 1920 to the start of WWII, with a focus on her cultural engagement in presenting Japanese culture in the form of lectures, which was the main focus of the present paper, and taking into consideration the recently rediscovered archive on Marija Skušek as well as the Slovenian (and Yugoslav) media reports from this particular period, we could see the multiple activities she performed in public life.

With these she spread her knowledge, promoted or was engaged in cultural exchanges with Japan, and thus she brought "Japan" closer to the intellectual and cultural milieu of Ljubljana, and beyond. With a series of lectures given in 1930 and 1931, which were mostly presented in the public as *A Japanese about a Japanese Woman* (or in German *Eine Japanerin über die japanische Frau*), starting in Ljubljana and then travelling to different places in Yugoslavia, as well as Austria. These lectures revealed Marija Skušek as a polyglot presenting a diverse variety of facets of Japan, including culture, sociology, art and language.

Moreover, what Marija Skušek gave to the Slovene public in packed lecture halls, often so packed that she had to repeat some of the lecture multiple times, was a particular insight into Japanese women and the struggle for a better social and educational positions at the start of the 20th century, and the emergence of feminist

18 "Pokazala je celo vrsto teh japonskih hiroglifnih znakov, potem pa predvajala tri japonske plese, ki se je v njih odražala vsa milina, umerjenost, in fantastika iz deželе smehljaja. Drugi del sporeda je izpolnila njena hčerka Erika Skuškova, ki je najprej prikazala s skioptičnimi slikami glavne glasbene in godbene japonske instrumente, nato pa zaigrala na klavirju 'Pomladansko deževje' in 'Pesem o levu'."

movements. She also presented certain aspects of Japanese culture, some of which were no longer practiced, while some of her lectures included presentations of her dancing and singing. It is not wholly clear what kind of slides she would present to the public, but from her archive we can conclude that she was constantly gathering news and photos from Japan.

What attracted special attention as far as her lectures are concerned is that most of them were organized by various women's organizations, such as the one in Ljubljana in 1930 (24 January) when she was invited by General Women's Society (*Splošno žensko društvo*), or in Split (11 December) by the National Women's Cooperative (*Narodna ženska zadruga*) which also included a humanitarian campaign for children. Another example is her lecture given at Jesenice in 1936 (7 May), organized by a society called the Ring of Yugoslav Sisters (*Kolo jugoslovanskih sester*), yet another women's organization. The exhibition held within the framework of the "Exhibition of Set Tables" was, surprisingly, also promoted and organized by a women's society, specifically by the first Slovene women's gymnastics society, Atena.

Another interesting fact is that one of the most fully committed figures in the abovementioned organizations was Franja Tavčar (1868–1938), who was Marija Skušek's witness at her wedding to Ivan Skušek in 1927. Franja Tavčar, the wife of Slovene politician and writer Ivan Tavčar, was an active participant in the liberal women's movement and in a wide range of national consciousness and emancipatory events for women. If we mention just some of her relations with the organizations under the auspices of which Marija Skušek was invited to lecture, Franja Tavčar was the president of the General Women's Society, co-founder of Atena, and the founder of the Ring of Yugoslav Sisters in 1921 which cared, *inter alia*, for poor and sick children.

All of the above could perhaps explain why some journals referred to Marija Skušek as "a Japanese representative of feminism" or even "a well-known Japanese feminist" when writing about her, and as well as noting the contents of her lectures. This leads us to assume that Marija Skušek was an active member in many of Franja Tavčar's activities, and brings forward new data on the social circle in which she was actively engaged. Her overall activities, discussed in this article, show Marija Skušek as a figure in Ljubljana public life, were she played an important role in presenting, and transmitting Japanese culture, and taking steps to aid the dialogues in Slovene-Japanese cultural exchanges.

Of course, lectures were not the only of Marija Skušek cultural activities in the period, and not the only social circle in which she was engaged. To grasp her overall involvement and influence on the social and cultural life of Slovenes, we would have to also note that as early as 1929 she was engaged in correspondence with Oton

Zupančič (1878–1949), the Slovene playwright, translator and poet, known as the pioneer of modernism in Slovene literature, and from the 1929 manager at the National Theatre (today's SNG DRAMA Ljubljana).[19] She was also active as an adviser in Ljubljana's Opera House at the staging of the opera *Madame Butterfly*, and in this period the version performed in 1936, when the main role was played by a Slovenian soprano of Croatian descent, Zlata Gjungjenac (1898–1982).[20] Besides the connections to the high circles of society that Marija Skušek made in her first 10 years of being in Slovenia, we should not forget her lifelong efforts for Slovene-Japanese cultural exchange, the beginnings of which we can also trace to this period. One of the earliest Japanese people who she hosted in Ljubljana and took on a visit to the Slovenian artist France Sterle (1889–1930) was the Japanese zoologist Uchida Tōru 内田亨 (1897–1981), who travelled and researched in Europe from 1929 to 1931 (Makino 1957, ix). Another active role adopted by Marija Skušek made use of her language abilities. Marija Skušek was probably one of the first teachers of Chinese and Japanese in Slovenia.[21] However, all of these efforts need to be further researched and an appropriate place found in the history of Slovene-Japanese cultural exchanges, in both Slovenia as well as Japan.

Acknowledgement

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19 She was asked to help with the 1929 play *Battle* (after the work *La bataille* by Pierre Frondaie) by Marki Yorisaka Sadao, to lend "Japanese costumes" and "two Japanese instruments" (Župančič 1929).

20 At the time, *Madame Butterfly* was an opera with many performances, and had been a key part of the repertoire of the opera since 1908 (Lah 2014, 117). The version in which Marija Skušek assisted was a new staging in which the lion's share of work was done by the composer and conductor Niko Štritof (1890–1944), who newly translated, studied and directed the work. Marija Skušek was credited with both offering advice on the staging and "on walking, gesture and the clothes of the Japanese" (*Slovenski narod* 1935).

21 Marija Skušek would work with private students (Chikako Shigemori, email to the author, January 25, 2021). In addition to Chinese and Japanese, she would also teach English (Hribar 2008, 203).

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Dancing with the Fan: The Role and Value of a Japanese Fan and Kimonos in the Transmission of Japanese Culture by Marija Tsuneko Skušek

*Nataša VISOČNIK GERŽELJ**

Abstract

The article addresses several issues concerning a Japanese fan and the kimonos found in the collection of Ivan Skušek from Slovene Ethnographic Museum. They belonged to Ivan Skušek's Japanese wife Marija Tsuneko Skušek, and were after her death donated to the museum together with other objects from the Skušek collection. With analysing these items and researching the life of Marija Tsuneko Skušek the article discusses the roles these objects had in transmitting Japanese culture to Slovene audience with a focus on the Japanese dances as one way of transmission. During her life in Ljubljana, Marija Skušek in one way adopted to the Slovene society very quickly, but on the other hand she presented Japanese culture and her identity in several lectures along with Japanese songs, dances and a tea ceremony. With researching the roles and values of these object in the museum collection, the article also discusses the importance of understanding not only the physical appearance of the items and their life, but also the wider background of items and collection, focusing also on the owner of these items in the relation to the collector. It is also important to stress how these objects transformed from daily objects of use to rarefied art after they were handed over to the museum, and within this process their value also changed.

Keywords: fan *maiōgi*, kimono, dance, transmission of culture, everyday object, East Asian collection

Izvleček

Ples s pahljačo: vloga in pomen japonske pahljače in kimon v prenosu japonske kulture Marije Tsuneko Skušek

Članek obravnava več vprašanj, ki se nanašajo na japonsko pahljačo in kimone iz zbirke Ivana Skuška v Slovenskem etnografskem muzeju. Pripadali so ženi Ivana Skuška, Mariji Tsuneko Skušek, in so bili po njeni smrti predani muzeju skupaj s celotno zbirko Ivana Skuška. Članek z analizo teh predmetov in raziskovanjem življenja Marije Tsuneko Skušek razpravlja o vlogi, ki so jo imeli ti predmeti pri posredovanju japonske kulture slovenskemu občinstvu, s poudarkom na japonskih plesih kot enem od načinov prenosa. Marija Skušek

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je bila v Ljubljani zelo hitro sprejeta v slovensko družbo, hkrati je tudi pogosto predstavljala japonsko kulturo, in sicer z izvajanjem predavanj ter japonskih pesmi, plesov in čajnega obreda. Z raziskovanjem vlog in vrednosti teh predmetov v muzejski zbirki članek razpravlja tudi o pomenu razumevanja ne samo fizičnega videza predmetov in njihovega življenja, temveč tudi širšega ozadja predmetov in zbirke, pri čemer se osredotoča na lastnico teh predmetov v odnosu do ustvarjalca zbirke. Pomembno je poudariti, kako so se ti predmeti po predaji muzeju iz vsakdanjih uporabnih predmetov spremenili v redko umetnost, s čimer se je spremenila tudi njihova vrednost.

Ključne besede: pahljača *maiōgi*, kimono, ples, prenos kulture, vsakdanji predmeti, vzhodnoazijske zbirke

Introduction

This article focuses on a Japanese fan and kimonos from the Skušek collection that were made especially for and used by Tsuneko Kondō Kawase 近藤常子 (1893–1963) or later Marija Skušek. Klara Hrvatin in this volume looks into the many lectures on Japanese culture that Marija Skušek delivered in Slovenia and the wider Yugoslavian area. During these lectures given in German and later also in Slovene she talked about Japanese customs, the everyday life of Japanese women, Japanese writing system, music, health, marriage, and life in Japan supported by photos and live dance and music. She was invited by many organizations and clubs around Yugoslavia as people were very interesting in Japanese culture (see more in Hrvatin 2021). She did not only talk about Japanese society and its culture, but performed different Japanese dances for which she would dress in a kimono. She also sung Japanese songs and performed a tea ceremony. Such presentations were very rare at that time and Marija Skušek, being the first Japanese person naturalized as a citizen of Slovenia, thus had an important role in cultural exchange between the two countries.

Within the research projects *East Asian Collections* we came across some specific items in the Ivan Skušek Collection in Slovene Ethnographic Museum. Among them there we found one interesting fan categorized as a *maiōgi* (舞扇) or "dance fan", which is a rare with regard to other fan collections in Slovenia.[1] This in-

1 There is only one other *maiōgi* in Slovenia, it is in SEM, but it is not part of Skušek's collection, while in other two collections (Alma Karlin Collection and the Collection of Objects from Asia and South America from Regional Museum of Celje) that are being researched in this project, another dance fan was not discovered. However, there are no data about the other dance fan in the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, and we do not know how this fan ended up in museum and where it came from.

spired me to think about what kind of role foreign (East Asian) objects had in transmitting the culture to a local audience through different kinds of performance, including dances and songs. Furthermore, in the article I would also like to address the question of how the items being used in everyday life at a certain time later become museum objects, and thus a part of a collection.[2]

In order to offer some answers to these issues, I examine the inventory of books and photos. While focusing on one dancing fan and several kimonos listed as Marija Skušek's belongings, this article thus focuses on the roles of physical appearance and dancing in the transmitting of Japanese culture to local audiences in Slovenia, Mrs. Skušek's new country. I also look at the relationship between these objects and a collection itself, and the complex contexts of the cross-cultural connections of the owner. According to the inventory of the collection there are only few Japanese items, as Ivan Skušek lived and collected in Beijing, China. However, as he married a Japanese woman some personal objects like a fan and kimonos can be found in the collection. Thus, the research is done through analysis of these items and photos of Mrs. Skušek, and with reading the newspaper reports on her activities, and discussed through a theoretical framework on museum items and collections, and on transmitting culture through performance. Unfortunately, there is not much data about Marija Tsuneko Skušek's life prior moving from Japan to China sometime after 1905 and before marring Ivan Skušek for the first time in 1920 in Beijing, even though there has been some research about her, so some of the arguments have to be researched further. While living in Slovene society she changed her name to Marija Skušek in 1927, when they married in Christian church, but she was also known by her nickname "Mrs. Japanese" or Marija Tsuneko Skušek (マリヤ常子スクシェキ) (Kotobanku 2021)

The Japanese Fan and Kimonos in Skušek's Collection

Objects that belonged to Marija Skušek are part of vast collection of Ivan Skušek Jr. (1877–1947), one of the greatest collectors of East Asian objects (mostly Chinese) from the Slovene territory. His collection is extensive and can be compared to some Western European collections of East Asian objects, while it also signifies the local peculiarity and uniqueness pertaining to the European periphery (Grčar 2021). As discussed by Tina Berdajs in this volume (2021) a Japanese fan, few kimonos and *obi* are part of set of items used or made for the Skušek's Japanese wife, Tsuneko Kondō Kawase.

2 Today there are four other fans in the Skušek collection, but others are Chinese fans, which were purchased by Ivan Skušek himself.

Ivan Skušek Jr. was one of the few seamen and travellers[3] from the Austro-Hungarian Empire who stepped foot in East Asia in the early 20th century, as he set sail in the service of the Austro-Hungarian Navy as an officer and served on Austrian warships and merchant ships together with missionaries, diplomats, researchers and other experts (Čeplak Mencin 2012, 101). Ivan Skušek Jr. was an Austro-Hungarian Navy officer who found himself confined in Beijing during WWI and could afford the purchase and transportation of larger and much more valuable items (Vampelj Suhadolnik 2019, 117). In his almost six years (1914–1920) in Beijing, he regularly visited antiques markets, and enthusiastically and systematically assembled numerous of Chinese objects with the goal to establish a museum after returning home. This was not achieved due to a lack of money and his death, and his collection was later handed over to the Slovene Ethnographic Museum (SEM) by his wife Marija Skušek. While most of the objects in collection are Chinese, such as porcelain, silk garments, lanterns, furniture and other visually appealing items, as well as his much less known but extensive numismatic collection of Chinese coins (see Grčar 2021), there are few pieces which were identified as Japanese and some of them likely belonged to his Japanese wife, while for some other Japanese items the way of acquiring them is unclear.

In Beijing Ivan Skušek namely met a young Japanese woman who owned a flower shop, Tsuneko Kondō-Kawase. She had previously been married to a German chief customs official, Paul Heinrich Schmidt, and had two children with him, son Matthias (1912–1933) and daughter Erika (1914–1958). When the war started, Schmidt was summoned back to Europe, and left his family in Beijing without contacting them anymore.[4] Although he never made it back, he provided for his wife by buying her a flower shop, even though she had previously worked as a nurse (see Hrvatin 2021). Skušek married Tsuneko Kondō-Kawase in Beijing in 1920 and then together with her children and his precious artefacts left for Europe in June of the same year. They finally arrived in Ljubljana on September 8, 1920. Mrs. Skušek stayed in Slovenia until her death in 1963, became Slovenian, survived her husband and children and never returned to Japan. The last time she was in Japan was visiting her mother in Gifu in 1919, together with Ivan and her children before going to Europe (Čeplak Mencin 2012, 110). In her later years she clearly expressed her wish to see Tokyo again, a wish that was never granted (Govc 1963).

3 In Slovene museums and other institutions there are at least 21 different collections or private legacies of East Asian objects (Vampelj Suhadolnik 2019, 97–100). These objects were mostly brought to the Slovene region at the end of 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries from East Asia by sailors, missionaries, diplomats, researchers and travellers.

4 However, his faith is unclear, as no data about him has been found yet.

According to the list of inventories of the Ivan Skušek Collection there are several other Japanese objects, like a set of 12 ceramic teacups and small plates, a partial set of miniature Japanese figurines made of ceramic and fabric *hina-ningyō* 雛人形, a folding screen (*byōbu* 屏風), four woodblock prints (*ukiyo-e* 浮世絵), and four pictures with silk embroidery. However, there are no entries in the list as to whether these objects were bought by Ivan Skušek or they were part of the belongings of Mrs. Skušek, as in the case of the focal fan and kimonos.

Although she had lived in Beijing for several years, Mrs. Skušek still had some Japanese items that later ended up as part of Skušek's collection, which was latter housed at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum. These are mostly things she used herself, such as a Japanese fan, or they were made for her like few kimonos and *obi*. Beside sone folding fan there are four regular kimonos, one winter kimono, one coat, one undergarment *kimono* (着物) and four *obi* (帯). However, there are no other kimono accessories that are needed to dress up in the outfit, which might have been lost or given away and thus never made it to the museum. According to some photos of Marija and Ivan Skušek (see figs. 3, 4), we can recognise more fans and kimonos that might have been in her possession, which also never made it to the museum. Those which managed to get to the museum are listed as personal objects made especially for Mrs. Skušek, and were probably not acknowledge as a part of Skušek's collection before being handed over to the museum. While "all collecting is done with a specific purpose in mind" as the items in a certain moment are appealing to the collector (Yasaitis 2006, 449), this purpose might be different in the case of the personal belongings of Mrs. Skušek than the other items in the collection. When investigating the individual objects in a certain collection, we cannot be too narrow in our work. As Thomsen (2015, 274) notes, it is good to understand "the individual motivations, the personal relationships, and the complex contexts of the cross-cultural connections" of the collector or the owner of these items, as in case of Mrs. Skušek. Thus it is important to emphasise the knowledge about the life of the item in the world of collection with regard to understanding the process of cultural transfer.

The Transmission of Japanese Culture to a Slovene Audience

Maintaining one's own culture abroad is big issue in a new country and depends on several elements. According to Gsir and Mescoli (2015, 15) "each migrant abroad is potentially a cultural representative of the culture(s) of the country of origin through his/her daily behaviour and cultural consumptions". There are several actions implemented by migrants in order to show or promote their culture abroad, and in the case of Marija Skušek we can definitely discuss the action of performing culture, because the diplomatic relations of Japan and Slovenia (at that time the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and later the SFR Yugoslavia[5]) were minimal and certainly we cannot talk about diaspora policies in that period (1920–1963).

As a culture is manifested through the behaviours of individuals, we can obtain some knowledge how she acted and behaved in transmitting her origin culture to the new society with an analysis of the life of Mrs. Skušek. In her performances she used some cultural products and commodities that were associated with Japan: clothes (kimonos) and objects used on an everyday basis (i.e. chopsticks, fans) and also objects used in artistic performances (such as dance, music, photos). All these elements contributed to defining her "specific image and to displaying it, an identity which is designed both for the self and for others" (Gsir and Mescoli 2015, 15). In this definition two things played the central role: the objects, which have their agency, as they are "things-in-motion illuminate that their human and social context" (Appadurai 1994, 77), and the body, that constitutes the "means through which these cultural products can be assimilated and become part of the self (which will be then shown to others)" (Gsir and Mescoli 2015, 15). These material and bodily practices have important roles in the concrete performance of culture, through the ways in which people put their culture into action, like Mrs. Skušek, who gave lectures on Japanese topics, dressed in a kimono and performed Japanese dances while her daughter Erika sang Japanese songs.

The newspapers recorded various activities of Mrs. Skušek, such as presentations and lectures on Japanese society and culture (see Hrvatin 2021). They give us insight into the content and manner adopted as she presented various aspects of Japanese culture. We learn that she had lectures about Japanese culture and she also danced some Japanese dances, as is suggested from the title of an article in the newspaper *Mariborski večernik "Jutra"* from 1935: "Japanese Evening at Ljudska univerza; The Curiosities of Japanese life—Japanese Dances and Music" (*Mariborski večernik Jutra* 1935). The article reports that "On Monday evening in Ljudska univerza here our Japanese Mrs. Marija Tsuneko Kondo-Skušek and her daughter Erika from Ljubljana have appeared on stage and gave us the presentations of the Japanese culture". The so-called "*japonski večer*" (Japanese evening) was crowded with people listening about Japanese life and customs, way of life, the status and position of Japanese women in Japanese society, the form handwriting and "… then she performed three Japanese dances, in which she expressed all

5 The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes existed from 1918 until the 1929, when it was renamed to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. In 1945 Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia and in 1963 the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia were established. In 1991 Slovenia became independent country.

the gracefulness, serenity and fantasy from the land of smiles" (*Mariborski večernik Jutra* 1935). Later her daughter Erika also talked about Japanese music and musical instruments, and then performed three Japanese songs (ibid.).

Another article with the title "Japanese lecturer in Split" in the newspaper *Novo doba* from 1930 reported that there would be Japanese women in Split who will give a lecture about different aspects of Japanese life and will show some pictures and also perform some Japanese dances, as it is written "…but in the end she will show a few Japanese dances". (*Novo doba* 1930, 6) There is another article reporting a similar performance "… Finally, she showed us some folk dances and sang along very well", or "Mrs. Tsuneko has at the end, as much as she could do it without music, showed some characteristic Japanese dances" (*Novosti* 1930, 6). It is said that the lecture Marija Skušek gave at the People's University of Maribor in 1930 was the most remarkable presentation of the season, where visitors were enchanted by Japanese singing and dancing (Hrvatin 2021).

In the time when Mrs. Skušek was living in Slovenia there were no other Japanese people living in the city. In one way she assimilated to the Slovene environment by changing her name, nationality, converting to Christianity and learning the language. As proposed by Gsir and Mescoli (2015, 12) maintaining cultural links with one's origin country on a regular basis might be an obstacle for quicker integration into the host society, but that without any support from the origin country and no diaspora community in the receiving country integration can be easier, which is clearly the case with Marija Skušek. Besides, as mentioned above, after her arrival in Slovenia in 1920 she stayed here until her death. During her life in Slovenia, she was surrounded with Slovene people and culture, but she was also aware of her own Japanese culture as well and was happy to introduce and show it to anyone who was interested. There were always a lot of people coming to the Skušeks' apartment where many of the objects they brought from China and Japan were displayed, and thus they were living with these objects everyday (see Motoh 2021). Being dressed in a kimono, showing people the objects, and using a fan were the ways of introducing the foreign Chinese and especially Japanese cultures to the new society.

Fans and Kimonos in the World of Japanese Dance

There are at least four articles reporting that Mrs. Skušek performed "Japanese dances" in these lectures and there are many photos of her being dressed in a kimono, as already mentioned above. However, from the very general description of her performance it is impossible to confirm which dances she performed, but in Japan a dance fan can be used whether in *nihon buyō*日本舞踊 (*nichibu*日舞)

or folk festival dance (*minbu* 民舞). It is also not known where Marijia Skušek learned the dances while living in Japan (1893–1905?)—whether she learned in *nihon buyō* school, from professional dancers or from local folk dances (*minbu*) or festivals (*matsuri* 祭) (Nachi no ōgi matsuri n.d.) is unknown. What is certain is that she performed "japonski ples" or Japanese dances to Slovene audiences, who were exited and thrilled about her performances. With the finding of a dance fan or *maiōgi* (see figs. 1, 2) in the Skušek Collection, we can assume that she was using this fan in the dances.

In traditional theatre and dance the details of attire, makeup, props, stage sets, lighting, and movement are visual cues that characterize particular dances, and in Japan the kimono, wigs, makeup, fans and other physical attributes of a character are prescribed, along with specific actions such as body carriage, stage positions, gaze, and movement quality (Hahn 2007, 82–83). Even though these dance performances in Yugoslavian and Slovenian territory with a fan and kimono were "out-of-context", which means there were performed out of their cultural environment, in our case Japan, they were important for transmitting the culture from one place to another. Within these performances "original" objects were playing important roles as they were representations of the Japanese people. Thus, these kinds of public presentations like lectures and dances are performances of Japanese identity (see Mayer Stinchecum 2008). "Theatre, music, dances and other visual arts can be used to perform, to represent identity and to showcase the past, the present and the future." (Johnson and Jaffe 2008, 4) These objects were elements used for the transformation of Japanese culture and expressed and also negotiated a Japanese identity in the foreign country, and such performances as the product of cultural practices represent people and also ideas of nationhood (ibid., 6).

Japanese fans and their variety of uses are symbols of Japanese identity, but they also contain their own picturesque symbolism. A fan is not only an accessory to keep cool during the hot summer months, but is an integral part of many facets of civil and ceremonial life, and there are many variations of forms. As in the past, even today the fan may still be an essential prop in the theatre, used by the referee of a *sumō* wrestling match, for certain formal manners and forms of etiquette, as seen in military fans and Shinto and Buddhist ceremonies, and it can be part of various festivals. (Shintani et al. 2003, 1, 77; see also Armstrong 1974; Hutt and Alexander 1992, 23; Iröns 1981)

The specific fan that belonged to Mrs. Skušek (figs. 1, 2) is called a *maiōgi* 舞扇 (dancing fan), which is part of the wider category called *sensu* 扇子 or *ōgi* 扇 (folding fan) (Kawashima 2002; Nakamura 1983). *Maiōgi* first made its appearance in the 17th century. The sticks are usually very thin and vary in number between six and eight, and invariably have a double guard to give the leaf strength and balance for the dance (Iröns 1981, 68). It is an essential prop in the theatre and the "fan dance" (Ortolani 1990; Mabuchi 2017, 34; Hutt and Alexander 1992, 23–24), and is constructed of paper, bamboo, and metal. It is a simple object—like two hands held together with fingers outspread, with blond bamboo *hone* 骨 (bones) radiating from an intersection to expand into nineteen folds of paper. The paper is glued to the bones and, on the outermost bones, secured with thread. A metal finding fastens the bones tightly at their point of crossing—the *kaname* 要 (pivot point)—and lead weights are discreetly tucked within the outer bones for balance. Often the paper folds display beautiful designs, ranging from abstract shapes to intricate depictions of scenes. Like the individual sections of a Japanese screen scroll, panels or sections of the fans' artistic design can be appreciated as complete units when the fan is partly closed or, with the entire fan unfolded, can be viewed from the larger context of the nineteen-panel composition (Hahn 2007, 9).[6] The fan in the Skušek Collection has a thick silver (*gin-iro* 銀色) leaf on one side and gold (*kin-iro* 金色) leaf on the other side with a flower design in white creating a dramatic effect when catching the light. The guards are doubled, ending with tiny tassels in imitations of the *hiōgi* 檜扇 or court fan (ibid.).

The inspection of other fan collections available online in Europe or the USA shows there are only a few similar fans held in them. In the Fan Museum in the UK are three of the fans presented as *maiōgi* in their catalogue (Preston 2001). They are from Meiji period (1868–1912) and similarly described with regard to material and construction, but also their special use, as: "double paper leaf is painted on both sides with different design. At the river end of each guard a lead inset is visible, where the lead insert is to ensure the correct fall of the fan when flung away in a dance" (ibid., 15). There may have been another dance fan that belonged to Mrs. Skušek as it is seen other photos (see Motoh 2021), but this fan did not end up in the Skušek Collection. After renewed inspection of items from East Asia in the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, another fan similar to Mrs. Skušek's was found in the same depository, although there is no information about that fan, whether it is from same collection or has been donated or sold to museum at a later time. In other collections of East Asian objects there are quite a few fans from East Asia, but none of them are *maiōgi* fans.

6 Similar to Mrs. Skušek's fan are two presented in the book by Hutt and Alexander (1992, 49, 51) that come from the same period in similar colours—gold and silver with designs in white, or violet and green.


Figures 1 and 2. The *maiōgi* fan considered in this article. Double paper leaf painted with cherry tree and blossom. Lacquered wooden sticks and guards. 50.5 cm across when open, and 29.7 cm long when closed. (Source: Skušek Collection, Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana)

Maiōgi as a stage prop as well as the dance itself imitate life and nature. The related dance was originally devoted to the gods, with the dance movements people were thanking the gods for a good harvest, apologizing for bad actions, and asking them for future good harvests along with the health and happiness of their family. *Kagura* (神楽), or dances dedicated to the gods, were carried out in Shinto shrines, where the dancers called *miko* danced and transmitted requests, thanks and apologies to the gods. Later dances began to be used in relation to Buddhism, such as *nenbutsu odori (*念仏踊り), or *bon odori* (盆踊り). There are also many dances with "masks" (*kamen* 仮面) that represent a wide variety of spirits and demons. Together with *minyō odori* (民謡踊り folk songs dances) or *minbu* these were used in all parts of the life cycle and in rituals for gods, annual celebrations, war, peace, disasters, imitating real but also unreal life with their varied movements and poses (Hahn 2007, 10). On the stage the fan is an allusion to various objects (flowers, seeds, jars, paddle, sword, bow, musical instruments), but also different motifs from nature (wind, snow, waves, mountain top) including different phases of the moon, falling cherry blossoms, etc. (Sellers-Young 1993, 75). According to the characters represented in the story (men, women, young, old man), the fan gets different roles. On certain occasions a fan can be replaced by other elements, such as an umbrella, ball, branch of flowering cherries and peaches, scroll, and so on (Hahn 2007, 14–16), children also use a doll or parasol, a paper umbrella which can be spotted in a photo of Mr. and Mrs. Skušek with their friends (see Motoh 2021). Such a fan can on the stage be used to illustrate a whole variety of actions, from something as esoteric as viewing the moon to presenting the precise actions of playing a *shamisen*, drinking sake, and cutting flowers. Many young dancers and all adult students of dance own at least one fan with which they can practice. The Skušek fan resembles an actual fan used in performance in size and weight, but it does not have the elaborate painted images of a fan designed specifically to be used with a particular dance piece (Sellers-Young 1993, 38, 39). The set of movements (*kata* 型) also refer to fan positions such as *nigiri* (moving the fan in front of the body), *kaname* (holding the fan at the centre) and *hiraki* (opening the fan) (ibid., 46). Dancers spend countless hours moving with fans, which are extensions their dancers' bodies and essential to this expressive art. Such fans, or *sensu*, spring to life in dancers' hands. Through daily practice they learn to manipulate them to tell stories. The Japanese dance repertory is filled with dances in which the fan must, in the mind's eye, continuously transform into various objects or scenery throughout the performance—a sake cup, a pine tree, or a leaf in the wind. Fans also impart intangible aspects of dance, such as emotions or atmosphere. The prop can playfully obscure, highlight, and reveal images of the dance narrative and, literally, the dancer's body—covering a smile, partitioning off faces in conversation, or framing an exposed neck (Hahn 2007, 8, 14).

In similar way to a fan, a kimono presents in any performance the outward visual appearance of the individual, and served this role when Mrs. Skušek was giving a lecture about Japanese life and society or dancing a Japanese dance or performing a tea ceremony in front of Slovene or even wider Yugoslavian audiences (*Jutro* 1927). In a newspaper she was even called a "Japanese princess who became our (this is Yugoslavian) citizen", being also presented as a "Japanese intellectual" or "Japanese feminist", but on the other side she was also seen as "exotic interesting flower" (*Novo doba* 1930) or even "Mrs. Japanese" (Kotobanku n.d.). With her way of speaking Slovene, strongly accented, and dressing in silk kimonos, she represented an exotic culture from far away, not only with the objects from China and Japan that were displayed around her home (see more Motoh 2021), but also with her clothes and movement in her presentations.

Japanese traditional clothing is closely related to Japanese dance, with the colour and patterns often matching the theme expressed by the dance. From the photos and article reports in the newspapers it is clear that Marija Skušek wore a kimono on many occasions, especially when she was giving lectures or dancing, but on other occasions as well, like when she married in a Christian church and thus accepted all the related sacraments in 1927, and adopted her Slovene name, Marija Skušek (see fig. 3). Certainly, however, she wore other clothes on other occasions. Comparing the photos of her dressed in a kimono and the list of items along with photos in the Skušek Collection it is obvious she must have once had more pieces of kimono in her closet than there were left behind after her death (see figs. 3, 4), but in the museum there are now only four kimonos (figs. 5, 9, 10), one coat, one undergarment kimono (*nagajuban*) (fig. 6) and four *obi* (two of them in figs. 7, 8). There are no signs of other kimono accessories, like padding in form of a towel, strip of plastic (*eri-shin*) for the collar of the *nagajuban*, ropes for the hip (*koshi-himo*), *date-jime*, *obi-ita*, *obi-makura*, *obi-gae*, *zōri*, or *kōrin* belt, which might have been lost or never given to the museum. Another question is if these kimonos and *obi* of Marija Tsuneko Skušek were designed in Japan, China or Slovene territory, and when they were produced as well. As such it is also unknown for which occasions the kimono were made.

Figure 3. Photo of Tsuneko Skušek and her husband Ivan Skušek after her receiving the Christian sacraments (baptism, communion, confirmation and church marriage) in Ljubljana in 1927. (Source: Photo Archive of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana)

A kimono, which is literally wrapping the body, sometimes in several layers and belts (*obi*), provides a form of communication in Japanese society (Hendry 1993, 162), and when worn in other country communicates and transmits Japanese culture as well. The final result of wrapping the body in a kimono gives aesthetic pleasure, and especially a higher degree of politeness and formality, as a kimono does not allow informal movements. There are various simpler implementations of kimonos, and for summer festivals there are "cotton kimono" or *yukata*. The form of kimono a woman wears indicates her age and status: "The woman's kimono is one of the unique expressions of Japanese life. It can denote the age and marital status or the wearer, the season of the year, the beginning of a new life, and even death" (Shaver 1966, 113). Wearing a kimono also provides a visual reinforcement of the synthesis of culture, which is performed in dance and music (Coaldrake 2008, 78).

Figure 4. Marija Tsuneko Skušek, making a radio show on Japan at the beginning of the 1930s. (Source: Photo Archive of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana)

Japanese kimono (literally "thing to wear"), refers to a straight-cut robe, which has a long ancestry that can be traced back to China and since the 8th century became widely worn by the Japanese court, and from the 10th century (Heian period 794–1192) on developed with different variations of size, material, decoration. The deemphasising of the shape of the wearer shifts the focal point of the garment from line to surface, making kimonos a perfect canvas for the decorative arts. A wide variety of decorative processes are used in the making of kimonos, from different weaves, to embroidery, to sophisticated dyeing techniques (Nomura and

Ema 2006). The kimonos made at the beginning of the 20th century are different in designs, materials and process of production than contemporary kimonos. There are also many different types of kimonos, differentiated by style or purpose, such as *kosode*, which is the most common form and also the generic term; *furisode* with long, swinging sleeves; *katabira*, an unlined summer kimono of hemp or ramie; *awase*, a lined kimono used in cooler weather; *uchikake*, an unbelted robe worn over a *kosode* (ibid.).

As mentioned earlier by Shaver (1966, 114), kimonos indicate the age and status of the wearer, as young women, whether unmarried or young wives, wear *furisode* (long sleeves), while married women and especially mothers wear kimonos with shortened sleeves. Similarly, the colours also indicate differences—the young wear bright colours, like red and various colours, and as women age the colours become gradually less and less vivid, finally reaching a state of grey, yellowish tan and then black in older age.

Figure 5. Kimono, dark blue silk with red patterned cloth sewed in on upper part and design of flowers on lower part. Length 155cm, wide 122 cm. No. 18462. (Source: Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana)

Figure 6. Undergarment, red silk with white collar, with pattern of waves and flowers. Length 133.5 cm. No 18464. (Source: Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana)

Analysing the collection of Mrs. Skušek we realised that three of the four kimonos are in dark colours (dark blue, blue or black) with some decorations (figs. 9, 10), short sleeves and are made of silk, which confirmed that these kimonos are for a mature woman. The blue one (fig. 5) has the upper part decorated with a sewed red and white pattern design, a rather odd decoration for a kimono. The lower part has a pattern of flowers and sticks on the front outside and inside. This kimono is listed in the inventory as an undergarment (*nagajuban*), but it as it does not have a white collar and it is longer than a usual undergarment. An undergarment is usually in white or light colours, but it could also be in other colours like red in this collection (see fig. 8), which might be considered today as vintage clothing. There were other kimonos that she wore according to some photos (figs. 3, 4), but there are not in museum collection.

Whether the kimono is for a theatre performance, special occasion or everyday use, an *obi* is vital. The four *obi* in the collection are of different patterns and colours, but similar length (from 375 cm to 409 cm) and width (from 31 to 33cm). Three *obi* are made of silk, one in dark blue (fig. 7) with embroidered plum flowers, chrysanthemums, maple leaves and lines on one side and beige on the other side without any designs, while the second one is in brown silk (fig. 8) with embroidered fans and flowers and maple leaves, the third one in light green with painted waves and birds in blue on both sides, and the fourth *obi* is in brown and green brocade with gold threaded patterns of flowers on both sides. There are several types of *obi* as well, these are probably called *chūya obi* (昼夜帯, "day-and-night obi") as they were made in the Meiji period and are not much made or worn today, with dark, sparingly decorated underside and a more colourful, decorated topside.

Figure 7. *Obi* in blue silk with embroidered patterns of flowers and waves in blue, white, red and orange colours. The other side is in beige colour without pattern. Length 374cm, wide 31cm. No 18466. (Source: Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana)

Figure 8. *Obi* in brown silk with embroidered patterns of fans in gold, blue, white, green and brown colours. Length 396cm, width 33cm. No. 18468. (Source: Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana)

As noted above, the kimonos and *obi* in this collection are now considered as vintage clothing, as they are not often made or worn today. However, these items were once worn for everyday occasions, even though the influence of Western clothing quickly spread in Meiji period. This was also a period of building a cultural identity in Japan, and kimonos played an important role as they were recognised in two key wats: as a cultural construction of what is Japanese and what is Western, and thus what is traditional and modern. This was also discussed in the framework of the "women question" addressed in the Meiji period (Goldstein-Gidoni 1999, 351). As Marija Skušek lectured and performed in a kimono, she presented a Japanese person, but also a Japanese woman. Japanese men were more encouraged to wear Western clothing for special occasions, while women wore kimonos. Even today a kimono wrapped around the female body has become a national symbol of tradition, and one that completes the image of being Japanese as opposed to being Western (ibid., 352).

The Values of the Japanese Kimonos and Fans in the Transmission of Culture and Museum Collections

The objects like the fan and kimonos found in the Skušek Collection were originally not part of the formal collection, as already mentioned above. These were objects especially made and used by Marija Skušek that she wore on different occasions. At the time of use these items were not seem as works of art in a museum, but as objects in her closet. However, when she lived in Ljubljana she also used the fan and kimonos to perform her Japanese culture and identity. While she adapted to Slovene society very well, speaking Slovene, giving up her Japanese citizenship and becoming Christian, she also maintained a Japanese identity with such cultural performances and visual appearances. As people around Yugoslavia were very interesting in Japanese culture, she enraptured and enchanted them by dressing up in a kimono and then performed a tea ceremony, sung Japanese songs or danced Japanese dances.

Figure 9. Kimono, black silk with grey lines, inner layer in red and green silk. Length 160 cm, up 122 cm; no. 18459. (Source: Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana)

Figure 10. Black silk with green leaves on the lower part of kimono and white family crest on upper front and back side and red inner layer. Length 165cm, width 124cm; No 18461. (Source: Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana)

Japanese dance embraces and embodies Japanese culture, as it shows aspects of its aesthetic components such as the attire, with the mimetic movements drawn from Japanese culture, along with the aesthetic of the physical movements, and even the physiques of the dancers (Hahn 2007, 168). As an insider with regard to Japanese culture, Marija Tsuneko Skušek could present an "authentic" performance of the Japanese tradition outside of her country to foreigners, as she was also recognized as a promoter of cultural exchange between Japan and Slovenia. (figs. 3, 4) She used her body in public as an instrument of the art and was performing culture, where objects like the fan and kimono, along with her dancing body and music, were a form of communication with the audience and thus transmitted cultural knowledge from one country to the other. People in Yugoslavia were fascinated by the fact that the "movements in dance are fluid, graceful, acquiring aesthetic ideals that reflect the Japanese culture" (*Mariborski večernik Jutra* 1935). Whether or not we consider this fascination with "exotic Japanese women" within the framework of Orientalism, the impact of her presence in Slovene society is still vivid today. With analysing the items that belonged to Mrs. Skušek we explored her life in Slovenia and understand the value of these items as objects for cultural transmission, and the roles that they had in the four decades she spent as "Mrs. Japanese".

Another important issue that we discovered by analysing these objects is their transformation from daily objects of use during her life to rarefied art objects after they were handed over to the Slovene Ethnographic Museum. When these objects were used in everyday life they had no great economic value, but today when they are a part of the collection they are considered antiques and defined as objects of economic value These objects today are systematically analysed and recognised as subjects, which is key to the comprehension of their value (Appadurai 1994, 76). These kimonos are compared on the one hand to artistic objects like paintings or woodblock prints, which are considered valuable in themselves, and on the other to kimonos of other eras, such as those worn by *geisha*. Here it is also important to point out that the fan, kimonos and *obi* were not acquired with the goal of making them part of a collection. Ivan Skušek did not buy them in an antique market, and they only became part of his collection later when they were catalogued and analysed.

This analysis of a fan and kimonos in the Skušek Collection has highlighted the roles and values of these objects in the museum collection. The article also discussed the importance of understanding not only the physical appearance of the items and their life, but also the wider background of items and collection, focusing also on the owner of the items. It is also important to stress how these items transformed from daily objects of use to rarefied art objects after they were handed over to the museum, and within this process their value also changed as they are museum objects representing Japanese culture on Slovene territory.

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SPECIAL ISSUE
EAST ASIA IN SLOVENIA: COLLECTING PRACTICES, CATEGORIZATION AND REPRESENTATION

East Asian Traditions: Perception and Representation in Alma Karlin's Writing

Following in the Footsteps of Isabella Bird? Alma Karlin and Her Representations of Japan

*Klemen SENICA**

Real learning always entails a struggle to understand the unknown.

David Harvey

Abstract

Alma Karlin (1889–1950), a round-the-world traveller, intellectual, and writer from Celje, Slovenia, arrived in Japan and lived in Tokyo in the early 1920s, an era which historians consider to be an interim period between the initial expansion of the Japanese Empire to mainland Asia and its end in 1945. The writer's fascination with the land can be inferred, among other things, from a 35-page description of Japan and the Japanese in her most famous book, *Einsame Weltreise. Die Tragödie einer Frau* (*The Odyssey of a Lonely Woman*), and passages in *Reiseskizzen* (*Travel Sketches*), an earlier work. The article aims to place these travel accounts in the historical and ideological contexts of their time while highlighting some similarities and differences between the representations of the land and its people by Karlin and those by Isabella Bird (1831–1904). Although Karlin makes no explicit reference to the famous British traveller in her writing on Japan, the article demonstrates that she must have known about Bird's book *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan*. It is, above all, her decision to introduce her (German) readers to topoi that were typical of Victorian women's travel writing which suggests that Karlin partly based her image of Japan, if not even the itinerary of her journey there, on Bird's bestselling work. Nevertheless, Karlin does not seem to have conformed to the then dominant orientalist discourses on Japan, her representations generally showing none of the Western arrogance that was so typical of her fellow travellers of both sexes.

Keywords: Alma Karlin, Japan, travel writing, Isabella Bird, representations, Orientalism

Po stopinjah Isabelle Bird? Alma Karlin in njene podobe Japonske

Izvleček

Celjska svetovna popotnica, intelektualka in pisateljica Alma Karlin (1889–1950) je japonsko otočje obiskala in v Tokiu prebivala v zgodnjih dvajsetih letih 20. stoletja, ki v zgodovinopisju veljajo za vmesno obdobje med začetkom širjenja japonskega imperija

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na azijsko celino in njegovim neslavnim koncem leta 1945. Pisateljičino fascinacijo nad deželo je mogoče razbrati tudi iz približno 35 strani dolgega opisa Japonske in Japoncev v njenem najbolj znanem delu *Einsame Weltreise. Die Tragödie einer Frau* (*Samotno potovanje v daljne dežele: tragedija ženske*) ter iz odlomkov iz predhodno objavljenih podlistkov z naslovom *Reiseskizzen* (*Popotne skice*). Avtor te opise postavi v zgodovinski in ideološki kontekst časa njihovega nastanka, hkrati pa opozori na nekaj vzporednic in nasprotij med reprezentacijami dežele ter njenih prebivalcev izpod peresa Alme Karlin in tistimi slovite britanske popotnice Isabelle Bird (1831–1904). Čeprav v japonskem delu svojega potopisa tega eksplicitno ne omenja, prispevek dokazuje, da je Alma Karlin nedvomno poznala knjižno uspešnico Isabelle Bird *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan*. Posledično lahko upravičeno sklepamo, da si je svoje podobe Japonske, mogoče celo itinerarij, ustvarila tudi na podlagi tega dela, kar je po avtorjevem mnenju najbolj razvidno iz izbire (klasičnih) tem ženskih potopisov iz viktorijanskega obdobja, ki jih je želela približati svojemu (nemškemu) bralstvu. Kljub temu se zdi, da se Alma Karlin ni podredila tedanjim orientalističnim diskurzom o Japonski, saj v njenih reprezentacijah praviloma ni mogoče zaznati tipične zahodnjaške oholosti, tako značilne za njene popotniške pendante obeh spolov.

Ključne besede: Alma Karlin, Japonska, potopisi, Isabella Bird, reprezentacije, orientalizem

Since the last decade of the 20th century, Alma Karlin (1889–1950) has been one of the most widely discussed natives of Celje, a city in central Slovenia. For decades she was relegated to the margins of the history of the place where she had been born and spent most of her life—it was not until 1989 that a commemorative plaque was placed on the site of the house she had been born in.[1] However, after Slovenia's independence, Karlin became the subject of numerous academic studies and popular articles, not only focusing on her non-conformist personal credo but also her substantial, stylistically diverse literary legacy, including the travel diaries based on her eight-year journey around the globe. Pušavec (2009, 128) highlights the 1990s as a milestone in the studies on Karlin: in 1992, Marko Radmilovič made a documentary entitled *Celjanka med ljudožerci* ("A Woman from Celje among Cannibals"), followed by *Alma* in 1995, a monodrama written by Uršula Cetinski and starring Polona Vetrih in both the Slovenian and English versions. The question is: why did this revival of interest come then? It is worth noting that the (academic) discovery and recognition of the life and work of Alma Karlin in the mid-1990s should be understood in the light of the atmosphere in Slovenian society in the late 1980s and early 1990s at large, which sought to associate the country with the Central European cultural and historical identity (see Vidmar-Horvat and Delanty 2008, 209–12). With her presumed cosmopolitanism and resistance to dominant societal

1 A detailed account of the local community's treatment of Alma Karlin's legacy can be found in Plevnik 2018.

norms, Karlin was a welcome deviation from the supposed Balkan narrow-mindedness and chauvinism.[2] Adding this to the fact that the same period saw mass publication and exploration of women's travelogues worldwide—a phenomenon initiated in the 1970s as part of the feminist movement's agenda to acknowledge women's contribution to the intellectual history of humankind (Bassnett 2002, 226), and amplified by the publishing industry's efforts to find new market niches (Weber 2003, 27)—the sudden fascination for Alma Karlin no longer seems so surprising (cf. Perenič 2018, 55).

Karlin's Travel Accounts from a Socio-Anthropological Perspective

According to Baskar (2015, 60), "any socio-anthropological analysis of travel practices necessitates contextualizing the traveller not only culturally, but also sociologically", meaning that they should be "considered also from the point of view of their social class" and "the regional division of labour they were subject to". Although some scholars suggest she failed to earn a high school diploma,[3] Karlin did not come from an underprivileged background. On the contrary, she was born into a respectable bourgeois family whose intellectual openness could be seen to go beyond her mother's profession as a teacher.[4] The evidence of this includes the language tests at the Royal Society of Arts, London, which Karlin passed with distinction, and the odd language teaching job, which helped her pay for her round-the-world journey. Still, in terms of her professional life, Karlin would nowadays be considered a freelancer. Throughout her journey, she had an irregular, modest, even inadequate income, often living close to the minimum subsistence level and suffering from material deprivation.[5]

2 The goal seems not to have been achieved yet in full. In his introduction, Marijan Pušavec (2018, 4), a renowned Slovenian researcher of Karlin's literary legacy, notes: "By issuing a special edition of *Dialogi* dedicated to Alma M. Karlin, the editorial board aimed at putting forth her persona not as another lesson of history, but as an example of someone who may herald a more *globalised role of the provincial town and community in a broader transnational framework* [my italics]. With her life, Alma M. Karlin demonstrated that this was not impossible."

3 Citing Pušavec, Perenič (2018, 50, n. 9) writes that Karlin formally completed only seven years of primary schooling.

4 Amalija Maček (2018, 13) notes that in German the social class Karlin was a member of would be referred to as *Bildungsbürgertum*, an educated class of the bourgeoisie that was immensely proud of its cultural capital.

5 Like many of her predecessors of both sexes, she risked everything to achieve her goal, including her own life: "To be part of a 'historic' moment meant taking risks: staking all one's physical and intellectual abilities, for there was a huge prize to be had, or a devastating loss" (Šmitek 1995, 8–9).

As Karlin spent her formative years in a time and place where one's national identity was a highly significant issue while experiencing the collapse of both Austria-Hungary in the aftermath of World War I and then that of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1941, it is hardly surprising that her national identity was a fluid, elusive one, not unlike those of many of the colonized peoples she visited on her travels. Another aspect which no socio-anthropological analysis of her imaginings of the places she visited in general, or Japan and the Japanese in particular, should neglect is that she grew up in the Dual Monarchy. This political entity was a contiguous empire rather than a monoethnic state, hence her German orientalist *Kulturbrille*, as will be discussed below.

Although the political map of Europe was considerably rearranged after the Great War, the global geopolitical landscape was still profoundly shaped by colonial empires when Alma Karlin travelled the world in the 1920s. One of the imperial powers Karlin visited on her journey was the Great Japanese Empire (*Dai-Nippon Teikoku*),[6] where she stayed for approximately 15 months in total. By the time of her visit, the Japanese archipelago had already become a well-known territory across Europe, including in the region of today's Slovenia, or in Karlin's own words, "every child in Europe babbles about geishas, kimonos, Japanese lanterns, wind chimes" (Karlin 1997, 103).[7] This was a result of *Japonisme*, the aesthetic cult of Japan in Europe and the US that peaked in the second half of the 19th century and was strongly reflected in art, especially painting, influencing some of the greatest masters of the time, such as Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890), Gustav Klimt (1862–1918), and Edgar Degas (1834–1917).

This Japanophilia was also reflected in the fast-growing body of travel literature about the country. One of the most famous travel writers was Isabella Bird (1831–1904), a Victorian traveller who went on to become the first woman to be elected Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society in 1897. It is no overstatement to say that the position made her an icon and role model for many women travel writers who came after her. Since Bird's travelogues, especially *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan*, first published in 1880, were instant bestsellers and saw several reprints in her lifetime (see Elliott 2008, 1–2), as was the case with Karlin's several decades later, it is beyond doubt that Karlin knew about them even if she never explicitly said as much. This is all the more likely given that Karlin spent several years in London before World War I. Adding this on top of the

6 In the early 1920s, the Japanese colonial empire ruled over Taiwan, the Korean peninsula, Micronesia, and South Sakhalin.

7 In Slovenian newspapers, the first longer pieces of writing on Japan date back to the year of Karlin's birth, claims Gabrič (2018, 155).

fact that she mostly relied on trustworthy sources such as encyclopaedias, classic literature, and dictionaries when studying faraway lands and learning new languages (Maček 2018, 9–10), it is safe to assume that she read Bird's travel diary about her experiences in Japan when planning her own trip to East Asia.[8]

In her travelogues, Karlin often mentions how meticulously she studied the places and people she intended to visit on her journey, adding that "there is value to stopping in a country only when you have prepared for the stop, or else your perception is superficial and unrealistic" (2006, 201).[9] Furthermore, when describing a visit to Tokyo's red-light district of Yoshiwara, she writes (Karlin 1997, 84): "I knew where I was, for I went there intentionally and had read about it extensively." This was not unique to Karlin. As many scholars today observe, travellers purposely adopt their predecessors' travel practices, seeking affirmation for what they have read and real-life images of what they have imagined beforehand. Sara Mills underlines that

> most writers portray members of the other nation through a conceptual and textual grid constituted by travel books. This close intertextual relation with other travel accounts can be seen in the fact that travel writing has always appropriated other writing, sometimes explicitly but often by plagiarising. (Mills 2001, 73)

It should be added that such plagiarism is not necessarily intentional, but rather spontaneous, unwitting, as can be seen from Karlin's ethnographic accounts of the places she visited, where "the external information has been absorbed into the text and submitted to the authorial voice" (Šlibar 1998, 123–24). At any rate, both lead to much the same result, with writers recreating the impressions and records of those who came before.

8 Trnovec (2020, 104) is explicit about Karlin preparing for her travels by reading travel diaries, among other things, but does not cite any specific authors or titles. As early as 1882, William Henry Davenport Adams published *Celebrated Women Travelers of the Nineteenth Century*, a book that saw more than nine reprints by 1906. As eager to learn as she was, Karlin may have even been aware of the photographs made by the Austrian photographers Wilhelm Burger (1844–1920) and Michael Moser (1853–1912), who arrived in Japan as part of an Austrian-Hungarian delegation back in 1869 (Tōkyō daigaku 2018).

9 According to Vladimir Šlibar (2009, 135), in her immense desire for knowledge, Karlin prepared painstakingly for her journey, "studying history, geography, and natural science, working to hone her painting skills, and compiling a dictionary of ten languages" before leaving Celje in the autumn of 1919.

Figure 1. Alma Karlin with her "Erika" typewriter. Unknown author. (Source: National and University Library of Slovenia, Ljubljana)

That said, Karlin's *Einsame Weltreise. Die Tragödie einer Frau* (1929) and *Im Banne der Südsee. Die Tragödie einer Frau* (1930),[10] the travel texts published soon after she returned from her eight-year globetrotting experience, can serve as a Central European woman's insightful ethnographical account of geographically and culturally distant societies and peoples in the 1920s, despite her probably being unfamiliar with the anthropological theories of the time (Šlibar 1998, 124). However, to fully understand her scholarly and publicly acclaimed travelogues, it is necessary to compare them with those of her—predominantly Anglo-American—female predecessors and contemporaries.[11] To this end, the ar-

10 In the manner of many Victorian female travel diaries—for example, Isabella Bird's travel experience from the US titled *A Lady' Life in the Rocky Mountains* (1879) and Gertrude Adams Fisher's *A Woman Alone in the Heart of Japan* (1906) (see Williams 2017, 18; cf. Elliott 2008, 2)—Karlin made explicit references in her book titles to the fact that they were written by a woman.

11 There had been non-British women travellers who embarked on solo round-the-world journeys as early as the 19th century. This includes Lina Bögli (1858–1941), who paid for her 10-year trip with the money she earned herself, much as Karlin did. Bögli wrote about her adventure in *Forward: Letters Written on a Trip around the World*, a book published in 1904. I owe this piece of information to Jerneja Jezernik.

ticle intends to highlight some parallels and distinctions between Karlin's representations of the Japanese archipelago and its inhabitants and those of Isabella Bird. Moreover, what undoubtedly was a remarkable journey should necessarily be considered in the light of the historical and ideological milieu in which Karlin lived and travelled. From such a broad perspective, new aspects of the places visited and their inhabitants, as represented by a woman traveller, can be explored.

The primary focus of this analysis of Alma Karlin's relationship to her *locus amoenus* is on the parts of Slovenian translations of *Reiseskizzen* (*Travel Sketches*) and one of the travelogues mentioned above, *Einsame Weltreise* (*The Odyssey of a Lonely Woman*), which refer to Japan as we know it today, a country made up of four main islands, Hokkaidō, Honshū, Kyūshū, Shikoku, and the archipelago of Okinawa.

"A Woman Travelling Alone" in a Rapidly Changing Country

Similar to Bird, Karlin got her first impression of Japan in Yokohama, the then leading Japanese port. Between June 1922 and July 1923, she stayed in Tokyo, which was, as it is today, the political, intellectual, and economic centre of the country. With a population of some two million, Tokyo was, at the time, smaller than London, where Karlin used to live before World War I. At first, she stayed near the Imperial Palace, in the Yūrakuchō district, before moving to her student's home in Hongō, where she remained for the rest of her stay in the capital (Jezernik 2006, 81).[12]

Needless to say, neither Bird nor Karlin was the first European woman to visit Japan after the American "Black Ships" (*kurofune*) arrived in 1853,[13] forcing the Tokugawa shogunate (1603–1867) to re-establish diversified international political and economic relations with all major Western superpowers. Soon thereafter, the country was flooded with European and North American advisers (*oyatoi gaikokujin*) hired by the Meiji government to assist in reforming the education system, military, law, administration, economy, etc. Their main task was to

12 Like in many other places on her globetrotting journey, Karlin worked as a language tutor while in Japan.

13 There were many forerunners of Bird (see Klein 2011), although she refrained from mentioning this in her travelogue. Japan had piqued Europe's interest ever since the Middle Ages, and it was perhaps Marco Polo (1254–1324) who first passed the word about this land to Europe. He most likely heard about Japan when traveling to South China, rather than going there himself, notes Takeuchi (1998, 86).

accelerate the modernization of Japan along the lines of the Western empires to avoid being colonized and meeting the same fate as neighbouring China had a few decades earlier. Meanwhile, refusing to merely sit and wait for the Western experts to arrive, the Japanese political and intellectual elite-to-be headed West to acquire knowledge themselves. One such prominent example was the Iwakura mission (*Iwakura shisetsudan*). Consisting of members of the then established and up-and-coming intellectual and political elite—including Itō Hirobumi (1841–1909), who emerged as the most influential Japanese politician of the group—this diplomatic mission visited all the superpowers of the time, including Austria-Hungary, on its journey between 1871 and 1873.[14]

It was only ten years after the Meiji Revolution that professed to be restoring the Emperor's political authority, a time of the last acts of rebellion against the new system when Isabella Bird arrived in Japan. As a subject of the mighty British Empire, this Victorian traveller enjoyed a higher social status than Karlin, but a few parallels could nevertheless be drawn between them. As women, they were bound to have different experiences than their male colleagues, their choices of routes necessarily informed by the fear of being raped (Weber 2003, 45). Karlin's horrific experience of narrowly escaping rape in Peru inspired her lifelong "fear of the male human animal" (2006, 87).[15]

In her own words, Karlin was a traveller who travelled alone and, in some instances, set foot where no white person had trodden before. However, as will be discussed below, this was not the case in Japan. In her Japan diaries (1881, vol. 1, vii), Bird made similar assertations of travelling alone, but when travelling to Hokkaidō, she was accompanied by a young Japanese translator named Ito. This was a reasonable decision since, like Karlin, Bird could not speak the local language. Therefore, both travellers were compelled to acquire information through intermediaries, either Japanese or foreigners who could speak Japanese. Another common trait is that both Karlin (see Mihurko Poniž 2018, 67–68) and Bird (Bassnett 2002, 232; Elliott 2008, 2), like many other travel writers, kept their audience in mind while writing about Japan. As Orožen (1990, 159) highlights, Karlin thought the purpose of what was in

14 After returning, Kume Kunitake (1839–1931), a private secretary to the head of the mission, Prince Iwakura Tomomi (1825–1883), and subsequently a professor of History at Tokyo Imperial University, published an in-depth account of the journey, whose complete English translation is more than 2,000 pages long. Travelling by train from Rome to Vienna, the mission crossed the Slovenian ethnic territory. Kume was particularly impressed by Austria and Vienna, saying the city was second only to Paris in terms of beauty (Kume 2009, 415–25).

15 For various reasons, Karlin (2006, 10–11) could not travel to Japan directly from Italy, so she decided to go to South America first.

every respect a tiring journey "was not only to discover new things but also to communicate them".[16]

There were also many differences between the two women, the most obvious being the primary reasons for their visits. Karlin first became fascinated by Japan during her stay in London, when her chance meeting with a Japanese native called Nobuji G. piqued her interest in Asia at large (Karlin 2010, 151).[17] From this student, Karlin learned a great deal about his country, and once in Japan she was fascinated by its people, saying that "no other people can compare with the Japanese" (Karlin 1997, 112).[18] With Bird, some scholars argue that one of the main reasons for her visit to Japan was to explore the possibilities of spreading the Christian faith, in her case Protestantism, in the Japanese archipelago (Kanasaka 2017, 106). However, once in Japan her attitude towards missionary schools was ambivalent. Bird (1881, vol. 2, 224–26) feared that girls' education was unduly focused on learning Western (table) manners at the expense of Japanese female etiquette, which in her traditionalistic eyes could lead to their social uprooting from the local community.[19]

The facts set out above already point to another difference between the authors. While Karlin occasionally doubted herself and her understanding of Japan, and openly regretted her inability to speak Japanese, Bird, on the other hand, was a more confident traveller, an omniscient narrator who, save for the introduction to her travelogues, never voiced doubts about her biased representation of Japan and its inhabitants, especially the native Ainu people (see also Bach 1995, 593). Her social capital was far greater than that of Alma Karlin: while in Japan, Bird moved in an intellectual milieu that was beyond reach for the traveller from Celje, its unreachability stemming not only from the fact that most of the figures the British woman met decades before had by then passed away. Among others, Bird (1881, vol. 1, 46, ix) was introduced to, or even socialized extensively with, James Curtis Hepburn (1815–1911), the author of what is still the most widely used system for transliteration of the Japanese language into the Latin alphabet; Heinrich

16 Karlin addressed the reader already in the notes made in the travel diary she kept during her journey. This leads Maček (2018, 15) to believe that the notes were made with the intention of being published. The dynamic between Karin's self-identity as an explorer and that as a writer is further discussed in Veselič (forthcoming).

17 Before her first meeting with Nobuji G., Karlin thought she should do her homework and research the customs and traditions of his native land (2010, 151).

18 Karlin's affection for the Japanese could be matched only by her affection for the British (see Orožen 1990, 157).

19 Yet, as Ozawa (2008, 95–97) points out, her comments and descriptions of missionary work are almost entirely omitted in the popular editions of her *Unbeaten Tracks.*

von Siebold (1852–1908), a translator and diplomat of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, who shared his father's passion for Japan; and Basil Hall Chamberlain (1850–1935), an erudite professor at Tokyo Imperial University. Needless to say, Bird's circle of acquaintances and friends during her stay in Japan also included Sir Harry S. Parkes (1828–1885) and his wife Fanny, the first non-Japanese woman to ascend Mount Fuji. Bird (1881, vol. 1, 245, n. 1) frequently refers to her distinguished friends who supposedly helped her understand Japanese culture in detail. Meanwhile, Karlin mentions her meetings with Okada Tadaichi, where she was introduced to many dignitaries and artists, and recounts the few days she spent in Nikkō in the company of the poet and university professor of English, Ernest Edwin Speight (1871–1949), as noted by Hrvatin (2019, 112).

Finally, the writers' travel accounts differ both in form and length. Bird's (1881, vol. 1, vii) "narrative of travels in Japan" has an epistolary structure, while Karlin based her writing on *Reiseskizzen*, a text she had written during her travels in instalments for the Celje-based German paper *Cillier Zeitung*. When released as a book, the experiences from Japan were given merely 35 pages, with some sections repeated from the newspaper editions, whereas Bird's account is more than 800 pages long. Unlike *Unbeaten Tracks*, Karlin's travel writing on Japan leaves the reader with the impression of having been given a medley of events and people that the writer was (un)impressed by during her visit to the country, rather than a coherent travelogue.

Walking the Beaten Track

As mentioned earlier, Karlin walked the beaten track when in Japan, visiting, or claiming to visit, only popular tourist destinations such as Kamakura, Nikkō, Kyoto, Mount Fuji, and so on.[20] Unlike Bird, who never lived in Japan, always staying on the move, Karlin resided and worked in Tokyo, making occasional

20 Shigemori Bučar (2019, 45) reconstructs Karlin's Japan itinerary from her collection of postcards of Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines, claiming that she probably travelled the country's western part between 1 and 10 July, for Karlin sent her first postcard from Korea to Celje on 11 July. Her passion for collecting not only postcards, but also other items on her round-the-world trip, should be understood as her desire to produce hard evidence that she had truly been to the places she wrote about. According to Mills (2001, 112), "[t]ravel writers, especially after the eighteenth century, write very much within an atmosphere of an assumption of exaggeration and possibly falsification; they thus have to adopt strategies to counter this, such as including maps, photographs and even testimonials /…/ by adopting a documentary, objective style and including certain types of information." Her strong desire for her travel writing to be considered credible is further proven by her assertions of the truthfulness of her writing that can be found in the autobiography she wrote after her return (Karlin 2010, 298).

trips to places near and further away from the city to break her daily routine. The only exception seems to be her trip to Kansai and Kyūshū, from where she continued her journey to the Korean Peninsula, which had been under Japanese colonial rule since 1910.[21] It should be noted that Karlin's travels across the Japanese archipelago were much less complicated than those of Isabella Bird, as the Japanese Empire had since built an elaborate rail network across the metropole and was busy expanding it to its colonies. As early as in May 1872, Japan's first rail link connected Tokyo and Yokohama, followed by the Kobe–Osaka–Kyoto link a few years later, and yet the entire rail system in 1878 covered only 76,5 miles (123 kilometres) (Bird 1881, vol. 2, 328). However, the improving transport infrastructure gradually changed locals' travel habits, enabling them "leisure travel". March (2007) adds that by the early 20th century, bureaucrats had realized the importance of the consistent, vigorous promotion of tourist destinations in foreign markets, paving the way for the establishment of the Japan Tourist Bureau in 1912.[22] So when Karlin travelled to tourist destinations in Honshū, there were hardly any unbeaten tracks left since travelling was no longer as strictly regulated as in the early years of the Meiji period, when foreigners needed a special permit to go inland.

To convey to the reader the beauty of Japan's tourist attractions, Karlin also touches on some other topics when describing the places she visited. Recalling her visit to Kamakura, a seaside town just over an hour's train journey from Tokyo, famous for a seated Buddha statue, Karlin scolds Europeans for their obsession with physical appearance while associating people in the East with a spiritual inclination and a capacity for contemplation:

> Active Westerners are excited by their physical strength like children, while pensive, soul-searching Easterners pursue the strength of the spirit, the body being merely the outer manifestation of the spirit and its temporary aide, a vessel. (Karlin 2006, 223)

21 For more details about her East Asian travels, see Vampelj Suhadolnik (2016, 53). Karlin's impressions of Korea are discussed by Senica (2011, 74–75) and Shigemori Bučar (2020), those of Taiwan by Senica (2011, 73–74) and Veselič (2020).

22 McDonald (2017, 14), on the other hand, underlines that the main impetus for the creation of this "government's official tourist organization" was to encourage travel from the metropole to the "new territories".

With today's knowledge, Karlin's notes on spirituality in the East should be read *cum grano salis*.[23] As Cwiertka (2006, 121–22) emphasizes, Japanese political elites, at least, were very much interested in the imperial subject's physical body, as suggested by the establishment of the Imperial Government Institute for Nutrition in 1920. Its creation likely had to do with the idea that only physically strong soldiers can perform well on the battlefield. In the early 1920s, Japan's imperial expansion had been well underway for quite some time. It was right after the Meiji Revolution and the return of political authority to the Emperor that the new political elites started the aggressive territorial expansion, resulting in the colonization of Hokkaidō as early as 1869.

Although Karlin left behind a set of postcards with images of the Ainu people, the indigenous inhabitants of Hokkaidō, and her travel diaries include notes on them, she seems not to have visited the island herself, as noted convincingly by some researchers (Jezernik 2006, 84; Veselič 2020, 147, n. 18). It has been established that the postcards were bought at the Japan-British Exhibition, held in London in 1910, rather than in Japan.[24] Moreover, unlike the passages describing the Tayal in Taiwan, whom she had met and wrote about meticulously (Karlin 2006, 326–33), Karlin's accounts of Ainu cuisine, spirituality, etc., are detailed yet generic and anachronistic (1997, 85–90). Her depiction of the daily life of the Ainu lacks any reference to the then already easily discernible impact of Western missionaries in the northernmost Japanese prefecture (Oguma 1998, 59–61), whom she often mentions in some other parts of her travelogues and with whom she even identifies (Sperber 2007, 176). Doubts about Karlin's

23 In the Japanese section of *The Odyssey of a Lonely Woman*, Karlin (2006, 266) says she occasionally prayed the Rosary. The fact that it is precisely this section of her diary where she mentions this is interesting: like today, Christianity was close to non-existent in Japan at the time compared to Buddhism or Shinto.
Unlike Karlin's keen interest in theosophy and East Asian religious beliefs and practices, which have been widely researched by Šmitek (2009) and Veselič (2021), respectively, her relationship with Catholicism is yet to be analysed. This is despite the fact that in the 1930s, Karlin attended daily mass at the Church of the Assumption in the centre of Celje (Trnovec 2020, 135), or according to Jerneja Jezernik (personal correspondence, December 31, 2020) engaged in contemplation at the Capuchins' church across the River Savinja, together with Thea Schreiber Gamelin (1906–1988), their way of life in other respects most likely deviating from what was considered acceptable at the time (Šučur 2014). In her old age, Schreiber Gamelin even decided to study theology in Ljubljana (Maček 2018, 22).

24 I thank Maja Veselič for this insight. Held by the Celje Regional Museum, Karlin's collection includes more than 500 postcards, of which nearly half show Japanese motifs (Trnovec 2020, 120). During her stay in London, Karlin must have visited the said exhibition in 1910. With the event, Japan aimed to promote its image of a successful colonial superpower on the eastern edge of Asia in the eyes of predominantly British visitors. According to Hennessey (2018), the exhibition included an Ainu village (in the form of a "human zoo").

visit to Hokkaidō are reinforced by the fact that her accounts of this supposed trip can only be found in feuilletons she wrote for a local Celje paper but were entirely omitted from her travel book. All this indicates that Karlin based her imaginings of the Ainu on documents from the second half of the 19th century, which were widely available across Europe at the time, as Ölschleger proves (2014), and perhaps even on Bird's accounts, rather than on first-hand experience.[25] Nevertheless, Karlin (1997, 86) did not hesitate to criticize, albeit in brief, Japanese colonial expansion, saying that the Japanese were crowding the Ainu out and forbidding them to use their language.

Compared with Karlin's accounts, Bird's descriptions of the Ainu are much less well-disposed. The British traveller might have been the first non-Japanese woman to come into contact with the indigenous people of Hokkaidō and was undoubtedly the first to write about them.[26] The most striking thing about this is the fact that she disrespected their wish not to disclose the information revealed to her to the Japanese government (1881, vol. 2, 58). Given that it was due to the latter's goodwill that she could travel north in the first place, she must have been aware that the political elite would be interested in her experience of the country. While betraying the Ainu's trust, Bird also paved the way for even harsher domination in the colonial attempts to Japanize the Ainu by diligently citing their names and the places she visited. It is precisely the overt support for Hokkaidō's colonization that could be one of the reasons for the incredible popularity of Bird in Japan, claims Williams (2017, 27), for Bird turned a blind eye to the misdeeds of the Japanese Empire. However, as Kanasaka (2017, 188) highlights, Bird's popularity in Japan did not start until the 1970s or 1980s, when it was a result of a campaign to promote new ways of travelling around the country.

Karlin's experience and the ensuing accounts of Japan would undoubtedly have been different had she spent one year in the "modern Osaka" instead of Tokyo, among "large shops and the hurrying Japanese, who seem to have become impolite" (Karlin 2006, 271). In the early 20th century, Japan saw a massive rise in department stores, which started to dominate "the commercial, architectural and cultural landscape of Japanese cities" (Cwiertka 2006, 50). Her travel accounts

25 On the issue of the credibility of women's travel diaries, Mulligan (2014, 183–84) notes: "Part of the pleasure of reading travel writing is the reader's awareness that the text is working on two levels simultaneously. In literary terms, travel writers employ a diverse range of rhetorical stylistic devices, paradoxically often used in fiction writing, to convince us of the authenticity of their accounts: but alongside the literary enjoyment, we can sometimes get a glimpse of the truly remarkable reality of human possibility."

26 Needless to say, Japanese explorers had travelled to Ezochi, now Hokkaidō, before this, in the Meiji period, also pursuing their interest in the Ainu. This included Matsuura Takeshirō (1818–1888), an explorer and cartographer credited with coining the name Hokkaidō.

suggest that Karlin was concerned about the merging of Japanese and Western cultural elements:

> Japan has found itself at a turning point, and what dismays a foreigner is the temporarily external adoption of Western ways where these should better be avoided: people wearing ugly, ill-suited Western clothes not tailored to Asiatic bodies; unsightly American stone cubes displacing lovely local buildings; imitation in areas where local art is superior and more accomplished. (Karlin in Jezernik 2006, 100)

If Karlin was annoyed by new buildings made of stone, Bird, on the other hand, disapproved of Western-style wooden structures, which failed to fit her stereotypical notions of the Japanese urban landscape:

> *Tôkiyô* and the new *régime* are architecturally represented by the ministerial villas of stone-faced brick, with red brick garden walls, the Engineering College, really solid and handsome, and a number of barracks, departments, police stations, colleges, and schools, in a debased Europeanised or Americanised style, built of wood, painted white, with a superabundance of oblong glass windows, and usually without verandahs, looking like inferior warehouses, or taverns in the outskirts of San Francisco, as vulgar and dismally ugly as they can be, and more like confectionery than building. (Bird 1881, vol. 1, 34)

The above excerpts suggest that their authors disapproved of the mixing of cultural, more specifically architectural, elements of the East with those of the West. This is precisely what travellers often lament still today, denying the peoples of the "exotic" places they visit the right to use the latest technological advancements, citing their negative impact on the "traditional" ways of life. Overwhelmed by disgust at what she saw, Bird forgot that during her visit Japan was still an economically weak and technologically undeveloped country unable to build modern infrastructure overnight, despite its efforts. Her aversion to mixing or, indeed, "impurity" was not limited to architecture alone. According to Bird (1881, vol. 1, 8), the Japanese of the treaty ports were contaminated and vulgarized by their interactions with foreigners, while those inland, where very few foreigners were allowed at the time, were still "kindly, gentle, and courteous". Karlin (2006, 379–80) also objected to race-mixing, seeing it as the root cause of moral and cultural degradation. In her opinion, this resulted in social problems in many South American countries, especially Peru. Later on her journey, she failed to question the "White Australia policy", Australia's immigration legislation that was highly discriminatory to all non-whites, including the Japanese, in the 1920s; instead, Karlin even defended it.[27]

Karlin's Daily Life in Tokyo

In analysing her descriptions of Japanese society in general and gender relations in particular, one should not overlook that while in Japan Karlin moved in the middle- and upper-class social circles among relatively well-educated men and women. From these friends and acquaintances, she acquired her knowledge of Japan's social structure and cultural specifics.[28] Although Karlin was multilingual, Japanese was not one of the nine languages she mastered. Remembering her reunion with her former student Nobuji, she laments: "He spoke the language of the country, and I did not" (Karlin in Jezernik 2009, 24). According to Barbara Trnovec (2020, 101), Karlin had studied Japanese in London, but could only say two words when she arrived: "Please" and "Excuse me / I am sorry" (Karlin 2006, 228). Despite her year-long stay in Tokyo, her knowledge of Japanese most likely remained limited to courtesies such as *gomen kudasai* (Hello. Is anyone home?) or *itadakimasu* (Let's eat!), and did not include writing in Japanese characters (Karlin 1997, 76, 77; 2006, 256).[29]

Nevertheless, Karlin proudly claimed she could communicate well enough with random fellow passengers on a tram if she had to enquire about the right stop (Karlin 1997, 78). Some other daily chores made her uneasy, since her scarce knowledge of the language did not suffice for a fluent dialogue. Visits to the international post office were particularly traumatic for her, even though workers there could speak English more fluently than she spoke Japanese (Karlin 1997, 77). However, her lack of knowledge of the Japanese language did not stop Karlin

27 Although some studies wish to paint her as a proto-feminist, Williams' (2017, 27) remarks on Bird could easily apply to Karlin: "Attempts to incorporate Bird into a feminist literary tradition are, however, complicated by her forceful support of contemporary racial and imperial hierarchies, and by her judgmental Christian moral framework." In the two travellers' defence, it should be added that such ethnocentric perception of the world dominated both the academia and the public discourses of the time in Europe and the United States (Goodenough 2002, 423). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights had not been adopted until after World War II, in December 1948.

28 Fister-Stoga (2001, 101) points out that despite her relatively long stay, the locals Karlin interacted with most likely perceived her as a tourist, treating her with deference and respect.

29 Her deficient knowledge of Japanese can be seen from her remark that all Japanese ships belong to the "maru" company (Karlin 2006, 312). The suffix *maru*, meaning "circle", is often attached to Japanese merchant ship names. Several theories purport to explain this, one saying that it was a way for sailors to express their hope for a safe return.

from socializing with the locals. To communicate with them, she used English, French or German, the languages she had mastered well and taught professionally while in Japan (Karlin 1997, 79; 2006, 243). Although one-third of the time in the middle school curriculum in the early Taishō period was devoted to the study of English (Clarke 2009, 72), Karlin's writings (1997, 78–79; 2006, 237) suggest that the level of knowledge of foreign languages that allowed for fluent communication was mainly limited to intellectuals.

Figure 2. Alma Karlin in *yukata*, photographed in Celje. Unknown author. (Source: National and University Library of Slovenia, Ljubljana)

Besides socializing with influential individuals, how did Karlin spend her spare time in Tokyo? Her descriptions in *The Odyssey of a Lonely Woman* indicate that she was entirely in keeping with the spirit of the age, taking walks in Ginza, particularly in the evenings to see the night markets (Karlin 2006, 234–35). This made her very much like many other members of the emerging middle class, who mostly lived on the outskirts of the city while making use of extensive railway links to the Tokyo city centre to do one-day (shopping) trips to the elite Ginza district, as Gordon notes.

> A family excursion to the Ginza shopping district on a Sunday would feature window shopping and perhaps the purchase of the latest style in ready-to-wear dress at Mitsui's pioneering Mitsukoshi department store. Shoppers would take a break in a coffee shop or beer hall, two other urban innovations of the early twentieth century. Their coffee would most often be brewed from beans grown by Japanese emigrant farmers in Brazil. [White, Merry I. 2012. *Coffee Life in Japan*. Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 5] They might end the day by dining in an elegant Western-style restaurant. A new term was coined for this modern leisure, *Gin-bura*, loosely translatable as "Ginza cruising". (Gordon 2020, 159)

Some researchers (Befu 2001, 132; Cwiertka 2006, 144) highlight that the blind enthusiasm for everything and everyone from the West had already declined in Japan by the time Karlin disembarked in Yokohama in the early 1920s. Nevertheless, Karlin felt that ordinary people in Japan of the 1920s had yet to get used to the presence of Westerners. When describing her experience of the Japanese perception of her, Karlin (1997, 76) notes: "They look at a white woman with great interest, but in the same way we look at a monkey in captivity, an elephant in a zoo, or some rare creature—as something curious, ugly, and amusing." While some Japanese in the 1920s may have still been reluctant to welcome foreigners into their city, town or village, they had long overcome the inferiority complex against the West. Nevertheless, despite her busy social life with the locals, which resulted in some insightful remarks about them, as noted by Fister-Stoga (2001, 107), Karlin felt she had failed to reach the depths of the "Japanese soul" (Karlin 2006, 243–44). The reason for this self-criticism is unclear to us. It is not implausible that when communicating with Karlin locals would directly point to or indirectly hint at Westerners' perceived inability to fully grasp Japanese culture. The anthropologist Harumi Befu offers the following explanation for the Japanese sense of superiority over foreigners:

> This notion of uniqueness is often accompanied by a belief that these unique features cannot be understood or fully comprehended by

> non-Japanese. Comprehension of these unique features supposedly requires not rational or logical understanding but an intuitive insight into Japanese culture that only natives can achieve. Thus foreigners are defined as incapable of understanding the essence of Japanese culture. (Befu 2001, 67)

However, Karlin's lack of self-confidence may also be interpreted in the light of the fact that women travellers were not supposed to produce "scientific" and authoritative writing; on the contrary, their accounts were expected to be amateurish (Mills 2001, 83).

Focusing on Japanese Cuisine

As a result of this expectation, women travel writers mostly, but not always (see Williams 2017, 27), focused on "less sophisticated" topics. One of them was local cuisine, and both Bird and Karlin succumbed to this discursive pressure. Karlin writes about the food she ate rather extensively.[30] After disembarking in Yokohama, she had "curry with rice" in the company of her fellow passengers from Russia in a restaurant "decorated in European style" (Karlin 2006, 225). Called *yōshokuya*, such restaurants—some 5,000 had opened across Tokyo by 1923—served Western food tailored to the eating habits of the local population (Ishige 2014, 157). As it was nearly seven decades since Japan had established close economic and political relations with the West when Karlin was there, the urban population had become well acquainted with European cuisine.

Nonetheless, it seems that during her stay in Tokyo Karlin was not able to enjoy all the benefits of culinary globalization. Due to her meagre income and high rent, as well as the payments she had to meet to repay the money borrowed in Hawaii to continue her travels, Karlin's first weeks in Tokyo meant a hand-to-mouth existence with very modest meals. In her own words (Karlin 2006, 230), she "suffered from serious malnutrition", her breakfast consisting of a small slice of bread, lunch of soy wrappers, and dinner of (rotting) peaches. Although this was in the first few weeks, poor meals were a constant throughout her stay in Japan (2006, 261–62). As she was, understandably, embarrassed about her poverty, she preferred to keep quiet about it (Karlin 2006, 231): "Nobody knew anything about this; even in the boarding house, I made it seem as if I ate my fill."

Later, with the help of a German friend, Karlin was introduced to a journalist

30 Similarly, Bird devotes an entire chapter to Japanese cuisine (1881, vol. 1, 237–46).

from *The Asahi Shimbun*, one of Japan's leading dailies even today, and became a contributor, and this allowed her to rise from the "swamp of destitution" (Karlin 2006, 231). A few pages later, she writes something that shatters the stereotypical notion most Westerners have of Japanese cuisine, according to which rice has always been the staple food. "I would gladly treat myself to a daily portion of rice, soup or vegetables if only I could get my hands on these things," Karlin laments (2006 245, 227), saying that life in Japan is incredibly expensive for Europeans. In the 1920s, white rice was too costly and therefore too exclusive to be the main dish in all Japanese households. Cwiertka (2006, 67) describes the diet of the time as follows: "Pure rice was reserved in peasant households for special occasions, such as New Year. Despite the rising standard of living during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the peasant diet still fell considerably below urban standards." It seems that throughout her stay in Japan, Karlin's diet was closer to that of the rural and impoverished working-class population in fast-growing cities, which included Korean and Okinawan immigrants to the *naichi* ("inner lands"), than to middle-class city dwellers. That said, Karlin was not a victim of high rice prices, which affected the daily lives of many Japanese; her choice of lifestyle was deliberate. At 150 yen per month, her salary for a part-time job at the German Embassy was far above average: a female typist, for instance, would earn around 1 yen per day in the late 1920s (see Gordon 2020, 154). But having already experienced privation on her journey and having been forced to borrow money to continue it, Karlin was very disciplined in saving the money earned from her job at the Embassy for new travels. That means she sustained her day-to-day life through tutoring and writing articles for Japanese newspapers (Karlin 2006, 262).

On the Social Position of Women in Japan

In the 1920s, cities teemed with progressive Japanese women who loved Western fashions along dandy Japanese men, a phenomenon that did not go unnoticed by Karlin (1997, 74; 2006, 245), who mentions locals wearing Western-style shoes and European-style clothes. A new middle class emerged, whose typical representatives were the first *modan gaaru* (modern girls), the polar opposite of the *salaryman*. Although they still worked low-paid jobs, typically as shop-attendants, popular culture characterized them as broad-minded individuals who paid no heed to social norms and tirelessly followed the latest fashion trends. During World War I, the empire's increased economic growth had a positive impact on households' incomes, particularly in urban areas. This slightly higher standard of living made conspicuous consumption possible for some individuals.

The country's rapid industrialization and modernization also had some drawbacks. Working conditions in many industries were poor, salaries were low, and women enjoyed even fewer labour rights than men. As Karlin (2006, 269) noted during her visit to Kokura, a town in the north of Kyushu, young girls often lived in boarding houses owned by the companies they worked for. However, the violation of female workers' basic rights in Japan did not upset Karlin enough to pay more attention to the issue in her travel writing.[31] On the other hand, she (Karlin 1997, 76) writes extensively about local women's role in the family. She noticed that they were considered far inferior to men, noting: "A woman has no worth here. She is required to follow her husband, to serve his parents like a slave." Similar rhetoric about women's position in society can be seen in Bird's writings.[32] Both Bird and Karlin cite the mother-in-law as the embodiment of evil. The former writes (Bird 1881, vol. 1, 253): "The eldest son, who inherits the house and land, almost invariably brings his wife to his father's house, where she often becomes little better than a slave to her mother-in-law." In the same vein, Karlin asserts:

> She, a stranger little older than a child, comes to live with her husband, a stranger to her, with her mother-in-law, also a stranger, and has to do whatever the latter pleases. /…/ Her life is miserable until the son becomes the master and she becomes the mother-in-law; then she can start torturing others. (Karlin 1997, 81)

Unlike today, when Japan has one of the lowest birth-rates in the world, one of the key social duties of a married woman in imperial Japan was to bear children. According to both Karlin (ibid.) and Bird (1881, vol. 1, 253), a husband could send his wife back to her parents if he felt she had not lived up to her task of becoming a mother.

In the first half of the 20th century, the ideology of the husband's multifaceted superiority over his wife was epitomized in the motto *otoko wa soto, onna wa uchi* ("Man outside, woman inside"). While many women still had to work until they were married, a woman's role in society changed drastically with marriage, as she was being suddenly tasked with the responsibility for what the Germans referred

31 Jerneja Jezernik (2006, 105–9) highlights that Karlin expounded on this topic in her short story *Little Spring* (*Kleiner Frühling*), which depicts the hardships endured by young Japanese girls in textile factories. Working conditions in weaving and spinning mills were unbearable, and poorly paid young workers were forced to toil from dawn to dusk, for 14 hours or more. The miserable working conditions were ideal for the spread of tuberculosis, a disease O Hara, the protagonist of Karlin's story, suffers from. As Gordon (2020, 102–3) emphasizes, young Japanese girls had few alternatives in the early 20th century, unpaid work on their parents' farms or the then still legal prostitution often being the only two options.

32 The social status of women was one of the main topoi of Victorian female travel writing on Japan (Williams 2017, 18).

to as *Kinder, Küche, Kirche*. It should be noted that gender inequality, which the government started promoting sometime in the mid-Meiji period, had not always characterized Japanese society. In the Edo period, men of most social classes were expected to help women with raising children, grocery shopping, and household chores. This changed in the late 19th century,[33] and Kathleen Uno (1993, 294) notes that up until the demise of Imperial Japan it was mostly officials at the Education Ministry who strived, through mass media and a special educational system for girls, to enforce a highly misogynistic ideology that instructed women to be "good wives, wise mothers" (*ryōsai kenbo*). Therefore, it is hardly surprising that Karlin (1997, 81) characterized a married Japanese woman as "a workhorse and a breeding animal", adding that, evidently, "such a woman cannot have a very sharp mind, or the time to hone it". Judging by Karlin's observations, officials were quite successful in their endeavours to promote a highly unequal, patriarchal system. Gender inequality was very likely particularly pronounced in the higher social classes, where "women in the grandest houses do not eat at the table, they merely serve their husbands and guests" (Karlin 2006, 256).

However, since some women, especially teachers, socialists, and feminists, refused to accept the imposed role of the housewife and unyieldingly opposed this systemic ideological repression, such ideas could never fully take root (Uno 1993, 294). Karlin (2006, 228) mentions Mrs M., a Japanese woman born in France, who divorced her Japanese husband after six years of marriage and described her marriage as a waste of time. This example clearly shows a discrepancy between the ruling elite's ideals and their practical implementation, which exists in every society.

German Orientalist Perspective in Karlin's Writing on Japan

The social, political, and economic situation in Japan in the second half of the 1870s was hardly comparable with that in the early 1920s. That said, one's

33 During its modernization, a process that went hand in hand with the construction of Japanese national identity, the country saw a phenomenon in which, according to Kuwayama (2009: 47), "/…/ the emics of dominant groups have been superimposed on those of other groups, thus having been elevated to the status of the etics for the entire culture, while having been presented as its emics in cross-cultural comparison." In the same vein, Sumiko Iwao (1995, 5) notes that "the samurai class culture of premodern times penetrated throughout the entire society as rigid class distinctions were officially abolished. As a consequence, women as a whole lost power and equality they had enjoyed. In other words, it was only quite recently, a little more than a century ago, that women lost their previous power and producer / worker status and became, especially in the cities, 'unemployed' consumer." The changed perception of the social role of women, and their subsequent relegation to housewives, stretched as far as the edges of the empire, as Ito (2008, 154–57) shows in the case of Okinawa.

perception of the land visited is not shaped by the time of the visit alone, but also by the traveller's ideological and social background. Or as Mills (2001, 69–70) puts it: "Travel writing cannot be read as a simple account of a journey, a country and a narrator, but must be seen in the light of discourses circulating at the time." The temporal contextualization of the perceptions of Japan that Bird and Karlin put forth to their readers would therefore be incomplete if their accounts of the places visited and the people encountered there were not also placed in the broader context of British and German Orientalism, respectively, aspects of which are reflected (sub)consciously in both writers' travel diaries. Their types of Orientalism differ in that Bird primarily identified with the British Empire and occasionally the Japanese colonial empire, as can be seen from her approving references to the civilizing mission in Hokkaidō.[34] Meanwhile, Karlin's was a nationally tinted Orientalism: through language, she principally identified with the German people and the German state, though never glorifying the latter when comparing it to Japan. Hence Karlin does not fit fully in the category of German orientalist writers, defined by Kontje (2004, 2–3) as having "oscillated between identifying their country with the rest of Europe against the Orient and allying themselves with selected parts of the East against the West". This affection for Japan is most apparent in Karlin's account of the Great Buddha of Kamakura and her agreement with the Japanese perception of work: "It should be done nicely, well, and without haste" (Karlin 2006, 233, 257).

Although she declared herself Austrian in the autobiography published after her return (2010, 294),[35] Karlin's allegiance belongs to the Germans, emphasizes Šlibar (1998, 122). Therefore, if read in detail, her accounts of the Japanese experience often reveal her German ethnic identification, which was a voluntary, conscious decision.[36] Karlin justified her sympathies for the Reich in a Herderian spirit with the shared language (Karlin 2006, 246),[37] thereby confirming Cvirn's claim (1992, 453–54) that

34 Due to limited space, this paper only focuses on Karlin's orientalist gaze. For Bird's orientalist representation of the Ainu, see Park (2015).

35 Božena Orožen (1990, 155) draws attention to this indirectly in her treatise: "What she is referring to when leaving Trieste, where her eight-year journey began in the late fall of 1919, and watching 'the last bit of homeland' disappear, is not the Slovenian community that lived around there, but the fact that Trieste used to belong to Austria-Hungary." At the same habitual, subconscious level, Karlin's Austrian imperial perspective is reflected in her relationship to Slovenians, or Slavic as she calls them, notes Bodrova (2018, 37).

36 In her own words, Karlin (1996, 101) kept submitting her travel writing to the aforementioned *Cillier Zeitung* free-of-charge in order to help build the German identity (*Deutschtum*) in the region. Her motives, however, were completely apolitical (2010, 294–95): "Needless to say, I have an attachment to the German people—it would be vile to claim otherwise—but this love, which never manifests politically, does not make me a bad subject to the state I chose to continue my life in."

37 Orožen (1990, 156) insightfully describes German as Karlin's "linguistic homeland".

language was the paramount element of one's national identity for the pro-German population of Celje at the turn of the 20th century. Although Germany was still recovering from its defeat in the First World War, Karlin (2006, 269) seems to have been rather proud to say that "the Japanese were the first among nations to admit that Germany is too strong to ever fail, and in every aspect—including knowledge, thinking, and character, all reinforcing the country as a military power". Her emotional attachment to Germany is immediately apparent from how upset she feels by a film she watches on the ship on her way to Japan. The film very likely showed German war crimes during the war, and Karlin (2006, 224) excludes the possibility that people of the German Reich might truly be capable of the atrocities shown on the screen (rape, killing, including of children, arson, etc.), wondering why the German government is not doing more to stop the dissemination of this "propaganda" material since Asians "could not know that these films pursue an incendiary policy".[38] Karlin continues to defend the Germans even after her bad experience with them following her employment in a machine factory in Tokyo, eagerly providing the reasons she thinks were behind this (Karlin 2006, 229–30).[39]

Rather than being limited to abstract ideas of national belonging, Karlin's affection for Germany was also reflected in her descriptions of specific individuals. One of the Germans she valued very highly was the then German Ambassador to Japan, Wilhelm Solf (1862–1936). Karlin believed Solf had contributed a great deal to Germany's popularity in Japan, stating that he had generated keen interest in his country among the Japanese (Karlin 2006, 269). Yet this Japanese affinity for the Germans was not new. Since the mid-Meiji period, Japanese empire-building had mainly been patterned after the German model, and it was not until the collapse of this model in 1945 that the esteem for it finally declined. This choice of Japanese political elites was hardly surprising, given the military glory won by Prussia through its victories against the Habsburg Monarchy in 1866 and against France five years later. Additionally, Germany had been a growing economic power since the unification of the country in 1871. On the brink of the First World War, this made Germany the leading economic power in Europe (Lieven 2001, 179), crowning the empire ruled by the House of Hohenzollern with the nimbus of an invincible, almighty state.

According to Karlin (2006, 269), Japan's political leaders had to balance their overt sympathies for Germany against their relations with the British Empire,

38 Nevertheless, reports of German war crimes were not a product of (Anglo-American) propaganda, and the greatest atrocities were committed in Belgium and Kalisz, a city in Poland.

39 Karlin later clearly expressed her anti-Nazi feelings and considered the Slovenian national liberation struggle against the German occupation of Slovenia to be entirely legitimate, while rejecting the Communist ideology at the same time (Kregar 2009).

a key ally of Japan since the early 1920s. Even though Karlin was a committed Anglophile, she never compared the two empires directly. In the section of *The Odyssey of a Lonely Woman* describing her Japanese experience, the British are mentioned only once, in the context of working conditions. Comparing them to people of the German Reich, she praises Britons as well as Americans for being kind to employees, noting that British employers also pay their staff better, offer fair overtime payments, and provide their staff with various benefits within the company while being reserved, calm, and very polite (Karlin 2006, 230, 246).

In her accounts of Japan and the Japanese, Karlin randomly switches between vantage points, moving from a German perspective to a transnational position of a European or white woman. Upon her arrival in Japan, the most important thing for her is to board with Europeans: Karlin describes her stay in a Russian boarding house at the start of her year in Tokyo as a dream come true and a chance to brush up her Russian (Karlin 2006, 226). Despite her self-professed affiliation with Europe, in her *magnum opus* she (2006, 244) does not consider Europeans to be superior to the Japanese *per se*, and while she reproaches the Japanese for rigidity and stiffness in thinking, she also claims that they have a greater capacity for in-depth analysis (Fister-Stoga 2001, 104). Moreover, Fister-Stoga (2001, 107–8) notes that Karlin occasionally thinks higher of the Japanese than she does of Europeans.[40] Still, she does so in the manner of the typical orientalist dichotomy "us vs. them", denying individuals on both sides of the divide the capacity to be different, unique, to think and behave out of their cultures. Karlin's previously mentioned remarks (2006, 257) about the spirituality and dexterousness of people in the East (i.e., the Japanese) are typical examples of simplistic generalization, idealization, and essentialization. Meanwhile, a touch of European arrogance can be discerned in her observation that the Japanese lack individuality, a trait allegedly reflected in their physiognomy (Karlin 1997, 83).

Karlin's obsession with racial identity is most apparent in the section elaborating on her decision to adopt an inadequate diet or, indeed, starvation. Even though Karlin knows she could get rice, soup[41], and some vegetables in a "second-class hotel", she refuses to do what would "cause disgust which Europeans do their best to avoid, and would likely ruin my reputation in the eyes of the yellow man—but most certainly in the eyes of the white man" (Karlin 2006, 245). This was Karlin's sense of virtue overriding her hunger.

40 Bach (1995, 595) suggests that Bird also treats some aspects of Japanese culture as superior to her own.

41 What she had in mind was probably *misoshiru* rather than beef noodle soup.

Karlin's class identity is another aspect that occasionally surfaces in her descriptions. This is readily discernible in her—mostly habitual—conceited and scornful attitude to those below her on the social ladder, a disposition she could have modelled on her mother's overtly contemptuous, disdainful treatment of their Slovenian maid Mimi (Karlin 2010, 51). Referring to a student who failed to use a handkerchief despite having a cold, she notes that he was of a lower social class and had "boogers the size of stalactites in Postojna Cave" hanging out of his nose. This bothered her so much that she lied about being too busy to continue tutoring him (Karlin 2006, 244). Occasionally, her students would approach her if they ran into her on the street to exchange a few words and feel very clever in doing so, she concludes the passage mockingly (ibid.).

On the other hand, Karlin was quite timid and insecure in her interactions with distinguished persons higher up the social ladder. She believed they wanted to socialize with her only to witness her presumably peculiar behaviour (ibid., 256), rather than because they were interested in her as a person. Despite her low self-esteem Karlin undoubtedly had a vast knowledge of various subjects and fascinating life experience. Before arriving in Japan, she had been travelling the world for some thirty months, not to mention her experience of living in several European countries in her twenties. Eventually, the job as a clerk in the German Embassy had a positive impact on her self-confidence, her description of this even revealing a sense of superiority, saying that positions there were something "only the best among the mortals could achieve, and this determined my worth" (Karlin 2006, 247).

Scholars have long attempted to understand why Karlin's Slovenian parents raised her speaking a "foreign" language or why her use of the Slovenian language was so awkward. The Karlins, Jakob (1829–1898) and Vilibalda (1844–1928), seem to have adopted the belief held by the German population of Celje in the late 19th and early 20th centuries that learning Slovenian—or *Windisch*, as they called it—was futile, since the knowledge of this language could never be put to use.[42] According to Cvirn (1992, 453), they claimed that due to the strong influence of the German vocabulary, Slovenian did not deserve to be considered a proper written language, but was, at most, a dialect, a language spoken by peasants, while the "New Slovenian", the language of the Slovenian bourgeoisie, was an artificial creation nobody could understand. This goes in line with Karlin's (2006, 224) lamentation that her knowledge of Slovenian is "deficient especially in terms of modern

42 Karlin seems to have internalized this belief: according to Orožen (1990, 158), she did not consider Slovenian to be one of the foreign languages that could have, had she been proficient in it, become her window to the world. Still, Slovenian was one of the ten languages she included in the dictionary she made before leaving.

expressions", when discussing her efforts to translate a love letter from Croatian to German on her way from Hawaii to Japan, which proves beyond doubt that she had been (somewhat) proficient in spoken Slovenian before she embarked on her round-the-world journey (cf. Sperber 2007, 177).

Conclusion

Among all the countries visited on her trip, Japan left the strongest mark on Karlin. Knowing that the Japanese archipelago was her primary destination, this comes as no surprise. As mentioned before, Karlin created images of the faraway places she intended to visit before even setting off. Her thorough, careful study of her overseas destinations only made her imaginings more deeply ingrained and stereotypical. Of all the destinations on her journey, Japan seems to have fitted best with her idyllic image of "distant dream worlds I have created myself" (Karlin 2006, 266). Or, in the words of Edward W. Said:

> Many travelers find themselves saying of an experience in a new country that it wasn't what they expected, meaning that it wasn't what a book said it would be. And of course many writers of travel books or guidebooks compose them in order to say that a country *is* like this, or better, that it *is* colorful, expensive, and so forth. The idea in either case is that people, places, and experiences can always be described by a book, so much so that the book (or text) acquires a greater authority, and use, even than the actuality it describes. (Said 1979, 93)

As real-life experience often failed to live up to her expectations, Karlin had experienced many disappointments along her journey. Her attempts to reconcile her expectations with reality put a tremendous strain on her, claims Maček (2018, 6). But while her identification and fascination with earlier male travellers were articulated and personalized—e.g. with Christopher Columbus (1451–1506), Vasco da Gama (1460–1524), Robert Louise Stevenson (1850–1894), Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936), and occasionally also with the fictional literary character Robinson Crusoe—whereby Karlin was unable to recognize any negative aspects of Columbus' "discovery" of the Americas, her identification with women travellers was, much like her anthropological references, impersonal and concealed, obscured.[43]

43 The (un)intentional omission of other women travellers when recounting one's own undertakings was not typical only of Karlin. Williams (2017, 17) points to a similar practice in Bird's writing.

This is no surprise, as the so-called global sisterhood of travellers and travel writers is a myth, women writers' lack of mutual sympathy going back to the Victorian era. Rather than sympathy, travel stories written by women most often reveal rivalry, distrust, jealousy and conflicts, adds Weber (2003, 36–38). In her introduction to *The Odyssey of a Lonely Woman,* Karlin (2006, 5) says she earned the money for her trip by working, rather than begging like many other "world travellers". Knowing that Karlin was, according to her friend Erika Madronič, also quite self-centred—and this trait is apparent in the introduction to her celebrated travelogue (Šlibar 1998, 118)—and ambitious, yet always highly self-critical (Trnovec 2020, 132), the lack of direct references to women in her writing is hardly surprising. All things considered, Karlin was well aware of walking the beaten path, at least in Japan. This can be gathered from her laments about the lack of the expected and supposedly deserved attention from fellow (German) citizens in the face of obstacles she had to overcome on her journey: "Consider everything the English did for the woman who had the courage to go *off the beaten track*!" (Karlin 1996, 156; italics added) This was likely an allusion to Bird and her *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan,* as well as to her admission to the Royal Geographical Society.[44]

The practice of referring to texts by earlier women travel writers has so far been neglected in scholarly narratives on Karlin's travelogues. But, as I demonstrated, Karlin partly based her expectations, her image of Japan, and perhaps also her itinerary—as much as her financial circumstances allowed—on Bird's *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan*.[45] The influence of this book on Karlin becomes most apparent in her descriptions of the social roles of married women in Japan, and to a lesser extent, of the Ainu. While Isabella Bird's detailed reports of the Hokkaidō natives' way of life were most likely not one of the primary sources of Karlin's "experience" of Ezochi, her influence on Karlin's perception of married women in Japan was highly likely. In other words, Bird's representations were almost directly mirrored in Karlin's depiction of "the wicked mother-in-law" vs. "the poor daughter-in-law". The topos of the position of the "other" woman was representative of Victorian women travel writers, which aligns with Šlibar's observation (1998, 117) that Karlin is characterized by "her conformity to mainstream expectations and her tendency to conform with the characteristics

44 The Slovenian translation of this passage from *Die Banne der Südsee* ("Was taten Engländer für eine Frau, die den Mut hatte, vom allgemeinen Pfad abzuweichen!") found in an article by Orožen (1990, 160), is closer to the German original than the translation in *Urok Južnega morja* (Karlin 1996, 156).

45 It is worth noting here that it was her two major journeys to East Asia in 1878 and 1897, and subsequently published travel accounts, which provided professional accreditation to Bird, maintains Elliott (2008, 2).

of women's travel discourse since the nineteenth century". Yet, although Karlin walked the beaten path while in Japan, and the Japan section of *The Odyssey of a Lonely Woman* deals with the some of the recurrent topoi of Victorian travel writing, her accounts of the land and its inhabitants mostly remain outside the common Western orientalist discourses of the time.[46] As mentioned above, her accounts on Japan lack an authoritative pronouncements and, contrary to Bird's (see Williams 2017, 28), avoid the glorification of European (moral) superiority, characteristics that were so typical of many of her contemporaries. This agrees with Fister-Stoga's claim that Karlin's writings on Japan are far from the *the-monarch-of-all-I-survey* genre (2001, 101, 104).

Alma Karlin's travel accounts need to be studied from a comparative perspective and together with their ideological and historical contexts to gain a complete understanding of her representations of the lands and peoples she visited on her heroic round-the-world journey.

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46 This does not mean that Karlin's travel accounts of Japan were produced outside Western colonial discourses, which *per se* were (and remain) a heterogenous phenomenon. Nevertheless, in women travel writing "colonialism is more notable by its absence in many of the accounts; the addressing of large-scale issues, such as the role of the journey in relation to colonial expansion or description of potential colonial sites, is notably absent" (Mills 2001, 98).

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The Allure of the Mystical: East Asian Religious Traditions in the Eyes of Alma M. Karlin

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Abstract

Alma M. Karlin (1889–1950), a world traveller and German-language travel and fiction writer, cultivated a keen interest in religious beliefs and practices of the places she visited, believing in the Romantic notion of religion as the distilled soul of nations as well as in the Theosophical presumption that all religions are just particular iterations of an underlying universal truth. For this reason, the topic of religion was central to both her personal and professional identity as an explorer and writer. This article examines her attitudes to East Asian religio-philosophical traditions, by focusing on the two versions of her unpublished manuscript *Glaube und Aberglaube im Fernen Osten*, which presents an attempt to turn her successful travel writing into an ethnographic text. The content and discourse analyses demonstrate the influence of both comparative religious studies of the late 19th century, and of the newer ethnological approaches from the turn of the century. On the one hand, Karlin adopts the binary opposition of religion (represented by Buddhism, Shintoism, Daoism and Confucianism) or the somewhat more broadly conceived belief, and superstition (e.g. wondering ghosts, fox fairies), and assumes the purity of textual traditions over the lived practices. At the same time, she is fascinated by what she perceives as more mystical beliefs and practices, which she finds creatively inspiring as well as marketable subjects of her writing.

Keywords: Alma M. Karlin, East Asia, religious beliefs and practices, comparative religion, travel writing

Privlačnost mističnega: vzhodnoazijske religijske tradicije v očeh Alme M. Karlin

Izvleček

Svetovna popotnica in nemškojezična pisateljica Alma M. Karlin (1889–1950) je gojila posebno zanimanje za religijska verovanja in prakse dežel, ki jih je obiskala. Verjela je v romantični koncept religije kot okna v dušo naroda ter v teozofsko prepričanje, da so vse religije le partikularni izrazi temeljne univerzalne resnice. Zato je bila religijska tematika osrednjega pomena tako za njeno osebno kot profesionalno identiteto raziskovalke in

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pisateljice. Pričujoči članek obravnava odnos Alme Karlin do vzhodnoazijskih religijsko-filozofskih tradicij na primeru dveh verzij njenega neobjavljenega rokopisa *Glaube und Aberglaube im Fernen Osten*, ki je poskus predelave njenih uspešnih potopisnih člankov in knjig v etnografsko besedilo. Vsebinska in diskurzivna analiza pokaže vplive tako primerjalne religiologije s konca 19. stoletja kot novejših etnoloških pristopov s preloma stoletja. Alma Karlin privzame binarno nasprotje religije (predstavljajo jo budizem, šintoizem, daoizem in konfucijanstvo) ali nekoliko širše koncipiranega verovanja na eni strani in praznoverja (npr. tavajoči duhovi, lisičje vile) na drugi ter predpostavlja čistost tekstualnih tradicij v primerjavi z živetimi praksami. Toda obenem jo fascinirajo – v njenih očeh – bolj mistična verovanja in prakse, ki so zanjo tako ustvarjalni navdih kot tržno privlačna pisateljska snov.

Ključne besede: Alma M. Karlin, Vzhodna Azija, religijska verovanja in prakse, primerjalna religiologija, potopisi

Introduction

The turn from the 19th to the 20th centuries saw Europe brimming with enthusiasm for everything that was exotic. Colonial expansion and solidification, and the many concomitant advances in travel and communication, resulted in the unprecedentedly wide spread of ideas and practices that Westerners became familiar with through encounters with foreign lands, especially Asia. This process did not only echo in the broader scholarship, it reverberated throughout society at large. Eastern religious traditions, primarily of the Indian subcontinent, became a space of exploration and escape from the challenges brought on by the processes of modernization (Clarke 1997, 96–111).

In 1908, Alma M. Karlin (1889–1950), a native of the then Austro–Hungarian provincial town of Celje, found herself in the metropolitan capital of London, where the atmosphere of cultural and religious pluralism was particularly heavy. There she began to learn a number of foreign languages, including Japanese, Chinese and Sanskrit, and became acquainted with Indian, Chinese and Japanese religio–philosophical traditions as well as Theosophy. Over the years she spent there and later in Scandinavia, an ambition began to take shape of traveling the world, exploring the unknown, becoming an acclaimed writer in the German language. And indeed, in November of 1919 Karlin embarked on her world trip, with a goal to learn about foreign lands, their people and customs, and to write about them in order to both educate her compatriots and reach personal fame.[1] It was her intention to support her travels by publishing non-fiction and fiction in newspapers

1 See Trnovec (2020, 106–127) for a more detailed analysis of Karlin's motivations and interests.

and magazines, and also in book form, although eventually she took up a number of different jobs—often with meagre pay, and had to resort to borrowing money to be able to continue her journey. She wanted to sail to Japan first, but due to financial and visa constraints she headed West, only reaching the "land of [her] dreams" (Karlin n.d.d.) some two and a half years into what would turn out to be an 8-year long adventure that took her to South America, California and Hawaii, East Asia, Australia and New Zealand, the South Pacific, Southeast Asia and India.

Among the many interests she pursued during her globe–trotting, religion is among the phenomena that stand out most markedly. Not only do various religious practices, especially those that she and her contemporaries in Europe would deem particularly superstitious and magic–oriented, figure prominently in her travel writing and fiction, she also compiled and published her notes and observations on religious practices in two dedicated volumes, the 1931 *Mystik der Südsee: Liebeszauber, Todeszauber, Götterglaube, seltsame Bräuche bei Geburten (Mysticism of the South Sea: Love Spells, Death Spells, Beliefs in Gods, Unusual Customs at Childbirth)*[2] and the 1933 *Der Todesdorn und andere seltsame Erlebnisse aus Peru und Panama*, the latter to great success.[3] It is notable, however, that no such book was published on religious traditions of Asia, where she spent more than a third of her journey, but it seems this was not for lack of intention. This article examines Karlin's unpublished manuscript—or two versions of such text, to be precise—with the title *Glaube und Aberglaube im Fernen Osten (Religion and Superstition in the Far East)*, now held at the National and University Library in Ljubljana.

Much like the above–mentioned volumes, these texts could be considered as popular scientific treatments of religious beliefs and practices encountered on her route, an ethnographic reworking of her travel experience, in this case through Asia. Here, I focus only on Karlin's views of East Asian traditions, complementing the analysis of the said texts with her travelogues, especially the *Einsame Weltreise* (1930)[4] which covers the same stretch of her journey. My main goal is to assess how Karlin's understanding of and attitudes to various teachings and practices she encountered in East Asia were formed, how they are related to the scientific and popular discourses on religion of her time and to what extent, if at all, she deviated from the established conceptual frameworks. Zmago Šmitek (1986,

2 Published in Berlin–Lichterfelde by Hugo Bemühler in the series "Weltreise" on geography and ethnology.

3 Published in Berlin by Prismen–Verlag. The English translations were published as *The Death–Thorn and other Strange Experiences in Peru and Panama* in London by G. Allen and Unwin Ltd. in 1934 and as *The Death–Thorn: Magic, Superstitions and Beliefs of Urban Indians in Panama and Peru* in Detroit by Blaine Ethridge Books in 1934 and in 1971.

4 Published as *The Odyssey of a Lonely Woman* in London by V. Gollancz, Ltd. in 1933.

176) in his seminal work on Slovene encounters with non–European societies and cultures, judges that "in terms of scientific independence and length, Karlin's manuscript exceeds almost everything written on East Asian religions in Slovene territory."[5] Although the reception and impact of her writing is beyond the scope of this article, Karlin's great popularity in the late 1920s and 1930s as a travel and (less so) fiction writer, must have exerted some influence on the popular imagination among her readership. Writing in German, her books became bestsellers in the German language book market, but they were likely read also among some of those whose mother tongue was Slovene, especially if they had theosophical inclinations.[6] Moreover, in the years 1931–1933 Karlin toured several European cities (Jezernik 2009, 138–39), lecturing in women's clubs, like many other contemporary women travellers (Leutner 1997).

I begin with a short exploration of the evolution of Karlin's personal interest in religion—a topic that is only touched upon here, but would in itself warrant a much deeper investigation, sketching in broad strokes the cultural atmosphere in which Karlin's intellectual curiosity and writing sensibilities were developed. What follows is a detailed analysis of one of the versions of aforementioned *Glaube und Aberglaube im Fernen Osten* manuscript. I first compare the two manuscripts, which differ in the geographical scope they cover and the level of detail, before directing my attention to the one presenting the more elaborate examination of East Asian religious beliefs and practices. I first appraise Karlin's sources. While her sparse comments make it clear she prepared for her journey by reading extensively (see also Senica 2021, 231), and that during her trip she was a regular visitor to local libraries as well as appreciated immensely, even sought, contact with people who could share their expertise or offer insights (academics, educated elites, missionaries), she, with rare exceptions, never reveals what texts or whom she consulted.[7] I continue with an overview of the topics that caught her eye, summarizing them not in the geographical manner in which she organizes her material, but rather by the categorizations she implicitly applies to it, thereby elucidating her conceptual scheme. In the final section I scrutinize her conceptions and approaches by recontextualizing Karlin's portrayal and interpretation of East Asian religious traditions in the intellectual trends of her time.

5 All translations from Slovene and German are mine.

6 Sadly, very little analysis has been done since Šmitek's (1986) book on the representations of East Asian religions and philosophies in Slovenia in the decades spanning Karlin's life. One notable exception are the recent articles by Motoh (2019a; 2020).

7 Numerous implicit intertextual reference can also be found in in her fictional writing (Bräsel 2019, 52–55).

Figure 1. A miniature of *mikoshi* 神輿, a Shinto portable shrine. (Source: Alma Karlin Collection, Celje Regional Museum)

Karlin's Interest in Comparative Religion

The period of Karlin's life roughly corresponds to the time when religion emerged and established itself as a special field of scientific inquiry, becoming institutionalized as a research subject in several disciplines, including sociology, anthropology, ethnology, folkloristics and the more narrowly defined religious studies. At the same time, this era witnessed a growing popular interest in Eastern, particularly Indian, philosophical and religious teachings and, to a lesser extent, practices. Both scholarly and general trends were highly influenced by the wider intellectual currents related to rationalism, atheism, mysticism and the like.

Alma Karlin was born a Roman Catholic and was buried as one, but her life, especially her travels and travel–inspired writing—both nonfictional and fictional—was lived in very pluralistic religious landscapes. Judging from her autobiography, her enthusiasm for the spiritual and mystical began at an early age. She reports about the imaginary fox kingdom where she resided in her childhood imagination (Karlin 2010, 21–22)—possibly later endearing her to the fox spirits and fairies of East Asia, the effect her father and later his death had on her early understanding of afterlife (ibid., 17, 33), and the deep impression her first communion left on her (ibid., 36). Pilgrimages and prayer are mentioned throughout the chapters on her youth, with a particularly detailed account of her religious experience on the final pilgrimage she undertook with her confidante, the family's maid Mimi, to Svete Višarje/Monte Santo di Lussari before she left for London. There she asks Holy Mary, who reportedly denies her happiness in love, for "the laurel wreath" as a consolation (Karlin 2010, 100–1). She later reads this as determining her fate as an unmarried woman, yet a successful author. A belief in destiny surfaces elsewhere too, for example, while reflecting on how well things turned out for her in Beijing because she decided to stay in a German instead of an English or a Russian guesthouse:

> Such an insignificant step—hesitation between two guesthouses, an incidental inquiry—so often determine the future, the human life. When I later remembered these tiny episodes, I often felt gloomy. It cannot be a pure coincidence that determines one's life. Yet, on the other hand: is our every action already a seed in the bosom of future, which only needs to germinate? (Karlin 1930a, 226; 1996, 283)

Figure 2. A wooden board painted with a motif of the Japanese Inari cult. (Source: Alma Karlin Collection, Celje Regional Museum)

In her travelogues, especially in those from the second part of her journey, Karlin often reflects on her identity as a Christian and the very different practices of Catholic and Protestant missionaries she encounters—in the Pacific, in South-East Asia and India she often stays at missionary stations or dormitories. But the dislike of Christianity that gradually builds in her—in India, at the end of her journey, she claims in exhaustion to have become "a staunch pagan" (1930b, 344; 2006, 345)—seems to dissipate after her return home. During the years spent with her companion Thea Schreiber Gammelin in Celje, they attend mass daily (Trnovec 2020, 139), but this likely stops when they move to the countryside. Finally, on her deathbed, Karlin calls for a Catholic priest, and is given a church funeral, reportedly to the surprise of her friend (ibid., 156).[8]

Karlin's enthusiasm for comparative religion developed during her multi–year stay in London. As a teenager she read extensively in French and English literature. First the works of Voltaire, and later Kipling, Stevenson and Haggard took her to different worlds, provoking her thirst for adventure. Then, in multicultural London, she met many European and Asian men and women[9] and began cultivating a keen interest in various Asian languages and traditions. Her encounter with a young Japanese man, Gotō Nobuji,[10] to whom she was giving English lessons, proved particularly impactful. As a conversation exercise she would usually ask him to tell her about Japanese culture and customs. His explanations not only taught her a great deal about Japan, "but awoke [her] interest for the entire Asia" (Karlin 2010, 151). After having met other Japanese and also Indian students—from the latter she learnt some Sanskrit—and after having been introduced to the basic structures of Chinese and its phonetics during her studies at the Oriental Institute in Paris,[11] she sought out a Chinese student for mutual language and culture exchange classes. Mr. Tao turned out to be another great influence. He taught her about "the many unforgettable men", "the teachings of philosophers and world sages"—Confucius and Laozi in China, Buddha in India, encouraging her to "engage in a serious study of the most diverse religious teachings" (ibid., 164–65). She became engrossed with Chinese philosophy and received from Mr. Tao upon his departure from London "*Wu Wei*, a wonderful study of Lao Ce [Laozi]" (ibid., 166) by the Dutch sinologist and translator Henri Borel (1869–1933). She complemented and deepened the knowledge gained from interactions with students

8 According to one oral history, there were two priests present at Karlin's funeral, a Roman Catholic one and an Old Catholic one (Roženbergar Šega 2009, 21).

9 Contrary to (some of) the men, who were both her teachers and sometimes love interests, the women remain unnamed with the sole exception of Karro, a Norwegian Theosophist (more below).

10 In her autobiography, Karlin writes of Nobuji G. Her postcard collection includes 6 postcards from N. G. depicting natural disasters in Japan. From another postcard sent from Berlin and signed as N. Goto, my colleague Chikako Shigemori Bučar identified his surname as Gotō 後藤. While in Japan, Karlin (1923a) mentions meeting her former student in her *Reiseskizze* "Asakusa".

11 The pages of her autobiography on the several months she spent in the French capital are believed lost. Some documents indicate she left London in April or May 1911 in order to study and possibly due to poor health. The more precise length or nature of her stay in Paris remains unclear (Trnovec 2020, 102–3).

through books she was given, bought or borrowed in the library. She was "utterly bewitched by Asia":

> I was in a new world; currents of knowledge from all parts of Asia rushing towards me, the ominous Indian mystics, ghost–interlaced Chinese mystics, the calm, bright Japanese mystics. (Karlin 2010, 168)

Figure 3. A postcard Karlin bought in Karachi, with an image related to serpent worship. (Source: Alma Karlin Collection, Celje Regional Museum)

In the Indian dormitory she frequented to learn Sanskrit with various residents, she became acquainted with a Norwegian Theosophist Karro, who introduced her to the movements' teachings.[12] This was significant as the movement was one of the more important driving forces behind the popular interest in Asian philosophical

12 On the other hand, Zmago Šmitek (2009, 62) considers it possible Karlin had heard of theosophy in her hometown, already before leaving for London.

and religious traditions in the late 19th century. Theosophy posited that there was an ancient universal truth underlying all religions, an eternal, united spiritual essence manifested most conspicuously in individual enlightened souls, an esoteric one true wisdom. It was one instance of pluralism and eclecticism so characteristic of the *fin de siècle*. The movement also introduced Buddhist terminology into the European vernacular, with concepts of karma, reincarnation, and meditation. While dismissed by some of its scholarly contemporaries for misrepresenting Buddhism or disseminating superstitious occultism, it held a wide popular appeal.[13]

Karlin met Karro again in Oslo (then Kristiania) where she found refuge after leaving London due to the movement restrictions imposed on her as an Austrian citizen at the onset of World War I. The time she spent there was formative as well: she studied a lot, sat in on various lectures, and began to write. In a conversation with a well–travelled captain's daughter over a Christmas dinner, she realized:

> I was not interested in the exterior thing, in what a tourist can see. For the first time that Christmas I said to myself—as if taking a decision, 'When I venture into the great wide world, I want to know *the interior of things*.' With this I meant *the soul of the nations*, flowers and animals from the interior of the land, but *first and foremost, the superstitions of foreign parts of the world*, which I have become very interested in ever since I began my studies in comparative religion. (Karlin 2010, 251–52, emphasis mine)

She forged a plan that "once the war bloodshed was over I wanted to go to the land of the rising sun and travel through China and India and to return home with so much material for novels, that I could draw on it my entire life" (Karlin 2010, 282). And indeed, in addition to travelogues, after her return she published numerous short stories and several novels inspired by the cultural beliefs and social practices of the places she visited.

Although Karlin reports that in her initial meetings with Karro in London she "very much resisted believing in the reincarnation (one attempt more than sufficed!)" (ibid., 169), she eventually became a Theosophist. When exactly Karlin became a member of the Theosophical Society and for how long she was one is so far unknown, however there is the American Theosophical Society membership card among her documents showing she paid her dues, very likely just before she left Tokyo, for the period between 1 July 1923 and 30 June 1924.

13 Established in 1885, Theosophical Society gathered by 1920 more than 45,000 members across the world (Clarke 1997, 90), including a significant following in the Indian subcontinent.

Furthermore, throughout her travelogue she reports making friends with Theosophists, such as the societies in Adelaide and in Auckland (Karlin 1930a, 308, 330; 2006, 390, 418), or contacting the local members in Java in the hope they could provide her with accommodation. There she is very disappointed, for they quickly lose interest in aiding her despite her visibly poor health (Karlin 1930b, 2020; 1996, 222–23). The arrows usually pointed at Christian, especially Protestant and Anglican missionaries are now directed at Theosophists: "They were too busy preaching about love and help to transform these characteristics into action" (Karlin 1930b, 220; 1996, 223). By the time she reaches India she is utterly frustrated by her lack of publishing success and financial difficulties, so she decides not to go to the Himalayas where one could still find "the real sages, yogis," nor to Adyar, the world headquarters of the Theosophical Society: "I was so bitter about my life, I didn't want to know anything about lives of others and about other worlds" (Karlin 1930b, 303; 1996, 305). Back in Europe her attitude changed and she began writing Theosophically inspired fiction, especially from the mid–1930s when she turned completely to spiritual fiction.[14] After 1945 she became more involved with Slovene speaking Theosophists in Celje and remained a Theosophist until the end of her life (Trnovec 2020, 158).[15]

Karlin's comparative interest in religion as a window upon the soul of a people, her didactic ambition and thirst for the exotic, her Theosophical outlook and the quest for the innermost truth all come together in her semi–scientific, ethnological writings on religion. In the following sections I thus turn to an examination of her unpublished book-length overview of religion and superstition in the Far East.

14 Among the most significant of these publications on reincarnation, connections between civilizations in time and space, lost worlds, spiritual quest and cultivation are the novels *Der Götze: Ein Mystischer Roman (The Idol: A Mystical Novel)* (1932), *Isolanthis: Roman vom Sinken eines Erdteils (Isolanthis: A Novel about Sinking of a Continent)* (1936), *Erdgebunden (Earthbound)* (1936) and *Der blaue Mond: eine Erzählung für Jung und Alt (The Blue Moon: A Tale for Young and Old)* (1938).

15 For more on Theosophical societies in the Slovene parts in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia see Šmitek (2009).

Figure 4. While Karlin did not travel to Egypt she wrote about its ancient culture in her theosophical fiction. (Source: Alma Karlin Collection, Celje Regional Museum)

Glaube und Aberglaube im Fernen Osten: The Two Manuscripts Compared

The manuscript *Glaube und Aberglaube im Fernen Osten* exists in two versions, both incomplete, differing significantly in the geographical scope they cover. The first version (Karlin n.d.a, hereon referred to simply as A) consists of the title page and further 91 paginated pages.[16] It has no general introduction—it begins with the description of beliefs and practices in "Japan" (A, 1–29), followed by "the Ainu on Hokkaido" (A, 29–34), "Korea, the 'Land of morning calm'" (A, 34–44), "China" (A, 45–80) and "Formosa", i.e. Taiwan (A, 80–91). At the bottom of the last

16 Due to the error in numbering, there is a page 32a in addition to page 32. Furthermore, there is no page 43. As the story told on page 42 seems complete and page 44 starts with a new paragraph, it is quite likely this is just another mistake, despite the fact that the thematic focus of the text changes, as shifts in topic in other parts of the manuscript are sometimes also quite abrupt.

existing page it ends in the middle of a sentence, describing one of the indigenous groups in Taiwan. Except for these regional divisions, there are no other subtitles in the text.

The second text (Karlin n.d.b, henceforth referred to as B) is a longer manuscript, which covers not only East Asia but also other parts of her travel from India to Australia. It misses many pages, including the cover page. That this text bears the same title can only be assumed from the handwritten note on the slip binding the otherwise loose pages. The note written in ball-point pen was probably added at the time when this part of Karlin's estate (i.e. her writing, personal correspondence and some photographs) were bequeathed to the National and University Library in Ljubljana by Karlin's friend and companion Thea Schreiber Gammelin. While large parts of the text are missing, we may conclude from the remaining parts that the full manuscript comprised 337 pages. The surviving pages include a description of an unclear region (B, 26–30), followed by a complete section on East Asia—bearing the following titles: "Japan" (B, 41–54), "In Hokkaido" (B, 55–62), "In Korea" (B, 59–62), "China" (B, 63–81) and "Formosa" (B, 81–87). On page 87 begins the chapter on the Philippines, yet the rest of the pages are missing. There remain pages 92–94, which discuss Australian aborigines, but more than a hundred of the subsequent pages are again missing. The final third of the manuscript is preserved in its entirety. Beginning in the middle of the sentence the pages from 215–271 describe "Malaya", "Siam" and "Burma", followed by "India" (B, 272–326). The manuscript concludes with a comparative chapter titled "Intersections (*Übergänge*)", where Karlin examines similarities between different traditions through the comparison of the European, Chinese and Mexican zodiac signs. This is in accord with her interest in comparative religion and general Theosophical orientation, which considers different religions as manifestations of one unitary, original wisdom.

Since the regional succession in the manuscript clearly follows the itinerary of her travels and Karlin had in fact already published books on religious practices in Central and South America, as well as on Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia, we may surmise that the missing parts of the text discuss Hawaii, New Zealand/the Maori and Indonesia. The two manuscripts are the longest texts in the folder of her unpublished ethnographic writings, the rest no longer than a couple of pages each. We may presume that they were intended as the last part of "trilogy" on "beliefs" and "superstitions" of the lands she visited, the first two being the already mentioned 1931 *Mystik der Südsee: Liebeszauber, Todeszauber, Götterglaube, seltsame Bräuche bei Geburten* and the 1933 *Der Todesdorn und andere seltsame Erlebnisse aus Peru und Panama*.

Neither of the manuscripts is dated. The second, longer version B appears to have initially been dated to 1943 on the accompanying paper slip, but the year was later crossed out in pencil. It is very likely that they were written before the mid–1930s, when Karlin's publications moved on from travelogues and ethnographic texts to Theosophy–inspired fiction.[17] It is also not clear which version Karlin created first. There is a high overlap in the content on East Asia; with few exceptions, version A is more extensive, presenting a greater variety of beliefs and practices in more detail. Although the style of writing in both texts is sober and distanced, version A includes several emotional remarks and exclamations, direct addresses to the reader, subjective commentaries—the tools and strategies richly adopted in the conversational, entertaining and engaging style of her travelogues.[18] The East Asia part of version B is more concise, even truncated at times. With a rare exception the paragraphs are written in a completely impersonal tone; the text often gravitates towards enumeration rather than description or explanation. It is thus very likely the version A was a first attempt to rework the experience-focused and emotion-laden writing of her feuilletons, magazine articles and book-length travelogues into what could be considered an objective ethnographic text for a more scientifically minded audience.

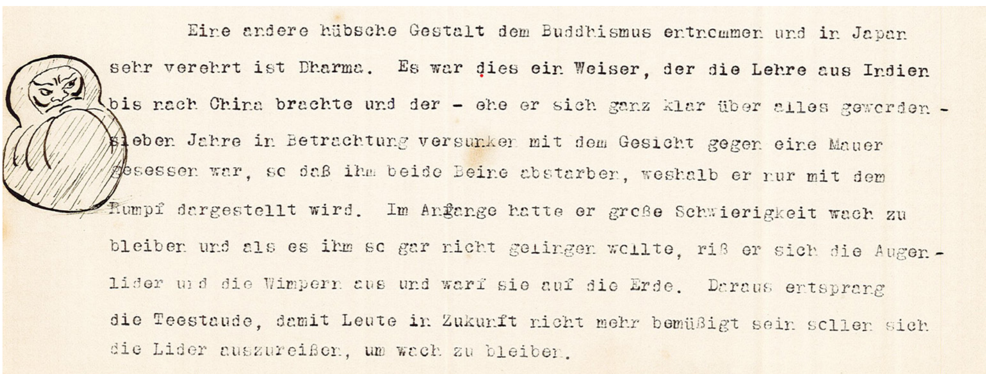
Eine andere hübsche Gestalt dem Buddhismus entnommen und in Japan sehr verehrt ist Dharma. Es war dies ein Weiser, der die Lehre aus Indien bis nach China brachte und der - ehe er sich ganz klar über alles geworden - sieben Jahre in Betrachtung versunken mit dem Gesicht gegen eine Mauer gesessen war, so daß ihm beide Beine abstarben, weshalb er nur mit dem Rumpf dargestellt wird. Im Anfange hatte er große Schwierigkeit wach zu bleiben und als es ihm so gar nicht gelingen wollte, riß er sich die Augen-lider und die Wimpern aus und warf sie auf die Erde. Daraus entsprang die Teestaude, damit Leute in Zukunft nicht mehr bemüßigt sein sollen sich die Lider auszureißen, um wach zu bleiben.

Figure 5. An excerpt from version B of *Glaube und Aberglaube im Fernen Osten*, with Karlin's hand-drawn Japanese *daruma* doll. (Source: Alma Karlin Estate, Ms 1872, Folder 33, National and University Library of Slovenia, Ljubljana)

17 It is possible that references to these two texts are somewhere in her extensive surviving correspondence, which would help ascertain when they were written and why they were not published. With regard to the latter, it is worth noting that while her travelogue through the Pacific was an unexpectedly huge success, the parallel ethnographic book did not sell particularly well (Bergerová 2019, 177).

18 For a very informative contrastive analysis of emotivity in Karlin's travel and ethnographic writing on the Pacific, see Bergerová (2019).

Finally, version A includes few handwritten corrections, while version B contains more revisions as well as hand–drawn sketches in the margins: the Japanese Buddhist *daruma* 達磨 doll (B, 47), Shinto *torii* 鳥居 gate (B, 50), the profile of the Japanese supernatural being *tengu* 天狗 (B, 51), the *mizuhiki* 水引 knot[19] (B, 51), ginseng root (?) (B, 61), *yin–yang* 陰陽 symbol (B, 76) and a simple sketch of a human being and a circle (B, 81). Based on the above, we may surmise that Karlin initially wrote the more extensive study on East Asia (version A), which she then shortened when it became a part of a longer text with a much broader geographical scope (version B). Be this as it may, this was a typical process of turning primary travel accounts into ethnographic texts—collating the information interspersed throughout the impressionistic chronological narrative into an organized, topic–cantered document (Rubiés 2002, 253). In the following two sections I take a closer look at two aspects of this process: I first appraise the sources used by Karlin and then examine the thematic structure of the *Glaube und Aberglaube* manuscript.

Karlin's Sources on East Asian Traditions

Throughout her travel and ethnographic writing, Karlin is rarely explicit about her sources of information. In the travelogues we can, based on her style of writing, to some extent discern her personal observations from what she gleaned from second–hand accounts, be they written or oral. This is much less obvious in the two versions of *Glaube und Aberglaube im Fernen Osten*, as she intentionally adopts a less emotive style of narration. Since significant parts of the text are related to the (sometimes more detailed, at others more limited) accounts in her travelogues, we can nevertheless make a partial reconstruction of how she obtained her information.

In her writing Karlin occasionally shares which things she learned from conversations with named interlocutors. For example, we know from her autobiography that her London student Gotō Nobuji, among other things, introduced her to Japanese customs and habits, folktales (e.g. on the 47 rōnin 浪人), and art of Japan, while Mr. Tao and other Chinese students introduced her to Daoism, Buddhism and Confucianism. Later, in Japan she adopts the same teaching method of asking students to tell her about everything Japanese: "During our socializing I learned very many things and became as close to the Japanese soul as an inhabitant of the West can; the boundary cannot be crossed by anyone" (1930a, 196; 2006, 243–44). It is easy to imagine the students (with one of whom she ends up

19 *Mizuhiki* is also one of the "trivial objects" found in Karlin's collection in the Celje Regional Museum, examined by Shigemori Bučar (2021, 33-36).

lodging) would explain to her the seasonal festivals and year–cycle rituals, or that friends and acquaintances would furnish her with the information on the historical and cultural, including religious significance of places they visited together on outings from Tokyo. Karlin also meets a variety of people through her position as the German ambassador's secretary, naming "the artist" Okada Tadaichi,[20] as the person who recounted to her the numerous stories about *tanuki* 狸, a Japanese supernatural trickster.

In China, her source of information as well as inspiration was likely an officer turned journalist Erich von Salzmann (1876–1941), a correspondent of several German newspapers, an author of fiction and non–fiction set in China, and likely a German spy (The National Archive n.d.). By the time Karlin met him, he had resided in China for about 20 years. Probably still more important was Karlin's friendship with Salzmann's wife—I believe it is her she refers to as Mrs. S.—and with whom she, among other sites, visited "the yellow temple Huang Ssu" a Tibetan Buddhist temple just outside the Beijing city walls (Karlin 1930a, 237–38; 2006, 292–99).[21] In Beijing, there were also two young women, a Chinese student Charlotte of German-educated Chinese parents to whom Karlin taught English, and, even more significantly, Mary, the eldest daughter of her landlady, a German woman Mrs. L., who was married to a Chinese man. Spending time with both young women, she learned a lot about gender roles, marriage rituals and family expectations, but probably also other things that were of interest to her, including religious beliefs and practices.

Karlin is the most explicit about her sources on the Taiwanese indigenous peoples. While in Taipei she had a long conversation with the famous Japanese ethnologist Mori Ushinosuke 森丑之助, who gave her the tour around the Taipei Museum, where he was a director and collector of indigenous objects, thus "saving [her] many months of search and investigation" (1924a, 1; 1997, 112). It is very likely that it was he who furnished her with the vast majority of the information provided in the Taiwanese sections of both manuscripts. In Taipei, she further spent evenings hearing about the "superstitions, tales and sagas of the Tayal" as related by her mysterious Japanese host and love interest Mr. I, who reportedly lived with Atayal for many years (Karlin 1930a, 267; 2006, 323).

20 This might in fact have been the sociologist, diplomat, and translator Okada Tadaichi, who was interested in architecture, art and theatre and "who developed a very enthusiastic interest in Central Europe and its nationals residing in Japan" (Čapková 2016, 87).

21 It is unclear whether this refers to the Western Yellow Temple (Xihuang si 西黄寺) or the no longer existing Eastern Yellow Temple (Donghuang si 東黄寺).

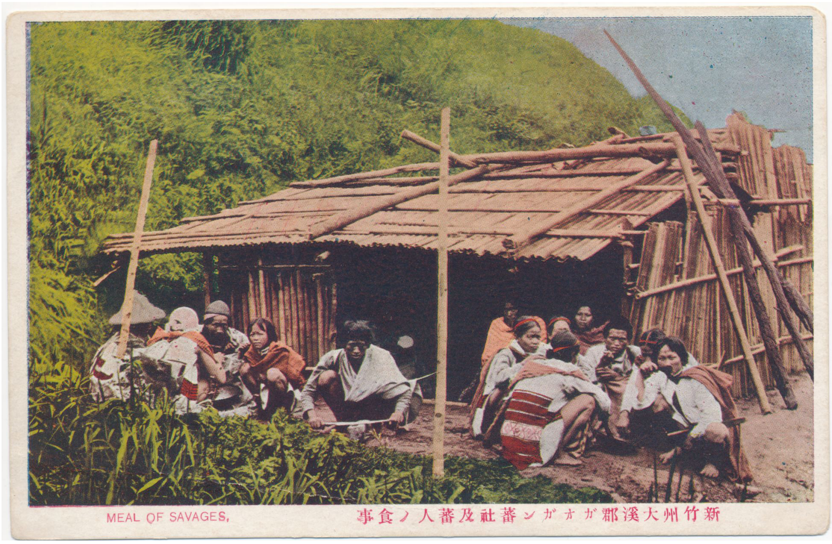

Figure 6. A Japanese colonial-era anthropological postcard portraying a group of Atayal during a meal. (Source: Alma Karlin Collection, Celje Regional Museum)

Karlin is even more reluctant or indifferent when it comes to reporting her readings. It is clear she reads extensively—as mentioned earlier, she states in her autobiography that she already acquired some books on Japan in London and that she received Henri Borel's interpretation of the *Daodejing* 道德經 (Karlin 2010, 166) as a gift from her student.[22] She speaks of preparations she undertook at home before her journey (ibid., 287), and mentions that her studies in Japan prepared her for the entire East Asian leg of her trip (Karlin n.d.d). In version A of the *Glaube und Abergalube,* Karlin makes a rare explicit reference to a written source, when she mentions the sinologist's Richard Wilhelm's writings on the "I Ging" (*Yijing* 已經), noting that the professor discusses the "Buch der Wandlungen", *Book of Changes*, in great detail, "explaining in passing particular signs" (A, 41).[23] It might be that she read his book later, after her return to Europe: while only noted in

22 This text is not a translation of Laozi's 老子 *Daodejing* 道德經, but rather Borel's own interpretation and elaboration of "the essence of his wisdom in all its purity" (Borel 1903, VII). It was intended for the general public as Borel believed it was his job to interpret China to the educated Dutch readership (Blussé 2014, 66). It was originally published in Dutch in 1895 in the collection *Wijsheid en schoonheid in China*, and it was soon translated into German, French and English.

23 Wilhelm (1873–1930) was among those Western researchers who adopted fieldwork-based approach to Chinese religious practices (see the final section below). What is more, he was not just an observer, he also participated in Daoist meditation and learned the inner alchemy practices (*neidan* 内丹) from his informants (Broy 2016, 92).

passing in her travelogue (likewise in the Korea section) the description of *Yijing* divination is relatively detailed in *Glaube und Aberglaube* and also includes examples of divinations.

In reports from several stops during her world trip, Karlin praises the excellent local libraries and speaks of the long hours she spent there, although again we are left without any details on the books and articles she consulted. I believe in the case of the Ainu people, her original two-part report, published in August 1923 in the feuilleton *Reiseskizzen* (*Travel Sketches*) (Karlin 1923b; 1923c) in her hometown's newspaper *Cillier Zeitung*, and *Glaube und Aberglaube* are based exclusively on the by then quite numerous ethnographic texts. Despite the efforts to write in a presumably objective, dispassionate style, throughout the manuscripts there is a sharp distinction in style and structure of the parts on Japan and China, and the Ainu and the Taiwanese indigenous peoples. The dry style and complete absence of what might be construed as personal observation or commentary that can be found in the Ainu chapter, in my opinion speak against the widely held belief that Alma Karlin visited Hokkaido while in Japan (e.g. Trnovec 2011, 2020). The doubt about Karlin's visit to Hokkaido was first expressed in passing by Jerneja Jezernik (2006, 84), and she, too, cites the uncharacteristic style of Ainu-related passages. In fact, the encyclopaedic way Karlin writes about the Ainu is very much reminiscent of the information on the practices of Taiwanese indigenous peoples—again found in the two *Reiseskizzen* (Karlin 1924d; 1924e) and the *Glaube und Aberglaube* manuscripts, which, as already mentioned, Karlin explicitly states was obtained through conversations with Mori Ushinosuke.

There are other details that give further credence to this suspicion. Perhaps the most obvious is that Karlin actually never claimed she visited the Ainu in Hokkaido—although the (too free) Slovene translation of the two *Reiseskizzen* can mislead the reader to make this assumption. In her travelogue the Ainu are only mentioned in passing (in a sentence that could admittedly be read as confirmation of her visit, but that could equally be read otherwise). Given the prominence she awards to her adventures among the—in her eyes—more exotic and unfamiliar people on her world trip, she would surely not pass up an opportunity to present her encounter with the Ainu, who were considered fascinating among the Japanese as well as Westerners. Furthermore, the map included in the German publications of her travelogue (Karlin 1930a; 1930b), which delineates her itinerary, stays well clear of the island and northern Japan in general. In fact, neither Karlin's travelogue nor her rich collection of postcards from Japan show her anywhere farther north than the famous religious complex and tourist hotspot of Nikko, not far from Tokyo (cf. Shigemori Bučar 2019). While her postcard collection does include two postcards depicting the Ainu, both are from the Japan–British exhibition of 1910, when Karlin was in London. Senica (2021, 238) further notes how there is no mention of missionary activities, which were well underway at that time, although Karlin regularly makes such observations in other parts of her travelogues. All in all, it is reasonable to assume Karlin compiled the information she read in the by then quite rich scholarship on the Ainu or perhaps in Isabela Bird, whose writings she must have been familiar with (Senica 2021).

Figure 7. A postcard from the Japan-British Exhibition of 1910, depicting the Ainu bear sacrifice. Karlin sent it to her mother in February 1911. (Source: Alma Karlin Collection, Celje Regional Museum)

One notable literary reference in her travelogue may give some clues as to why she avoids or is not interested in naming her written sources. On the cusp of her departure from Genova, having finally boarded the steamer that would take her to South America, Karlin stands on the deck and bids farewell with a famous poem *Quiet Night's Thoughts* by Li Taipo (Li Taibai 李太白) she had learned in the local public library. In her travelogue she cites it in entirety in Italian (1930, 24; 2006, 24). Interestingly, her version has a very different second verse from the original, likely adjusted then or later to accentuate the dramatic moment of her own project. While in the original the poet mistakes the moonlight on the floor of his room for frost, Karlin's version states: "And in that moonlight I saw in my mind the peoples and lands that I must see."[24] Karlin saw herself foremost as an explorer of distant, unfamiliar lands, so in her eyes her own authenticity and authority as a writer is grounded in the personal experience, rather than in the familiarity with the existing scholarship or other travel accounts. This said, her documentary writing is no less marked by the typical Orientalist intertextuality, as Klemen Senica (2021) has shown.

Karlin's Examination of East Asian Religious Beliefs and Practices

In this section, I outline the content of *Glaube und Aberglaube im Fernen Osten*, predominantly based on version A. As mentioned earlier, the material is organized geographically in five chapters, following her itinerary chronologically. There are obvious differences between them in terms of length, the longest two chapters being on Japan and China where she stayed more than a year and around 5 months, respectively. These are not only more exhaustive but also include richer commentary. The chapters on the Ainu and Taiwan stand out not only due to the style of writing (see above), but also because they include information on social life that would not be considered (either by Karlin or her readers then and now) religious or ritual, but would rather fall under the broader category of ethnographic subjects. She thus describes the physical appearance and child care of the Ainu, and details the physical appearance, dress and headdress, economic life and social structures of respective "*Wildstämme*" (wild tribes) of Taiwan,[25] following ethnic categorizations of Japanese colonial government. She further includes descriptions of landscape and vegetation.[26] The reason for this must be that in these sections she is not the original compiler of the information herself. The Taiwan part is likely an abbreviated copy of her notes of Ushinosuke's museum tour, while for the Ainu she equally follows a text that is in itself already ethnographic.[27]

24 "Levai la faccia al chiaro astro lucente/E a quel lume di luna volsi in mente,/Popoli e terre che veder dovró. Indi al sulo chinati i stanchi rai,/Al mio paese tacito pensai/Ed agli amici cho piu non rivedrò." (Karlin 1930a, 24)

25 The version B contains the entire "Formosa" section, which actually concludes with a few paragraphs on the Taiwanese ("Formosanern"), i. e. the settlers from Southern China.

26 Taiwan and its inhabitants, especially the indigenous population in the highlands and on the Eastern coast, proved mesmerizing for Karlin. In particular the Atayal to whose territory she made an overnight excursion, figure prominently in her travel and fictional writing despite her short stay on the island (Veselič, forthcoming).

27 See Rubiés (2002, 252–53) for a discussion of how "spontaneous ethnographies" gradually became "methodised" since the late 16th century and how this "inscribed the travel narrative within a scientific project".

The manuscript has no special introduction, although the first sentence of the chapter on Japan may serve as a sort of preface to the entire volume: "In the Far East, Buddhism rules and colours all views, either directly or indirectly" (A, 1). While echoes of this statement are found in various parts of the text, Karlin discusses a breadth of beliefs and practices, only some of them Buddhist. She sometimes intentionally groups them, implying a sort of classification, while at other times listing them haphazardly—this is especially the case in the shorter Korean chapter. Contrary to the geographical key she uses as the main organizing principle, I will summarize the content according to the implicit categorization, thereby elucidating Karlin's conceptual scheme of various religious practices.

Figure 8. A Buddhist temple with a pagoda in Mukden (Shenyang). On the back side, Karlin notes it is quite different from the Japanese temples. (Source: Alma Karlin Collection, Celje Regional Museum)

Apart from the chapter on Taiwan, creation/origin myths are among the first things Karlin mentions in each chapter. She recounts the myths on the origin of Japan and the Sun goddess Amaterasu 天照大神, i.e. the mythical ancestor of the Japanese imperial lineage, the Ainu myths of settlement of the world and the creation of first human beings as well as the Sun and Moon deities, Korean myths of Hwanung 환웅/桓雄 and the first woman, and of the sage Kija 箕子, as well as the Chinese myth of Pangu 盤古. In her description of the Atayal in Taiwan she relates two origin legends—the tale of two Suns, which is in fact the Moon creation story, and a legend on origin of facial tattooing, both of which can also be found in a more extended form as separate items in the folder of her unpublished ethnographic texts held at the National and University Library. In the case of the Pangu myth she notes that there are numerous versions of the story (A, 45), while the rest of them are treated as authoritative, canonized texts.

Karlin does not intend to dwell long on such myths, however, as the book "primarily deals with superstitions that are alive and well today" (A, 45). She thus begins each regional section with a brief comment on the state of religion in the particular country. She explains that in Japan there are two main religions ("*Hauptreligionen*") in addition to the original belief in spirits ("*Geisterglauben*"), i.e. Shintoism as a state religion based on the ancestor cult and Sun worship, and the imported Buddhism (A, 1). Later in the text she warns that people are neither strong followers of Shinto nor exclusively Buddhist (A, 12). Due to the simplicity and lack of imaginative space in Shintoism, however, it is Buddhism that has "a true influence on the dispositions and the life of the people" (A, 1). For Korea she remarks that while Buddhism is the main religion, it has taken a more phantastic form than in Japan (A, 37). She introduces the China chapter by stating that although there are three main religions—Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism—"in ordinary life, one religion unnoticeably extends into the others and it is less possible than anywhere else to draw clear boundaries among them" (A, 45). She further characterizes Chinese religiosity as pragmatic, functional, "firmly and clearly rooted in the tangible" (A, 46), even in its considerations of the hereafter. For the Ainu, on the other hand, she notes that their "*Götterlehre*" (doctrine of gods) is quite simple (A, 29).

In the longer sections on Japan and China such introductions are followed by the descriptions, of various length, of beliefs and practices related to the identified main religions. From the succession of topics presented, Karlin seems to associate Japanese ancestor veneration primarily with Shintoism, although her explanation of related rituals includes daily offerings at home and the Obon お盆 festival when the souls of the deceased return home, which is in fact of Buddhist origin.[28] She makes two comparative observations about ancestor veneration: that unlike "us", the Japanese don't perceive the ancestors to be removed from people's daily lives—on the contrary, they are here, living parallel lives (A, 3). She further notes that in older times the Obon dances were supposedly highly "immoral, that is, according to modern attitudes." She sees this, however, as a typical characteristic of the "primitive peoples", who tend to have "a liking for accentuated erotic goings–on" (A, 4). She also describes Shinto funerals. Interestingly, the shorter version B includes the fact that all the highest dignitaries and imperial family members

28 She also seems to confuse the *tokonoma* 床の間, alcove for the display of artistic items, and the *kamidana* 神棚—the miniature household altar that enshrines Shinto *kami* 神 (A, 3–4, 23).

may only be buried in the Shinto way, while others prefer a Buddhist funeral (B, 44). Karlin mentions the deified historical personages of Tenjin 天神, whom she calls "the God of school children" (in fact of knowledge, learning and the learned), and Kōbō Daishi 弘法大師, the founder of the esoteric Shingon 真言宗 school of Buddhism, whom she classifies as more Shinto than Buddhist (A, 9). She then turns to the numerous deities and protective spirits that must be evoked during house construction, depicting the related rituals in great detail. She ends her description of Shinto-related practices with dietary aspects of Shinto ceremonies.

Karlin then addresses Buddhism, crediting it with "making the Japanese what they are":

> serious in the perception of their duty, always conscientious about avoiding what leads to bad karma, obedient, diligent, controlled; most of all controlled. They don't burden their fellow humans with their suffering and their worries; they don't grumble against fate, they don't romp and curse if they break something, if something of theirs is ruined by the blunder of others; they are not impatient when something doesn't want to go [as expected], and they don't get besides themselves when a great misfortune is completely unexpectedly brought upon them. (A, 12–13)

She ascribes such a calm attitude, for which she holds the Japanese in high esteem, to the awareness of "circularity of things", "the swinging wheel of birth and rebirth", recognition that how we act is what matters: "In the East people consider much more the impersonal and the immortal (*unvergängliche*) than we do, living in the eternal as well as in the momentary (*vorübergehende*) and with this worldview they get over the everyday much more easily" (A, 13). She then explains at considerable length the elementary Buddhist teachings on reincarnation, karma and the impermanence of things. She emphasizes the complete absence of the idea of grace so fundamental to Christian belief: "one can neither free himself by prayer nor buy himself out from old guilt," although even in the Buddhist lands "the lower folk" are inclined to avoid the consequences of misdeeds by donations, magic or penance. "Nevertheless, there is the sense, that there in the universe it is all law and not blind power and that anyone who disrupts this eternal harmony, must suffer through this disorder". (A, 14)

Figure 9. A postcard with the famous Great Buddha of Kamakura (Kamakura Daibutsu 鎌倉大仏), which Karlin (1930a, 187; 2006, 232) calls "the best expression of Buddhism I have seen anywhere". (Source: Alma Karlin Collection, Celje Regional Museum)

According to Karlin, while Buddhist teaching was "wonderfully pure" when it came to Japan in the 6th century CE, people soon realized that it had many manifestations and artists began to represent these in the form of deities, such as Kannon 観音, the goddess of mercy. She then explains some of the most prominent bodhisattvas and deities of Japanese Buddhism: Jizō 地蔵, Daruma 達磨—representing Bodhidharma, the founder of, the fierce protector deity Fudō 不動, the seven lucky gods, of whom goddess Benten (or Benzaiten 弁才天), receives most of Karlin's attention. In this section, Karlin also describes a Buddhist funeral.

Among the "main religions" in China, she first briefly discusses Confucianism, which she prefers to describe as "the philosophy of everyday life" (A, 45) rather than a religion. She clarifies that Confucius is not a deity, but is honoured for his great wisdom. She describes the basic postulates of Confucianism as the basis of entire social life and considers civility or courtesy as the central precept of Confucius's teaching. She calls him the "Apostle of civility", where civility is not meant to be "a meaningless demeanour, but rather a pure outflow of true goodwill". "The beautiful thing in the East is", she says commendably, is "the honouring of the selfless" (A, 47).

She is less favourably inclined towards Buddhism in China. In stark contrast to her approving words on Buddhism in Japan and the closeness she feels towards

Buddhist teachings in general, she finds that Buddhism in China, while retaining the fundamentals, has for the most part strayed into the superstitious and fantastical. She blames this on "the Lamaism of Tibetan Monks" (A, 48), yet does not explicate this position any further.[29] She therefore discusses neither the Chinese nor Tibetan Buddhist practice in any detail, but simply mentions a few Buddhist deities—Bodhisattva Guanyin 觀音, the "laughing Buddha" (笑佛; Budai) and the demon king Mo Wang 魔王, likening the latter to Shiva, the Hindu god of destruction. In addition to a sentence or two of introduction for each of the said deities, she also gives the corresponding Japanese names.

Figure 10. A postcard depicting the costumes and masks used in Tibetan Buddhism for performance of the ceremony for pacifying the souls of those who suffered a bad death. (Source: Alma Karlin Collection, Celje Regional Museum)

Karlin then turns to Daoism but emphasizes once again that many of the deities can be ascribed to both Buddhism and Daoism. She also states that contrary to the irrelevance of the body in Buddhism (due to reincarnation), Daoism glorifies the body, its strength and health. She finds this contrary to the original teaching "which possessed something sublime" (A, 48). She calls Dao "the all-permeating elementary power" and the underlines "*Wu Wei*" (*wuwei* 無爲) as the way to merge

29 Judging from the denigrating comments in her travelogue *Einsame Weltreise*, Karlin holds Tibetan Buddhism, and especially Tibetan monks, in extremely low regard (Karlin 1930a, 236–38; 2006, 295, 297–98).

with this force. She quotes several "sayings of the sage", she must have found particularly appealing as she characterizes them as "the most beautiful" (A, 49–50).[30] At the same time, she observes that the true philosophy of Daoism now only exists in books, for it had been overrun by supernatural beings and fantasies (A, 50). A few passages later, Karlin also mentions the eight Daoist immortals (*ba xian* 八仙), with special emphasis on Li Tieguai 李鐵拐, whose statue she was given as a present in Peru and carried with her through much of her journey.[31]

Figure 11. Karlin with her beloved "Idol", the figure of Daoist immortal Li Tieguai. (Source: Alma Karlin Estate, Ms 1872, National ...)

30 Not all can readily be identified as quotes from *Daodejing*. The tenuous nature of the "master said …" type of narrative that Motoh (2019b) demonstrates for quotes ascribed to Confucius, very likely holds true in this case as well.

31 She was not aware it was a Daoist immortal until she came to China. She carried the statue for a large part of her journey, then lost it, was reunited with it, and in the mid-1930s dedicated her novel *Der Götze* (*Idol*) to it. Her special connection to the statue is described in Karlin (1927; 1997, 179–84).

Stressing how difficult it is to separate or classify many deities, spirits, and supernatural beings (A, 19), in both the Japan and China chapters the sections on the "main religions" are followed by what today is most often termed as folk or popular religion, but what Karlin covers under the broad category of "superstitions". Among these, there is a conspicuous fascination with foxes. She dedicates nearly two pages (A 19–20) to the worship of Inari (Inari Ōkami 稲荷大神), the Japanese goddess of rice, good harvest, and wealth, often represented by fox servants, and more than three pages to the shape-shifting fox-fairies (*hulijing* 狐狸精) in China (A 50–53), recounting several legends about them. She mentions the numerous other deities and supernatural beings, such as Tengu 天狗, Shōjō 猩猩 and Tanuki (Bake–danuki 化け狸) in Japan, or the "god of the hearth" (Zao Jun 灶君) and wandering ghosts in China. In the Korea chapter she mentions "Tokgabi" (Dokkaebi 도깨비), the prankster goblin and "high carved idols with creepy grimaces", in fact the village guardians Jangseung 장승/長承, standing along paths, representing various natural forces, whom "the simple folk" consider to be able to turn away ghosts or treat as ghost lightning rods (A, 42). Methods of warding off evil spirits are also described in the Ainu chapter, as is the famous bear sacrifice. In addition to these more elaborate forms of superstition Karlin also identifies "conventional superstitions" (A, 23) or the customs and views that belong to "the superstitions in the narrow sense" (B, 51). Here she includes the potency of various plants and foodstuffs (e. g. ginseng), food taboos, magical spells (such as love and death spells of the Ainu), auspicious signs, lucky and harmful actions (e.g. dropping chopsticks in Japan), etc.

Figure 12. A postcard portraying Korean village guardians—Jangseung. (Source: Alma Karlin Collection, Celje Regional Museum)

A topic of great interest to Karlin, that is peppered throughout the text and cuts across the distinction she makes between religion and superstition, is symbolism. She discusses it more extensively in the chapter on Japan, but also gives many instances in the Korea and China parts of the manuscript. She sees symbolism, which she relates to Shintoism and "not yet completely erased belief in the spirits of nature", as permeating the life of the Japanese (A, 4). She seems particularly taken by the enormous admiration Japanese cultivate for various trees and flowers: "Only in Japan does one make outings to admire the trees while they blossom, and only there is one as excited about the change of flowers as over personal happiness" (A, 6). Similarly, one of the wonderful things for her in China is "the symbolism that ties everything together, that can be noticed at every step, and that gives the commonest of things a deeper appeal and a finer meaning" (A, 71). She observes, that "we used to have this too, we have just forgotten the meaning of most objects around us" (A, 71). Throughout her manuscript Karlin notes the symbolism of animals, symbolism in the architecture and decoration of shrines, temples and homes, in New Year decorations and food. In the China section she further notes the symbolism of body parts, numbers, stars and in theatre. She seems to find animal symbolism particularly worthy of attention—not only does she highlight the examples throughout *Glaube und Aberglaube*, there is also a three-page comparative article "Tiere in Volksmund der Völker" among her papers in the National and University Library. Moreover, related to signs and symbolism are divination practices, another crosscutting topic. She describes the "Orakel" in Shinto shrines, gives examples of meanings of dreams, and of signs in the already mentioned *Yijing* divination. Interestingly the latter is included in the Korea part of the text, although she acknowledges this is an "ancient wisdom", known already to Laozi and widely popular in China (A, 41).

Finally, in the sections on Japan and China, where Karlin stayed longer, a focus on two different ritual-cycles can be discerned. In Japan, where she stayed for more than a year, she was able to observe the entire year-cycle: the New Year celebrations, the Inari festival at the time of rice-planting, the "Boy's Day" (now Children's Day こどもの日), the summer Obon and Tanabata たなばた[32] festivals. In China, however, she describes New Year celebrations in one short paragraph (she left the country before the Spring Festival of 1924) and mentions the Qingming and Mid-Autumn festivals only in passing. On the other hand, in China there is a clear focus on life-cycle rituals. There she had the opportunity and, with no fixed job, the time to cultivate more intimate local friendships, especially with her host's German-Chinese family, granting her wider access

32 She mistakenly calls it the festival of "Weaving Princess and the Ox King" (A, 8), the Ox King being a different legendary character than Cowherd of the Tanabata.

to life-cycle rituals. Her meticulous description and interpretation of mortuary rituals (Vampelj Suhadolnik 2019) in her travel writing (Karlin 1924a; 1924b; 1997, 99–102) is based on the funeral she attended of her Chinese host's father. In version A of Glaube und Aberglaube im Fernen Osten it extends over five pages.[33] Another two pages are dedicated to weddings, followed by a few paragraphs on pregnancy, infertility and children. As mentioned earlier, funerals are also described in the chapter on Japan—the Shinto one form the perspective of the officiating priest and the Buddhist one from the perspective of the bereaved family members, while Bunun burials are mentioned in the section on Taiwan. This section also includes a lengthy treatment of the rites-of-passage to adulthood among the Atayal, centred around men's headhunting and men's and women's facial tattooing.

Figure 13. A postcard depicting the famous wood carving of the sleeping cat (Nemuri-neko 眠り猫) at the Tōshō-gū Shrine in Nikkō 日光東照宮. (Source: Alma Karlin Collection, Celje Regional Museum)

To sum up, while not exhaustive, this overview has shown Karlin had a very indiscriminate interest in broadly defined, primarily contemporary religious beliefs and practices. Karlin chose the geographical key to present these in her manuscript,

33 She makes an observation that despite the Buddhist views, the average Chinese person understands the afterlife in very materialistic terms, and this is the reason the funeral itself as well as later mortuary rituals are of utmost importance, as is demonstrated by the huge costs attached to these rites (A, 62–63).

yet there is also an inkling of a system in the way she organized her first-hand observations and second-hand information. The brief introductions are followed by origin myths, then come "religions", "superstitions"—first the more complex beliefs and then more mundane magical acts. Interspersed throughout the text are references to symbolism and the year ritual cycle, while rituals of the life cycle come last. The final paragraphs of each chapter seem reserved for the left-over information—brief references or simple enumerations of unrelated customs or, in the case of China, descriptions of some of the temples she visited in Beijing, the longer versions of which can be found in her travelogue (1930a, 235–38; Karlin 2006, 294–99). In the final section of my analysis, I attempt to unpack Karlin's conceptual scheme and method, by situating them in the broader intellectual trends of her time.

Figure 14. Chinese sacrificial paper money, also known as spirit money, burned in ancestor worship or as an offering to various deities. (Source: Alma Karlin Collection, Celje Regional Museum)

Karlin's Conceptual Scheme and Method in *Glaube und Aberglaube im Fernen Osten*

As the very title of the manuscript suggests Alma Karlin distinguishes between belief and superstition, yet the above references to her text demonstrate, the binary opposition between religion and superstition to be even more salient for her conceptual framework. Although both religion and superstition have long been used to describe various beliefs and practices, the specific meanings of these terms have varied widely through place and time. Still, labelling something as a superstition has invariably served to hierarchize different traditions and practices, hailing some as proper and orthodox, while denigrating others as diminished forms of the true thing or even complete aberrations (O'Neil 2005, 8864).

In her text, Karlin does not provide a definition of what constitutes the one or the other, but we can gain insights from how she uses these terms, especially in the two longer sections on Japan and China. In Japan, she identifies two (main) religions ("*(Haupt)religionen*")—Buddhism and Shintoism, while in China three merit such a distinction—Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism. This corresponds to the prevailing scholarly attitudes of the time, engulfed in the comparative concept of "world religion", illustrated by, for example, Max Müller's *The Sacred Books of the East* (1879–1910) translation project or the First World's Parliament of Religions in 1893.[34] It is impossible to pinpoint the precise starting point, but throughout the 19th century there had been a steady development towards the formation of the study field of comparative religion, with academic institutionalization in its final decades.[35] The initially philological interest in the translation and interpretation of ancient philosophical and religious texts turned into a process of selecting, editing and canonizing, whereby those texts that became designated as sacred writings were compiled and reconstructed as canons of specific religious systems.

The need for generation of such orderly traditions was not only significant for academia, but was of equal importance for the colonial governance and modernizing efforts of independent Asian states. The process of secularization, i.e. creation of a separate religious sphere (distinct from other social spheres such as politics, economy, law etc.), that transpired in post-Reformation Europe (Asad 1993, 28), came to be viewed as imperative for successful modernization and modernity. As in many other places, in East Asia the adoption of the concept of religion Ch. *zongjiao*/Jp. *shūkyō* 宗教 and its discursive counterpart of superstition, Ch. *mixin*, Jp. *meishin* 迷信, both neologisms, led to the establishment of various officially recognized religious associations, integration and systematization of clergy training, and hierarchization if not homogenization of particular teachings and practices in an attempt to emulate the church–state structure of Western countries (e.g. Goossaert and Palmer 2011, esp. chs. 2 and 3; Josephson 2012, chs. 6 and 7). In other words, during Karlin's sojourn in Japan and China, the vocabulary of religion and superstition was not only a familiar form of reference to different East

34 See Masuzawa (2005) for a detailed treatment of emergence of the concept of world religion.

35 A historical and conceptual overview of the establishment of "religion" as a subject of comparative inquiry in humanities and social sciences can be found in Stausberg (2007).

Asian teachings and practices among her Western counterparts, but was probably familiar to at least some of her educated local interlocutors.

Contrary to the narrowly and, as I will further show below, textually defined religion, for Karlin belief ("*Glaube*") is more inclusive. It seems to indicate a level of fairly complex, coherent ideas about and engagement with the transcendent, the spiritual. For example, she calls the Japanese ritual of *nagare kanjo* 流れ灌頂 or "flowing anointment", the sprinkling of the head performed for the salvation of a woman who died in childbirth, "a very beautiful custom on the boundary between belief and superstition" (A, 26). The ritual formed as a part of the Buddhist tradition in medieval Japan after the introduction of the apocryphal Mahayana Blood Bowl Sutra Ketsubon Kyō 血盆經 from China (Glassman 2009, esp. 185–86). There is no indication that Karlin is aware of the "uncanonical" origin, therefore not grouping it with other Buddhist practices. The more likely reason for placing it on the boundary with superstition is the fear of wandering ghosts at the centre of this practice.

Belief for her is also about the truthfulness and depth of feeling, the interior of things, in contrast both to the superficiality of superstition as well as ceremony. This is explicit in her comments on contemporary practice of Christianity in South America, where "the Christian belief was a soulless circus of ceremonies. It manifested itself neither in life, nor in art, only in superstitious customs and sensual gestures" (Karlin 1930a, 90; 2006, 108). The emphasis on the non-material also seems to be an element in her understanding of belief, as shown in her reflection on the religiosity of Chinese and the blurred boundaries of Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism:[36]

> To me it seemed anyway as if there was no belief in our sense of the word, although everything is permeated by a very deep wisdom on the one hand, and the binding symbolism and astonishing superstition on the other; and a Chinese never undertakes anything of which the supernatural is not a part of [...] His belief concerns itself a lot, too much, perhaps, with things of the next world, but in this he is thinking of the practical, not idealistic side of the beyond. (A, 45)

The most important of all, however is that belief is historically rooted within a particular society. When pondering about missionary activities Karlin at one point writes:

36 Interestingly, she does not use the term three teachings, *sanjiao* 三教, although it has been commonly used in China to refer to the combination of the three.

> Why should a belief not be as good as another one, especially in the lands where the original belief was pure and deep and seemed adapted to people? (Karlin 1930a, 319; 2006, 404)

A certain overlap exists, then, with the term religion, but belief seems more inclusive. While Karlin adopts religion only for the traditions stated above, belief appears to encompass all the religious teachings that she values positively.

When it comes to superstition ("*Aberglaube*"), Karlin is more ambiguous. In her non–fiction writing the term sometimes carries a clear negative connotation of something shallow, simplistic, empty. In the East Asian case this is evident in her treatment of Buddhism. She is very drawn to its teachings, perhaps even considers herself a Buddhist (Karlin 1930a, 327), but while she sings nothing but praises of Buddhism in Japan, she is much more critical of the Chinese practice. Although "true to its origin in the basic features" she finds it to be full of "demon worship", "superstition" and "thought aberrations in every sense". (A, 48) She is more reluctant to use superstition in order to refer to lived Buddhist practices in Japan—many of them syncretic, than to those in China, which she only painstakingly calls Buddhist. The fact that the year in Japan was "the happiest part of her journey" (Karlin n.d.d) certainly colours her views. She similarly observes that the "pure and high" philosophy of Daoism now only exists in books, as it had been overrun by all sorts of "spirit beings, magical feats and fanciful stories" (A, 50). Thesejudgements are firmly grounded in the prevailing scholarly views during her London years and the period she spent in East Asia, although they were losing their stronghold at the time the manuscript was probably written.[37]

As mentioned above, in the era of Romanticism an interest in religion—especially from the comparative point of view—became one of the central concerns of humanities. The 19th century thus saw fervent engagement in philological translations of many religious and philosophical texts. With regard to Buddhism, the translation and interpretation activities were very much focussed on what were deemed the pristine Pali and too a much lesser extent Sanskrit texts of Theravada, while Mahayana Buddhism was generally derided as the corruption of the original teachings (Clarke 1997, 98) and hence remained outside these endeavours. The nascent

37 The rich history of Western interest in the East Asian religio-philosophical traditions is beyond the scope of this article. East Asian, more specifically Chinese religious traditions and practices were first more forcefully brought to European attention with the missionary activities following the establishment of maritime trade contacts in the 16th century, while the interest in Japan was constrained by the two and a half centuries of Japan's closure, until the country was forced to open in the mid-19th century. A short overview of the scholarly study of religions in China can be found in Girardot and Kleeman (2005), while the late 19th and early 20th centuries' scholarly and popular engagement with the religious traditions of China and Japan is treated by Oldmeadow (2004, esp. ch. 7).

sinological scholarship[38] mostly directed its attention to the traditions of Confucianist and Daoist texts, as well as the Chinese translations of some Buddhist texts, although the latter were not necessarily fundamental to the Chinese Buddhist tradition (Girardot and Kleeman 2005, 1632). One of the first Western authorities on Japanese Buddhism, Ernest Fennollosa (1853–1908), who came a little later, was very vocal in his criticism of prominent philologists and scholars of Theravada Buddhism such as Thomas William Rhys Davids (1843–1922), which held Rhys Davids, which held Mahayana schools to be a degenerate form of Buddhism, and was no more sympathetic to Theosophical interpretations of Buddhism or the popular notions which, in his opinion, selfishly only cared for individual liberation (Oldmeadow 2004, 166). Moreover, the gradual process of canonization of East Asian religious traditions, mentioned above, resulted not only in the construction of seemingly coherent, unified religious traditions, but also in judging contemporary religious practices against the "genuine", "pure" textual religion of ancient times (Nongbri 2013, 112). This counterposing of lived vs. textual that Karlin's comments make so clear remains central to the scholarly treatment of East Asian religious traditions, such as in the separation of Daoism as philosophy and as religion.

This said, in the second half of the 19th century, the writings of some Protestant and Jesuit missionaries as well as (mostly) amateur scholars who were based in China ("in the field" so to speak), began to stress contemporary Chinese religious practice, in particular the folk religion (Girardot and Kleeman 2005, 1632–33). Such was the case of J. J. M. de Groot (1854–1921), a Dutch–German sinologist who taught in Leiden and later in Berlin. Like most of the Leiden-trained sinologists of that time, De Groot was originally meant to work as an interpreter in China and the Dutch Indies, but then shifted to a research career—although still in the employ of the Ministry of the Colonial Affairs—as an ethnologist and ethnographer with a focus on Chinese religion and its impact on domestic and social life (Blussé 2014, 59–61). In his monumental, unfinished work *The Religious System in China* (1892–1910) he nevertheless takes a turn towards classical, i.e. elite sources, and concludes that what he has observed in practice[39] are just different manifestations of the single essence—he calls it

38 The first European chairs were established in 1814 at the Collège de France and in 1876 at Oxford University.

39 Already during his year of practical study, which he spent in Fujian, de Groot was observing and noting in his diaries numerous details about family structures and institutions, the position of women, festivals and rituals of different social strata. He destroyed his diaries "after extracting from [them] whatever may be of scientific value", for they also included "intimate matters of life, also concerning friends and relatives" (de Groot's unpublished autobiography, cited in Zwi Werblowsky 1986, 118). De Groot's initially very favourable, respectful attitude to China became its opposite around the time he began publishing his life work in which he finds China to be backward, undeveloped, and superstitious (ibid., 119; Girardot and Kleeman 2005, 1634).

universismus—of Chinese religion. According to de Groot, even Chinese Buddhism is but one branch of this unitary system (Zwi Werblowsky 1986, 117).

Figure 15. Karlin with the figure of Boddhisatva Kannon/Guanyin 觀音she brought from Japan or China. The photo was taken in her hometown of Celje. (Source: Alma Karlin Estate, Ms 1872, National ...)

Within this tradition of the ethnographic approach to Chinese religious practices, another person of interest is Wilhelm Grube, a German who spent two years in China as a collector for the Berlin Museum of Anthropology (Broy 2016, 90). He published his observations of the popular religious practice in several texts (e.g. Grube 1901; 1910). Both de Groot (1892, Part I.) and Grube (1898) wrote extensively on Chinese mortuary rituals—a topic that stands out prominently in Karlin's travel writing from China as well. Whether Karlin was familiar with the writings of de Groot and Grube is difficult to determine, although it seems completely possible that she had access to some of these publications through contacts in China, such as the von Salzmans, if not already in Tokyo.[40]

Karlin, too, was clearly attracted to the ethnographic–folkloristic approaches to religion that were slowly coming to the fore, and was a keen observer of the way people lived there and then, "superstitions" being part and parcel of everyday life. Despite her critical tone, it is precisely the rich and "contagious mysticism" that she finds most attractive when it comes to Chinese beliefs:

> As the symbolism is tightly woven into the everyday of a Japanese, so reaches here the superstition into each, ever so minor act. Yet it is exactly this state of affairs that makes this country a wandering secret for us; one lives and moves in a somewhat eerie air circle of wonders, and this magic atmosphere is so strong, that no one who has lived in China long can escape it. (A, 48)

She was absolutely fascinated by popular religious practices and enticed by various folktales and legends. She also found them inspiring in her literary pursuits. Thus, in her travelogue she muses:

> Should I tell you about the Forbidden City, where once a year, with a special permit, you are allowed into a certain part, where I saw a beautiful Buddha pagoda? Maybe I should speak about a chrysanthemum exhibition, which was not nearly as beautiful as in Dai Nippon,[41] my beloved Japan, or about the miracles in the Kung fu Tse [Kongfuzi] Hall, where the great philosopher is venerated? I would much rather speak about superstition, the steps of fox-fairy, about [Gu], who takes the lives of unborn children, about the ghost wall … but the most wonderful of these things are anyway recounted in my Beijing short stories. (1930a, 248; 2006, 312)

With no full-time job and a quiet room overlooking the picturesque Beijing courtyards, Karlin immersed herself in writing during her months there. The collection of the (very) short stories she refers to was published in 1930 as *Drachen und Geister (Dragons and Ghosts)* by Frundsberg Verlag in Berlin. Again, the title is indicative of the aspects of Chinese tradition that enthralled her the most – symbolism and supernatural creatures, especially ghosts. Excerpts of book reviews

40 Grube's (1898) discussion of mortuary customs in Beijing was, for example, published in the *Journal of the Peking Oriental Society*.

41 The fact that she uses this name for the Japanese empire is but one indication of her uncritical and unreflected identification with the Japanese imperial project.

reproduced in Jezernik (2009, 83) indicate readers found Karlin's fiction both entertaining and informative.

Conclusion

In this paper I have analysed Alma Karlin's unpublished manuscript *Glaube und Aberglaube im Fernen Osten*, which exists in two incomplete versions. The first version A, which was scrutinized more closely, equates the Far East with East Asia, while the second version B takes a broader geographical perspective, encompassing everything west and south of India. The East Asian section of the later is, with a rare exception, just a distillation of the former. The manuscripts were probably intended as ethnographic, semi-scholarly counterparts to Karlin's travelogue *Einsame Weltreise*.

As the title suggests, the two texts focus on religious beliefs and practices, matters of life-long interest for Karlin. Raised as a Roman Catholic, Karlin became enticed by non-European, particularly Asian religious and philosophical traditions during the years she spent in London where she moved as a young woman thirsty for knowledge and adventure. Working as a language teacher, she met students from Japan, India and China who offered her first glimpses of the classical textual traditions of Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism as well as the social life and cultural practices of their home countries. In the self-imposed exile in Scandinavia at the onset of the World War I, on a diet of library readings, lectures, and conversations with Theosophists and well-travelled people, Karlin forged a plan to travel around the globe, working towards fulfilling her ambition for fame as an explorer and author. Religious beliefs and practices were central in this endeavour, for she firmly believed in the Romantic notion of religion as a distilled soul of nations, the Theosophical presumption that all religions are just particular iterations of an underlying universal truth, as well as in religion's stimulus for creative writing. She then had to put her aspirations on hold for eight years of what became a physically exhausting and mentally draining journey, but eventually attained glory with the publication of her travelogues after her return in 1928. Not only did East Asian religious traditions figure prominently in her documentary writing, they were often present in her fictional stories set in contemporary China and Japan.

Until the mid-1930s, when Karlin turned to Theosophical fiction, her writing on religion was more reminiscent of the late 19th century scholarly approaches than the spiritual quests that became typical in the popular writing of the early 20th century. In her treatment of various East Asian beliefs and practices she adopted the categories of religion and (more broadly conceived) belief, and of superstition.

She employed "religion" only in reference to what by then became understood as bounded, coherent systems of canonized textual traditions exemplified in the concept of "world religions". In her evaluations of contemporary Buddhist and Daoist practices in China she further underlined the primacy of ancient texts, deeming the lived practices she observed as superstitions at best and aberrations at worst. This was very much in line with the (comparative) philological and philosophical endeavours of the 19th century.

At the same time, Karlin was eager to observe, even experience, the ways people lived in the places she visited. From this perspective, it was the bustle of local religious festivities, the colourful deities and supernatural beings, and the purportedly all-permeating symbolism she encountered in East Asia that consumed her attention. These she approached in a manner of an amateur fieldwork ethnologist. Not able to speak any of the East Asian languages beyond the basic phrases, she must have relied heavily on the willingness and the ability of her interlocutors as well as the already published accounts—scholarly and popular—for explanation of the practices she so keenly observed. She mostly approached people and their lives with a genuine interest and appreciation, but neither this nor her unconventional position of a single woman traveling the world on her own hard-earned money enabled her—as Leutner (1997) also demonstrates for other German-speaking women travellers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries—to radically break away from the established conceptual frameworks of her time.

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OTHER TOPICS

The Food, Water, Air and Fire Doctrines in Ancient Indian and Greek Philosophies from a Comparative Perspective

*Lenart ŠKOF**

Abstract

The main aim of this article lies in the comparison of ancient cosmico-natural elements from the Vedic period with their counterparts in the Presocratics, with a focus on food, air, water and fire. By way of an introduction to the ancient elemental world, we first present the concept of food (*anna*) as an idiosyncratic Vedic teaching of the ancient elements. This is followed by our first comparison—of Raikva's natural philosophy of *Vāyu/prāṇa* with Anaximenes's *pneûma/aér* teaching in the broader context of both the Vedic and Presocratic teachings on the role of air/breath. Secondly, water as brought to us in *pañcāgnividyā* teaching from *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* and *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* is compared to the teaching of the Greek natural philosopher Thales. Finally, the teaching on fire as heat being present in all beings (*agni vaiśvānara*) and in relation to cosmic teachings on fire in the ancient Vedic world are compared to Heraclitus' philosophy of fire as an element. Additionally, this article also presents a survey and analysis of some of the key representatives of comparative and intercultural philosophy dealing with the elemental and natural philosophy of ancient India and Greece.

Keywords: Vedic philosophy, Presocratics, food, air, water, fire, philosophy of nature, comparative philosophy

Doktrine hrane, vode, zraka in ognja v stari indijski in grški filozofiji s komparativnega vidika

Izvleček

Članek se ukvarja s primerjavo starih kozmično-naravnih elementov iz vedskega obdobja s predsokratskimi elementi: hrano, zrakom, vodo in ognjem. Najprej se v uvodu v starodavni svet elementov ukvarjamo z elementom hrane (*anna*) kot indijsko posebnostjo v okviru starih učenj o elementih. Temu sledi prvi od treh osrednjih delov članka, v katerem se posvečamo primerom indijske filozofije narave (Raikva in nauki o *Vāyu/prāṇa*) ter grškemu nauku filozofa Anaksimenesa o *pneûma/aér* – oboje v širšem kontekstu starih vedskih in predsokratskih učenj o vlogi zraka/vetra/diha. V drugi osrednji analizi

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se posvečamo učenju o vodi (*pañcāgnividyā*) v *Bṛhadāraṇyaka upaniṣadi* in *Chāndogya upaniṣadi* ter sorodnih starih vedskih tekstih in ta nauk primerjamo s starimi grškimi nauki o vodi, ki jih najdemo v Talesovi filozofiji narave. V sklepnem delu se posvečamo še indijskim vedskim naukom o ognju kot toploti, prisotni v vseh bitjih (*agni vaiśvānara*), ter spremljajočih kozmičnih učenjih stare Indije. Te nauke primerjamo s filozofijo grškega misleca Heraklita. Poleg tega članek prinaša pregled in analizo najpomembnejših del s področja primerjalne in medkulturne filozofije, ki se ukvarjajo z omenjenimi temami stare elementarne misli in filozofije narave v vedski Indiji in predsokratski Grčiji.

Ključne besede: vedska filozofija, predsokratiki, hrana, zrak, voda, ogenj, filozofija narave, primerjalna filozofija

Introduction

Within the ancient Vedic tradition, the elemental mystery of the world and the ontology of emanations of being and blossoming of life through the elements is in the forefront of its mytico-religious revelation. Thus air, water, food, earth and fire can be traced in their cosmic emanations through Vedic gods and mesocosmic "connections" (understood as *bandhu* and *upaniṣad*) (*Upaniṣads* 1996, lii–lvi). The main aim of this article is to compare these ancient elements from the Vedic period to the Presocratics: as already observed by Ranade in his *Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy* (1986), it is through the independent parallelism that we can compare Raikva's natural philosophy of *vāyu/prāṇa* with Anaximenes's *pneûma/aér* teaching. Vedic teaching on water as brought to us in *pañcāgnividyā* from *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* and *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* will be brought into dialogue with Thales's natural philosophy of water; finally, teaching on fire as heat being present in all beings and the related cosmic teachings on fire will be compared to Heraclitus' natural philosophy of fire. Additionally, we will elaborate on the ancient Vedic element of "food" (*anna*), representing an idiosyncratic and archaic (and unique) contribution to elemental thinking.

As far as research by comparative philosophers is concerned, among the first to devote some attention to these two topics was Conger (1952). However, he only briefly examines Anaximenes, comparing his theory with the doctrines of the Upaniṣads, and fails to discuss Heraclitus' concept of fire in any detail. In his work on the history of Indian philosophy, Ruben mentions Anaximenes when analysing the Indian philosopher Uddālaka Āruṇi, whom he identifies as "the earliest of the materialists" (Ruben 1947, 81), chronologically locating him among the third generation of philosophers of the Upaniṣads, flourishing in the second half of the 7th century. But it is only with the work *Early Greek*

Philosophy and the Orient by West (1971), which reserves ample space for extensive treatments of Anaximenes and, particularly, Heraclitus, that a broader insight into a series of possible direct and indirect links with the Upaniṣads, is enabled. Pajin, too, calls attention to the similarities between the teachings of Anaximenes and Raikva (Pajin 1980); and West's analytical work is completed with the markedly historicist approaches of Sedlar and Karttunen.[1] Standing out among the students of Indian philosophy is the already mentioned Ranade (1986), who in his chapter on the development of Upaniṣadic cosmology also touches on the link between Anaximenes and Raikva, a philosopher of the Upaniṣads (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 4.3.1–4), and in his conclusion, amid numerous examples of analogies in the teachings of the two, upholds the importance of "independent parallelism" (Ranade 1986, 74) which allows comparison of cognate doctrines without constraining them into a framework of direct or indirect influences, historic contact, or even a common source (i.e., of Indo-Europeans), which are so extensively studied by West and Karttunen. Boland and Wessel (1993) finally asserted the close affinity between these teachings of ancient philosophers (Anaximenes in particular) and the Indian "wind-breath doctrine" (the so called *Wind-Atem-Lehre*[2]), while comparisons between Heraclitus and later Greek thinkers and Indian philosophers from Uddālaka Āruṇi onwards have been examined by Scharfstein (1998).

Food as an Element in Ancient Indian Philosophy[3]

Let us begin with an idiosyncratic example of an ancient teaching of the elemental world and its cosmico-natural significance. Within Western and Eastern traditions of mythological thinking and philosophy there are only few testimonies for the philosophical or even metaphysical relevance of food and eating. With few exceptions—such as Aristotle and Feuerbach—the philosophy or metaphysics of food and nutrition has been poorly represented in Western

1 Sedlar draws interesting parallels between regarding the role of wind/breath in Greek and Indian medicine (and mentions Anaximenes from the Greek pole of this learning); he ascribes to Heraclitus points of convergence with Buddhism, but also associates him with the Upaniṣadic doctrines of breath and fire (Sedlar 1980, 17ff.). Karttunen rejects any (even indirect) link between Anaximenes and Heraclitus, on the one hand, and Indian doctrines, on the other, but he does mention some similarities between them (Karttunen 1989, 11ff.).

2 For this teaching we draw on *Die Wind-Atem Lehre in den älteren Upaniṣaden* (Boland 1997).

3 This part of our essay draws on an earlier encyclopaedic article titled "Food in Ancient Indian Philosophy" (Thompson and Kaplan 2014). Reprinted with permission.

philosophical tradition.[4] In contrast, the ancient Indian natural philosophy of the Vedas brings important mythico-philosophical testimonies on the cosmic food cycle, as well as early philosophical elaborations on the role of food. Moreover, it is only in the Vedas that an old mythico-philosophical theory of food as an element is presented in a cosmico-ontological key. Apart from their rich philosophical, ethical and comparative relevance for various philosophies or disciplines of the body (yoga, vegetarianism), ancient Vedic teachings on food and the food cycle can also substantially inform contemporary environmental philosophy and philosophy of religion (or philosophical theology).

For the Upaniṣadic philosophers there existed four or five originary elements of the world: earth, water, fire, air, and ether/space (see *Praśna Upaniṣad* 4.7: "[…] earth and the elements of earth; waters and the elements of water; fire and the elements of fire; wind and the elements of wind; space and the elements of space […]" (*Upaniṣads* 1996, 284)). As such they are fully parallel to the five Greek elements as listed by the Presocratic philosophers (interestingly enough, in Feuerbach we have earth, water, light, air, and food; see Feuerbach 1989). But it is in the special role attributed to food that the natural philosophy of ancient Vedic India substantially diverges from the related Greek testimonies. Being aware of natural relations between "food" (*anna*) and "eater" (*attṛ*), some Vedic philosophers included food among the originary elements and even attributed it a primary role among them. Here two interrelated doctrines appeared: about the water-cycle and about food. Of course, both food and eater are fundamental categories of biology: plants and animals produce food, or, rather, constitute the food for each other in the cycle of life. On the other hand, water is another originary source of life for early Vedic thinkers—such as rain, which falls on the ground and "feeds" plants, animals, and humans. Book XI of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* presents the legendary story of Bhṛgu, the son and pupil of the god Varuṇa. Being too proud and too confident, Bhṛgu was sent to the jungle by his father. As Bhṛgu looked in all four directions, he experienced horrible scenes of cannibalism, men dismembering men and eating their limbs. Upon his return to his father, Bhṛgu receives Varuṇa's explanation: what he has witnessed were scenes from the world beyond, where men were representing the angry souls of plants, trees and the animals, all of them seeking retribution for being killed and eaten in their lives in this world. Bhṛgu thus receives from Varuṇa a lesson about the interconnectedness of all living things: he learns that the whole universe is nothing but *food* (*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 11.6.1-13[5]). But

4 Cf. here an excellent book on food and theology titled Food & Faith (Wirzba 2011). On Feuerbach's teaching on food see Škof (2015, ch. 5).

5 See *The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (1994, 108–12).

at the same moment, the story of Bhṛgu is also an early example of a deeper sacrificial awareness—not yet about vegetarianism, but about the elemental meaning of food and a lesson about the deeper meaning of food sacrifice (Ruben 1947). Later, this will lead to a new ethical awareness, as exemplified in the teachings of Buddhism and Jainism, and the tradition of vegetarianism in Hinduism. Now, in *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* III there is another version of this legend. Here Bhṛgu learns the doctrine about *bráhman* and food: according to Varuṇa, *bráhman* is food, for it is from food that beings are born, on food they live, and to food they pass upon death. Given the Vedic meaning of *bráhman* as a mysterious power of poetic formulation, or truth formulation (and later, in Vedānta, the absolute), and equating it with food, Bhṛgu is finally instructed by Varuṇa to practice austerity.

In the early Upaniṣads food is recognized both as an originary material/empirical as well as spiritual/metaphysical substance: in *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 2.2.1, a human being is formed from the essence of food:

From food, surely, are they born;

all creatures that live on Earth.

On food alone, once born, they live;

and into food in the end they pass.

For food is the foremost of beings,

so it is called 'all herbs'.

(*Upaniṣads* 1996, 185)

Similarly, in the earlier *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 1.5.1, food is worshiped as the highest of all, as *bráhman* itself. The poetic verses read as follows:

By wisdom and by toil,

when the father produced

the seven kinds of food –

One was common to all here.

Two he assigned to the gods.

Three he kept for himself.

One he gave to the beasts.

All beings depend on it,
both those that breathe
and those that do not.

Why aren't they exhausted,
when they are eaten every day?

The man who knows it
as the inexhaustible –

he eats food with his face;
he reaches the gods;
he lives on invigorating food.
(*Upaniṣads* 1996, 18)

Here this pre-Buddhist *Upaniṣad* lists seven kinds of food, being created by the father of the gods, Prajāpati: among the various foods given to the creatures, milk is of the foremost importance (as explained in the commentary to the above verses in the Upaniṣad itself—see *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 1.5.2). Next, by following the Upaniṣadic teaching, and by the means of daily sacrifice, the sacrificer who knows this (in famous Upaniṣadic phrase "*ya evaṃ veda*") and follows this ancient teaching—i.e. the sacrificer who firmly establishes himself/herself as a Person/Creator—also knows the inexhaustible spiritual origin (food) of everything, and thus receives an inexhaustible amount of (material) food.[6] So it is clearly stated in this passage how food serves both as a material and spiritual basis of everything. Food and liturgical acts (rituals, including various daily practices) are interdependent and have ethical consequences.

In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 1.2.1 we have a famous cosmogonic story about Death (Mṛtyu, m.) as the primeval deity: according to the Upaniṣadic philosophers Death is equated with hunger, and this thus indirectly indicates the key cosmologico-ontological role of food for the living. Moreover, Death emitted water,

6 See *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 1.4.17: "Anyone who knows this obtains this whole world" (*Upaniṣads* 1996, 17); Sskt: *tad idaṃ sarvam āpnoti ya evaṃ veda* (Limaye and Vadekar 1958, 190).

which then solidified into earth, and from the heat (*tapas*) emitted in this process fire was created. Air is also added to the elements. Mṛtyu began to eat everything he created and thus he became the eater of this world, with the entire world being his food (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 1.2.5: "He began to eat whatever he gave birth to," *Upaniṣads* 1996, 8). Finally, there is another important correlation, namely between food and breath (*prāṇa*). In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* V, both "Brahman is food" and "Brahman is lifebreath" are uttered by the Upaniṣadic philosopher (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 5.12.1[7]). But food and breath (or air) are closely interdependent. In a story about Prātṛda and his father from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 5.12.1, Prātṛda is instructed about reaching pre-eminence as follows: all beings need food, and all beings likewise need (life) breath. This ancient Upaniṣadic teaching of the elements of food and air suggests the following: bodies subsist on a hidden cosmic, or empirico-metaphysical *reserve* of food and cosmic wind, or breath. The ancient "wind-breath-doctrine", as presented in the early Upaniṣads, strongly attests this (see Boland 1997). Finally, the whole universe is nothing but food; in his substance, man is now identical to the metaphysical food, or *bráhman*, the first and ultimate creator and consumer of everything (Geib 1976, 225–28).

Another of the key early Upaniṣads, *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 6.2.1-4, reveals a cosmogonical story closely related to food: in the beginning this world was One, without a second. In the process of becoming many, this primeval One first emitted heat, then water (as a result of cosmic perspiration), and finally from the rain it emitted food. Important teachings on the essence of food can be found also in *Aitareya, Kauṣītaki,* and *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣads*. *Aitareya Upaniṣad* 1.2.1 brings a cosmogonical story about hunger and thirst, which both affected the micro- and macrocosmic deities (i.e., cosmic realities) in the Upaniṣads, such as the human body and the cosmos. Immediately after they were created/emitted from the Self *(ātman*), they fell into the cosmic waters/ocean. From these waters, food was created for them by this Self:

> Once these deities were created, they fell into this vast ocean here. It afflicted him with hunger and thirst. Those deities then said to him: 'Find us a dwelling in which we can establish ourselves and eat food'. (*Upaniṣads* 1996, 196)

To sum up: within the ancient Upaniṣadic teachings, food is frequently presented as the "the material substratum of all beings" (Geib 1976, 226), which is revealed in the seed from which all living things evolve. *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* describes how

7 Sskt: "*annaṃ brahma […] prāṇo brahma*" (Limaye and Vadekar 1958, 262).

all beings evolve from food, live in it, and revert to it,[8] and in this Upaniṣad the world, analogously to the passage from *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 1.4.6, is divided into two poles: the food (*anna*) and the eater (*attṛ*). Food is thus "pre-existing matter" and "empirical food consisting of beings eating each other", whereby all is "reduced to the *one* metaphysical substance" (ibid.).

Ancient Indian Water Doctrine and Comparison with Thales's Philosophy

The earliest Upaniṣads bear testimony to the beginnings of philosophical thinking comparable to the role of the Ionian philosophers, at least with regard to their philosophy of nature in ancient Greece. Schneider thus speaks of the "morphologically comparable phenomena of two high cultures" (Schneider 1961, 1). The question concerning both cultures is to what extent it is possible in this case to speak of a philosophy of nature. The definition adopted by Boland in her monograph about the wind-breath doctrine (Boland 1997) is centred on the following constituents of natural philosophy: the question of the principle (or the element of being: e.g. water in Thales); an observation method that breaks with the exclusively mythological discourse; the related knowledge; and, ultimately, the (philosophical) explanation of the whole of cosmic and human life (ibid., 8).

A presentation of this kind within ancient Indian philosophy was attempted by Frauwallner in his *History of Indian Philosophy* from 1953. In the framework of Upaniṣadic philosophy, Frauwallner was the first to systematically speak of three doctrines: the water doctrine, breath doctrine, and fire doctrine (Frauwallner 1953, 36–47). The doctrine of water as a lifegiving principle is based on insight gained by ancient philosophers of nature through observation: water in the form of rain nourishes plants, humans are sustained by mothers' milk, and at the time of a person's death, through the moisture carried into the sky by the smoke from the funeral pyre, water returns to its source and comes full circle. Ancient Indians claimed that water flows out of the Moon, which is constantly, as it were, "filing up" and "emptying out" according to its phases. It is an old Vedic belief that the Moon contains *soma*, the beverage bestowing immortality to the gods, and that the heavenly waters raining down on humans, feeding them, also originate in the Moon (ibid., 37–39). Now, Schneider argues that the doctrine about the circulation of water—from its origin in the Moon through rain to the plants and from

8 Sskt.: "*annādvai prajāḥ prajāyante | yāḥ kāśva pṛthivīṃ śritāḥ | atho annenaiva jīvanti | athainadapiyantyanttataī |*" (TU 2.2); "*annāddhyeva khalvimāni bhṛtāni jāyante | annena jātāni jīvanti | annaṃ prayantyabhisaṃviśantīti |*" (TU 3.1.2) (Limaye and Vadekar 1958, 55, 59).

there through the food consumed by man, into the seed from which an embryo develops—is evidence of an already rational philosophical thought that does not require *śrāddha* or faith to be understood (Schneider 1961, 4–5). This doctrine does reveal a clear tendency to search for that material first cause of the incessant emergence and passing away of the things that are in the world.

Do the food and water doctrines have any parallels in the Greek world of thought? Can water, the material cause or *arché* in Thale,[9] also be conceived of as the (material) substratum/substance/essence (*hypokeímenon*) of being? Such an interpretation, as well as the terms "element" (*stoicheîon*) and "substratum" (*hypokeímenon*), would already be in line with the ideas of Aristotle (and here we can note that it would be equally uncertain to apply Greek philosophical terms, of later origin, to Indian philosophers). In a section of *Metaphysics* (983b 6-10), Aristotle suggests an interesting explanation about the role of the principles of being, which is analogous to the passage of *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 2.2:[10] "[…] that of which all things that are consist, and from which they first come to be, and into which they are finally resolved […]" (Barnes 1995, 1556f). But can we say that Thales, too, understood the principles of being in this same way? Guthrie associates the term *arché* (which was also used by Aristotle) with its use in the meaning of "beginning" and "cause", which was already known during the period of the Ionian philosophers and, even before that, by Homer, remarking that the first to use the term *arché* was most probably Anaximander. If we apply this meaning now to water, we can say that "all things *were once* water […], and to the philosopher all things *are still* water, […] in spite of the changes" (Guthrie 1992, 57). Whereas the Vedic philosophers might have chosen water because of its biologically discernible role in the emergence and sustenance of all that is—acknowledging it through, as it were, a proto-rational-experimental analysis as the first principle or cause of being—what led Thales to it appears more difficult to determine. The idea that Thales might have been persuaded by the descriptions of the flooding of the Nile in Egypt and the related annual emergence of life—as Aristotle's report stating that for Thales the Earth floats on water (*On the Heavens,* 294a 28) seems to confirm—can also be found in Middle Eastern mythology (Guthrie 1992, 58–61). Even a rational explanation offers parallels with the Indian search for an explanation on this point, and according to Aristotle's conjecture the moisture-containing seed in Thales could refer to a connection with the origin of all life, and water is

9 Thales of Miletus (*fl.* 585 BCE) may have been a Greek contemporary of Pravāhaṇa Jaivali.

10 Together with the *Aitareya Upaniṣad* and the *Kauṣitaki Upaniṣad*, the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* forms the group of early prose Upaniṣads, which were probably created around the 6th/5th century BCE, while the creation of the two most ancient Upaniṣads—the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and the *Chāndogya*—can be dated as far back as the 7th/6th century BCE (Olivelle 1996, xxxvii).

also associated with the vital heat that disappears at death when the body dries up (*Metaphysics,* 983a 20-28). Water or moisture (*hygrós*) is thus the original matter that might, in the early days of philosophy, have been considered the beginning of all life as "the continuing, hidden constituent of all things" (Guthrie 1992, 94). These doctrines from both pre-Buddhist India and Presocratic Greece indicate a new way of thinking and rationalizing the emergence, existence, and passing of living things, which culminate in the wind-breath and fire doctrines.

Ancient Indian Wind-Breath Doctrine and Comparison with Anaximenes's Philosophy

The former two doctrines bring us to the breath, or the so called wind-breath doctrine, which, as we shall see, opens up interesting comparative possibilities. The special importance of breathing can be traced back to the Vedic Saṃhitās. In the *Ṛksaṃhita*, breath (*prāṇa;* from the root of the verb **an-* in the sense of "to breathe"), which is associated with life, also represents a link with the cosmic wind or god of wind (*vāyu*) (Brereton and Jamison 2020, 94). In one of the major hymns of the *Ṛksaṃhita* (10.90.13), we can identify a link between the cosmic wind (*vāyu*) and the breath of the first cosmic person (*puruṣa*):

> The Moon was born from his mind. From his eye the Sun was born.
>
> From his mouth Indra and Agni, from his breath Vāyu was born.
>
> (*The Rigveda* 2014, 1540[11])

This connection and interdependence of microcosm and macrocosm already reveals one of the most characteristic traits of later Brahmanic and Upaniṣadic thought—the interpretation of reality through an analogy between a description according to the world of gods and according to the world of the self (i.e., *adhidevatam* and *adhyātmam*). Further, the same hymn also contains four of the later vital powers or "breaths" (*prāṇāḥ*, and thus in plural) as they will be then numbered in the earliest Upaniṣads. For example, in the *Aitareya Upaniṣad* 3.2-8 the group of five basic vital functions consists of breathing, sight, hearing, speech, and thinking (they are referred to in the idiosyncratic Vedic plural after the first of them—i.e., the breath). Moreover, in *Ṛksaṃhita* 10.189.2 we can also find the rudiments of a third type of reading of *prāṇa* or breath—namely, a fundamental connection with the process of breathing (this is the first and only example of

11 Sskt.: "*candramā manaso jātaś cakṣoḥ sṛryo ajāyata | mukhād indraś cāgniś ca prāṇād vāyur ajāyata ||*"

inhaling/exhaling, *apāna/prāṇa* that appears in the *Ṛksaṃhita*), which later, as we shall see, manifests in the discussion about the five types of breath, particularly important in yoga and traditional Indian medicine (Zysk 1993, 198ff.). The verses of this Vedic hymn read as follows:

> This dappled cow has stridden here and sat in front of its mother
>
> and its father, as it goes forth toward the Sun.
>
> She moves within the realms of light, breathing in from his
>
> breathing-out.
>
> The buffalo has looked out across heaven.
>
> (*The Rigveda* 2014, 1660).

Crucial to comparative philosophy are passages of the Upaniṣads associating breath with life and the self (*ātman*). The earliest Upaniṣadic testimony of the wind-breath doctrine, originating from the Saṃhitā period, can be traced back to *Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa* 3.1–2 (which corresponds to the passage from *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 4.1–3 in which we encounter the Upaniṣadic philosopher Raikva).[12] In relation to the gods (*adhidevatam*), the *Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa* 3.1.1–13 first describes how the wind is the only complete divinity, as all other divinities (*devatāḥ*), which here could be understood as "natural forces"—these are the Sun, Moon, stars, fire, day, night, cardinal points, Parjanya, waters, herbs, and trees—revert back to it, while the wind is the only complete *sāman*. It is important to highlight that wind holds such divine status due to its constant movement. And in relation to the self (*adhyātmam;* see *Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa* 3.1.14–19), breath is the only *sāman* into which the remaining four of the five vital powers, namely speech, thinking, sight and hearing—which are otherwise active in man together with breath—revert to during sleep. In the conclusion of *Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa* 3.2.1–4 we eventually witness kṣatriya Abhipratārin Kākṣaseni calling *ātman* the one who eats without being eaten (cf. the food doctrine!): this *ātman*—here in the sense of breath—now refers both to gods and humans. Thus the macrocosmic wind is here linked to the breath in man. Since wind stood cosmically above breath already in the *Ṛksaṃhita* (as vertically macrocosm is above the microcosm) and is also the one into which breath reverts at death, this doctrine is called by Boland (1997) the wind-breath doctrine. Related to these two passages is also a somewhat later teaching from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 1.5.21–23 about the competition among the five types of breath

12 Ruben (1947) classifies Raikva among the first generation philosophers of the Upaniṣads (700–670 BCE).

(*prāṇāḥ*)[13] or vital/spiritual powers transferred to the wind and corresponding natural phenomena or divinities. Although the *Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa* text as part of the *Sāmaveda* is primarily still in the service of mythological thinking, it already provides occasional "natural philosophical reflections" (Boland 1997, 39) as well.

The five breaths doctrine defines the next stage in the development of the doctrine of breath, which was in its rudimentary state present already in the Saṃhitās and Brāhmaṇas and started to appear in the Upaniṣads concurrently with the mentioned teachings of breath as vital power; but now we are not talking about the vital and cognitive powers, but rather the five types and processes of breathing or breath within humans. These now include *prāṇa*, *apāna*, *udāna*, *vyāna* and *samāna* (Zysk 1993, 201). In relation to the role of each breath we should mention the treatment by Bodewitz (1986, 344), who proposes the following principal meanings for the mentioned breaths: exhalation (*prāṇa*) and inhalation (*apāna;* also digestive/abdominal breath, downward-moving and governing excretion) as the two most important parts of the breathing process; upward-moving breath (*udāna*; also inhalation), breath between inhalation and exhalation (*vyāna;* air diffused throughout the body), and, finally linking breath (*samāna;* breath between *prāṇa* and *apāna*, which is, in contrast to *vyāna*, congested in the lower part of the body).

Moving now to the Greek parallels of this doctrine, it should be noted that in Greek philosophy prior to Plato no such development of the concept of breath as a life-giving principle that would lead towards a theory of breaths in the body can be observed. Still, Anaximenes provides some interesting parallels to the doctrine. Anaximenes's air (*aér*) as the first principle represents the pinnacle of wind-breath in the monistic philosophy of the Ionians. Guthrie (1992) points out that Anaximenes's choice of air for *arché* is more appropriate than Anaximander's *apeíron.* Anaximenes proceeds from the fundamental characteristic of the air, which subsists through rarefaction and condensing as the substratum of all being, whereas *apeíron* as the Boundless that enters the various things, thus is then in a way

13 *Prāṇa* in the sense of breath is in the plural (*prāṇāḥ*) a generic term denoting human bodily/vital faculties, the number of which ranges between five and twelve. The five "breaths" consist of the following five faculties: the breath (*prāṇā*), the speech (*vāc*), the sight (*cakṣus*), the hearing (*śrotram*), and the mind (*manas*) (see *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad* 1.7; the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* already knows from two to the thirteen prāṇas, as well as three types of breath; cf. Deussen 1915, 296ff.). These faculties can additionally include the senses of smell and taste, the body, the arms, the legs, the genital organs, and discernment (*vijñāna*). This latter, besides breath, represents the most important aspect of the whole vital and cognitive essence of man (cf. Ježić 1999, 76ff.). In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 4.1 the five "breaths" are equalled to *bráhman* and their base is in the heart. Typical of the development of the Upaniṣadic thought is that the breath doctrine gradually gives way to the doctrine of self (*ātman*), which also dwells in the heart.

"no longer the Boundless", and the "differences of kind or quality are for the first time reduced to a common origin in differences of quantity" (Guthrie 1992, 116, 126). An even more important aspect of Anaximenes's philosophy—particularly in comparison with Indian teachings—provides the second reason for choosing air as the *arché*, namely its function as the carrier of life. Even in ancient Greece it is possible to encounter ancient images that connect breath, life, air and soul. Already in Homer man is invested with two forces or vehicles of life—*thymós* and *psyché*. *Thymós* or life force, comes into man out of cosmic energies and governs the emotional and mental processes in him/her. Its action is concentrated in the area of the chest (*phrén*) and heart (*kér, kradíe*), which maintain these activities by constant movement. The principle that expresses man's *thymós,* and thereby their vitality, through *breathing* is *psyche.* With death, the link between the life force and the body is severed, and *thymós* joins again the flow of cosmic energies (Dietz 2000, 71–74). It is thus possible, even in periods preceding Anaximenes, to juxtapose the ancient Indian (already Ṛgvedic) conception of *prāṇa* as vital breath which at death re-enters cosmic wind, with the Greek (Homeric) *thymós* in the sense of a vital force which at death reunites with its cosmic origin.

This brings us to the well-known passage in which Aetius in his work *Peri archon* from the 1st/2nd century AD reports the following from Anaximenes: "As our soul, he says, being air holds us together and controls us, so does wind [*or*, breath] and air enclose the whole world" (Kirk, Raven and Schofield 1999, 158).[14] In this sentence or, better, report about the teachings of Anaximenes, the cosmic *aér* is likened to *pneûma* in man. In comparison to Indian teaching—while the wind-breath doctrine was included in the doctrine of the two "gatherers" (*prāṇa* and *vāyu*) into which all other vital faculties and cosmic phenomena revert—Anaximenes's teaching about the link between the human breath and the cosmic air can be interpreted as a typologically analogous expression of a universally present knowledge about the nature of human life and, more strictly, our soul (in the sense of the five Indian "breaths" or vital powers—as one whole of physical-spiritual faculties—and Anaximenes's teaching, which originates from an ancient Greek connection between breathing and the soul). Boland and Wessel (1993, 106f.), however, point out the asymmetry in terminology: in Anaximenes, *aér* is a joint term for the micro- and macrocosmic reality, while the Indian wind-breath doctrine does not understand the terms *prāṇa* and *vāyu* as synonyms. Further, the Indian doctrine does not speak about the rarefaction/condensing of air. But recalling that in the more ancient layers of the Indian wind-breath doctrine the transfer

14 Gr.: "hoîon he psyché, fesín, he hemetéra aér oûsa synkrateî hemâs, kaì hólon tén kósmon pneûma kaì aér periéchei" (Diels and Kranz 1934, 95 [fr. 13 B 2]). For more about the contextual meaning of this sentence see Alt 1973.

to the macrocosm must have followed reflections about human beings, we should presume the same for Anaximenes. Or, as Barnes states:

> We men contain an airy soul; and that air keeps us together, i.e., keeps us alive; the universe as a whole contains air: hence it is air that keeps the universe together, i.e., supplies its underlying stuff. (Barnes 1996, 55)

Although a "fully developed and clear-cut use of the inference from the known microcosm, man, to the unknown macrocosm, the world as a whole […]" (Kirk, Raven and Schofield 1999, 161) likely did not occur in Greece before the 5th century BCE, we may still allow the possibility that the link, in one form or another, was drawn by Anaximenes, which is why its parallelism with the Indian doctrine is also comparatively interesting.

Ancient Indian Fire Doctrine and Comparison with Heraclitus

For Frauwallner, the fire doctrine is the most important of the three doctrines he examines (water, air and fire; see Frauwallner 1953, 45–49). It is based on the ancient observations of bodily warmth, in which the first Indian philosophers recognized the fire that dwells in all beings (*agni vaiśvānara*). This *divinity*, which can already be found in the *Ṛksaṃhita*, and whose very name bespeaks its role—of a fire belonging to all humanity—represents both the celestial and terrestrial fire (Macdonell 1995, 99). However, the fire dwelling in man, and of which the Upaniṣads speak (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 5.9 and *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 3.13.7 respectively), differs from its personified divine and mythological image as encountered in earlier texts. Its significance for the early Indian philosophy of nature lies in that its existence—and thereby the role of the physical substratum in the human body—can be demonstrated empirically as well: we can *hear* the fire roar/hum when we cover our ears, and its power is revealed in that it digests the food we have consumed, thus giving us warmth, which can be *felt* by touching our skin (Frauwallner 1953, 45). The doctrine of fire is otherwise associated with the notions of connectedness between the micro- and macrocosm, which can be found already in the wind-breath doctrine. If water in the water doctrine comes from the Moon, then fire originates in the Sun, which at the same time represents the heavenly door through which this world receives heavenly light (*jyotiṣ*). The light that shines in the Sun is the same light that dwells in the human being (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 3.13.7). The Sun is thus connected through its rays with the man into whom it flows and in whom the inner fire, by analogy, concentrates in the heart, from where it is then conveyed to the various parts of the body by the blood vessels. This circle (cf. the cycle of water and micro-macrocosmic analogies in the wind-breath doctrine) closes again at death, when the fire from man returns to his/her heavenly abode (Frauwallner 1953, 46). Already in the *Ṛksaṃhita* Agni is the terrestrial fire that can consume everything else (Macdonell 1995, 89). The doctrine of the fire residing in man is also related to the notion of an eater who digests the food consumed by man and distributes the energy extracted from it throughout the body (Geib 1976, 229). Another important parallel between the wind-breath and fire doctrines can also be found in the sense of the Upaniṣadic doctrine of "gatherers" (*saṃvargaḥ*)—for the roles of breath and wind in the cosmos have their counterpart roles in the fire in the body, on the one side, and the Sun in the cosmos, on the other (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 4.3.4).[15]

Finally, can the Indian doctrine of fire be compared to the role of fire in Heraclitus? In Heraclitus, fire is the original archetypal and eternal form of matter (cf. fr. B 30), which is the *origin* of thoughts (*lógoi*) about change and emergence of everything from antitheses (fire, sea/water and earth, and flame/lightning/*prestér*). The quantity of fire in this continual exchange or flow of change always remains *the same*: fire is, through this constant movement (starting and dying down according to *métron and lógos*), perpetually turning into non-fire, sea through evaporation into non-sea, earth through spillovers into non-earth. This movement, this constancy of change, testifies to a different substratum of thought than that encountered in Anaximenes, for change does not occur through some physical transformation (like condensing and rarefaction) of fire: "All things are an equal exchange for fire and fire for all things, as goods are for gold and gold for goods" (Kirk, Raven and Schofield 1999, 198). These words are evidence that Heraclitus deliberately did not choose an analogy to, say, Anaximenes's doctrine; instead, he emphasized with a merchant-like (originally non-philosophical and non-physical) comparison the meaning of the "parity of value: a certain quantity of gold will buy a certain quantity of goods" (Guthrie 1992, 461). Thus, rather than being the substratum or, as it were, a substance of all things, fire instead performs a special role from the viewpoint of passing into opposites; i.e., a process taking place in the world.

Regarding the question of comparative possibilities, West relies on an excerpt from *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 4.3. in which the doctrine of "gatherers" (*saṃvargaḥ*) is described, specifically in the context of the wind-breath doctrine, which he himself associates with the exchange of elements in Heraclitus (fr. B 31), where, within the framework of the Upaniṣadic doctrine, fire is thus "consumed" by a cosmological "gatherer" or wind (West 1971, 173f.). Although we may speak of two formally

15 "These, then, are the two gatherers—the wind among the deities and the breath among the vital functions (*prāṇa*)" (*Upaniṣads* 1996, 129).

analogous methods, in the context of this doctrine fire does not play the same role as in Heraclitus. Therefore, it would appear more appropriate to compare fire in the perspective of its role as carrier of life: fire—which, as we have seen, is for Heraclitus an essential state of the soul—also "plays some part in the great cycle of natural change" (Kirk, Raven and Schofield 1999, 204). If we add that the dry (and therefore warm; i.e., dried as opposed to moist or wet) soul in Heraclitus is also associated with the heat of the Sun as the primary source of life (in fr. B 67a, the soul runs through the body like a spider across its web, while vital heat proceeding from the Sun gives life to all things that live) it is possible to draw a comparison with Indian thought or the doctrine of fire (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 3.13.7), where the light or heat connect the Sun and the human being, or the macrocosm and microcosm. Another interesting parallel between the Indian thought and that of Heraclitus is related to the role of breathing: in fr. A 16 it is conveyed through the words of Sextus Empiricus that in sleep "breathing is the only point of attachment to be preserved" (Kirk, Raven and Schofield 1999, 205). This introduces an interesting analogy with the doctrine of breath in the context of the five "breaths" or vital powers (*prāṇāḥ)*, where, as we already know, *prāṇa* in the narrower sense is the only one among the vital/spiritual powers to remain present even during sleep (*Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa* 3.1.14–19). This parallel demonstrates how significant the phenomenon of breath/ing and its constant active presence in the process of life is for the early Greek and Indian philosophies, despite its different role in both.

Conclusion

In his work about the comparative history of philosophy, Scharfstein sets Heraclitus within the social and philosophical frame of the beginnings of metaphysical philosophy—together with the Upaniṣadic thinkers Uddālaka Āruṇi and Yājñavalkya on one side, and Parmenides on the other (Scharfstein 1998). But we have seen that it may be more appropriate to place Heraclitus in the context of the beginnings of Indian and Greek philosophy of nature and the doctrines of the first (material) principles. For intercultural philosophy the vital-cosmic breath, or air, appears to be one of the crucial phenomena for understanding the position of the human being in the world. Indian pre-Buddhist and Greek Presocratic philosophies throw a comparative and intercultural light on how the very idea of human embeddedness in the macrocosm has been present in the consciousness and early philosophical observation and analyses of these traditions from the very beginning: this early thought starts with the human *body*, making the latter the first phenomenon and object of understanding of an individual's involvement in and engagement with the surrounding world.

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ASIAN STUDIES IN SLOVENIA

Kitajska filozofija življenja, relacijska etika in pandemija COVID-19

*Jana S. ROŠKER**

Izvleček

Članek raziskuje odnos med različnimi modeli etike in njihov možni vpliv na strategije reševanja krize. Ker je COVID-19 sprožil krizo globalnih razsežnosti, je treba rešitve iskati na globalni ravni in ne v ozki omejenosti posameznih nacionalnih držav. V tem kontekstu je pomemben premislek o vednosti in teoretskih modelih etike različnih kultur. Članek s perspektive tradicionalnih kitajskih filozofij, zlasti konfucijanske, oriše nekatera teoretska izhodišča za alternativne modele družbene etike. Med drugim je ta perspektiva pomembna zato, ker so na siniških območjih pandemijo doslej obvladali veliko hitreje in učinkoviteje kot v drugih regijah sveta. Članek najprej predstavi kitajsko filozofijo življenja in osvetli njen sedanji pomen; nato predstavi tradicionalne kitajske modele relacijskih in neesencialističnih konceptov jaza ter prouči njihov vpliv na konfucijanske modele družbene etike. Na osnovi tega osvetli nekatere nove načine razumevanja medosebnih in medkulturnih interakcij, ki bi nam lahko pomagale pri razvoju novih strategij soočanja s sedanjo in prihodnjimi pandemijami.

Ključne besede: COVID-19, pandemija, kitajska etika, konfucijanska etika, relacijski jaz, etika vlog, relacionalizem

Chinese Philosophy of Life, Relational Ethics and the COVID-19 Pandemic

Abstract

This paper investigates the relation between different models of ethics and their impact upon crises solution strategies. Because COVID-19 is a global-scale crisis, it has to be solved on the global level. In this framework, it is important to consider knowledge and ethical theories from different cultures. The paper outlines some theoretical groundworks for alternative models of social ethics from the perspective of traditional Chinese, particularly Confucian, philosophies. Among other issues, this perspective is meaningful because in the Sinitic areas the pandemic has so far been brought under control much quicker and more effectively than in other regions of the world. First, the paper introduces the Chinese philosophy of life and highlights its current relevance; then, it presents traditional Chinese models of relational and anti-essentialist concepts of the self and investigates

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their impact to the Confucian models of social ethics. On this basis, it illuminates some new ways of understanding interpersonal and intercultural interactions that might help us develop new strategies against current and future pandemics.

Keywords: COVID-19, pandemic, Chinese ethics, Confucian ethics, relational self, role ethics, relationalism

Uvod

V času vsake krize in tranzicije imata filozofija in zlasti filozofska etika ključno vlogo – v tem pogledu pandemija COVID-19 zagotovo ni izjema. V taki krizi postane etično odločanje ključno, kajti naravoslovna znanost nam sama ne more povedati, katere vrednote naj postavimo v ospredje. V tem kontekstu so pomembne odločitve brez dvoma etične in ne znanstvene. Vprašanja o tem, kako naj delujemo v takšnih kritičnih časih, so izjemnega pomena, zato moramo – morda bolj kot kdaj koli – celovito artikulirati, razpravljati in raziskovati etične vloge nas samih in drugih.

Kot vsi vemo, ljudi zaradi lastnega interesa običajno usmerjajo najbližji cilji. Skrb za tveganje okužbe skupnosti se jim zdi abstraktna in manj pomembna kot ohranitev individualnih svoboščin. Če hočemo razviti drugačna načela ter privzeti vrednote sodelovanja in solidarnosti, moramo svoje mišljenje preoblikovati in preobraziti tako, da bo izhajalo iz skupnostne in družbene perspektive, ne iz sebičnosti. Pandemija COVID-19 je tako pokazala, da moramo udejanjati svoje moralne teorije, če hočemo spremeniti svoja individualna ravnanja.

Trenutno se je velik del naših življenj ustavil, naše skupne odgovornosti pa terjajo, da ravnamo na nelagodne in celo boleče načine. Čeprav ne vemo, kdaj bo vsega tega konec ali kakšna bo »nova normalnost« po pandemiji, lahko filozofija spremeni naše odzive na situacijo, v katero smo ujeti. Pokaže nam lahko, kako izkoristiti to krizo kot priložnost za kultivacijo našega občutka povezanosti in vzajemne pomoči. Poleg tega lahko filozofija v teh negotovih časih v nas vzgaja zavest o naši individualni moralnosti in moralni odgovornosti. V takih razmerah se lahko vednost in mišljenje drugih kultur in časov zagotovo izkažeta za koristna.

Ker se spoprijemamo z globalno širitvijo korona virusa SARS-CoV-2, ki je sprožil pandemijo COVID-19, moramo razumeti pomen medkulturnega sodelovanja. Medkulturni dialog mora imeti pomembno vlogo pri pripravi novega transkulturnega dogovora, s katerim bi morda lahko oblikovali nove modele družbenega sodelovanja in povezovanja ne samo znotraj posameznih družb in kultur, temveč tudi onkraj nacionalnih, etničnih in civilizacijskih meja (Mansouri 2020, 4). Zato ni naključje, da je med globalno pandemijo COVID-19 potreba po takem medkulturnem dialogu še izrazitejša, saj nazorno kaže, da živimo v izjemno medsebojno povezanem svetu. Popolno prepoznavanje velikega pomena naše medsebojne povezanosti in skupnih problemov nam lahko pomaga pri iskanju izhoda iz globalne krize. Če pa v nasprotju s tem naše tesne medsebojne povezanosti ne bomo upoštevali, bi to lahko nevarnosti krize celo dodatno povečalo, namesto da bi jih odpravilo.

Povezovanje vednosti in učenosti različnih filozofskih tradicij lahko pripomore k snovanju produktivnega prepoznavanja človeštva kot celote. Še več, prav tako nam lahko pomaga izdelati nove strategije družbenega sodelovanja. Zato bom poskušala z medkulturne perspektive orisati nekatere osnovne teoretske temelje za mogoče alternativne modele družbene etike. Kot strokovnjakinja za kitajsko filozofijo se bom seveda osredotočila na modele iz kitajske idejne tradicije in nadejam se, da bom identificirala nekaj možnih okvirov za nove oblike solidarnosti in sodelovanja, ki so ključne za reševanje takih kriz. Ta naloga se mi zdi pomembna zlasti zato, ker so v pretežnem delu tako imenovane siniške regije – tj. regije pod zgodovinsko močnim vplivom kitajske, zlasti klasične konfucijanske etike – pandemijo doslej veliko hitreje in učinkoviteje obvladali kot v drugih delih sveta. Številni avtorji in avtorice so razloge za visoko stopnjo sodelovanja, ki je potrebno v teh procesih, pripisali tradicionalni siniški pokornosti in kolektivizmu (Escobar 2020, 3) ter jih povezali z avtokratskimi strukturami družb. Oba fenomena naj bi pripadala skupni, na konfucijanstvu osnovani politično-ideološki dediščini vzhodnoazijskih družb (glej npr. Han 2020, 4; Oviedo 2020, 4; Escobar 2020, 2 itd.). Takšni pogledi so površni in posplošeni, sploh če spomnimo na to, da so bili ukrepi za zajezitev pandemije najuspešnejši v tistih vzhodnoazijskih družbah, ki niso avtokratske, temveč progresivne in demokratične. Da bi bolje razumeli to vprašanje, bom v zadnjem delu članka predstavila tudi drugačne kulturno pogojene modele odnosa med posameznikom in družbo. V tem kontekstu so izjemno pomembni tudi medkulturni dialogi na področju etike in politične filozofije, saj moramo danes vedeti, kaj je najpomembnejše: dosledno upoštevanje individualnih svoboščin in pravic ali čim večje zmanjšanje števila nepotrebnih smrti.

Toda preden se spustim v te – četudi pomembne – detajle, bom uvodoma odprla splošnejšo razpravo in predstavila kitajsko filozofijo življenja ter osvetlila njen sedanji pomen; v naslednjem razdelku bom kritično predstavila klasične kitajske modele relacijskega jaza in njegovo vgrajenost v tradicionalno konfucijansko etiko vlog. V nadaljevanju bom obravnavala nekatere ključne razlike med različnimi modeli sodelovanja, kot so kolektivizem, individuacija in relacionalizem. Ti modeli lahko pripomorejo k boljšemu razumevanju različnih oblik strukturiranja odnosa med individualnim in skupnostjo ali družbo. Na tej osnovi bom povezala tipične značilnosti tradicionalne kitajske filozofije življenja in konfucijanske etike, s čimer bom pojasnila nekatere nove načine razumevanja medosebnih in medkulturnih interakcij, ki utegnejo pripomoči k razvoju novih strategij proti sedanji in morebitnim prihodnjim pandemijam.

Kitajska filozofija življenja

Kitajske filozofije življenja ne smemo zamenjati s filozofskim gibanjem, ki se je konec 19. in na začetku 20. stoletja pojavilo v Nemčiji pod imenom *Lebensphilosophie*,[1] čeprav je obema diskurzoma skupna kritika povsem materialističnega in mehanicističnega obravnavanja človekove eksistence in mišljenja. Tudi temeljni epistemologiji obeh filozofskih diskurzov izhajata iz podobnih miselnih premis, ker obe koreninita v hipotezi, da je razumevanje življenja mogoče doseči edinole v teku samega življenja ter znotraj njega samega.

Te epistemološke osnove so v evropski filozofiji življenja večinoma osnovane na temelju idej Schopenhauerja, Kierkegaarda in Nietzscheja, medtem ko v kitajskem filozofskem vitalizmu te osnove zasledimo že v najstarejših pisnih virih kitajske tradicije. Najprej poglejmo načelo ustvarjalne ustvarjalnosti življenja (*shengsheng* 生生),[2] ki spada med temeljne paradigme konfucijanskih diskurzov že od njihovega začetka, tj. od širjenja *Knjige premen* (*Zhou Yi* 周易). Po mojem mnenju je ta vitalna ustvarjalnost in pomembnost človekovega življenja, ki je – kot bomo videli v nadaljevanju – naznačena v njej, ključnega pomena za nastanek medčloveške empatije, ki se pozneje manifestira v osrednji konfucijanski vrlini človečnosti (*ren* 仁). Medčloveška empatija, občutek, da drugi ljudje in družba kot celota štejejo in so pomembni kot mi sami, je ključna v vsaki krizi, zlasti v sedanji pandemiji, ki ogroža nešteta življenja po vsem svetu. Zato pobližje poglejmo osnovo takega pogleda na pomen človeškega življenja.

V novejšem času je filozofsko paradigmo kustvarjalne ustvarjalnosti teoretsko nadgradil in razvil sodobni kitajski filozof Fang Dongmei (1899–1977),[3] ki je

1 Gibanje je poznano tudi kot nemška vitalistična filozofija.

2 V *Knjigi premen* načelo vitalne kreativne kreativnosti velja za vir spremembe, ki je osnovna paradigma vsakega življenja: »Kreativna kreativnost življenja je to, kar imenujemo Sprememba (生生之謂易« (Zhou yi s. d., Xi ci I, 5).

3 Po mnenju njegovega študenta Cheng Chung-yinga je Fang Dongmei, ki je bil izobražen v zahodni in kitajski filozofiji, pripadal – skupaj s Feng Youlanom in Jin Yuelinom – področju tako imenovane sintezne filozofije znotraj tako imenovane moderne nove konfucijanske (現代新儒家) idejne struje (Sernelj 2020, 163).

kitajsko filozofijo primarno razumel kot diskurz, usmerjen na pomen takih vsebin, kot so človeško življenje (*shengming* 生命), vzajemna ljubezen (*ren'ai* 仁爱), transformacijska in generativna energija (*huayu* 化育), vrnitev k prvotni harmoniji, ciljno usmerjena harmonizacija (*zhonghe* 中和), analogni pristop k razumevanju celotne kategorije s pomočjo enega primera itd. (Wang 2020, 191).

Fang Dongmei je konfucijanske, daoistične, budistične in zahodne filozofske tradicije integriral in združil v svojo filozofsko teorijo (Sernelj 2020, 165). Izhajajoč iz *Knjige premen* je filozofijo definiral kot proučevanje sinteze čustvenega in racionalnega, ki nastane iz najvišjega pola (*Taiji* 太極) in ustvari človeško življenje (ibid.). Zanj se čustveno in racionalno vzajemno določata in sta medsebojno odvisna.

V središču Fangove filozofije je koncept življenja ali živeti (*sheng* 生), ki, kot rečeno, izhaja iz filozofije *Zhou yi* (*Knjige premen*).[4] Po Fangu so vse šole tradicionalne kitajske misli nastale iz kozmologije, ki jo določa vseprevladujoči instinkt za življenje in preživetje, vitalni impulz, ki nenehno ustvarja in poustvarja vse, kar obstaja. Za Fanga je bil kozmos »živo okolje«[5] in je bil kot tak prežet s »kroženjem racionalnih načel in občutij«.[6] Medtem ko strukturna koherentnost vzorcev (*li* 理) eksistence ostaja temeljna, so občutki (*qing* 情) prvenstven vir življenja:[7] »Življenje je svet občutkov, njegova esenca pa je nenehna ustvarjalna želja in impulz«[8] (Fang 1936, 25). Zato je za Fanga življenje »gibka, raztegljiva moč«[9] (Fang 1936, 163).

Univerzum je živa entiteta, ki je ne moremo zreducirati na golo inertno fizično materijo. Na podlagi teh premis je Fang dualizmu materije in ideje dodal še tretjo kategorijo, namreč življenje: »Vidimo lahko, da je življenje dodatni, prvotni fenomen; ne moremo ga obravnavati enako kot materijo. Njegov sistem temelji na organski celoti«[10] (ibid., 179).

Ta živi univerzum je poln energije in vse v njem je strukturno povezano s procesom življenja, ki ga v celoti prežema. Tudi človeška misel korenini v tej slikoviti,

4 Tukaj lahko odkrijemo enega od številnih vplivov njegovega najljubšega filozofa Alfreda Northa Whiteheada (1861–1947), ki je študentom in znanstvenikom svetoval, naj presežejo slonokoščeno metodo učenja iz knjig in stopijo na sveži zrak, se predajo klasičnim umetniškim delom in drugim sadežem življenja ter »premišljujejo o pomembnejših vprašanjih samih po sebi, namesto da se v učilnicah sklanjajo nad mizami, zakopani v učbenike in so ves dan sami« (Wang 2020, 184).

5 生命的环境

6 情理团

7 生命的原态

8 生命是有情之天下, 其实质为不断的, 创进的欲望与冲动

9 一种伸张的权力

10 从这种比较里，我们可以看出生命显是新的现象，不能与物质等视齐观了，生命的现象系以机体的全部为大本营。

občutljivi in ustvarjalni paleti življenja samega; ni produkt gole racionalnosti: »Življenje je izvir misli in misli so simboli ali znaki življenja«[11] (ibid., 164). Potemtakem je celo znanost simbol videnja življenja, kajti njen pomen je v »razvijanju človeške želje po življenju«[12] (ibid., 160). Na ta način je Fang »dopolnil proces ontologizacije življenja«[13] (Fang in Li 1995, 892). V svoji filozofiji je »hotel s 'ustvarjalno močjo nenehne produkcije in reprodukcije življenja' združiti 'objektivni svet's 'subjektivnim duhom človeštva'«[14] (ibid., 904).

Življenje je temeljna gonilna sila univerzuma. Zato ga Fang imenuje prvotna (Fang 1982, 149) ali ultimativna substanca[15] (ibid. 1984, 28) univerzuma. Vendar pa poudari, da čeprav je ta ultimativna substanca transcendentna (*chaoyue* 超越), pa nikakor ni absolutna (*chaojue* 超绝) (ibid., 20). Fang Dongmeijeva ontologija tako povsem jasno pripada holističnemu področju, tako da so jo moderni konfucijanci imenovali »imanentna transcendenca«.[16] Po mojem mnenju bi lahko ta pogled imenovali tudi »ontologija življenja«.[17]

V teoriji biti Fang meni, da je narava biti večplastna. Njena raznolična vseprežemajoča enotnost vsebuje biološke, fizične, psihološke, religiozne, estetske, moralne in neumljive dejavnike. Vse to je postavljeno v strukturni red, ki sega od temeljne fizične ravni in se postopoma dviguje do nerazložljivega. Nato se ponovno spušča od nerazložljivega do fizične ravni. Po Fang Dongmeiju lahko tudi ljudje napredujejo od temeljne do višje ravni. Na najvišjih ravneh lahko svoje kreativne moči pretakajo nazaj k tistim na nižji ravni in jih tako utrjujejo (Sernelj 2020, 251). To gibanje od padajočega do dvigajočega predstavlja dva kozmična procesa, ki drug drugega nenehno spodbujata in navdihujeta (Shen 2003, 251).

Tako kot večina njegovih sopotnikov – modernih konfucijancev – je tudi Fang glede svoje teorije človeškosti (*renxing* 人性) prepričan, da vsebuje notranjo dinamiko, ki je inherentno dobra; gre za naravni razvoj, ki teži k izpopolnitvi dobrega. Človeškost se razvija skladno s strukturnim redom bivanja (ibid.). Fangova organistična filozofija in njegova teorija celovite harmonije pomenita ontologijo dinamičnih odnosov. Njegova afirmacija ustvarjalnosti kot ultimativne realnosti sama po sebi kaže na izmenjave med ljudmi in naravo (Sernelj 2020, 166).

11 生命是思想的根生, 思想是生命的符号

12 科学的价值就在发舒人类的生命欲

13 走完了将生命本体化的思想历程

14 方)企求的是 "客观世界" 与 "主体的人类精神" 贯通, 而作为两者贯通的连续点或曰相关点即 "生命生生不息的创造力

15 生命为原体

16 内在超越

17 生命本体论

> V svoji ontologiji življenja Fang Dongmei pravi, da čeprav obstaja objektivni (materialni) svet, ki tvori njegov dejanski temelj, sta dinamika in ustvarjalni obstoj življenja s svojim inherentnim in konsistentnim vrednotnim sistemom, ki poudarja pomen življenja, sama po sebi usmerjena k raztapljanju golega fizičnega sveta. V tem kontekstu je pomembno poudariti, da po Fangu človekova eksistenca ni golo preživetje, temveč predpostavlja iskanje pomena in smisla. (ibid.)

V tradicionalnem konfucijanstvu je bila ta ontologija življenja nepretrgane ustvarjalne ustvarjalnosti povezana z univerzalnim človeškim občutkom za vzajemno empatijo, ki se manifestira v konceptu človečnosti (*ren* 仁). To ontološko dimenzijo človečnosti, ki je usidrana v kozmičnem načelu ustvarjalne ustvarjalnosti, je orisal že Zhu Xi v svoji neokonfucijanski teoriji. V sodobnem času je bil Chen Lai prvi, ki je podrobno razdelal in temeljito analiziral te temelje neokonfucijanstva, s čimer jih je nadgradil in osnoval koherenten model vsezajemajoče ontologije *ren*:

> Teorija človečnosti je bila povezana s teorijo kozmične ustvarjalnosti življenja, kar je bila posledica preobrata v prvotnem načinu mišljenja. Če je namreč človečnost univerzalna, če je nekaj, kar ni zamejeno s človeškim svetom, kako se potemtakem manifestira? Že od samega začetka so konfucijanci menili, da se človečnost v univerzumu manifestira v ustrvarjalni ustvarjalnosti življenja. Kozmična ustvarjalna ustvarjalnost je pravzaprav človečnost, medtem ko je kozmična človečnost začetek in izvor človečnosti v svetu ljudi. Z drugimi besedami, to je substanca. (Chen 2014, 44)[18]

Človečnost v pomenu medčloveške empatije tako dobi zelo elementarni značaj. Življenje samo po sebi je tisto, kar ljudi obdari s pomenom. Samo dejstvo, da smo živi, nas dela ljudi in nam omogoča inherentno povezanost z našo človečnostjo.

Relacionalizem[19] in etika vlog[20]

Tudi sodobni kitajski filozof Li Zehou gradi iz podobne paradigme. Prva predpostavka njegove filozofije je podmena, da »so človeška bitja živa«.[21] Podobno kot

18 仁学之所以要与宇宙论的生生论联结在一起，其思路在原初应是反推的结果，即如果仁道是普遍的，是不限于人世的，那么其在宇宙的表现为何？儒家很早就认为，仁在宇宙的体现便是 生生，生生便是宇宙之仁，宇宙之仁是人世之仁的根源和本源，换言之就是本体。

19 关系主义

20 角色伦理

21 人活着

Fang trdi, da je tako visoko vrednotenje življenja kot takega globoko ukoreninjeno v kitajski kulturi in filozofiji. V tem primeru je njegova bistvena trditev, da pomen človeškega življenja ne izvira iz smrti (ali tistega, kar se zgodi po njej – tako kot za krščanstvo in zato za večino zahodnega prebivalstva), temveč iz življenja samega. Toda Li se tudi vpraša: »Zakaj (ali zaradi katerega razloga) človeška bitja živijo?«[22]

Ta druga dimenzija se nanaša na odnos med posameznikom, ki je označen kot »mali jaz« (小我), in družbo ali skupnostjo, v kateri ljudje vidijo širšo predstavo samih sebe, in to je tako imenovani »veliki jaz« (大我). Li Zehou prav tako pravi, da je ključna razlika med zahodno in tradicionalno kitajsko etiko v njunem drugačnem razumevanju odnosa med posameznikom in družbo. Li kritično razišče zahodne sisteme etike in moralne filozofije, ki izhajajo iz pojma individualizma.

Medtem ko je zahodna kultura osnovana na ideji svobodnega in abstraktnega posameznika, je kitajski družbeni red osnovan na mreži odnosov, zato bi ga lahko označili za »relacijsko vrlinsko etiko«[23] (Li in Liu 2014, 209). Ta osnovna distinkcija povzroča velike razlike v etičnem mišljenju, ki prevladujejo v obeh kulturno-filozofskih diskurzih, in se ne nanašajo samo na vsakokratne poglede na odnos med posameznikom in družbo, temveč tudi na odnos med razumom in čustvom.

Li poudarja, da so bile tradicionalne kitajske družbe organizirane kot mreže odnosov, ki so skupaj povezovale posameznike. Ti niso bili konstituirani kot izolirane in neodvisne entitete, temveč kot tako imenovani relacijski jazi, kar pomeni, da so bili ljudje esencialno medsebojno povezani in da so njihove identitete v največji meri določali njihovi socialni odnosi. Lijeva razlaga takšnega koncepta človeškega jaza, ki je zmeraj umeščen v določene konkretne situacije in družbene okvire, je povezana s kitajskimi, zlasti konfucijanskimi tradicijami, v katerih je pojmovanje osebe osredotočeno na odnose. To prav tako pomeni, da lahko prizadevanja, neuspehe ali dosežke vsake osebe razumemo samo z upoštevanjem njihovih vplivov na medčloveške odnose (Lai 2018, 64). »Konfucijanstvo tako pomeni moralno interpretacijo odnosov kot temeljnih gradnikov človeškega življenja in morale« (D'Ambrosio 2016, 720). Zato ljudje prav v taki relacionalnosti dosežejo in doživljajo pomen, ki ga imajo kot moralne človeške osebe, vključno s svojimi vrlinami in odnosom do življenja (Li 2016a, 1096).

Morala je torej ukoreninjena v harmonični medsebojni vpliv med različnimi ljudmi, ki imajo raznolike družbene vloge. Li uporabi pojem »relacionalizem« ali (v njegovem prevodu) »*guanxiism*«,[24] s katerim označi tiste posebnosti konfucijanske eti-

22 人为什么活?

23 关系主义的美德伦理

24 关系主义

ke, ki moralnost gradijo na osnovi družbenih odnosov in ne individualizma. Po Li Zehouju je takšno razumevanje značilen rezultat kitajskega pogleda enega sveta.[25]

> Zaradi konfucijanskega pogleda enega sveta so ljudje še bolj negovali medosebne odnose in človeška čustva. Obžalovali so nestalno naravo življenja in smrti. Iskali so pomen svojega bivanja in ga našli sredi svojega sedanjega življenja med drugimi ljudmi. Tako so našli nešteto neskončnosti znotraj končnega in odkrili, da je osvoboditev mogoče doseči na tem svetu. (Li 2016a, 11)[26]

Klasični konfucijanci so definirali glavno strukturo družbenih mrež ljudi, ki jo sestavlja pet osnovnih odnosov (*wu lun* 五倫). Prvi opis (ali definicijo) moralnih vsebin teh odnosov lahko najdemo v *Mengziju*:

> Med očeti in sinovi mora vladati ljubezen, med vladarji in podložnikom pravičnost, med možmi in ženami razlika; starec mora imeti prednost pred mladim in med prijatelji mora obstajati zaupanje. (*Mengzi* s. d., Teng Wen gong I: 4)[27]

Tak model ali koncept medosebnih odnosov, tovrstna etična ureditev in vzajemna odgovornost je racionalizirana, vključuje pa tudi čustva (Li Zehou 2016a, 1097). Ti osnovni odnosi ohlapno določajo, kako naj potekajo medosebne interakcije, saj ima vsaka predpisane specifične dolžnosti in vzorce obnašanja. Ta model lahko razumemo kot strnitev elementarnih odnosov med ljudmi v vsaki civilni družbi. Sestavljajo ga družinski, politični in prijateljski odnosi. Obenem predstavlja konfucijansko poudarjanje družine, saj trije od petih osnovnih odnosov izhajajo iz nje. Po Liju je to temelj zgoraj omenjenega relacionalizma. Tak družbeni sistem dopušča, da medosebne odnose prežemajo čustva – z iskrenim čustvom ljubezni med starši in otrokom kot izvorom, substanco in temeljem (Jia 2018, 156). Tako ni naključje, da je v tradicionalni Kitajski družine z državo povezoval ideal dobrega državljana; v konfucijanski etiki mora biti dober državljan v prvi vrsti dober član družine. Ključna ideja tovrstnega pogleda je, da je urejanje odnosov v lastni družini tisto, kar vodi v dobro urejeno državo (Rošker 2020, 105).

Še več, kot smo videli v zgornjem citatu, konfucijanski sistem petih osnovnih odnosov ni samo opis naših družbenih odnosov, temveč tudi cela vrsta predpisanih norm,

25 S tem pojmom (v kitajščini 一个世界观) Li Zehou označi holistično naravo kitajskega in konfucijanskega pogleda na svet.

26 由于儒家的"一个世界" 观，人们便重视人际关系，人世情感，感伤于生死无常，人生若寄，把生的意义寄托和归宿在人间，"于有限中寓无限"，"即入世而求超脱".

27 父子有親，君臣有義，夫婦有別，長幼有序，朋友有信.

ki urejajo naše družbene interakcije, kajti vsak odnos uravnava vrlina (Wang 2016, 194). V teh moralnih interakcijah ima ključno vlogo spoštljiva ljubezen do staršev ali ugled družine (*xiao* 孝).[28] Ta vrlina, ki je konstitutivni element ljubezni otroka do staršev, v konfucijanski etiki največkrat velja za eno najpomembnejših.[29] V konkretnih kontekstih to največkrat pomeni izpolnjevanje otrokovih dolžnosti do staršev.[30] Poleg ostalega je spoštljiva ljubezen do staršev pomembna zato, ker je odnos med starši in otrokom prvo družbeno okolje, v katerem se otrok nauči upoštevanja in razumevanja normativnosti v odnosih (Lai 2018, 121). Zato se vrlina kultivira najprej in predvsem v družini ter znotraj omejitev, ki jih postavljajo dolžnosti in odgovornosti, ki tvorijo družinske odnose. Zaradi tega ima v konfucijanski moralni epistemologiji družinska ljubezen bistveno prednost pred ljubeznijo do drugih zunaj družine (ali drugače, prednost bližine pred distanco). V družini se posameznik najprej in predvsem nauči, kako živeti vrline (Fan 2010, xii). Naravna naklonjenost med starši in otroki ustvari človeško dispozicijo ljubezni. Ljubezen med starši in otrokom tvori osnovo temeljne človeške vrline človečnosti (*ren*). Treba jo je razviti in kultivirati, da bi zgradili dobro družbo (Fan 2010, 16).

Henry Rosemont in Roger Ames v knjigi *Confucian Role Ethics: A Moral Vision for the 21st Century* prav tako poudarita, da je spoštovanje v družini (*xiao*) izvor uspešnega družbenega vedenja in vir človečnosti ali izpolnjevanja načel (*ren*). Model, ki ga je Li Zehou imenoval »relacionalizem«, sta Rosemont in Ames označila kot etiko vlog s poudarkom, da pomeni mrežo družbenih vlog, ki izvirajo iz vlog družinskih članov. V takšnih vlogah so življenja ljudi vtkana v pomembne kontekste. Poleg tega je ta mreža dinamična in večplastna, kajti nihče ne prevzame samo ene vloge in vsakdo jih ima več. Denimo: sem mama, vendar tudi hčerka; sem učiteljica, a tudi raziskovalka in zato proučevalka del drugih ljudi; prav tako sem žena, državljanka, voznica, potrošnica, producentka, pevka itd.

Zato je konfucijansko pojmovanje osebe sestavljeno iz dinamične raznoličnosti zmeraj specifičnih odnosov, ki jih Rosemont in Ames opišeta takole:

28 Podobno kot številni drugi vidiki klasične konfucijanske etike ima spoštljiva ljubezen do staršev velik potencial za ponovno ovrednotenje in rekonstrukcijo nekaterih modernih institucij in idej. Erin Cline (2013, 232) denimo ugotavlja, da lahko močan konfucijanski poudarek na odnosu starši – otroci zelo pripomore k izboljšanju, okrepitvi in nadaljnjemu razvoju sodobnih izobraževalnih programov.

29 Paul D'Ambrosio (2016, 727) zapiše, da »je spoštljiva ljubezen do staršev izjemno pomembna vrlina zato, ker je osnovana na čustvih, ki so naravna za vse ljudi. Vendar postane vrlina šele takrat, ko je kultivirana in jo izpolnjujemo. Podobno so druge vrline osnovane na naravnih čustvih (vključno z željo) in se razvijejo z njihovim uresničevanjem v praksi.«

30 Konfucijanske dolžnosti otrok se večinoma nanašajo na dolžnost spoštovanja in uboganja staršev, tako čustveno kot tudi finančno podporo ostarelim staršem, nadaljevanje družinskega imena itd. (Wang 2016, 195).

> Konfucijanska etika vloge ima holistično in obvezujočo vizijo moralnega življenja, ki je osnovana na naši empirični izkušnji in odgovorna zanjo. Prvič, konfucijanska etika vloge vztraja na primarnosti vitalnih odnosov in preprečuje vsako idejo končnoveljavne individualnosti. Osebna ločenost je konceptualna abstrakcija, popolna avtonomija pa zavajajoča izmišljotina; združenje je dejstvo. In predanost pojmu višjega »jaza« je daleč od tega, da osebi odrekamo njeno edinstvenost, pravzaprav jo poudarjamo. (Rosemont in Ames 2016, 12)

Ker je osebna edinstvenost pomembna, ko govorimo o odnosu med družbo in posameznikom, pobliže poglejmo njen položaj v tradicionalni kitajski filozofiji.

Ideal moralnega jaza in individualna edinstvenost

V okviru konfucijanske relacijske moralnosti je moralni ideal, h kateremu težijo vsi posamezniki, doseči popoln moralni jaz. V kontekstu sedanjih prizadevanj pa se moramo vprašati, ali je tak ideal popolnoma univerzalen ali pa upošteva tudi edinstvenost vsakokratnih individualnih življenj.

V holističnem sistemu klasične kitajske filozofije se zdi, da sta moralni jaz in edinstveni posameznik v vzajemnem protislovju. Toda v realnosti sta dela istega teoretičnega načela, ki določa komplementarne interakcije binarnih nasprotij.

Pogoste zahodne trditve, da kitajsko pojmovanje jaza ne vsebuje nobenih močnih »individualističnih« konotacij, so večinoma preveč splošne. Poleg tega je zahodno pojmovanje izoliranega, razmejenega in popolnoma neodvisnega posameznika v veliki meri rezultat ideologij modernizacije. Zato se moramo obravnave ali raziskovanja kitajskega pojmovanja »samorealizacije« jaza lotiti z ustrezno previdnostjo, kajti vsakdo, ki je bil akulturiran v diskurzih zahodne modernosti, samodejno teži k enačenju tega pojma z samouresničitvijo individualne eksistence. Toda v resnici se lahko konfucijanski moralni jaz realizira samo skozi svoje soljudi in v njih, skozi skupnost in v njej.

David Hall in Roger Ames (1998, 25) poudarjata, da ima pojmovanje »individualnosti« dva različna pomena. Prvič, nanaša se na posamezno, enotno, nedeljivo entiteto, ki je lahko zaradi določenih značilnosti vključena v določen razred. Kot element (ali član) določenega rodu ali razreda je ta »individualnost« medsebojno zamenljiva. Hannah Arendt to opiše kot individualnost, ki je v nasprotju z vsakršno pluralnostjo. Tak koncept individualnosti je osnovna raven človeške eksistence, kajti tak posameznik je samo produkt dela kot primarne aktivnosti preživetja. Hannah Arendt zapiše:

> Zagotovo tudi posameznik živi v prisotnosti drugih in skupaj z njimi, toda ta skupnost nima nobenih jasnih znakov resnične pluralnosti. Ne obstaja v koristni kombinaciji različnih veščin in poklicev kot v primeru obrtništva (kaj šele v odnosu med edinstvenimi osebami), temveč obstaja v množenju primerkov, ki so si vsi tako zelo podobni, ker so to, kar so, goli živeči organizmi. (Arendt 1998, 212)

Literatura o tem vprašanju večinoma še ni opozorila na to »osamljenost *laborer qua labourer*«, ker konkretna organizacija dela in z njo povezan družbeni položaj zahtevata sočasno navzočnost številnih delavcev za opravljanje vsake dodeljene naloge; zato je videti, kot da med njimi ne bi bilo nobenih pregrad izoliranosti (ibid.).

Tak posameznik nima obraza in posebne ločene osebnosti ali identitete. In vendar je prav ta koncept individualnosti temelj enakosti vseh posameznikov pred zakonom, koncepta univerzalnih človekovih pravic, dostopa do enakih možnosti itd. Kot trdita Hall in Ames (1998, 25), prav tovrstno razumevanje posameznika omogoča tudi podrobnejšo pojasnitev pojmov, kot so avtonomija, enakost, svobodna volja ipd. Ta vrsta jaza spada v domeno enodimenzionalnega, empiričnega jaza, ali povedano s kitajskim izrazom, v sfero »zunanjega vladarja« (*wai wang* 外王).

Toda Hall in Ames opozorita, da je mogoče pojem posameznika povezati s pojmoma edinstvenosti in singularnosti, ki nimata nobenih drugih pomenov, ki bi se nanašali na pripadnost ali članstvo v določenem razredu. V tem primeru je enakost predpostavljena na osnovi načela enakovrednosti. Avtorja pravita, da nam prav ta pomen »edinstvene individualnosti« omogoča razumevanje tradicionalne konfucijanske ideje jaza.

Fang Dongmei je zagovarjal zelo podobno idejo, ko je poudaril, da edinstvenost utrjuje konfucijanski jaz in je zato vrlina že sama po sebi:

> *Dao* je vseprisoten in vse v sebi združuje v entiteto. Zato pravimo, da je veliki *Dao* neomejen. Toda po drugi strani vsebuje tudi specifične partikularnosti. Edinstvenost teh partikularnih entitet moramo sprejeti kot resnično. Vsaka realizirana partikularnost nosi v sebi težnjo vrline. Zato njenega pomena ne moremo zanikati. (Fang 2004, 259)

Kakor koli, celo tovrstni jaz edinstvene individualnosti je »edinstven« »na tipično kitajski« (tj. relacionalni oziroma odnosni) način, saj se konstituira s kvaliteto svojih odnosov z zunanjim svetom.

Zaradi prevlade individualizma je v zahodnem svetu razširjen predsodek do specifičnega pogleda na jaz, ki se je razvil na Kitajskem in v vseh drugih siniških (tj.

vzhodnoazijskih) regijah. Tako imenovane »Vzhodnjake« dojemamo, kot da bi bili brez kakršne koli individualnosti, kot ljudi, ki ravnajo in mislijo kolektivno. In kolektivizem kot pojem je v neposrednem nasprotju z individualizmom. Kolektivne enote sestavljajo mehanistično vzpostavljeni posamezniki, ki ravnajo in se vedejo kot drobna kolesca znotraj velikega stroja. V resnici je lahko kolektivizem sestavljen samo iz množice enodimenzionalnih, praznih, prej opisanih posameznikov:

> Dejansko je v naravi dela, da zberemo ljudi v delovno skupino, v kateri poljubno število posameznikov »dela skupaj, kot da bi bili eno«, in v tem smislu lahko povezanost prežema delo celo bolj intimno kot katera koli druga dejavnost. Toda taka »kolektivna narava dela«, ki je daleč od tega, da bi oblikovala razpoznavno, določljivo realnost za vsakega posameznika delovne skupine, pa nasprotno zahteva popolno izgubo zavesti o individualnosti in identiteti; in prav zaradi tega so vse te »vrline«, nastale iz dela brez jasne funkcije v procesu življenja, povsem »družabne« in se bistveno ne razlikujejo od dodatnega zadovoljstva, ki ga ponujata uživanje hrane in pitje ob druženju. Družabnost, ki izhaja iz tistih dejavnosti, ki naravno vzniknejo v metabolizmu človeškega telesa, ne temelji na enakosti, temveč na istosti. (Arendt 1998, 213)

Relacionalizem torej nima nič skupnega s kolektivizmom, čeprav je v njegovem okviru družba vsaj toliko pomembna kot posameznik. Tako relacionalizem kot etika vloge sta sistem, v katerem se ljudje zavedajo, da ne morejo preživeti sami, drug brez drugega, zato razvijejo kontekstualizirano samozavedanje.

Karl Gustav Jung to imenuje proces samorealizirane »individuacije« (Jung 1976, 301, 402, 433), ki je nekakšna samouresničitev v smislu, da se vsak človeški jaz dojema kot edinstvena, popolnoma izjemna in neponovljiva kombinacija določenih lastnosti, ki so kot take univerzalne. Univerzalni in partikularni elementi vsakega posameznika so v vzajemno komplementarnem odnosu.

Jung pravi, da je individuacija najvišji cilj človeškega življenja. Prav to pa je koncept, ki lahko odgovori na najintimnejše in obenem najbolj univerzalno človeško vprašanje: »Kaj je smisel življenja?« (ibid.). Uresničenje tega cilja zahteva pogum za ugotovitev, kdo smo, individuacija pa je proces ugotavljanja, kdo smo.

Po Jungu je to trajajoč »psihološki razvoj«, v katerem se izpolnijo dane individualne lastnosti … proces, v katerem [oseba] dokončno postane tisto edinstveno bitje (Spartz 2020), ki dejansko je. Na Kitajskem in v vseh drugih regijah pod vplivom siniške, zlasti konfucijanske kulture je tako samozavedanje bolj stvarno, kajti prav prek svoje edinstvenosti lahko vsako človeško bitje resnično dojame pomen in pomembnost družbenih kontekstov, v katere so vključeni.

V nasprotju z individuacijo se individualizem kaže kot osredotočenost nase in kot sebičnost, ki poudarjata, kako se nekdo razlikuje od vseh drugih, namesto tega, kako je z njimi povezan (ibid.). Cilj individuacije je, kot pravi Jung, »odstranjevati iz jaza varljive ovoje osebe« na eni strani in na drugi kultivirati »sugestivno moč« kolektivno nezavednega.

Zato številni sodobni akademiki, ki proučujejo etiko, poudarjajo, da je pojem posameznika problematičen: to je eden od razlogov, da Li Zehou daje prednost relacionalizmu pred individualizmom. Zanj sta relacijska drža in razumevanje natančnejša in bliže realnosti kot družbene teorije, ki temeljijo na ideji abstraktnega posameznika, kajti v realnem svetu ne obstaja nič, kar bi bilo enako popolnoma neodvisnemu, »čistemu« jazu, ločenemu od vseh namenov, čustev in odnosov.[31] Videti je, da se Henry Rosemont in Roger Ames s takim pogledom strinjata, ko trdita:

> Vse bolj sva prepričana, da je opisovanje pravilnega ravnanja oseb v njihovih različnih vlogah in primernega odnosa, ki ga v teh vlogah izražajo v odnosu do drugih, s katerimi so povezani, zadoščalo za artikulacijo etike, za katero je videti … da se sklada z našimi vsakodnevnimi izkušnjami veliko bolje kot tiste abstraktne trditve v pisanju herojev zahodne moralne filozofije v preteklosti in sedanjosti. (Rosemont in Ames 2016, 9)

Tovrstne zahodne diskurze Li kritizira tudi zaradi njihovega enodimenzionalnega poudarjanja individualne avtonomije in ideje o svobodni odločitvi. Te paradigme konec koncev temeljijo na prvotni predpostavki, da je mogoče posameznike ločiti in izvzeti iz družbenih kontekstov, odnosov in celo iz tistih človeških okoliščin, ki so vitalnega pomena za človeško življenje, kot sta zmožnost in potreba po medsebojni povezanosti in vzajemni skrbi (Fan 2010, 13). S konfucijanske perspektive, kot je relacionalizem, so ljudje v osnovi relacionalna bitja. Zato Li poudari:

> Ker ljudi vzgajajo in zanje skrbijo njihove družine in skupnosti, jim to nalaga dolžnosti in odgovornosti do te relacionalnosti in sploh do njihovega »rodu« (človeškega rodu). Ljudje ne pripadajo samo sebi. Že v prvem delu nam *Klasik spoštljive ljubezni do staršev* (*Xiao jing*) pove, da telesa prejmemo od staršev in jih zato ne smemo poškodovati. Če se obsoja celo poškodovanje telesa, kako naj bi bil dovoljen samomor? (Li 2016a, 1131)

31 V tem kontekstu Li ugotovi, da je konfucijanski pogled na izvor in prihodnost človeštva bolj univerzalen kot primerljivi pogledi glavnih svetovnih religij, saj se te pogosto sklicujejo na poslednji sodni dan. Poleg tega svoje vernike večinoma obravnavajo kot izbrana ljudstva. V nasprotju s tem je konfucijanstvo usmerjeno k uresničevanju »Poti« v vsakdanjih situacijah in razmerjih (Li Zehou 2016a, 1142).

V relacijskem sistemu se od posameznika ne pričakuje, da deluje kot neodvisni, oddeljeni moralni agent (Lai 2008, 6). Zato ga redko presojamo po idealiziranih standardih neodvisne individualnosti. Pri takšnem razumevanju jaza odnosi in okolja v veliki meri določajo vrline, mišljenje, prepričanja, motivacije, vedenje in dejanja. Poleg tega v tem okviru odnose vedno zaznamuje recipročna in vzajemna komplementarnost: »Dober učitelj in dober učenec se lahko razvijeta samo skupaj, tvoja blaginja in blaginja tvojega soseda pa sta soodvisni in vzajemno vključljivi« (Rosemont in Ames 2016, 12). Čeprav relacionalizem razvršča neenako – vladar ima oblast nad ministrom, oče nad sinom itd. –, sta obe osebi v odnosu še zmeraj metafizično in moralno komplementarni druga drugi, da bi oblikovali trdne družbene enote, zgrajene iz svojih odnosov.

Relacionalizem vsebuje tudi model etike vrlin, ki pa ni osnovan na konceptu izoliranega posameznika, temveč ga bolj določajo intrinzično čustveni odnosi. Pri tem Li Zehou (2016a, 1097) poudari, da je v tem sistemu pomembno kultivirati ta primarna čustva, ki izhajajo iz bioloških instinktov, in jih povezati s temeljnimi medsebojnimi dolžnostmi. To pomeni, da je treba čustva racionalizirati, urediti, standardizirati in integrirati znotraj človeške čustveno-racionalne strukture v relacijsko mrežo. V tej strukturi so odnosi cilj, medtem ko so čustva in zaveze subjektivne in jih je treba diferencirati. Tovrstna etika prej vodi v harmonijo kot v abstraktne ideje normativne pravičnosti.

V luči sedanje pandemije postane še bolj očitno, da nas lahko take vrline približajo bolj skrbstveno naravnani družbi, osnovani na priznavanju naše medsebojne odgovornosti, človeške šibkosti in nenehne medsebojne odvisnosti.

Zaključek

Pandemija COVID-19 je jasno pokazala, kako prepletene so človeške usode. Prav tako je pokazala, da moramo za učinkovito reševanje skupnih težav nenehno kooperativno delovati. V ta namen moramo širiti zavedanje, da smo vsi del globalnega človeštva in zato v istem čolnu: skupaj tonemo ali plujemo. Zato je prav tako nujno, da negujemo občutljivost in empatijo do soljudi ne glede na to, kdo trpi. Tradicionalna kitajska filozofija človečnosti (*ren* 仁) in njen racionalni duh nam lahko pomagata razjasniti teoretske temelje takega prizadevanja.

Take ideje lahko krepijo sodelovalni pogled, ki presega prepad med neodvisno singularnostjo in zabrisanim jazom ter je kritičen do dihotomije med jazom in drugim ali med posameznikom in celoto. Ti pogledi izhajajo iz paradigem kontrastnega dopolnjevanja, kajti posebnosti posameznika ne moremo oceniti preprosto z vidika njegovih individualnih presoj, temveč tudi z vidika njihovega širšega vpliva na družbo. Tega pa ocenjujemo glede na individualni položaj v posameznikovem kontekstualnem okolju in njegove odnose z drugimi posamezniki (Lai 2008, 88). Z etičnega vidika ima taka relacijska mreža različne in pomembne družbene posledice zlasti v primerjavi s tistimi okviri, ki terjajo neodvisno trdnost posameznikov.

V času krize širjenja COVID-19 po svetu je znanje o različnih načinih sodelovanja in solidarnosti izjemnega pomena. Kratek uvod v tradicionalno etiko vlog, ki ima nedvomno – čeprav v latentni in nezavedni obliki – pomembno vlogo pri siniških družbenih odzivih na krizo,[32] je mišljen kot preliminarni prispevek k oblikovanju takšnega vzajemno povezanega transkulturnega znanja, ki ga danes bolj potrebujemo – in je tudi bolj mogoče – kot kdaj koli prej.

(Prevod: Nina Kozinc)

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32 Številni ljudje izražajo dvome glede vprašanja, ali imajo lahko tradicionalni etični modeli kakršen koli vpliv na sodobne siniške družbe, ki so modernizirane in globalizirane ter s tem vpete v številne vrednotne sisteme sodobnega sveta. Vendar je primerjalna empirična raziskava, ki sem jo izvedla na Tajvanu in v Srednji Evropi, nedvomno pokazala, da ta vpliv še vedno obstaja, in sicer ne zgolj v reliktni, temveč tudi v precej neposredni obliki (prim. Rošker 2012).

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BOOK REVIEW

Anthony F. SHAKER[1]: *Reintroducing Philosophy: Thinking as the Gathering of Civilization According to Contemporary, Islamicate and Ancient Sources*

*Reviewed by Nevad KAHTERAN**

(2020. Delaware: Vernon Press, pp. 770. ISBN: 978-1-62273-837-3)
(Downloads available from the link: https://vernonpress.com/book/894. Assessed July, 2020)

A number of the scholars mentioned in the acknowledgments of this work and whom I know personally—including Jana S. Rošker, Ady Van den Stock and, especially, Sachiko Murata—have urged me to read and review this stimulating book by Anthony F. Shaker. A philosopher, a scholar of Islamic thought/civilization, and an analyst of social theory, he has translated three important books by Ghazālī and composed works on both Islamic and Western European philosophy, and on contemporary political developments. These include *Thinking in the Language of Reality* (2012), an exposition of the systematic philosophy of Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī (d. 1274). As far as this reviewer is concerned, the thematic scope of this new book is itself testimony that "new thresholds are possible for our troubled humanity". Vernon Press ought to be congratulated for publishing this extraordinarily rich book, which I highly recommend.

In this study of philosophy, the author asks the reader to keep a question in mind concerning the dissolution of "Western" hegemony and the possibility of a return to more natural course of history for humanity's inheritance and civilization. Contrary to the prevailing manner of portraying Islam and Muslims in negative stereotypes (see especially Morris, Shepard, and Tidswell, 2019), Shaker sees in Islam "the advent of the first truly global (Islamicate civilization)", and takes into account that we are now entering a post-Western world. His expertise is grounded

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in Islamicate, German and Greek philosophy. In certain respects, it is a continuation of his previously published book *Modernity, Civilization and the Return to History* (2017), with the same publisher. It analyses themes from several world traditions in logic, knowledge and metaphysics connected with the quest for completeness of thinking, and it adopts a radically interdisciplinary approach in which all translations from Arabic, German, French and Greek are the author's own.

At this late hour of our collective history, Shaker is able to link the German philosophical tradition—e.g. Hegel's master ideas and philosophical system, Nietzsche, Heidegger and other giants of German philosophy—to the Islamic one of Ibn ʻArabī, Ibn Sīnā, Suhrawardī, Qūnawī, Sadrā and others. *Reintroducing Philosophy* is based on a concentrated reading of all these sources.

Of course, the author does not say that every path merits examination in his book. Especially given the change in intellectual perspective referred to in the "Introduction", it is worth mentioning here another book with respect to the possible links between the German tradition and Islamic philosophy written by Ian Almond, *History of Islam in German Thought: From Leibniz to Nietzsche* (2010). I would also add Moser, Gősken, and Hayes' book *Heidegger in the Islamicate World* (2019), which contributes to the scholarship and understanding of Heidegger's philosophy in relation to Islamic thought, without being conditioned by particular religious concerns or prejudices. In fact, this is the very reason why the author chose to use the word "Islamicate" instead of "Islamic" in the book's subtitle. What is the appropriate stance to adopt? As in the above mentioned book, Shaker applied a term invented by world historian Marshall Hodgson, author of *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, where it is defined as follows:

> Islamicate would refer not directly to the religion, Islam, itself, but to the social and cultural complex historically associated with Islam and Muslims, both among Muslims themselves and even when found among non-Muslims. (Hodgson 1974, vol. I: 58–59)

For Shaker, "the present book will show that the incompleteness of thought came to be understood not as an incompleteness of omission (e.g., in a formal proof), as it is today, but an incompleteness of purpose". His selection of themes incorporated in the book is lengthened by the need to cut across cultural and historical boundaries. The lack of Africa and the gaps on India and China are compensated for with the tradition of *Hikma* (an Arabic term which literally means wisdom, and the usual connotation is the knowledge of first principles, that is, of God, where the bedrock of the thought-system being the Qur'an and the *hadith*), ancient Greek and German traditions for the Western-centric narrative, or a self-adoring "Western"-centric worldview that has dampened debate for too long. Frankly speaking, the multifaceted and multi-layered approach adopted in the book is astonishing.

Quite understandable is the fact that this study is oriented toward the interconnectivity of ideas across cultural and temporal boundaries, as well as the ends to which they were originally formulated or applied, simultaneously running into parallels, borrowings and affinities across cultural boundaries through his systematic attack on Eurocentrism. However, Shaker is quite aware that every critique of Westernism and Eurocentrism frankly seems to fall on deaf ears in the absence of a more accurate measurement, i.e. there is a need for people to understand the influence of non-European traditions on European thought, of other and earlier traditions' true role in "this late gathering of civilization", as he portrays it there.

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Part one and the first chapter begin by asking with what sort of *things*, in the unfolding of knowing and being, philosophy was concerned with besides "beingness", its formal subject-matter. In the second chapter Shaker approaches the question of thingness from the perspective of Islamicate philosophy (Sadrā and Qūnawī), with a short discussion of how Heidegger and Kant interpreted the history of thingness as a concept.

Chapter three is dedicated to "the human dimensions of things", analysing the attitudes of classical Muslim thinkers like al-Farābī, Ibn Sīnā, Qūnawī, Mulla Sadrā and others. As Shaker observes, their contemporary "Western" counterparts have uprooted everything in their path, because they consider what we call "things human" mere instruments in the hands of their authors.

Chapter four is about method and the path to discovery, and takes into account the fact that method by itself does not carry out to its own wider social or metaphysical implications, as stressed here according to the pattern of noetic movement in any kind of "search". Based on this epistemological model, Shaker presents Qūnawī's concept or framework of the sign, the philosophical underpinnings of Qūnawī's logic of signs.

The new logic of discovery is the theme of chapter five, which discusses the prejudices of objective thinking, science and Kant's "Copernican revolution", the prejudices of thinking, relationality, multiplicity and presence, presence and identity, togetherness and nonexistence, along with a note on the paradigm of thinking and its purpose.

Chapter six is about identity, and looks at what is real and what is true (objective truth). It also sets out to correct “tradition”, offering a short review of the standards of scholarship that allow these historical relationships to be systematically overruled for the sake of a local, “Western” narrative, the unification of knower, known and knowledge, or in other words this is how medieval Islamicate philosophy reconciled the onenesses, multiplicities and all other complexities at the root. Is all thinking relational due to the multiplicity imposed by its relationality, and what impact does this have on the very possibility of grasping the reality of anything? The reason for this question is the fact that Muslim philosophers worked out the paradigm of knowing and being, and their focus has always been a question of both *truth* and *reality*, as Shaker notes.

Chapter seven is dedicated to the love of wisdom and the question of science, and here Shaker uses the Qur’anic word *hikma* (Q., II: 269) for love of wisdom, not *falsafa*, which refers to philosophical thinking as derived from classical Greek schools of thought. The dilemma about the hermeneutic as imperative is discussed here, from the apophantic as-proposition to mathematics.

The theme of chapter eight, the mathematization of knowledge, takes into account the longstanding Islamicate interest in mathematics. The chapter starts with Leibniz and goes on to analytic philosophy, Gottlob Frege’s formal system of sign notation, and Heidegger’s critical appraisal of the mathematization of knowledge in modern times.

Part two is dedicated to the dynamics of being.

Chapter 9 is entitled “When is ‘before’ the World?” This has to do with the “cause” of the world’s origin, including with regard to the language of love. We can read in this chapter sections on the world’s beginning as a problem of knowing and being at the “logico-epistemological” level; being and the completeness of thinking, which have to do with the unfolding of being and knowing; empirical negation in the path of knowing; permanence and relationality; moving from thinking to personification; perception and paradigm; and man in the “cosmology” of Timaeus.

Chapter 10 is about creation as allegory, in particular Abū Bakr Muhammad ibn Zakariyyā al-Rāzī’s (Lat. Rhazes) allegory, philosophy and medicine. (Rāzī, Ibn Sīnā and some other Muslim philosophers were doctors). It also takes into account philosophy’s close association with medicine, in addition to the fact that medical problems helped philosophers uncover new areas of interest in the inquiry into being that perhaps no other positive science could. This chapter also presents a physiological explanation of philosophy and explanation of the soul and its created beginning.

Chapter eleven, "Philosophy and the Uses of Anatomical Teleology", deals with the question of how certain technical refinements in physiology, an "art" entirely devoted to the human body, its functions, and the faculties of its soul, sharpened the medieval concept of "purpose", including in terms of governance and other-worldly felicity.

Chapter twelve, "Explanation in the Greek Spirit", covers philosophical monism and medical explanation; Aristotle and Sadrā; the problem of one or many principles in the explanation of things; rational versus empirical explanation in the Hippocratic tradition; caution according Galen; shifting medical models in the transformation of science; and the philosophical consequences of the scientific approach.

Chapter thirteen, "Knowledge and Action", deals with the only conceivable, current ethico-scientific commitment, i.e. the development of still more technologies, with sections on the paradigmatic why-question; under what conditions is philosophy "productive"?; between action and theory; intentional act or actionability?

Chapter fourteen, "The Paradigm of Man in the World", elaborates the paradigm (Ar. *unmuzaj*) and offers a background for the term. It puts the question of man in perspective, where the paradigm in focus lends itself to the question of "civilization". It then turns to the philosophical concept of paradigm; the prolegomenon to higher things; selfhood in paradigmatic reason; divine sovereignty and the completeness of particulars.

Chapter fifteen, "The Paradox of Thinking", discusses al-Fārābī and Sadrā with regard to thinking in the language of man's being; becoming human; Sadrā on thinking and intellect; paradigm in the argument from perception; the scope of perception; a word on realization (*tahaqquq*). According to Shaker, the paradigm for man's being in the world may not always have been openly acknowledged, but it pointed clearly to dimensions of a thinking open to being that have meant, since al-Fārābī, nothing less than *the gathering of civilization*, from which stems the subtitle of his book—*thinking as the gathering of civilization*.

Part three, "Philosophy to the East", compares the ethical turns—the new form of subjectivism—of a good number of intellectual movements around the world.

Chapter sixteen, "Patterns of Philosophical Thinking in Classical India", shows that many areas of investigation are shared here with the philosophical tradition of the Hellenic and Islamicate worlds. We read here sections on the exegetical imperatives of liberation, because the Vedic tradition constituted an authentic source of philosophical knowledge; the logic of interpreting being; philosophy as a "way of life".

Chapter seventeen, "The Restoration of Philosophy in China", examines the fact is that we are witnessing the *Confucian comeback* in today's China. Besides the section on logic and the linguistic model in China, a debate on an "ethically" grounded philosophy in China is also included.

Chapter eighteen, "Rebellion against Whom?", offers sections about method and contents, and the revolutionary interregnum.

Part four, "The Travails of Contemporary Philosophy", concerns the so-called true method of philosophy and science: inductive reasoning.

Chapter nineteen, "What Is So New about Contemporary Philosophy?", offers sections on certain alternatives to metaphysics, including Russell and Sellars on knowledge of the world.

Chapter twenty, "How Subservient Is Contemporary Philosophy to Technology?", offers a short history of the new paradigm and the case of Ottoman Egypt, and a short world history of science: a) the practice of science in the Islamicate period, b) the institutionalization of science; the history of existence.

Chapter twenty one, "The Indifference to Humanity", offers sections on "being there" before Shaker's concluding remarks, with thinking as the gathering of civilization advocating structural parallels based on a comparative framework, where modern humanism is not when and how human diversity was discovered. In this epilogue, Shaker is aware that his study accorded *Hikma* a prominent place because of the critical and extended role it played over thought during fourteen centuries of philosophical development, but also because "it was the cauldron of a zone of thinking that set the stage for new level of human civilization". Although his study is not a history of philosophy, it is in close proximity to world history thanks to a *bibliography which consists of 302 source books*.

At this critical juncture of history, this study should serve as a rude awakening, according to the author, who points to the fact that philosophy has meekly turned itself into an administrative cover for specializations—one recalls Frascati and other lists, as well as webometrics ...—and a moral commitment to little more than gadgets and technology. The author's respect for the *Hikma* tradition and Islamicate philosophy is expressed once more in the conclusion:

> Islamicate philosophy—far older, more complex, more socially and civilizationally ambitious—placed man at the heart of the knowing and being in the single emergence, a divine self-manifestation.

In response, I would like to stress that systematic contemporary philosophy is absent in Arab-Islamic culture, and definitely relegated to the West. It is intellectual tradition that plays, even now, the role of epistemology, ontology and axiology. In the same vein, we may wonder with the late Professor Massimo Campanini whether there are differences between Islamic philosophy and Islamicate philosophy? And if Islamic philosophy represents the space of accepted common knowledge in the Muslim world, then it seems that Islamicate philosophy could become key to opening the door of the unthought (*impensée*) in Islamic lore to enrich, and perhaps strengthen, the thought (*pensée*) that I myself adhere to with both hands, having translated the introductory and concluding chapters of M. Arkoun's book *The Unthought in Contemporary Islamic Thought* (2002).

Here we are in agreement with Campanini's book *Philosophical Perspectives of Modern Qur'anic Exegesis* (2016), in that the Qur'an constitutes the "disclosure" (*kashf*) of the Absolute and Divine Being. It is consequently possible to study the Holy Book philosophically toward a "Philosophical Qur'anology".

Through Islamicate philosophy and the sources used in this book, Shaker hopes for a renewal of Islamic thought, according to the nearly forgotten *Hikma* tradition, at the threshold between the human and the divine realms, in order to realize its higher possibilities and deepest aspirations, thus opening up new horizons that contemporary philosophical thinking has been excluding. It seems to me that Campanini's attitude is consistent with the Islamicate approach presented in this book.

Mojmilo/Sarajevo, 6th December 2020

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