



NÁPRSTEK MUSEUM IN 1962

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In 1962 the Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American cultures in Prague completed hundred years of its activities. On the anniversary day, the 1st November, a bronze plate was unveiled to the memory of the founder of the Museum, Vojta Náprstek, beside the entrance to the old-Prague house where today the offices and the library of the Museum are situated. The then Prague Mayor Adolf Svoboda, who carried out the ceremonial act, praised in his opening address the significance of Vojta Náprstek for the cultural progress of Prague in the second half of the 19th century. The next speakers were Dr. Erich Herold, director of the Náprstek Museum, and Dr. S. Wolf, the director of the State Museum of Ethnology in Dresden, who addressed the assembly on behalf of foreign guests.

In the afternoon of the same day a ceremonial meeting took place in the lecture-hall of the Museum. Dr. František Kahuda, the then minister of culture and education evaluated in his speech the importance of Vojta Náprstek for the Czech culture and accentuated the role of the Museum in our society. Dr. Herold gave then a brief outline of the future program of the Museum. The representatives of four foreign museums greeted the assembly and delivered valuable gifts. (Dr. Siegfried Wolf, the director of the State Museum of Ethnology, Dr. Tibor Bodrogi, the director of the Museum of Ethnology in Budapest, prof. Olga Gluchareva, the then director of the State Museum of the Eastern Art in Moscow and Mgr. Kristina Czerniewska, the then chief of the de-

partment of ethnology of the Museum of Folk Culture and Art in Warsaw.)

In the next days these guests together with the director of the Nájprstek Museum consulted the possibilities of the future cooperation and discussed their respective experiences in museological work. It was agreed that the members of the State Museum of Ethnology in Dresden would prepare the exhibition of the culture of North-American Indians which will take place in Prague and later in Budapest.

For the centenary of the Nájprstek Museum the edition of the first, commemorative, volume of the Annals of the Nájprstek Museum was prepared. This volume was published in 1963. With these Annals the Museum founded its own scientific periodical published in foreign languages.

The Nájprstek Museum performing the duty of a central institute in Czechoslovakia collects the cultural objects of non-European peoples to form the basis for complex research of their cultures. The collections of ethnographic objects and oriental antiquities are systematically completed. Three small collections from the district museums (Karlovy Vary, Kladno, Litoměřice) were transferred to the Nájprstek Museum. In 1962, after an agreement with the National Museum, the central collection of non-European numismatics was transferred to the Nájprstek Museum, whilst the numismatic department of the National Museum would collect mainly European material. According to this plan the specialist for Islamic numismatics, Dr. Jarmila Štěpková, has been appointed member of the Nájprstek Museum.

The scientific staff of the Museum was formed by: Dr. Erich Herold, the director (indology), prom. fil. Eva Rychterová (Chinese art), prom. hist. Milan Stuchlík (ethnology, esp. Oceania and Indonesia), Dr. Václav Šolc (ethnology, esp. America), Dr. Jarmila Štěpková (Islamic numismatics, since 1. X. 1962). As the Museum had no africanist, Dr. Herold administered the African collection.

Among the activities of the Nájprstek Museum in 1962 the organization of various exhibitions took the prominent part. The exposition of Asian collections, opened in 1959, and the exhibition of the Japanese netsuke, opened in 1961, continued the whole year. The exhibition of Indonesian arms, opened in 1961, lasted till November 1962. It brought systematic typology of Indonesian

swords and daggers together with the spears and shields from Borneo, warrior-masks and armours from Nias. This exhibition was prepared by M. Stuchlík. In April the exhibition of the art of Congo was opened which showed the art styles of different provinces of Congo. The majority of exhibits represented masks and statues, together with some decorated objects of every-day use, coming especially from the collections of J. Hloucha, F. V. Fojt and P. Schebesta, now being the part of the Museum funds. Because of a great interest with which it met this exhibition was prolonged till 1963. In collaboration with the Bolivian embassy a two-months' exhibition of photographs and children's painting from Bolivia was opened in February. In collaboration with the embassy of Chinese People's Republic an exhibition dealing with the Chinese actor Mei Lan-fang and his significance for the Peking opera was arranged in October. The centenary of the Museum was celebrated by the opening of an exhibition showing the evolution and activities of the Museum during its hundred year's existence and the first part of ethnographic Gallery showing the culture of Oceania. By help of the most modern museological and expository methods about 400 specimens documenting the material and spiritual culture of the peoples of Australia and Oceania were exhibited.

Further substantial part of the Museum's activities was represented by the organization of a series of popular lectures (in collaboration with the Czechoslovak Orientalistic Society) and several literary evenings dedicated to the prominent authors of oriental literatures. Also the courses in the Japanese flower-arrangement (ikebana) met with an extraordinary success. One of them was led by the famous artist prof. Teshigahara. Nevertheless, in 1962 a decrease in the number of visitors was registered. The sum total of visitors was 28.990.

Náprstek Museum organizes small itinerant exhibitions based on its collections. These exhibitions are continually arranged in different district museums and cultural institutions. In 1962 four such exhibition were realized. The exhibition of the work of the Czechoslovak Egyptological Institute in Egypt was performed in nine towns, the photograph exhibition of historical monuments of Soviet Central Asia in one town, the exhibitions of photographs and handicrafts of Morocco in five towns and the exhibition of

contemporary genre painting from Brazaville, named Painters of Poto-Poto, in four towns.

The members of the Museum studied during 1962 in several foreign countries. Dr. Herold obtained a sponsorship of UNESCO for a one month study tour to some West-European countries. He visited the National Museum of Kopenhagen, the National Ethnological Museum in Leiden, the Museum of Asian Art and Tropical Institute in Amsterdam and the Museum of Ethnology in Rotterdam. Second part of his tour was postponed till 1963. At the invitation of the State Museum of Ethnology in Dresden a group of three members of the Náprstek Museum (Dr. E. Herold, E. Rychterová, H. Doležalová) visited Dresden. Their visit helped to the mutual acquaintance of the museological work of both institutes and to the development of their collaboration. On this occasion this group visited also the State Museum of Ethnology in Leipzig. Dr. Jarmila Štěpková organized the collection of Islamic coins in the State Museums in Berlin at their invitation. In November 1962 M. Stuchlík left for Kabul for a three months' study stay in Afghanistan.

The collections of the Náprstek Museum increased in 1962 by 1500 pieces. The most important among them was a collection of 164 pieces of the Berti tribe from Darfur (Sudan). That was the result of eight month's field work of L. Holý CSc., the member of the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. The monograph of Berti together with the catalogue of this collection will be published in the series of the Náprstek Museum. Two remarkable objects from Congo were bought: a mask (Bayaka) representing a sitting European mariner with a bottle in his hand, and a statue (standing figure) from the Bapende tribe. The majority of acquisitions were bought from the private collectors. Especially the collection of Chinese art was completed and enlarged in this way. The Museum bought e.g. eight scrolls from 18th—20th century, a collection of New Year colourprints, Chinese rubbings, a collection of paper cut-outs from the province Kwang-tung, a bronze hoe and a halberd from the dynasty Shang and Chou, one cloisonné vase from the 16th century and many other objects. The archive of photographs increased by 1400 negatives of the late Czechoslovak indologist A. Žižka made during his 16 months' stay in India.

It can be said that on the whole the year 1962 was very tiresome for the members of the Museum. The relatively small staff charged with the duties connected with the preparation of the celebration of the Museum centenary, with the organization of several exhibitions and with their own research moreover had to overcome the difficult situation resulting from the lack of magazines for the ever increasing collections. Even if we observe in this year a small decrease in the number of visitors, we consider it as very successful, especially because it signifies the transition to a new and higher type of our museological work. This transition is marked above all by the beginning of the full cooperation with the foreign institutes.