



THE JAPANESE COLLECTION OF VÁCLAV STEJSKAL

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ABSTRACT: The paper deals with the Japanese collection of Václav Stejskal, who travelled round the world on the Aurora warship in 1886–1888, in 1887 spending three months in Japan. He donated his Far Eastern acquisitions to the National Museum and they are now part of the Asian collection of the Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures. His collection numbers more than 300 items, the majority being typical export objects produced in late 19th century Japan. However, it also contains several masterpieces and items of great ethnological interest.

KEY WORDS: Václav Stejskal – National Museum – Japanese collection – Yokohama – diary.

Introduction

Many outstanding figures in Czech science and culture are currently being researched as part of a Czech Ministry of Culture research programme. Václav Stejskal, who donated his collection to the Náprstek Museum, is one of them. This paper deals with one part of his donation – items acquired in Japan. A full description of individual objects and photos of all his Japanese acquisitions can be found in the following electronic catalogue (Kraemerová, 2010).

Václav Stejskal, one of the museum's major donors, acquired Chinese, Indonesian and Japanese items during his journey round the world on the Austria-Hungarian corvette Aurora in 1886–1888. He donated his Oriental collection to the National Museum (then the Land Museum), but the Asian items were later transferred to the Náprstek Museum. A short biography of Václav Stejskal (28. 9. 1851 Liberk – 12. 7. 1934 Hostomice) has already been produced in both Czech and in English,¹ and therefore this paper is devoted purely to his Japanese collection and his stay in Japan.

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¹ Suhomelová, Marcela; Suchomel, Filip: Aurora, Ostasiatiasche expedition 1886–1888, k odkazu Václava Stejskala, in: *Středočeský sborník historický* 28–29, 2002–2008, pp. 101–123. Heroldová Helena: Reputation and Oblivion: The History of Václav Stejskal's Eastern Asia Collection, in: *Annals of the Náprstek Museum*, 31, 2010, pp. 23–36.

Stejskal cannot be said to have been a professional traveller or globe-trotter, since travelling was not his profession. Neither can he be classed as an adventurer or hunter, or even as a Japanese-oriented scientist. He just wanted to see distant countries, and his profession of ship's purser enabled him to do so.

Stejskal's Stay in Japan

Stejskal reached the Japanese port of Yokohama on 11th June 1886 and the corvette *Aurora* left Nagasaki on 19th September after a three-month stay. During these three months Stejskal visited not only Yokohama and Nagasaki but also Hakodate and Kōbe.

Sailors naturally enjoyed their stay in far Eastern ports and made various trips, mainly to pleasure quarters and then to local sights. In his diary, Stejskal made careful notes of naval coordinates² and gave short descriptions of what he and his shipmates did and what the weather was like. Only once, shortly before he left Japan, did he try to give a short assessment of Japan in his description. This was on 8th September, when the corvette was anchored in Nagasaki. His description shows his poor general knowledge of Japan, even if several pieces of information are accurate and faithful. The inaccurate ones include the following: "The Japanese cannot be considered artists, they have no art of poetry, music, painting, sculptures or architecture, they have only single items of art. A nation whose most frequent punishment is slashing the belly cannot be poetic."³

Likewise his summary of the character of Japanese women: "The social role of Japanese women is quite simple: they are neither slaves nor containers for giving birth to children as is common with other Asian nations. But neither are they spoilt things wrapped in cotton wool, or worshipped and adored goddesses as in the ancient European civilizations. They are friends and advisers of their men, their behaviour is polite and benevolent ... and they are protected from foreign attacks. Therefore they are neither shrews or goddesses, romantic ladies or Amazons, but joyful girls and reasonable women."⁴

On the other hand his diary entries also include a few accurate observations concerning, for example, the Japanese lifestyle: "...real cleanliness, tenderness, a sense of decency and proportion, seriousness and self-respect...". Although the diary entries are quite short, it is clear that Japan made a very strong impact on Stejskal, since he returned to his impressions when the corvette was already on its way to China. He remembered how he was carried in a *kago* carrier, what basic principles of Shintō belief was about, what geishas looked like and how the Japanese behaved in their Buddhist temples.

A researcher trying to gain valuable pieces of information from the diary, such as where Mr. Stejskal bought the collected items, how much they cost, why he liked the things he gathered and how he evaluated them might give up in despair. The diary does not contain any such detailed descriptions. If there are any, they have no evidence value:

² Heroldová, Helena: *Jitřenka pluje na východ, Mare-Czech, 2007*

³ *Ibid.*, pp.132

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 133

14. 7.: ... We bought five pictures on gold (kakimonos) to be used for lampshades.

2. 8.: ... A walk in Yokosuka and in Miyako, where we bought Indian inks.

29. 8.: ... A walk, shopping, everything very expensive.

1. 9.: ... Shopping. Bought bamboo ware and daibutsu (Kōbe).

2. 9.: ... Bought three fans and three temple lamps.

15. 9.: ... Shopping, in the evening Russian dinner in Eureka hotel...

17. 9.: ... Preparations for our departure – shopping in the afternoon – visited the best tea house, Hanasan, in the evening...⁵

The above remarks contain all the information we have concerning Stejskal's shopping trips. When and where he bought his souvenirs and for how much is not known. On the other hand, he did buy all his Japanese items during the three months he spent in Japan. After his return, he did not buy any oriental objects from antiques shops. That means we know the latest date that he bought the items in his collection, the date when they were imported and the fact that they were imported directly from Japan.

Václav Stejskal arrived in Japan at a time when Japan called itself Big Japan (Dainihon), Yokohama was a small village, not a town⁶, newspapers were published but they were more first attempts to issue newspapers of a western kind. Stejskal was a sailor, more precisely a purser on a warship, he did not speak Japanese and when he arrived in a port he looked for amusement like his fellow sailors. Unlike them, however, he was interested in oriental souvenirs so he could exhibit them in his parlour when he returned home, something that was highly fashionable at that time. He had no ambitions to educate the Czech public, as his contemporary travellers Kořenský and Svojsík did. He was not a man of letters, he did not strive to write travelogues, his diary was merely his private notes.

Stejskal arrived in Japan just as revolutionary changes were starting to be implemented. The Japanese longed to introduce new technologies, and at the same time adapt their culture to that of the Westerners. There were small changes such as the use of toothbrushes, as well as more important changes such as the adoption of a seven-day week, a labour-free Sunday and the introduction of the Gregorian calendar in the 5th year of the Meiji Era (1873). In the same year a postal service was introduced into Japan. Some new phenomena, such as western dresses and hair styles, were only external factors. However, uncritical adoption of all western novelties peaked in the 1880s. The conservative classes hated these changes, and after the fancy-dress ball in Tōkyō Rokumeikan (something of a centre of Western culture) a major movement against the imitation of Western culture started. Once again, traditional Japanese culture and customs began to be held in high esteem.

From 1881, the Japanese constitution started to be discussed and prepared. It was finally declared on 11th February 1889. According to the constitution only men and only those whose year taxes reached at least 15 yen had voting rights. Only 450,000 men met this condition. Stejskal did not mention in his diary how much money he spent in Japan, but from the above-mentioned condition it can be seen that one yen was a substantial sum.⁷

⁵ Ibid. 2/8=pp. 122, 29/8= pp. 131, 1/9= pp. 132, 2/9=pp. 132, 15/9= pp. 136, 17/9= pp. 136.

⁶ Yokohama was not promoted to the status of a town until 1889, when a new constitution was issued. Before then, Yokohama was a small village, the only advantage of which lay in having a harbour deep enough for big ships. As a port Yokohama was opened for foreigners in 1853 but real trade began later, in 1859.

⁷ Reischauer, Edwin O.; Craig, Albert M.: *Dějiny Japonska, Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, Praha 2000.*

The Aurora's arrival and stay in Yokohama harbour was mentioned in newspapers, but only in the English ones: the Japan Weekly Mail⁸ and the Japan Gazette.⁹ The Japanese newspapers did not record any such announcements. They dealt mainly with domestic political issues, and were full of advertisements and so on. Stejskal mentioned in his diary the large-scale celebrations of the emperor's birthday on 21st June 1887, when ships in the harbour fired 400 gun shots at noon. Similarly, on 7th August 1887 he wrote about a typhoon coming very near to Japan or even striking some parts of Japan, but the Japanese newspapers¹⁰ did not pay any attention to these quite important pieces of news. The explanation might be that Japanese newspapers were published, but these early attempts to issue newspapers of a Western kind were not really recognisable as such, and did not yet have any news priorities or clearly-established columns.

The corvette Aurora reached Japan at a time when only five ports were open to foreign ships, and the Aurora visited four of them. Sailors could disembark but were only able to visit the vicinity of the harbour, which was defined as the area within a radius of ten Japanese miles (39.3 km). If they wanted to travel further inland, they were obliged to ask for special permission, or "passports". Without a passport they could travel from Yokohama to Kamakura or to Zushi, for example, but not to Hakone, Odawara or Atami. Passports were issued from 1875 until 1894, when they stopped being issued and foreigners were allowed to travel freely throughout Japan. Stejskal had a passport issued¹¹ and travelled a little bit further.

What did Yokohama look like when Stejskal arrived? Unfortunately almost nothing from that time is left. The oldest buildings to survive the devastating earthquake in 1923 date from the beginning of the 20th century.¹² Today the existence of old Yokohama is documented in black and white, hand painted photographs which were produced as souvenirs for foreigners. Stejskal mentioned several buildings that he visited. First there was the Germania Club, which existed from 1863–1938.¹³ The original interior can be also seen on photographs.¹⁴ Further on he mentions his walks through "Bluffe", which is the misspelled English name of the foreigners' quarter, Yamate Bluff,¹⁵ situated on the slopes rising up from the harbour.¹⁶

⁸ E.g. The Japan Weekly Mail (Yokohama kaiko shiryokan, library), June 18, 1887 pp. 598, Arrivals: Aurora(4), Austrian corvette, captain Müller, 11th June, Amoy 21st May. Or the same newspaper dated July 23, 1887, a column: Departures: Aurora (4), Austrian corvette, captain Müller, 19th July – Hakodate.

⁹ The Japan Gazette (Yokohama kaiko shiryokan, library) regularly reported on ships arriving or staying in Yokohama harbour. The Japan Gazette had three regular columns: Vessels berthed, Vessels in the harbour and Men-of-War. The corvette Aurora was included among the warships. For example, the record of 18/8/1887 was as follows: Aurora, Austro-Hungarian Corvette, Captain Franz Muller, 1430 tons, from Hakodate, Aug.8th. Further on, e.g. On 22/8/1887, the newspaper mentions the Aurora leaving for Kōbe. The Japan Daily Herald was another English newspaper of Stejskal's time, but no notice regarding the Aurora was found.

¹⁰ Of the contemporary newspapers Yūbin Hōchi Shinbun, Asa no Shinbun a Jiji Shinpō which are available in the library of Museum of the Opening of Yokohama Port (Yokohama kaiko shiryokan).

¹¹ Documents in the library of the Náprstek Museum (archive of the Náprstek Museum, Ar.K1.196-LXXXV.1.-I)

¹² E.g. The building of the Cash Bank (Shōkin Ginkō) built in 1904 or the building of the Yokohama liaison office of Mitsui bussan.

¹³ Club Germania was founded in 1863. Those who gathered there were mainly German, but other foreigners were also able to participate in its activities.

¹⁴ Architects and Architecture in Yokohama 1850s–1950s, Kaiko 150 shūnen kinen, Museum of Yokohama Urban History, 2009.

¹⁵ The foreigners' quarter can be seen on photographs from the 19th century, e.g. Japanese collection of the Náprstek Museum, inv.no. 33714.

¹⁶ The harbour as it was when Stejskal visited it is also pictured on photograph inv.no. 33724 (Japanese collection of the Náprstek Museum).

Although Stejskal did not record it in his diary, he must have visited the Club Hotel, built in 1884, which together with the Grand Hotel Yokohama¹⁷ was one of the two most important hotels in Yokohama.

In 1866 a large fire devastated Yokohama, after which brick buildings started to be built. Suitable quality stone was not available in the vicinity, and architects took inspiration from England and revelled in the fireproof quality of bricks. Unfortunately brick buildings were not suitable for seismically unstable zones, and so the brick buildings were reinforced with steel bars and beams. In 1899 Yokohama had 120,000 inhabitants and an area of 56.4 km². At the same time Tōkyō had about one million inhabitants, and from the 1880s started to take over the importance of Yokohama harbour.

Stejskal arrived in the old Yokohama harbour. The new one was designed by Henry Spencer Palmer¹⁸ in 1886, but its first part was built in 1889 and the complete harbour was finished in 1896. The above-mentioned foreigners' quarter, known as Yamate Bluff, had about 5400 inhabitants between 1874 and 1899, but of that number two thirds were of Chinese origin. It is very interesting that Stejskal does not mention in his diary the great proportion of Chinese among the foreigners dwelling in Japan. It is possible that he was unable to distinguish the Chinese and the Japanese. He did not speak Japanese or Chinese, and so it is very probable he did not speak to local people. He also did not know about the existence of the foreigners' cemetery that existed in Japan from 1853.¹⁹

In 1887 the main commodities traded in Yokohama harbour were²⁰ porcelain,²¹ lacquerware, tea, copper, rice, iron, weapons, machines and some other minor items. Goods were exported mainly to Europe and America and imported goods were transported via Tōkyō to other parts of the country.

Stejskal also mentioned the people he met in Yokohama, the most important of them being Mr. Langfeldt from the company Langfeldt & Myers.²² Together with Mr. Langfeldt and the captain of the corvette *Aurora*, Mr. Müller, Stejskal went on a trip to Hakone, where they stayed in the Fujiya Hotel, then a very luxurious hotel popular among foreigners.²³

Other places Mr. Stejskal visited include Enoshima (a small island near Kamakura with a temple to the goddess Benten), Ikegami (where the temple still exists today but as a part of greater Tōkyō), the Yunogawa Spa near Hakodate, the Ainu village Horobitan, Yumoto Spa and Fujisawa in Hakone. Naturally he also went to Tōkyō and Kōbe. The corvette stopped in Hakodate, a place which was at that time a remote part of the country. On the way back

¹⁷ The Grand Hotel Yokohama (photograph inv.no. 33240, Japanese collection of the Náprstek Museum), existed until 1887 and it is doubtful if Stejskal entered it or not.

¹⁸ 30. 4. 1838–10. 2. 1893, British military engineer and topographer, lived in Japan from 1887, the Japanese government hired him to design water works and harbours. He has a tomb in Tōkyō Aoyama cemetery.

¹⁹ The foreigners' cemetery still exists today in spite of many fires and earthquakes. Until 1960 foreigners were buried there, and now 3123 foreigners who died in Japan are buried there.

²⁰ Total yearly trade amounted to 100 000 tons. See Yokohama-Tōkyō, Meiji no yūshutsu tōjiki, Kanagawa kenritsu rekishi hakubutsukan, tokubetsuten, 26. 4. 2008, catalogue of the exhibition.

²¹ Total Japanese porcelain export amounted to 1 311 901 yen in the year mentioned. Of this amount 52% was exported from Yokohama. See Yokohama-Tōkyō, Meiji no yūshutsu tōjiki, Kanagawa kenricu rekishi hakubutsukan, tokubetsuten, 26. 4. 2008, catalogue of the exhibition.

²² Shipping and shipbuilding company, Mr. Langfeldt worked in Japan, Mr. Myers in San Francisco, their main commodities were ships, but the company also traded in foodstuff, liquor etc. The company had its residence on plot no. 52 from 1871, and on plot no. 73. in 1881–1916. See Yokohama gaikokujin kyoryūchi (Foreigners' Quarter in Yokohama), Yokohama kaiko shiryōkan, Yūrindō, Yokohama Archives of History, 1998.

²³ A record in the hotel register and a photograph of the hotel (inv.no. 33231).

from Japan the corvette stayed several days in Nagasaki, which at that time must have been a cosmopolitan centre of Japan unlike other cities, since only in Nagasaki, namely on the small island of Dejima, did Japan trade with foreigners. But Stejskal did not like Nagasaki, which again can be explained by the more cosmopolitan society in Nagasaki and inhabitants accustomed to treating foreigners.²⁴

Chronology of the Acquisition of Stejskal's Collection

The Japanese items were acquired in four stages. First, immediately after his voyage, Stejskal donated nine objects to the Náprsteks. They are mentioned in inventory book no. 2 on pages 325–329 (among inventory numbers 2078–2099 and 3000–3298), on page 349 (3328–3329) and on page 357 (2 items of Japanese origin, but they were never labelled with inventory numbers, but were only mentioned as ... donated by Mr. Václav Stejskal, naval commissioner who made a journey round the world on the warship Aurora in 1886–1888, now dwelling in Černikovice in Bohemia). He also sent the museum two kabuki posters, which most probably he could not use and could not read either. They have inv. nos. 2816 and 2817. Several entries in the old inventory books are confusing (e.g. Japanese roughly hewn *niwageta* clogs are described as wooden slippers from Yokohama – 3023a/3456 ab) and others are clearly mistaken (a dress of a Tagal woman from Manila is in fact a Japanese samurai dress called *kamishimo*, inv. nos. 3039a/1985 ab).

But the largest portion of his collection was donated to the museum after he died, as a bequest. All these items were included in the acquisition book in 1940 on pages 48–54 under the acquisition numbers 117–908 and old inventory numbers 17457–18268. All objects are described in German, and the donor was also described in German – übernommen von Landes Museum in Prag aus dem Nachlasse des Direktores Wenzel Stejskal, Hostomitz. Later objects were labelled with new inventory numbers as they were unsystematically revised and described in the depositories at various times, some as late as the 1980s and 1990s when, for example, woodblock prints were finally described (685/40=A20517, 688+689/40=A20510ab, 690+691/40=A18973ab, 692+693/40=A18983ab, 694/40=A18982, 695/40=A10535, 696/40=A18986).

Further acquisitions are dated 1955 – an incomplete set of porcelain cups and lids (inv. no. 48234), that were used in Stejskal's house in Hostomice. Several of them were broken and are therefore missing. The last acquisition comes from 1971 (56/71/1, 2ab, 3,4,6, 7). Again, these items were transferred from Stejskal's house in Hostomice to the Náprstek Museum.

Several objects have a very interesting history. For example, Stejskal brought two almost identical clocks back from Japan. One was labelled with the right number, but the other had the wrong number, and the origin of the clock is not known. The history of the two suits of armour he brought from Japan and exhibited in his oriental parlour in Hostomice is even more complicated. The suits of armour were brought to the museum without any inventory or acquisition numbers and most probably they were mixed up with the armour that was transferred to the museum in the 1950s from various local museums and then state owned castles. The transfers were organised by the National Cultural Committee. From the photographs of armour from Stejskal's villa one cannot identify Stejskal's acquisitions among the many pieces of armour.

²⁴ Diary entries, Heroldová, Helena: *Jitřenka pluje na východ*, Mare-Czech 2007.

Survey of the Whole of Stejskal's Japanese Collection

α) Positive inventory

Stejskal's Japanese collection amounts to 338 items, but to achieve this final number was quite a difficult process. The acquisition book of 1940 includes 791 items (117-908/40) of different provenance. But Stejskal also donated some objects to the museum immediately after his return, while other objects reached the museum long after his death because they were used in the villa in Hostomice (tea cups, for example). Only 630 items of different provenance obtained inventory numbers and were located in different collections according to their origin.

β) Discarded items – 21 items in total

In the 1960s a large number of the museum's items were shredded and Stejskal's collection was also hit by this measure. Of Stejskal's collection, some paper items such as envelopes and restaurant menus were discarded and two out of three identical vases were transferred to an antiques shop, which is documented under the contract numbers.

χ) Untraceable objects, with new inventory numbers – 11 items in total

The situation here is a little bit complicated, since some objects are really lost (inv.nos. 23127, 23159, 23162, 30306, 30589, 48027, 48218 – part of the whole), while some of them were not lost but were merely issued with a new inventory number, and thus the collection's relationship to Stejskal cannot be perfectly documented (23141, 30262, 30290, 30291).

δ) Other issues – 5 items in total

These five items were mentioned in the lists that Stejskal made for himself before he donated his objects to the museum. They were also mentioned in the Náprstek Museum acquisition book of 1940. However, for unknown reasons they were either allotted new inventory numbers or the new inventory numbers were not put down in the acquisition book. This concerns the following items: a clock, a fan and a large decorative fan, a parasol and a temple model.

ε) Missing items labelled with old inventory numbers

Some old numbers in the acquisition books were not allotted new inventory numbers, although in the original list²⁵ both acquisition and inventory numbers are mentioned. The reason might be that the objects were lost soon after they were donated to the museum or they were mixed with other objects transported to the museum in the 1950s by the National Cultural Committee. There are also items which were registered in the Náprstek Museum library and archive, and were not included in the Stejskal archive materials in the National Museum.

There are a total of 109 acquisition numbers of Japanese objects from 1940 that were not allotted new inventory numbers and that are missing.²⁶

²⁵ A list, typewritten and including acquisition and inventory numbers, drawn up most probably soon after the items were acquired in the museum.

²⁶ It is possible to speculate that e.g. porcelain sets or paper lanterns were damaged during the many times that the collection was moved, but it is also possible that many items such as picture books or screen stands still exist in the collection but are labelled with numbers that are not related to the original old acquisition or inventory numbers and therefore it cannot be proven that they come from Stejskal's collection.

Classification and Characteristics

a) material classification

Printed materials (51 items)

Of the total, the majority (39) consists of small trinkets, with a minority of woodblock prints and two vertical scrolls. Trinkets include envelopes for letters or those for small amounts of money, small stiff paper cards, most probably used for messages or as a visiting cards. They are typical products of the 1880s, when Stejskal visited Japan, and it is likely that Stejskal bought these cards partly for his own use and partly as samples to be shown at home.

The woodblock prints he bought in Japan are 1880s sheets printed in aniline colours. The painters are Toyohara Chikanobu (inv.nos. A18973ab, A20510abc), Sadanobu II (inv. nos. A18983ab, A18986), and one triptych from Kiyochika (inv.no. A19000abc). The vertical scrolls are typical items produced for foreigners at the end of the 19th century. One scroll depicts a landscape with a mountain stream. It is made of velvet and inserted into imitation brocade. The second scroll is rather bizarre. It is a painting on silk depicting a man being caught and carried away by an eagle. The painting is mounted on paper and inserted into brown brocade. It was certainly produced for foreigners because in the background of the picture is Mount Fuji, a very important symbol of Japan which was inserted everywhere possible. Vertical scrolls were very popular souvenirs because they could be hung in European and American interiors. In summary, the prints in the Japanese collection are typical souvenir items.

Porcelain and ceramics (54 items)

All the items can be divided into several groups in terms of their characteristics. The first group consists of ceramic flat vases to be hung on the wall. These are shaped like woven baskets with crabs on them. Stejskal bought them in Chinese Shantou (Swatow) but they were produced in Japan (inv. nos. 1660, 23163, 23164, 23165). The second group includes three small porcelain statues (inv. nos. 23130, 23131 and 23158). They were most probably produced in Arita as imitations of famous Kakiemon products²⁷ They were also popular souvenirs. After that, a further numerous group consists of vases and jars. It is interesting that Stejskal always bought at least two pieces of the same sort. It is difficult to speculate why always two pieces of the same kind – perhaps he was inspired by the pairs of vases on Buddhist altars, or maybe he wanted to give one of the pair as a present and display the other one in his parlour. Satsuma production²⁸ (inv. nos. 48030 and 48031, 48038 and 48039) and Kutani ware (inv. nos. 48031 and 48032, or 48033 and 48034) feature the most in his collection.

Large artifacts form another group of popular souvenirs. They made a considerable impression in European interiors, because their oriental design made them rare. Stejskal brought two high (76 cm) cylindrical vessels for holding sticks and umbrellas. Both vessels have large protruding reliefs of white pigeons and garden lanterns (inv. nos. 23144 and

²⁷ Kakiemon Sakaida 1596–1666, Arita, pref. Saga, workshops for porcelain production from mid-17th century bear the name of their founder.

²⁸ Satsumayaki, a type of porcelain production that has its beginning at the end of 16th century in Azuchi-Momoyama period and is still produced nowadays. The type can be characterized by its ivory or light beige colour and crackled glaze, with enamels and gold painting on the glaze, usually using motifs of flowers and birds, geishas and samurai etc. which were very popular in Europe.

23145). There is also one large vase from Arita, made for export (h. 71.3 cm, inv. no. 20085), it has a traditional European shape with narrowed neck and wavy brim with motifs of birds and blossoms on the body.

The porcelain collection contains only a fragment of porcelain cups with lids (or saucers as they were used in Europe). According to Stejskal's original list, he bought many more of them. But they are of very thin porcelain decorated with underglaze cobalt painting, enamel and gold painting overglaze and they were probably often used for serving tea and soon broken. Underglaze cobalt painting is also a decoration on brush vessels (inv. nos. 48041, 48042, 48043, 48044, A8628, A8629, A8630). They are of Seto production²⁹ which was very popular among foreigners in the second half of the Meiji period because it was very similar to Delft faience. Both had similar white and blue decorations; only the motifs of Japanese products were very special.

Metal ware and enamel ware (31 items)

The metal ware that Stejskal brought from Japan consists mainly of vases, candlesticks and lanterns which were oriental and decorative enough. In addition, he also bought three mirrors that evidently fascinated him because he also mentions them in his diary (23rd September):³⁰ "Shinto shrines have altars with the usual candlesticks and a sacred mirror but they have no monsters or (gods) idols." The mirrors are of traditional circular shape with one side polished and a relief of fortune symbols on the reverse side (inv.nos. 23141ab, A14302). The very beautiful chased metal items produced in the 2nd half of the 19th century include other objects such as a box in the shape of a persimmon, decorated with a high relief of a cock and a hen (inv. no. 30284), a photograph frame (inv. no. 30267) decorated with a rich relief of birds and flowers, and two low brush stands (inv. no. 23155 and 23156) also richly decorated with high relief and engraving.

The best purchase that Stejskal succeeded in making is enamel ware – four vases (two pairs, inv. nos. 23146, 23147, 23148, 23149), all of them with motifs of birds and flowers. There are also two plates made of enamel on copper core (inv. Nos. 30317, 30318). They are nice but of average production. An enamel tray (inv. no. 30319) is quite interesting and outstanding because its decoration is assembled from many traditional Japanese patterns.

Lacquerware and woodcarvings (40 items)

This group consists mainly of trays (10 pcs.) and bowls (6 pcs.), average 19th century production. Only four brush stands differ slightly from the average production. Two of them are made of light-coloured wood and have a six-pointed shape (it is not quite clear if they are of Japanese or Chinese production). There are calligraphic inscriptions on the surface. The other two are made of the black bark of some special tree. However, all four were bought as souvenirs.

Three small portable zushi altars (inv. nos. 30329, 30330, 30331) differ from souvenir production as well as the golden plated wood carving (inv.no. 23143) called *Amida sanzou* from the end of the 18th century. They were made to be used in Japan. Unlike them, the lacquer cases made from ostrich eggs and lacquered with *rankaku nuri* and golden *makie* (inv. nos. 46797, 48217ab, 48218 a, 48219 ab) and a table with round shaped and lacquered upper desk (inv. no. 20220) are again unique examples of Japanese craft.

²⁹ In Seto, now Aichi prefecture, porcelain was produced from the end of the 13th century. Products of Seto were so popular that they gave their name to porcelain in Japanese: setomono.

³⁰ Heroldová, Helena: Jitřenka pluje na východ, Mare-Czech 2007, p. 137.

Weapons and armours (58 items)

Weapons and armours seemed to be of great interest to Stejskal. Maybe his interest was aroused by the fact that he could buy them cheaply, as he arrived in Japan after the wearing of swords had been banned (the *haitōrei* law, introduced in 1876). The photographs of his private museum prove that he brought a complete samurai outfit back from Japan. Almost all items were of high historical and artistic quality. Of his collection, the Náprstek Museum has arrows (19), knife handles (*kozuka* at least 4 pcs. but maybe all 6 pcs.), bows (2), halberds (3), lances (3), sword guards (8), plumes for helmets (2), army banners (2) and various sorts of swords and daggers (12). The sword guards of the end of 18th century and first half of 19th century may be considered very valuable. One is particularly interesting (inv. no. 30246). It has a brass stand welded to the back, allowing it to be exhibited on a shelf. It is highly improbable that Stejskal bought the sword guard with a stand in Japan; it is more likely that he had the stand welded on after his return in order to be able to exhibit it. The pierced sword guard (inv. no. 30248) produced at the beginning of the 18th century is the oldest one.

Nevertheless, several swords can be definitely considered the most valuable. Five sword blades were produced in the Muromachi period (1392–1573) and one at the end of the 12th or at the beginning of the 13th century. Several of them are signed (inv. no. 30581, 30583, 30585, 30586, 30 587, 30 588). Three short *wakizashi* swords are dated 18th century (inv. nos. 30580, 30584, 30590), while two daggers and one short *wakizashi* sword is of recent production (*shinshintō*).

The two suits of armour in his collection probably form part of the rich collection of armour in the Náprstek Museum even if they cannot be clearly identified. The black and white photographs of his private museum are not sharp enough to enable the armour to be identified precisely.

Clothing and accessories (32 items)

Stejskal managed to collect some objects that are of great ethnological interest. First among these is a garment used by the monks of a small Buddhist sect called *Jishū*³¹ (inv. no. 1980) and two formal samurai attires: *kamishimo* and *hitatare* (inv.nos. 1984 and 1985). Again we cannot say if Stejskal considered these objects so valuable and interesting that he immediately donated them to the museum or, alternatively, he could not use them for decorating his parlour and therefore he donated them to the museum. Besides, he brought back a large number of shoes – straw *waraji* sandals, wooden *geta* clogs, socks, hairpins, two summer cotton *yukata* kimonos, and one ladies' silk kimono, one short *happi* jacket, the authentic dress of a manual worker of the 1880s. The monk's *kesa* wrap worn above the usual monk's dress (inv. no. 29255) was definitely considered very special and was therefore collected. It is sown together from small pieces of brocade and lined with pink silk.

Folk craft (25 items)

Stejskal brought from Japan many objects of daily use woven from bamboo splinters, wicker or straw. They have almost zero artistic value, but they are very precious from the historical and ethnological viewpoint. Everyday items were used till they were worn out and disposed of. The Japanese did not preserve everyday utensils of the past as they did not have enough

³¹ Kraemerová, Alice: Nenápadný poklad a zapomenutá sekta (Discreet Treasure and Forgotten Sect), in: *Nový Orient*, 7/2003, pp. 296–299. Also Kraemerová, Alice: Amiginu, in: *Mingu Monthly*, Vol.35, no.10, January 2003, pp.21–23.

space for them. As a result they are rare in Japan. Stejskal bought baskets, trays, bowls and so on in Japan. He also bought, evidently for didactic use, several models of Japanese houses (inv. nos. 30326, 30327, 30328). One very simple model of a Japanese house was donated to the museum immediately after his arrival back home in 1888 (inv. no. 1097). Stejskal also bought three special Japanese *soroban* abacuses and two identical clocks *shakudokei* (inv. Nos. 19828, A 31065).

Other objects (47 items)

Objects included in this group also provide evidence regarding life in Japan at the end of the 19th century. They include fans – ordinary *uchiwa* fans and folding *ōgi* fans, large fans for interior decoration (16 in total), parasols (2), pipes (6) and pipe-stems for long pipes with small heads (9). An inkstone and a bamboo whisk for the tea ceremony were considered unusual and therefore collected for didactic purposes. Stejskal also acquired a folding fishing rod that, although it is included in the Japanese collection, may be of non-Japanese provenance. Many of these objects had some personal significance to the owner – e.g. the fan (inv. no. 30218) that was a promotional item for the Ya'ami hotel in Kyōto (although this object is also of historical value, since the hotel burnt down in 1906) and the promotional fan (inv.no. 30217) from a hotel or restaurant in Nagasaki.

b) Objects made for use in Japan

All European collections of Japanese artifacts can be divided into two parts: Japanese objects made for the Japanese and objects made for export. The latter were usually produced using traditional technologies, but their shapes or decorations were adapted to the demands and fashion of foreigners.

The same division can be applied to Stejskal's collection. Nevertheless, Stejskal himself was not aware of such a criterion. He paid most attention to objects produced for export and to objects which had some didactic value. However, he also managed to collect many export artifacts that were distinguished by their masterful elaboration.

Typical items made in Japan and used by the Japanese are represented in Stejskal's collection by swords, armours, sword guards, lanterns, portable altars, wooden clogs and straw sandals, dresses for everyday use and formal robes. Some of them were soon donated to the museum – indeed, they were maybe bought in Japan for the very purpose of donation to Mr. and Mrs. Náprstek, whom Stejskal respected and was on friendly terms with. Other more interesting and decorative objects he exhibited in his parlour, however.

Stejskal also brought back from his journey samples of the coins he used in each country he visited. The coins were originally labelled with one acquisition number 888/40 (inv. nos. 31571–31590) and they were completely marked as Chinese coins. It is highly probable that some of these coins were of Japanese origin. However, during the restructuring of individual collections they were incorporated into the non-European numismatic collection and were given new inventory numbers. Thus their relation to the original donor was lost.

c) Objects made for export

This category includes most of the objects in the collection, principally a large number of vases made of metal or porcelain, containers for umbrellas, aniline coloured woodblock prints, lacquered trays, lacquered ostrich eggs, porcelain statues, tea sets, lacquered round tables and so on. Enamelling technique was very popular in Europe, and three vases (inv. nos. 23147, 23148, 23149) and two plates (inv. nos. 30317 a 30318) represent typical objects made for export in Japan.

d) Sundry souvenirs or items of a didactic nature

Fans, a fishing rod, purses and visiting card boxes, abacuses, a clock, models of houses, envelopes and various cards can be described as souvenirs. Stejskal brought them home and intended to show them to the public because they were so different. Certainly abacuses, clocks and models of houses were of much interest.

e) Masterpieces

Stejskal's collection cannot be said to include famous artists' masterpieces, but it does include items by anonymous authors produced using traditional Japanese techniques. These masterpieces form about one eighth of the whole collection and it may be instructive to list them according to the techniques alone.

The cylindrical stands for brushes are among the porcelain masterpieces. They are identical in shape but decorated with different motifs of plants painted in underglaze cobalt. They were produced in famous Seto workshops. Some of them are slightly damaged (inv. nos. 48041 and 48042, 48044), while some are preserved without any damage (48043, A8629). They were produced at the end of the 18th or beginning of the 19th century.

Two stands for brushes (inv.no. 23156 a 23157) are made of metal and they are decorated with high reliefs of figurative motifs. A metal photograph frame (inv. no. 30267) is shaped in the European way and decorated with a high relief of peonies and birds, perfectly elaborated. The same technique is used to decorate a metal box. The lid of the box has a cock and a hen, chrysanthemums and flying birds in high relief. The notable enamel ware includes a very special tray (inv. no. 30319) that is decorated with a great variety of traditional Japanese motifs.

Lacquerware imported to Europe was highly appreciated, but unfortunately many lacquered objects were damaged over time because the European climate is much drier than Japan's and the lacquerware has cracked or become distorted. Items with such damage cannot be restored. A remarkable item in Stejskal's collection is the gilded wood carving of Buddha Amida and two bodhisattvas, the *Amida sanzō* (inv. no. 23143). It can be only speculated that this statue comes from some Buddhist temple and can be dated to the end of the 18th century. Three portable *zushi* altars (inv. no. 30329, 30330, 30331) are also of Buddhist origin. They are very small (8.5 cm–13 cm high with diminutive statues of protective deities). Similar altars were produced during the long Tokugawa period (1600–1868), when each family had to be registered in a Buddhist temple and had to prove it. On the other hand a typical export product is a round table with a lacquered top. The low relief of hiramakie shows the typical export product motif of a pine, flying bird of prey and Mount Fuji, a symbol of Japan.³² The rim of the round top is decorated with a regular motif of meandering flowers. The desk is supported by one column standing on three legs. The column and legs are also decorated with dark lacquer and neat golden motifs of flowers (inv. no. 20220).

Smaller lacquerware items of note include an absolutely unique round shaped box decorated with a family crest dated to the mid-19th century (inv. no. 23160a-d), and a box for aromatic substances, *jinbako*, containing six miniature boxes decorated with hiramakie technique (inv. no. 23161) dated 1820–1860. There are also some ostrich eggs decorated

³² For a table similar in shape but different in decoration see: Suchomel, Filip; Suchomelová Marcela: *Plocha zrozená k dekoru*, Národní galerie, Praha 2002, pp. 180–181, a table from the castle in Bojnice.

with lacquer, very often monconque lacquer (rankaku nuri) and golden hiramakie, which are very unusual items of Japanese manufacture. These eggs were used as decorative boxes – they were divided into two parts, one being a lid. However, they needed some kind of stand.

Stejskal brought four of them. Only three and half of them are preserved. The missing half was damaged and finally discarded (inv. nos. 46797, 48217, 48218, 48219).

Stejskal managed to collect some extraordinary swords with high quality blades in Japan. Of course he also bought souvenir products made in the 19th century, but he also bought six *kotō* swords, five from the Muromachi period (1392–1573) and one even from Kamakura period (1185–1333). Four long katana swords, one short *wakizashi* and one extra long *daitō* represent weapons of very high quality (inv. nos. 30581, 30583, 30585, 30586, 30587, 30588). Two blades are signed Izumi na kami Kanemitsu and the oldest blade is interesting because it was originally a long *tachi* sword blade but later on was shortened to the *katana* shape. The high value of the blades is not diminished by the fact the blades are inserted into mid-19th century scabbards. In 1877, when Stejskal arrived in Japan, swords – no matter if precious or worthless – symbolised the old times. Sword owners were getting rid of them and they were probably very cheap souvenirs.

The same is probably also true of samurai clothes. Stejskal bought or received them, but no explanation is mentioned in his diary. The fairly formal samurai's *hitatare* is quite extraordinary and not very often found in European collections. The *hitatare* consists of a jacket with slits and broad long *nagabakama* trousers. It is made of indigo dyed cotton and decorated with family crests – a sakura with five petals. The trouser belt is made of raw coloured silk (inv. no. 1984 ab). This military wear was worn when being given an audience by a feudal lord or even shōgun. The long wide legs were worn dragging behind the samurai like a train; he had to take great care when walking that he did not trip over his trousers. The second formal suit of samurai official clothing, the *kamishimo*, is composed of two parts, a jacket with wing-like shoulders and broad *hakama* trousers. There are family symbols on the jacket in the form of sakura crests (inv. no. 1985 a-d). Each samurai clothing set has a label saying: Aurora 1886–1888, so that there is no doubt regarding its origin.

The acquisition of clothing worn by members of the Buddhist sect Jishū, known as the *amiginu*, is something of a mystery. How did Stejskal acquire it and did he know what it was? It is a short jacket made of black hand-woven fabric with a belt of yellow ribbon and complemented by a Buddhist rosary. (inv. no. 1841). If Stejskal had been an educated ethnographer this garment would be an obvious acquisition, but for a naval purser it seems very peculiar. On the other hand it is true that Stejskal donated all three garments to the Náprstek Museum soon after his arrival back home. Maybe he bought them with the intention of donating them to Mr. and Mrs. Náprstek. They were not suitable for exhibiting in his parlour – they have to be arranged on stands, the colours fade in daylight and so on.

A small screen divided by a wooden frame into four parts of different colours: dark brown, light blue, red and black, represents a different story. Each part is embroidered with a different motif of birds and flowers (inv. no. 23140). It is a typical product for foreigners but it can be included among the masterpieces because of its beautiful embroidery, bright and well-preserved colours and last but not least as outstanding proof of the 19th century popularity of oriental decorations.

Contribution to the Náprstek Museum's Japanese Collection

To say that Stejskal's contribution to the Japanese collection is major means to overlook its other important aspects. It is a complete collection by one collector, an amateur whose only criterion for buying things seemed to be 19th century general fashion and the popularity of oriental parlours. He managed to collect several hundreds items, of which more than three hundred show life and culture in Japan at the end of 19th century. All items can be precisely specified as far as their transport from Japan is concerned. In addition to souvenirs that filled oriental rooms and collections of curios he also succeeded in gathering some very valuable objects, outstanding either because of their traditional technique (lacquerware), ethnographic value (an *amiginu* jacket, samurai wear) or historical value (sword blades).

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Photographs by Jiří Vaněk



Commander's folding fan, *tessen*, bamboo splinters, paper, metal strips, l.30 cm, w. 51 cm, 2nd half of 19th century. Inv.no. 30213.



Figurine of a woman with a cat, porcelain, overglaze gold and enamel painting, h. 14 cm, mid 19th century, most probably imitation of famous Kakiemon workshop production. Inv.no. 23158.



Helmet, *kabuto*, metal, made of 24 strips covered with brown lacquer, nape cover consisting of four ruffles, diameter 30.5 cm. Inv.no. 54960.



Model of a house, wood, coloured straw, bamboo splinters, l.22 cm, w. 15 cm, h. 22 cm, end of 19th century. Inv.no. 30328.



Case made of an ostrich egg, white lacquer – *rankakunuri*, *hiramakie* relief of two pheasants under a plum tree, h. 16 cm, max. diameter 13 cm. Inv.no. 46797 ab.



Brush stand, porcelain, underglaze cobalt painting, h. 31 cm, diameter 12 cm, end of 18th or beginning of 19th century. Inv.no. 48042.



Ladies handbag, satin, embroidery depicting sakura, morning glory, *susuki* grass and insects, metal clasp of European style, w. 20.3 cm. Inv.no. 48420.