

THE COLLECTION OF FEATHER ORNAMENTS FROM ENRIQUE STANKO VRÁZ'S JOURNEY ACROSS EQUATORIAL AMERICA

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ABSTRACT: Enrique Stanko Vráz (1860–1932) was a multifaceted individual known for his roles as a traveller, photographer, hunter, and collector of natural history specimens and artifacts from non-European cultures. While travelling through equatorial South America up the Amazon River from 1892 to 1893, he amassed a remarkable collection of four hundred ethnographic artifacts from two dozen groups of Indigenous peoples. More than one hundred and thirty years after the acquisition of this collection by the Náprstek Museum, the first part of the collection is published – a collection of feather ornaments. Particular attention is paid to the circumstances of the acquisition of the objects from the Indigenous peoples, their use by the ethnic groups visited, their transport to Europe and their further handling. The inspirational sources of E. S. Vráz's ideas, which were also reflected in his contact with the Indigenous people and his collecting activities, are briefly presented.

KEYWORDS: feather ornaments – Enrique Stanko Vráz – Amazonia – Guahibo – Puinave – Baniwa – Adzanene – Carutana – Yekuana – Baré – Kichwa

Introduction

The Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures houses a collection of 53 feather ornaments of the Guahibo, Adzanene (distinct branch of the Baniwa), Carutana, Piapoco, Puinave, Yekuana, Campas, Maijuna-Orejones, and other unspecified Indigenous peoples of Kichwa and Yameo language groups from the travels of Enrique Stanko Vráz [Fig. 1] through the Amazon. In addition to the ornaments for which a group of Indigenous peoples that made them from archival materials were identified, there are also 18 dance hanging ornaments (whole bodies or parts of bird bodies) for which their ethnic origin cannot be determined, although it is known that they came from Vráz's Amazon expedition. Finally, there are 15 feather ornaments (most often whole birds or their bodies), which probably also come from this collector, but because they cannot be safely identified as part of Vráz's collection from the available archival materials, it was decided to omit them from this article. Instead, it was decided to include ten feather ornaments that are not part of the collection in their own right but form the decoration of musical instruments acquired during Vráz's travels. The photographs presented in this article almost all come from the photo collection of the Náprstek Museum.

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An evaluation of the sources

The personality of E. S. Vráz and his travels are the subject of two older publications, which although rich in information, are of a popular nature and without proper annotation. These are a comprehensive book by Vráz's daughter V. Vrázová entitled *Život a cesty E. S. Vráze* (The Life and Travels of E. S. Vráz, 1937),² in which she drew on surviving private correspondence and memoirs, and a short book by Z. Jerman *E. S. Vráz* (1947).³ Both of these publications were sources of information for this article, but at the same time they had to be approached critically and compared with the original sources. J. Todorovová's book *Enrique Stanko Vráz: Záhadný cestovatel fotograf* (Enrique Stanko Vráz: Mysterious Traveller and Photographer, 2006) meets the parameters of a scholarly text, but it deals only marginally with Vráz's journey across South America, as do other articles by J. Todorovová, in which she deals mainly with Vráz's photo collection in the Náprstek Museum.⁴ Amongst the scholarly works that focus on Vráz's life story, mindset, and self-presentation, it is worth mentioning the publication by V. Rozhoň titled *Čeští cestovatelé a obraz zámoří v české společnosti* (Czech Travellers and the Image of Overseas in Czech Society, 2005) and the article by B. Půtová titled 'Čeští cestovatelé a etnografové na hranici kultur: Frič, Vráz a Kořenský' (Czech travellers and ethnographers on the border of cultures: Frič, Vráz, Kořenský, 2012).⁵ Vráz's Amazonian journey in the context of the Náprstek Museum collections is also briefly discussed in S. Kázecký's chapter 'Enrique Stanko Vráz' in *Na Trilha Dos Viajantes Tchecos – Po stopách českých cestovatelů* (2021).⁶

The main source for this study was archival materials from Vráz's archive at the Náprstek Museum, namely the original accession registry from the early years of the museum,⁷ Vráz's own reprinted travelogue *Napříč rovníkovou Amerikou* (Across Equatorial America, 1900), and his other travel writings and features. Due to limited space within this scholarly article, the number of archival materials studied has been narrowed down to the topic under investigation: feather ornaments. However, the archival holdings of Vráz's contemporaries, friends, and collaborators such as Vojta Náprstek, Josefa Náprstková, Antonín Frič, Václav Frič, or Josef Kořenský contain additional material for future study of Vráz's Amazonian collection as well as for his natural history collecting.

The study of Náprstek's accession registry presented certain pitfalls. The original system of the numerical registration of objects, which had been used during the lifetime of the museum's founders, was later changed and new numbers were assigned to collection objects acquired in the early years of the museum's existence. Therefore, in some cases, the assignment of records to specific objects was somewhat uncertain and required further verification with the literature. In this respect, our work was very well served by the first edition of Vráz's travelogue *Napříč rovníkovou Amerikou*, published

2 See Vrázová 1937. Amongst other scholarly and popularly educational texts on the Amazonian journey of E. S. Vráz, the following articles are worth mentioning: Rozhoň 2003; Štěpánek 2008.

3 Jerman 1947.

4 Kandert and Todorovová 2010; Todorovová 2012; Todorovová 2016.

5 Půtová 2012.

6 Matýšková, ed. 2020.

7 See Náprstek Museum accession book III, pp. 178, 179, 180–189, 192–200, 242.



Fig. 1. Enrique Stanko Vráz on horseback in Venezuela (1892) – author's caption to this photograph: 'Vráz on his "Rosinante" (like Don Quichotte de la Mancha), a horse older than I was and whom I bought out of human mercy, whose bones rattled before I fattened him'. NpM, Ethnographic Photographic Collection, Inv. No. Am I 5800.

during the traveller's lifetime in 1900.⁸ This work contains a number of photographs of ethnographic objects collected by Vráz from the Náprstek Museum, with detailed descriptions. In the next, three-volume edition of this travelogue (published 1938–1939)⁹ edited by his daughter Vlasta, there are some inaccuracies, while the abridged edition of the travelogue from 1984 edited by O. Kandertová does not contain photographs of the collection items.¹⁰

8 In the library of the Náprstek Museum, this book is still preserved with a handwritten dedication by E. S. Vráz to his wife Vlasta one year before his death in 1931. The dedication reads as follows: 'To my dear wife, companion throughout our lives, friend for more than thirty years and often a sufferer, always faithful and cheerful in both bad and good times.' See Vráz 1900.

9 Vráz and Vrázová, eds. 1938; Vráz and Vrázová, eds. 1939.

10 Vráz and Kandertová, eds. 1984.

Brief outline of the journey

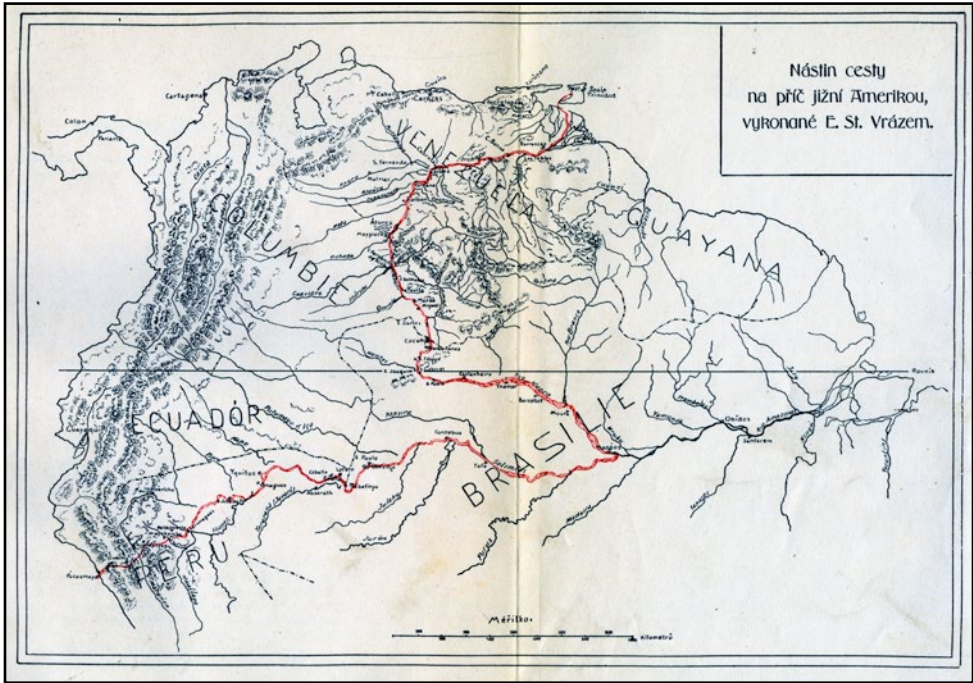


Fig. 2. Map of Vráz's journey from his book *Napříč rovníkovou Amerikou*.

Since the personality of E. S. Vráz and the course of his journey through equatorial America have been repeatedly mentioned in literature, it will be discussed in this article only to the extent that it is directly related to the collection of the feather ornaments under study. For the sake of context, it will be mentioned briefly that Vráz arrived in Venezuela in 1889 and spent the next three years raising funds for his voyage. He began his journey across South America, which is indicated on the map from the first edition of his book [Fig. 2], on the steamer *Bolívar* on 23 November 1892.

He first sailed up the Orinoco to Ciudad Bolívar and from there to the town of Caicara [Fig. 3]. From Caicara, he proceeded with local guides and porters up the Orinoco River in a canoe he named *Praga* [Fig. 7]. After a long stop at the abandoned village of Perico, forced by sickness and the flight of the crew, Vráz, with the help of Manuela, a woman of the Baniwa Indigenous peoples, reached the mestizo village of rubber collectors, San Fernando de Atabapo. From there he made several expeditions amongst the Indigenous peoples of the area and obtained ethnographic artefacts from them. He then sailed with a crew of locals to the former mission village of San Antonio de Yavita. In Yavita, he again travelled around the area, meeting and trading with other groups of Indigenous peoples. This first section of Vráz's journey will receive the most attention in this article because most of the feather ornaments come from it.

From San Antonio de Yavita, Vráz sent the canoe *Praga* and another boat, the *Tucuso* [Fig. 4] ('hummingbird'), loaded with collections and photographs across the



Fig. 3. View of the town of Caicara on the banks of the Orinoco River with farm buildings and church.
NpM, Ethnographic Photographic Collection, Inv. No. Am I 6064.

Casiquiare River, which connects the Orinoco and Amazon river systems. He set out alone with the rest of the Indigenous crew for the town of San Carlos on the border of Venezuela and Brazil, where he would later be reunited with his cargo. On 20 May 1892, however, only the *Praga* arrived here; the *Tucuso* sank in the rapids, and Vráz also lost half of his ethnographic collection, including his feather ornaments.¹¹

From San Carlos, Vráz then continued down the Río Negro to Manaus, Brazil. On this journey, he met other Indigenous people of the Amazon and expanded his collections to include ethnographic artefacts of the Tucano-Uiquina group, but not feather ornaments. On 18 June 1893, Vráz sailed to Manaus, from where he sent the first part of his collections to Bohemia with the financial support of his compatriots, and then continued his journey up the Amazon on the steamer *Perseveranza*.

In Iquitos or Yurimaguas, Vráz purchased other feather ornaments of the Indigenous peoples of the Peruvian and Ecuadorian Amazon, which will be briefly mentioned in this article. However, the makers and original owners of these ornaments were most likely not visited by Enrique Stanko Vráz. From Yurimaguas, Vráz made hunting expeditions and obtained other Amazonian ethnographic items from the Conibos and Jívaros, but there are no feather ornaments amongst them. From Yurimaguas, Vráz sent

11 'They took about 5/6 of my zoological collections, the skeletons and skulls of Indians, half of my collections of folklore /.../ twenty or more photographic negatives.', Vráz 1900, p. 445.

another shipment to Europe, most of it consisting of natural objects,¹² and continued further west to the foothills of the Andes. With the help of Indigenous guides, he crossed mountain passes of the Andes and finally arrived in November 1893 at Pascamayo, a Peruvian village on the Pacific coast.¹³

Fig. 4. Vráz's later lost canoe Tucuso on the Orinoco River. NpM, Ethnographic Photographic Collection, Inv. No. Am I 3078.



Finances and contacts

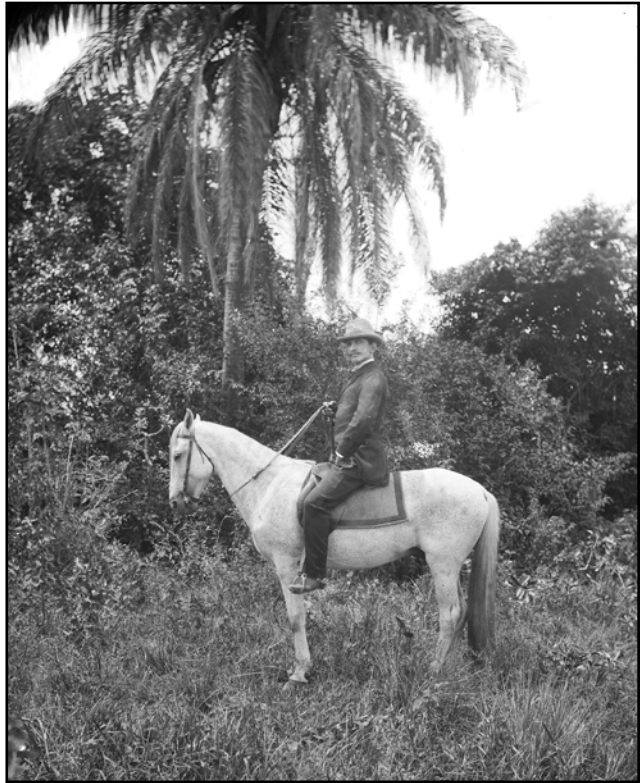
Vráz arrived in Venezuela at about the age of twenty-nine, already an experienced traveller, having travelled, hunted, and collected natural plants in Africa from 1880 to 1889.¹⁴ Probably before his journey to Africa, Vráz acquainted himself with several business contacts with companies that were engaged in buying natural plants, especially

¹² 'For four days I was busy in preparing and packing what I had collected on my voyage, most of it insects or bird skins, and what the Sabia was to take to Iquitos, from there another ship to Manus, etc. For a single small box sent from here to Europe, a hundred gulden must be paid for transport.', Vráz 1900, p. 648.

¹³ Matýšková, ed. 2020, p. 53.

¹⁴ The surviving correspondence from the years 1895–1902 which Vráz kept with various natural history dealers shows that he collected and sold all-natural history and animals for which he founded a market. The larger quantities were mainly beetles and butterflies (hundreds of specimens). The numbers of mammals, birds, reptiles, and eggs are estimated from the correspondence to be in the lower hundreds. See Archive of the Náprstek Museum, ar. Vráz 3, Convolute of letters concerning the sale and purchase of natural history specimens.

Fig. 5. Vráz's companion Jaroslav Brázda on horseback in Venezuela. NpM, Ethnographic Photographic Collection, Inv. No. Am I 6068.



for German partners.¹⁵ He later expanded these business activities in South America to include French and British companies¹⁶ to which he sold Venezuelan orchids. The trade in natural products, however risky, helped Vráz to finance his expeditions. Vráz's collecting and selling of natural plants built on contacts that had already been established by the Czech orchid collector Benedikt Roezl (1824–1885). Vráz's British business partner for the export of orchids from Venezuela was Sanders Company, based

15 According to the correspondence preserved in the Náprstek Museum, in this period the traders were mainly Bernhard Gerhard from Leipzig – to whom Vráz sent birds, bird eggs, beetles, and butterflies in a small number of specimens – V. Schlütter and Dr. O. Staudinger from Dresden. Dr. O. Staudinger was also a business partner of Frič, who resold him the natural products. See Archive of the Náprstek Museum, ar. Vráz 3, Convolute of letters concerning the sale and purchase of natural products, *Letter of Dr. O. Staudinger from Dresden*, 19 September 1888; Archive of the Náprstek Museum, ar. Vráz 3, Convolute of letters concerning the sale and purchase of natural history, Correspondence with Bernhardt Gerhard of Leipzig, 1894–1895; Archive of the Náprstek Museum, ar. Vráz 3, Convolute of letters concerning the sale and purchase of natural products, Correspondence with V. Schlütter from 1886, 1893, 1895; Archive of the Náprstek Museum, ar. Vráz 3, Convolute of letters concerning the sale and purchase of natural products, Correspondence with Dr. O. Staudinger of Dresden United from 1886, 1894, 1895, 1902.

16 Specifically, these were traders A. Pouillon, Etablissement a' Horticulture, Charles Allnauf, and F. Sander and Co., Orchids of St. Albans, UK. The orchid trade was in the thousands, as evidenced for example by correspondence with Etablissement a' Horticulture. Archive of the Náprstek Museum, ar. Vráz 3, Convolute of letters concerning the sale and purchase of natural plants, Correspondence with L. Duval (Etablissement a' Horticulture), 1890–1892.

in St. Albans. This company was founded in 1873 by Henry Frederick Conrad Sander¹⁷ an English associate of Roezl, as the main trade channel for Roezl's botanical hauls in the British Isles.¹⁸ Another important source of finance for Vráz's journey through the interior of South America was the trade in the sap of the so-called *balata* tree (*Manilkara bidentata*).¹⁹ Vráz discovered the sources of this sap during his expeditions into the interior of Venezuela and learned to process it from the local inhabitants.²⁰

Vráz's key business partner in the ventures was his compatriot Jaroslav Brázda (1861–1918) [Fig. 5] travelled with him to Venezuela and who processed his catches and collections in Venezuela and helped to arrange their transport to Europe.²¹ During his African stay, in 1885,²² Vráz managed to establish another very important business contact with another Czech compatriot, not only for his journey in South America. This person was Václav Frič (1839–1916), a Prague natural history dealer who exported goods all over the world.²³ V. Frič was also the brother of the naturalist and curator of the National Museum (then the Museum of the Kingdom of Bohemia) Antonín Frič and the uncle of another important traveller to South America, Alberto Vojtěch Frič (1882–1944). Vráz maintained a lively correspondence with V. Frič throughout his entire journey through South America – from 1891–1893, over two dozen letters have been preserved, partly addressed to Brázda as a conduit of communication on the Venezuelan coast.²⁴

In addition to the support of the Náprstek household,²⁵ acquaintance with the Frič brothers, and thus access to their network of contacts, was crucial to the financing of Vráz's trip and his collecting. In his letter dated 20 March 1893, for example, V. Frič encloses a clipping from the newspaper *Národní listy*, mentioning the patrons who had contributed to the collection organised by the Frič brothers to pay for the

17 Reinikka 1972, pp. 260–263.

18 Archive of the Náprstek Museum, *Letter from Arnold Peths to Vojta Náprstek*, 12 July 1887; Sander's Orchids, *undated*.

19 This material replaced gutta percha sap in the manufacture of submarine cables.

20 Todorovová 2006, p. 9.

21 Archive of the Náprstek Museum, ar. Vráz 3, Convolute of letters and other writings from V. Frič, a dealer in natural products in Prague in 1885–1913.

22 Contact to E. S. Vráz was given to V. Frič by his brother Antonín Frič. Archive of the Náprstek Museum, ar. Vráz 3, Convolute of letters and other documents from V. Frič, a natural specimens dealer in Prague from 1885–1913, *Letter from V. Frič*, 7 December 1885.

23 Frič sold mainly zoological specimens, various models of natural animals, minerals, fossils, rocks, but also working aids for naturalists. He focused mainly on the Czech, German, and Austrian schools, where his natural science exhibits were used as teaching aids for demonstration during lessons. His work was awarded several medals, for example at the World Expositions in Vienna (1873) and Paris (1889). See Velebil 2022, pp. 19–38.

24 Archive of the Náprstek Museum, ar. Vráz 3, Convolute of letters and other writings from V. Frič, a dealer in natural products in Prague from 1885–1913.

25 In one of her letters to Vráz in South America, J. Náprstková writes: 'Frič chose the natural science objects and we the ethnographic ones; the latter shipment is very interesting, especially the ornaments from the wings, the crowns, and many others, and the head; everything was quite new to us, quite different from what we already have. Thank you for your trouble, we will settle the amount here together with prof. Frič, and what issue you have decided to have, we will settle it all.' See archive of the Náprstek Museum, ar. Vráz 2, Convolute of letters from friends, *Letter from Josefa Náprstková to E. S. Vráz*, 14 November 1893.

transport of the first part of Vráz's collections from Manaus to Prague.²⁶ The amount raised – 710 gulden – was a rather significant sum, as the monthly salary of a clerk in 1883 was 25 gulden.²⁷ This shipment also included ethnographic objects from the first part of Vráz's Amazonian journey, including feather ornaments.²⁸ The extensive correspondence also shows that Frič had pre-financed the first part of Vráz's journey through Venezuelan to Manaus with a promise to collect natural history objects.²⁹ In addition, Frič also ordered specific types of natural history and zoological 'exhibits' from Vráz and advised him on their identification, preparation, and conservation.³⁰

Further analysis of the correspondence between Vráz, V. Frič and other European traders during his South American travels is material for a separate study, but at this point let us at least mention that in the context of the volume of natural history exhibits that E. S. Vráz sent from his travels in South America, the ethnographic collection constitutes a very valuable, but marginal part of Vráz's South American collecting 'haul'.

The sources of inspiration and thinking

In planning his trip, Vráz relied on the writings of several travellers who had visited the area before him. These included Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859), from whose *Views of Nature, or Contemplations on the Sublime Phenomena of Creation: with Scientific Illustrations* (1850)³¹ he repeatedly quotes, especially in passages dealing with his own journey. This primarily pertains to the locations that Humboldt explored alongside the French botanist Aimé Bonpland (1773–1858) during their journey in 1799. This is a journey from Venezuela along the Orinoco via the rapids of Atur and Maipur, where Vráz specifically compares the current situation in the area with Humboldt's more than ninety-year-old description.³² Humboldt's work was not only a practical guide for Vráz on his journey, but also an admired inspiration.³³

26 Enclosed in the letter is this clipping: 'The following have contributed to the transport of the products of nature acquired by Mr. E. St. Vráz in South America for the Museum of the Kingdom of Bohemia: P. Felcman, director of the sugar factory, 25 gulden; P. Diviš Šl. of Šterlinky, director of the sugar factory, 20 gulden; the Natural History Club, 20 gulden; Prof. Dr. J. Schöbl, 50 gulden; Fr. Bohumír Staněk, 10 gulden; Mr. Václav Frič, 50 gulden; Mr. V. Rychlý, 5 gulden. With the previously announced contributions of 540 gulden. With the addition of the interest on the deposited amount (1 gulden 38 koruna), the total so far is 721 gulden, 38 koruna. Of this amount, the sum of 710 gulden was sent through the banker Zdekaur to the German Consulate in Manaus on the Amazon River. Further contributions are accepted by Dr. Antonin Frič in Prague, Spálena Street No. 25.', archive of the Náprstek Museum, ar. Vráz 3, Convolute of letters and other documents from V. Frič, natural history dealer in Prague, 1885–1913, *Letter from V. Frič*, 20 March 1893.

27 Macháčová 1989, p. 278.

28 Archive of the Náprstek Museum, ar. Vráz 2, Convolute of letters from friends, *Letter from Josefa Náprstková to E. S. Vráz*, 14 November 1893.

29 Archive of the Náprstek Museum, ar. Vráz 3, Convolute of letters and other documents from V. Frič, a dealer in natural products in Prague from 1885–1913, *Letter of V. Frič*, 16 July 1889.

30 Archive of the Náprstek Museum, ar. Vráz 3, Convolute of letters and other writings from V. Frič, a dealer in natural products in Prague from 1885–1913.

31 Humboldt 1850.

32 Vráz 1900, p. 237.

33 Vráz 1900, p. 231.

Vráz's second predecessor on his journey through the rainforest on the border of Colombia, Venezuela, and Brazil was Alfred Russel Wallace (1823–1913), who worked in South America from 1848 to 1852. According to quoted recollections of local residents from the Yavita community, Vráz may even have stayed in the same hut as Wallace on his journey.³⁴ Vráz also quotes from Wallace's *Travels on the Amazon* (1889) in *Napříč rovníkovou Amerikou*.³⁵

Vráz's also drew a significant importance and inspiration from the French physician Jules Crevaux (1847–1882), who travelled through the upper Orinoco between 1878 and 1881. In his book, *Napříč rovníkovou Amerikou*, Vráz quotes from his *Voyages dans l'Amérique du Sud* (1883).³⁶ Vráz also believed that on the river island of Cucurital, he discovered Crevaux's initials carved in stone.³⁷ In addition, Vráz also refers in his book *Napříč rovníkovou Amerikou* to travellers from the Czech lands – Samuel Fritz (1654–1725)³⁸ and Tadeáš Haenke (1761–1816),³⁹ whose medallion he mentions in the notes of his travelogue. Other travellers, cartographers, geographers, and photographers, whose writings and maps Vráz drew on during his journey, included Agostino Codazzi (1793–1859), Francisco Michelena y Rojas (1801–1872), and Ermanno Stradelli (1852–1926). He then relied on the work of Jean Jules Linden (1817–1898) and Édouard André (1840–1911) to determine his botanical collections.⁴⁰

Vráz's reference to the intellectual legacy of famous European travellers is manifested in several ways. It is reflected in his pursuit of a scientific approach, which he then embodied in his book *Napříč rovníkovou Amerikou*. In this work, the author aims to encompass a wide-ranging interdisciplinary perspective. The book incorporates details about the region's plant and animal life, geographical insights, cartographic representations, and naturally, ethnographic and anthropological accounts, along with thoughtful reflections on the Indigenous communities inhabiting the rainforest, as well as urban centres in Latin America.⁴¹ The reference to the work of earlier travellers from the Czech lands then seems to indicate his desire to incorporate his own journey into an older tradition and also to accentuate a certain patriotic aspect of his book.⁴² The reference to the work of important European authors of the past was also probably intended to emphasise and perhaps even legitimise the scientific purpose of Vráz's journey. Whether he succeeded in achieving this goal is questionable. Mainly because Vráz's book *Napříč rovníkovou Amerikou* was published only in Czech, it did not reach a response abroad. Undoubtedly, however, it remains to this day a valuable and comprehensive source for research on Vráz's Amazonian ethnographic collection.

34 Vráz 1900, p. 340.

35 Vráz 1900, pp. 340–343.

36 Crevaux 1883.

37 Vráz 1900, p. 246.

38 Vráz 1900, p. 171, 506, 616

39 Vráz 1900, pp. 51, footnote no. 49 the notes in the critical apparatus.

40 Vráz 1900, p. 125.

41 Not far from the Atures Rapids, E. S. Vráz even named two hills after his Prague friends and patrons: one after Vojtěch Náprstek and the other after Václav Frič. See Vráz 1900, p. 152.

42 Vráz 1900, p. 340. Vráz had brought the newspaper *Světovzor* and the *Zlatá Praha* with him on his Amazonian expedition, but someone stole them from him in Yavita. Along the way, he also read *Pohádka máje* by Vilém Mrštík (1863–1912) a *Zapadlí vlastenci* by Karel Václav Rais (1859–1926).

His relationship to the Indigenous peoples

Vráz's relationship with the Indigenous peoples of South America is exceedingly difficult to cover in a concise manner and is again material for a more comprehensive study. In relation to the Native Americans, E. S. Vráz was undoubtedly influenced by 19th century ethnocentrism and positivism.⁴³ Yet Vráz cannot be said to have had an unwavering belief in progress embodied by the West and to automatically contrast it with the 'backwardness' of the Indigenous peoples. There are many paradoxes in his depiction of his encounters with them, and he does not shy away from finding parallels between the mindset and customs of Europeans and the Indigenous inhabitants of the Amazon. His view of the cultures of rainforest South America also seems to have been influenced by theories of degenerative human culture, which are based on the idea that bad behaviour is learned, a consequence of civilisation, while the Indigenous state is one of decency.⁴⁴ The influence of these concepts of thought can be well perceived in the extract from his book quoted below, in which he discusses the level of material culture of the Indigenous people of the Amazon and newly established cities.

Let us at least consider how Vráz perceived the Indigenous people in the context of their material culture and artisanry. As part of his attempt at a scientific approach, in *Napříč rovníkovou Amerikou* he devotes detailed attention to descriptions of the physical appearance and customs of Indigenous peoples. In spirit of contemporary racial theories, in addition to ethnographic and anthropological insights, he also examines in detail the physical beauty of the women and strength, skin colour, shape, or head shape of the Indigenous people of Amazon. An important aspect of the 'cultural maturity' of the groups of Indigenous peoples he visited, which he repeatedly compares, was for Vráz the sophistication of their material culture.

Thus, for example, he admires the culture of the Yekuana (which Vráz calls the Maquiritare) the makers of elaborate wicker products, but is openly critical of the 'mestizo culture' in the cities, also because of the declining manual dexterity of the locals. He contrasts the situation in coastal communities living in contact with European culture with that in the interior. In the rainforest, he says:

Man made everything, or most of what he has, with his own hands; he had to invent, test, make his own tools /.../ What is surprising is the taste and variety of ornaments he can make from bird feathers, fruits, seeds, etc. /.../ The farther away from the coasts, from the banks of the rivers, the farther away from European culture, or from its offspring (often very ignorant), namely, the semi-culture of the newly forming race, the more abundant, better and more artistic is the work of the Indians. We can also find here works testifying to good taste, yes, works of art, if we consider that they were invented and created by savages.⁴⁵

43 Nakládalová 2021, pp. 5, 11.

44 Doron 2019.

45 'I have seen nowhere among the so-called "savages" more tasteful, more thorough work than these Maquiritare scarves of baskets, pouches, zebukan, and small mats, woven of palm fronds. The drawings of these Indians, too, with which they decorate their articles, are fine in their lines. It is a harmonious repetition of the same lines in all cultured peoples, pleasing to the human eye.', Vráz 1900, p. 319.

Fig. 6. Girl of an unspecified group of Indigenous people working in a coffee plantation in Maturin. NpM, Ethnographic Photographic Collection, Inv. No. Am III 431.



A figure who occupies a privileged position in Vráz's travelogue because of his relationship with the Indigenous people is Manuela of the Baniwa group of Indigenous peoples. Vráz met Manuela, a woman of about forty, in the settlement of Pericó, at that time completely abandoned because of the civil war. In Pericó, Manuela lived alone in the company of a dog and kept contact with the surrounding groups – mainly the Piaroa and Guahibo. As an interpreter, she became an important liaison for Vráz during his visits to neighbouring groups of Indigenous peoples and the purchase of ethnographic books, and she also cared for him during his sickness.⁴⁶ In *Napříč rovníkovou Amerikou*, Vráz writes of her:

⁴⁶ In his book *Napříč rovníkovou Amerikou*, Vráz describes how he was cared for by Manuela and another Indigenous named Antonio: 'A clearing was cut on the shore for me, a hamaca was hung here, and my baggage was brought to me, in which I had medicine.' At the same time, the text does not imply that the relationship between Vráz and Manuela went beyond friendship and some sort of business arrangement; elsewhere Vráz describes giving Manuela cloth for clothes (p. 235). He also wrote: 'We are in Atures, and we are lecturing on to Salvajito. Where we put things on the sand on the shore. A sail from Prague is thrown over everything and my English hat is attached to the mast! Manuela told the Indians that it was the guardian of things who would kill anyone who dared to steal anything.', Vráz 1900, p. 228.

A marvellous woman! /.../ A true Amazon! Why would she need the help of the strong sex? She wields the oar, knife, and bow as well as any man, and I have no doubt that if she had a rifle she would shoot jaguars, as she now hunts rodents with an arrow or harpoons turtles.⁴⁷

This relationship with Manuela, as well as Vráz's positive attitude towards the reliable, repeatedly hired oarsmen of the Baré group of Indigenous peoples, illustrates well a certain internal contradiction in his perception of the Indigenous people. Vráz seems to have tended to make generalisations about those groups of Indigenous peoples with whom he had only superficial, short-term experience, but elsewhere he depicts the behaviour of specific individuals that contradicts these generalisations. On the one hand, for example, he marvels at Manuela's sagacity and bravery; on the other, he claims that the Indigenous Amazonians stand 'undeniably below the white race in understanding and wisdom.'⁴⁸

The collection and preservation of feather ornaments

For Vráz, the Indigenous peoples of the Amazon were not only 'objects' of study, but also hired workers who helped him hunt and transport his collections and business partners from whom he purchased products. He exchanged them for all sorts of objects: he mentions cheap cardboard fabrics, mirrors, and white, blue, and red glass beads. It was in exchange for glass beads that Vráz acquired some men's feather ornaments in the first leg of his journey; men gave them to him in exchange for the glass beads their wives coveted.⁴⁹ But he also traded ethnographic items for axes, salt bags, soap, knives, matches, and cigars.⁵⁰ As the natives could not count, trading was done according to his own estimation, and he mentions that he always tried to offer them more than what they would get for the item in the nearest market town.⁵¹ In addition, as in Africa, he tried to encourage the locals to hunt and collect natural resources for him. He complains, however, about the low activity, which he attributes to their laziness and ignorance. Seen from a modern perspective, and with a better knowledge of the thought world of the Indigenous Amazonians, it is possible that killing larger animals for purposes other than self-defence or subsistence was not permissible for them.⁵²

47 Vráz 1900, p. 175.

48 Vráz 1900, p. 746.

49 'Thus I acquired many a beautiful crown, a dancing comb, which a young man, reluctantly, but obeying the wishes of his inconsolable wife, brought to me to exchange for the ornament his dearest heart desired.', Vráz 1900, p. 376.

50 Vráz 1900, pp. 376, 179.

51 'The Yavitans, at first, from the immediate vicinity of their huts or from the "conucos" brought me things mostly almost worthless and the same: large locusts, caterpillars, birds shot by *servatana*, and soon they slacked off in bringing these things. An exception was a beautiful female three-toed sloth with a baby.', Vráz 1900, p. 359.

52 Wright 1981.



Fig. 7. Vráz's canoe *Praga* loaded with cargo, moored in San Antonio de Yavita. NpM, Ethnographic Photographic Collection, Inv. No. Am I 6080.

Since Vráz's plan from the beginning was to collect, prepare, and preserve⁵³ birds and feather ornaments on site, the equipment for this work can be found in his inventory of the cargo he took on the voyage, which lists several chemicals and taxidermy tools for this purpose.⁵⁴ To prevent heat and humidity from deteriorating the artifacts, he tried to preserve them as soon as he acquired them, often under a homemade shelter.⁵⁵ In connection with the treatment of the bird skins, Vráz mentions that he filled them with 'dry, elastic, air-permeable material, which the hunter often had to bring from afar.'⁵⁶ He also mentions that he rubbed the feathers on both sides with arsenic soap, sprinkled them with naphthalene,⁵⁷ and salt and alum powder.⁵⁸ In order to prevent the feathers from becoming infested with mould or rot, he would unfold them and hang them in open areas in the hut or, in the worst case, in the sun; here he took care to fold them frequently, taking care to prevent 'the greatest enemies of the collector – the ants.'⁵⁹

53 'Returning to Yavita, often past midnight, I would prepare my spoils by candlelight and, when the candles ran out, by Indian torches. Perhaps the collector of the highest energy, the enthusiasm, would languish and sink with fatigue, instead of taking his well-deserved sleep and rest, and sit perseveringly and protect the objects thus collected from destruction!', Vráz 1900, p. 357.

54 'potassium cyanide, chloroform, sulphur, arsenic /.../ objects generally intended for diligent zoological collecting, /.../ quinine, arsenic, antidotes, Tincture Opii, Ipecacuanha, Tanin, Calomel, Iodoform, Sublimate.', Vráz 1900, p. 86.

55 Vráz 1900, p. 664.

56 Vráz 1900.

57 Vráz 1900, p. 665.

58 Vráz 1900, p. 667.

59 Vráz 1900, p. 665.

He would cover the cords on which the objects were hung with kerosene or other sticky substance to protect them from ants. The challenge before sending the objects was to pack them properly, and he wrote about this: 'And where to get the wrapping, the boxes? Most of them must be sealed tightly, joined in sheet metal, the containers, perhaps Indian pots, replaced, the wide-mouthed bottles plugged, the bladders tied.'⁶⁰

E. S. Vráz on the feather ornaments of the Amazon

Although Vráz's observations on the feather ornaments of the Indigenous Amazonian people are not an exhaustive ethnographic analysis, it was decided to include them in this article. Given their age, they are also a unique source of knowledge of the material culture of groups of Indigenous peoples that have now partly disappeared, and at the same time Vráz's observations often concern specific feather ornaments from the collection of the Náprstek Museum.

In *Napříč rovníkovou Amerikou*, Vráz states that feather ornamentation was more likely to be a male custom amongst the Indigenous peoples he visited and an act for ceremonial occasions or for battle; the shaman wore a headdress different from that of the other men of the group.⁶¹ Feathers were the main material used to make ornaments, and Vráz also notes the difference between the different groups of Indigenous peoples in this area – he speaks of 'the untidy crown of the Guahibo sorcerer'⁶² – and, in contrast, of 'the colourful crowns of the upper Amazon made of long feathers of the Aras.'⁶³ However, as an example of these more aesthetic ornaments, he highlights three headdresses (Inv. Nos. A7009, 45488 and A7027), which he purchased in the market in Yurimaguas or Iquitos and did not personally visit the community from which they came.

Although adorning oneself with feathers was reserved for feasting or fighting, Vráz mentions that his arrival also prompted the inhabitants to adorn themselves with headdresses in their hair or feather ornaments for their noses, ears, or lips.⁶⁴ Vráz also observed the custom of wearing a comb made of hard palm fronds or blunt plant spines, decorated with feathers and pendants (see, for example, the comb from the Baniwa group Adzanene or Carutana, Inv. No. 56620) in Vráz's collection.⁶⁵ Vráz also observed that despite the same type of feathers used to make the headdresses, their appearance varies from group to group: 'The creation of new designs, new groups, forms, colours, etc., is more or less limited by the prevailing fashion of the Indian tribe in question, but not by any lack of ingenuity and artistry amongst the "savage" artists.'⁶⁶

Vráz identified various bird feathers commonly utilized, including those from parrots, macaws, toucans, mockingbirds (yellow feathers), herons (fine feathers), pipits, kittiwakes, and smaller predators like the Guianan cock-of-the-rock (orange)

60 Vráz 1900, p. 667.

61 Vráz 1900, p. 682.

62 Vráz 1900, p. 695.

63 Vráz 1900.

64 Vráz 1900, p. 691.

65 Vráz 1900, p. 258. In connection with the wearing of the comb, Vráz also speaks directly of the Guahibo Indigenous peoples.

66 Vráz 1900, p. 684.

Fig. 8. Guahibo man with feather headdress snorting hallucinogenic *ñopo* powder. NpM, Ethnographic Photographic Collection, Inv. No. Am I 6094.



and, least frequently, harpy eagles' down and feathers.⁶⁷ This observation from Vráz is more or less matched by the expert identification of feather ornaments given in the table at the end of the article [Tab. 1]. It is because of their feathers that the Indigenous inhabitants of the Amazon domesticated the birds (young or injured individuals) and kept them at home. Vráz mentions that he has seen parrots, some species of songbirds, and harpy eagles in Amazonian households.⁶⁸ The Amazonian Indigenous people stored feather ornaments in a similar way to Vráz, hanging them from the ceiling on forks or on ropes made from plant fibres, and storing the rarest pieces in baskets or bags made from palm leaves.⁶⁹

67 Vráz 1900, p. 695.

68 Vráz 1900, p. 695. Vráz states here that the women of the Amazonian groups feed the birds with their own saliva so that they quickly get used to it.

69 Vráz 1900, p. 685.

Fig. 9. Guahibo man with wicker headdress into which bird feathers were inserted. NpM, Ethnographic Photographic Collection, Inv. No. Am I 3080.



Guahibo [Pl. 1]

The Guahibo were the first group of Indigenous people from whom Vráz purchased objects for the Náprstek Museum's collections on his journey.⁷⁰ Thanks to Antonio, who had a wife within the Guahibo, a local Chandler, escaped murderer, and friend of Vráz's guide, Manuela, Vráz integrated into a group of Guahibo from the Vichada River in modern day Colombia.⁷¹ Here he also participated in the ceremony of removing the dead chief from the earth and purchased a snuff bottle for the hallucinogenic powder *ñopo*, originally decorated with feathers (Inv. No. 66212).⁷²

Of the feather ornaments of the Guahibo, Vráz writes the following:

Some of the grown men had crowns, very skilfully woven from palm fronds, either flat, with short, yellow and red toucan feathers tucked around between two circles, or the crowns were featherless and wide, not unlike the pierced bottom of a nicely knitted shawl.⁷³

⁷⁰ The first meeting with the Guahibo Indigenous peoples was arranged by Manuela, but no business was transacted because Vráz found only two old and sick Guahibo People in the camp, from whom he bought nothing.

⁷¹ Baquero 1989, pp. 77–93; Vráz 1900, pp. 234–235; Yopez Chamorro, 1984, pp. 2–39.

⁷² Vráz 1900, p. 272.

⁷³ Vráz 1900, p. 257.

He goes on to say:

Others again wore a knitted band of the same material as the preceding, round the forehead, into which either feathers were tucked or, and only in the case of the heroes of the tribe not immensely proud of this ornament, the claws of a jaguar were attached. The chief and the sorcerer had *karikari* feathers set in their crowns. Both sexes wore either pieces of reeds or feathers tucked into their earlobes.⁷⁴

The Vráz Amazonian collection preserves Guahibo feather ornaments (Inv. Nos. A7001, A7005, and A7004) and a snuffbox for the hallucinogenic powder *ñopo*, originally also decorated with a bird feather ornament (Inv. No. 66212).

Fig. 10. Guahibo man with a cover made of beaten lychee called *marima*. NpM, Ethnographic Photographic Collection, Inv. No. Am I 3357.



⁷⁴ Vráz 1900, p. 257.

San Fernando de Atabapo

After his stay amongst the Guahibo, Vráz sailed to San Fernando de Atabapo in present-day Venezuela (the Orinoco River forms the border between Colombia and Venezuela in these parts), a rubber-collecting town.⁷⁵ The local population was partly mestizo, and partly included Spanish-speaking members of the Baré and Baniwa Indigenous peoples.⁷⁶ It was from the local Baniwa that Vráz acquired the pen-decorated pipes (Inv. Nos. 45448 and 45449). From San Fernando de Atabapo, Vráz made several short journeys amongst the groups of Indigenous peoples to the Guavire and Inírida rivers,⁷⁷ where he purchased additional feather ornaments.⁷⁸

Piapoco [Pl. 2]

From San Fernando de Atabapo, Vráz sailed down the Guaviare River, south-eastward in what is now Colombia, with two other mestizos and two men of Piapoco Indigenous people.⁷⁹ He stayed amongst them only a few days, however, and later wrote of them as 'distrustful'. In *Napříč rovníkovou Amerikou*, he also mentioned that he did not find many ethnographic ornaments in the Piapoco huts and only a few feather ornaments.⁸⁰ Vráz further stated that the Piapocos wore feather ornaments only when dancing. He also notes amongst them the skin of the rare seven-coloured tanager, which he calls 'the most magnificent of South American birds.'⁸¹ In Vráz's Amazonian collection, an ornament from the Piapocos survives (Inv. No. 45809).

Puinave [Pl. 3]

Vráz's next journey from San Fernando de Atabapo was along the Inírida River amongst the Puinave group,⁸² located located about three kilometers away from the town.⁸³ In his book *Napříč rovníkovou Amerikou*, Vráz praises the Puinave's fine houses, similar to those of the Yekuana as well as their products made of vegetable fibres, both mats and shawls and 'very fine ornaments made of feathers for hair.'⁸⁴ However, he stayed amongst the Puinave for only two days, looking mainly for rare birds.⁸⁵ From this visit, feather headdresses (Inv. Nos. A7003 and A7008) and a case with a feather ornament (Inv. No. 45513) are preserved in Náprstek collections.

75 Vráz 1900, p. 294.

76 Vráz 1900, p. 315.

77 Usma Oviedo et al. 2021.

78 Vráz 1900, p. 305. Here he also received the news that his companion Jaroslav Brázda had been ambushed on the coast of Venezuela and robbed of twelve thousand francs in gold coins, most of their joint savings. Vráz had borrowed money for his trip, and due to this misfortune, his debt increased day by day, which worsened not only his mental but probably also his physical condition, and after this event he fell into a fever again.

79 Bolaños Motta et al. 2019; Vráz 1900, p. 306.

80 Vráz 1900, p. 310.

81 Vráz 1900, p. 309.

82 Rozo 2018.

83 He wrote the following about this trip: 'My second research trip was to the Inírida River, emptying into the Guaviare on its right bank about three kilometres above San Fernando de Atabapo. On this river, of magnificent scenery, dwells the once powerful tribe of the Guaipuinabi; the remnant of it now scattered here and to the river Guainii, are called Puinaves.', Vráz 1900, p. 310.

84 Vráz 1900.

85 Vráz 1900, p. 312.

Yekuana [Pl. 4]

Another group of Indigenous peoples that Vráz visited in the vicinity of San Fernando de Atabapo was the Yekuana (which Vráz calls Maquiritare)⁸⁶ group of Indigenous peoples. Vráz places the Yekuana amongst the highest of the groups of the Orinoco basin because of their material culture ('I became acquainted with a tribe that stands out above all the other Orinoco in the higher degree of culture, in its skill and in the beauty of the manufacture of its various tools and implements').⁸⁷ Eighteen ethnographic pieces – including a very well-crafted flasket – have survived in Vráz's collections from his visit to the Yekuana. According to Vráz, the Yekuana traded their wares (and bird feathers) over great distances:

For a few pots, for a cheap iron axe of European manufacture, for a knife, the interior Indians make long journeys. Thus, from the Ventuari River on the upper Orinoco, the Maquiritare Indians travel eastwards, to British Guiana, to the Indians who already have European goods direct from the coast, and as far as here the Maquiritare carry parrots of precious quality, beautiful woven baskets, hammocks, and the like.⁸⁸

There is only one feather ornament amongst the Yekuana ethnographic artefacts: it is a dance ornament with hanging bird bodies (Inv. No. 45499).

Guarinuma [Pl. 5]

Vráz left San Fernando de Atabapo with a crew of three Baniwa, one Yavita inhabitant, and one Adzanene.⁸⁹ His next stop was a Baniwá settlement called Guarinuma in present-day Venezuela (again, the border area between present-day Venezuela and Colombia). In this community Vráz participated in a rite of passage to adulthood; the expulsion of an evil spirit from a young girl. About five dozen neighbouring Baniwa arrived for this festival, 'feathered and ready to dance.'⁹⁰ It is possible, then, that some of the three feather ornaments of the Baniwa group that survive in the collection originated here. These are the feather headdress case (Inv. No. 45497) and two feather headdresses (Inv. Nos. A7007 and A7002).

In his book *Napříč rovníkovou Amerikou*, Vráz goes on to describe the strategies he used to get the Indigenous people to allow him to participate in the ritual: '/.../' and so I gave out tobacco, salt, and even various gifts, such as beads and fishing rods, in abundance, and managed, after a good time and with constant joking, to stay here and observe.⁹¹ In Guarinuma, Vráz also bought for the first time musical instruments decorated with feathers, and he speaks of *yapururu* and *sikota* flutes (Inv. Nos. 45448 and 45449). These instruments are remarkably similar to the musical instruments from the settlements of San Antonio de Yavita and Corona, which he visits later.⁹²

86 Castro Albernaz 2020.

87 Vráz 1900, p. 319.

88 Vráz 1900, p. 731.

89 Vráz 1900, p. 328.

90 Vráz 1900, p. 316.

91 Vráz 1900.

92 Vráz 1900, p. 329.



Fig. 11. Village green in San Antonio de Yavita with a field in the foreground. NpM, Ethnographic Photographic Collection, Inv. No. Am I 6056.

San Antonio de Yavita [Pls. 6–7]

San Antonio de Yavita [Fig. 12], in present-day Venezuela, was Vráz's next long-term stop, where he stayed from late March to late April 1893.⁹³ Thanks to Wallace's and Humboldt's texts, Yavita became a 'collector's eldorado' for Vráz. Yavita was a hundred-year-old settlement founded by missionaries at the time of his arrival. It was inhabited by Indigenous people from various surrounding groups of Indigenous peoples.⁹⁴ They spoke partly Spanish, partly their own newly developed language. Although the missionaries were no longer active in Yavita at the time of Vráz's visit, the locals maintained outward forms of Christianity and wore pants and cassock, which, according to Vráz, made them feel 'very much elevated above their half-naked neighbours, the Baniwa, Baré, Puinave, Adzanene etc.'⁹⁵ From Yavita, Vráz went on hunting expeditions of up to several days and for gathering natural resources, accompanied by guides from the surrounding groups of Indigenous peoples – mainly Baniwa, namely the Adzanene ethnic group, and Carutana.

The Yavitans also retained their rituals, which included dancing with feather ornaments and playing feather-decorated musical instruments.⁹⁶ Vráz describes a 'dance

93 Vráz 1900, p. 330.

94 Vráz 1900, p. 369.

95 Vráz 1900, p. 331.

96 Vráz 1900, p. 343.

of the parrots' in which the men dressed themselves in beautiful feather headdresses with heron, toucan and macaw feathers, yellow underneath and blue on top, with the down of storks and herons stuck on:

Perhaps in deference to their pagan relatives,⁹⁷ the Yavitans removed their shirts and casques before the dance. Adorning themselves with feather crowns (*taramare*), they squawked like the Baniwas to the sounds emanating from the same flute instruments, most interesting as those I have seen and partly purchased in Guarinuma. /.../ Two of them whistled on the *yapururu*, two of them on the smaller and narrower *sikota* /.../ while another of the musicians whistled on the *jíb*, a Pan flute of only two reeds.⁹⁸

At the same time, the women of Yavita used the feathers of parrots and toucans to decorate hammocks, which they then sold on the coast. From San Antonio de Yavita, according to archival records, Vráz brought musical instruments: flutes decorated with feathers, a *sikota* pipe (Inv. No. 45447) and a *yapururu* flute (Inv. No. 45445), probably originally decorated with feather ornaments (Inv. No. 45737).⁹⁹

Baré [Pl. 8]

Only three artifacts from the Baré Indigenous peoples¹⁰⁰ survive in the Vráz collection; two of which are feather ornaments, a headdress (Inv. No. 45810), and a pair of knee ornaments (Inv. No. 45811). No mention was found in Vráz's texts that he ever visited a Baré community, but he does speak of people of this ethnicity living in San Fernando de Atabapo and in the vicinity of Yavita. We also know that the Baré were hired by Vráz as rowers and cargo carriers because, in addition to their language, they knew Spanish and sometimes Portuguese¹⁰¹ and were accustomed to travelling long distances along the Orinoco and Río Negro to Manaus. He found most of the Baré together in the town of San Carlos on the border of Venezuela and Brazil, so perhaps the ornaments in Vráz's collection originated there.

Adzanene (Baniwa) and Carutana [Pl. 9]

The Adzanene (distinct branch of the Baniwa) and Carutana Indigenous peoples¹⁰² also appear in Vráz's inventories of feather ornaments. Vráz interacted with Indigenous peoples from these groups around San Antonio de Yavita¹⁰³ and recruited them as helpers on expeditions.¹⁰⁴ Vráz also encountered a larger group of members of these groups at the Easter Monday festivities in Yavita. Apparently, it is from the vicinity of Yavita that several feather ornaments (Inv. Nos. 63960, 63923, 63926, and A7012),

97 Vráz means the original inhabitants of the Carutana and Adzanene ethnic groups.

98 Vráz 1900, p. 348.

99 See Náprstek Museum accession book III, p. 189.

100 Lopes da Costa Oliviera 2015.

101 '/.../ The Baré hired by me carry the luggage'; '/.../ and immediately I found new rowers, the Baré Indians, and left San Carlos.', Vráz 1900, pp. 235, 446.

102 Wright 1981.

103 Vráz 1900, p. 350.

104 Vráz 1900, p. 357.



Fig. 12. Boy in a boat on the Orinoco River. NpM, Ethnographic Photographic Collection, Inv. No. Am II 3234.

which have survived in our collections, and a comb (Inv. No. 56620), originally also decorated with feathers, originate.¹⁰⁵ Unfortunately, the archival sources for the objects mostly mention both variants of the Adzanene and Carutana.

In the case of the Carutana, it is the only group of Indigenous peoples Vráz mentioned that at his request they decorated themselves for dancing with feather ornaments, and the chief greased his hands and shoulders with fresh pitch and covered them with fine heron down, for which he had previously sent his best hunter.¹⁰⁶ As the only Indigenous group, Vráz records that the Carutana also decorated weapons with feathers – presumably ceremonial ones.¹⁰⁷

Feather Ornaments from the Peruvian Amazon [Pls. 10–15]

Furthermore, there are 17 feather ornaments from the Peruvian and Ecuadorian Amazon in Vráz's collection. These are the best-preserved feather ornaments and come from the Yameo language group from the Tigre River in Peru, from the Campas (Asháninka) from the upper Ucayali River, from the Maijuna-Orejones group of Indigenous peoples, and from the Sarayaku community on the Bonanza River in the Guayas province of Ecuador. Sarayaku ornaments from the Indigenous people of the Kichwa language group and the Záparo Indigenous peoples.¹⁰⁸ As mentioned above, these areas were not visited by Vráz during his journey, and he therefore probably bought the feather

¹⁰⁵ Vráz 1900, p. 355.

¹⁰⁶ Vráz 1900, p. 696.

¹⁰⁷ Vráz 1900, p. 438.

¹⁰⁸ Kelly et al. 2017.



Fig. 13. Portrait of a Shipibo man from Peruvian Amazonia with feather ornament. NpM, Ethnographic Photographic Collection, Inv. No. Am II 3656.

ornaments in the market in Yurimaguas and from there sent them on the steamer *Sabia* to Iquitos and on to Manaus in September 1893. It is to these ornaments that Frič seems to be critically referring to in his book *Indians of South America* when he writes about 'the Náprstek Museum, where there is plenty of room for fake Indian ornaments, bought in the port cities of South America, which glisten with novelty.'¹⁰⁹

Nevertheless, E. S. Vráz tried to find out more about these feather products from the surviving records in the accession book registry. He discusses one of these ornaments, a headdress made of toucan feathers from the Záparo (Inv. No. A7009), because of its pendants made of 'pearl luna shells'.¹¹⁰ The pendants are unique in that, according to Vráz: 'each individual piece of mother-of-pearl is smoothed to exactly the same size in a wave shape and then fitted with a hole for hanging on a string of tiny glass shells.' This processing of mother-of-pearl took several months, perhaps an entire year of work (about two hours a day).¹¹¹

In Vráz's collection there are 20 more feather ornaments in the form of bird bodies – mostly toucans and aracari [Pl. 16]. For these ornaments, however, we do not know the community or group of Indigenous peoples to which they originally belonged.

¹⁰⁹ Frič 1977, pp. 242–243.

¹¹⁰ Vráz 1900, p. 695.

¹¹¹ Vráz 1900.

Conclusion

Enrique Stanko Vráz, on his journey through the rainforests of equatorial South America, has acquired a remarkable collection of Indigenous feather ornaments that have yet to be professionally researched and published. The feather ornaments from Vráz's voyage come from areas rarely reached by European travellers and were acquired in the early days of the museum. They therefore soon became the most valuable core of the Amazon collection and were widely exhibited. The first event of this kind was in 1892, an exhibition of Vráz's Amazonian ethnographic artefacts, which Vojta Náprstek organised on the ground floor of his house.¹¹² It was an exhibition of ethnographic artifacts that had arrived in Prague by mail before Vráz himself returned from South America. From March to May 1894, the Náprstek Museum hosted an exhibition of ethnographic objects collected by E. S. Vráz in Venezuela, accompanied by lectures by the traveller.¹¹³ Some of the ornaments were then presented in the first post-war exhibition on the occasion of the reopening of the museum, *The Art of Africa, America, Asia and Oceania* (25 June 1948 – 28 April 1949), in the permanent exhibition of the native cultures of the Americas (1965–2013), and to date in at least seven other exhibition projects and accompanying catalogues of a popularising nature.¹¹⁴

Research of sources and archival material revealed the circumstances of their acquisition and sometimes the specific places and groups of Indigenous peoples where E. S. Vráz acquired these ornaments. Research on feathers in cooperation with Jan Hušek, RNDr., PhD from the Zoology Department of the National Museum determined the species of birds whose feathers were used to produce the ornaments. It also revealed what Vráz exchanged the ornaments for, how he preserved, stored, and packaged them. Correspondence from Vráz's archive revealed his hitherto almost unexplored collaboration with a number of European natural history dealers and his links with other personalities of the Czech intellectual milieu of the time. An analysis of the first edition of his travelogue *Napříč rovníkovou Amerikou* allowed to define the sources of his inspiration and at least sketch his relationship with the Indigenous peoples. The research also revealed that some of the ornaments originating from the Ecuadorian and Peruvian Amazon were most likely purchased in Yurimaguas and that the groups of Indigenous peoples that produced them were never visited by Vráz.

112 According to Vrázová, German researchers also noticed the exhibition and were interested in buying the collections. However, E. S. Vráz insisted that ethnographic objects should form part of the Czech collections. See Vrázová 1937, p. 143.

113 Rozhoň 2005.

114 Amongst the larger exhibition projects, the following are worth mentioning (organised by the National Museum – Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures if not stated otherwise): *Tanec hudba divadlo. Lidová tvořivost mimoevropských národů* (18 Jun. 1952 – 1954); *Pralesní indiáni Ecuadoru a Peru* (19 Dec. 1973 – 26 Feb. 1974); *Hudba Ameriky* (1986), *Cesty porozumění. Brazílie ve sbírkách českých muzeí a galerií* (Památník Národního písemnictví, 1988); *Šperky a ozdoby z mimoevropského světa* (1990); *Kolumbie – místa světového dědictví* (1998); *Pera, píra, peříčka – ozdoby jihoamerických indiánů* (2000); *Šamani a čarodějové* (27 Feb. – 26 Aug. 2007), and *Indiáni* (2017–2019). Vráz's photographic collection from this trip was then reflected in the exhibitions *Nejstarší fotografie ze zámoří. Výstava unikátních snímků E. S. Vráze* (1991); *Jižní Amerika E. St. Vráze po sto letech v obrazech fotografických St. Kázeckého* (24 Mar. – 24 May 1998); *Fotografie E. St. Vráze z Venezuely* (15 Oct. 2003 – 4 Jan. 2004). In addition, a conference titled *Enrique Stanko Vráz in Latin America* (2007) on E. S. Vráz's s was also organised by the Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Tab. 1. Feather Ornaments from Enrique Stanko's Journey across Equatorial America.¹¹⁵

Inv. No.	Artifact	Ethnic Group	Location	Species of Bird
A7001	headband	Guahibo	Venezuela, Vichada River Basin	channel-billed toucan (<i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i>), yellow-crowned Amazon (<i>Amazona ochrocephala</i>) tail feather
A7005	headband	Guahibo	Venezuela, Vichada River Basin	channel-billed toucan (<i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i>), yellow-crowned Amazon (<i>Amazona ochrocephala</i>) tail feather
A7004	headband	Guahibo	Venezuela, Vichada River Basin	channel-billed toucan (<i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i>), yellow-crowned Amazon (<i>Amazona ochrocephala</i>) tail feather
66212	snuff case for <i>ñopo</i>	Guahibo	Venezuela, Vichada River Basin	
45809	headband	Piapoco	The Guaviare River not far from San Fernando de Atabapo	scarlet macaw (<i>Ara macao</i>) and channel-billed toucan (<i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i>)
45513	pouch with feather ornament	Puinave	Venezuela – the banks of the Inírida River, near San Fernando de Atabapo	channel-billed toucan (<i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i>) or white-throated toucan (<i>Ramphastos tucanus</i>)
A7003	headband	Puinave	Venezuela – the banks of the Inírida River, near San Fernando de Atabapo	channel-billed toucan (<i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i>)
A7008	headband	Puinave	Venezuela – the banks of the Inírida River, near San Fernando de Atabapo	channel-billed toucan (<i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i>)
45499	dance ornament with birds' bodies	Yekuana (Maquiritare)	Not far from San Fernando de Atabapo	Guianan cock-of-the-rock (<i>Rupicola rupicola</i>) flayed skin with the head, channel-billed toucan (<i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i>) or white-throated toucan (<i>Ramphastos tucanus</i>), yellow-crowned Amazon (<i>Amazona ochrocephala</i>), tail feather
45497	pouch with feather ornament	Baniwa	Community of Guarinuma	channel-billed toucan (<i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i>) or white-throated toucan (<i>Ramphastos tucanus</i>)
A7007	headband	Baniwa	Community of Guarinuma	channel-billed toucan (<i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i>)
A7002	headband	Baniwa	Community of Guarinuma	channel-billed toucan (<i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i>) and scarlet macaw (<i>Ara macao</i>)

¹¹⁵ Research on feathers realized in cooperation with Jan Hušek, RNDr., PhD from the Zoology Department of the National Museum.

Inv. No.	Artifact	Ethnic Group	Location	Species of Bird
45448	flute decorated with feathers	Baniwa	San Fernando de Atabapo	channel-billed toucan (<i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i>) or white-throated toucan (<i>Ramphastos tucanus</i>)
45449	flute decorated with feathers	Baniwa	San Fernando de Atabapo	channel-billed toucan (<i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i>)
44445	Flute decorated with feathers	Baniwa	San Fernando de Atabapo (or Corona)	harpy eagle (<i>Harpia harpyja</i>), channel-billed toucan (<i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i>) or white-throated toucan (<i>Ramphastos tucanus</i>)
45454	flute <i>manvavaku</i> decorated with feathers	Baniwa	San Fernando de Atabapo (or Corona)	long blue feather of a blue-and-yellow macaw (<i>Ara ararauna</i>)
45445	flute <i>yarapuru</i> decorated with feathers	Baniwa	San Antonio de Yavita	channel-billed toucan (<i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i>) or white-throated toucan (<i>Ramphastos tucanus</i>)
45447	flute <i>sikota</i> decorated with feathers		San Antonio de Yavita	channel-billed toucan (<i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i>) or white-throated toucan (<i>Ramphastos tucanus</i>)
45737	feather ornament for <i>yarapuru</i> flute		San Antonio de Yavita	channel-billed toucan (<i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i>)
63951	bird's body – Pan Flute decoration		San Antonio de Yavita	magpie tanager (<i>Cissopis leveriana</i>)
63921	bird's body – Pan Flute decoration		San Antonio de Yavita	paradise tanager (<i>Tangara chilensis</i>)
45810	headband	Baré	San Antonio de Yavita (?) San Fernando de Atabapo (?) San Carlos (?)	channel-billed toucan (<i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i>) or white-throated toucan (<i>Ramphastos tucanus</i>)
45811a-b	feather knee ornament	Baré	San Antonio de Yavita (?) San Fernando de Atabapo (?) San Carlos (?)	channel-billed toucan (<i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i>)
63960	headband	Adzanene (Baniwa)	Around the community of San Antonio de Yavita	scarlet macaw (<i>Ara macao</i>); channel-billed toucan (<i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i>) or white-throated toucan (<i>Ramphastos tucanus</i>) or green aracari (<i>Pteroglossus viridis</i>)
63923	feather hairpin	Adzanene, Carutana	Around the community of San Antonio de Yavita	snowy egret (<i>Egretta thula</i>); long blue feather of a blue-and-yellow macaw (<i>Ara ararauna</i>), small red and yellow feather of possibly a channel-billed toucan (<i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i>)

Inv. No.	Artifact	Ethnic Group	Location	Species of Bird
63926	feather hair ornament	Adzanene, Carutana	Around the community of San Antonio de Yavita	snowy egret (<i>Egretta thula</i>); long blue feathers of a blue-and-yellow macaw (<i>Ara ararauna</i>), small red and yellow feather of possibly a channel-billed toucan (<i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i>)
A7012	feather hair ornament	Adzanene, Carutana	Around the community of San Antonio de Yavita	red-and-green macaw (<i>Ara chloropterus</i>), tail feather
56620	comb	Adzanene, Carutana	Around the community of San Antonio de Yavita	
63945	head ornament	Campas	Peru, the upper reaches of the Ucayali	tail feather of oropendola (<i>Psarocolius</i>)
63946	pendant	Campas	Peru, the upper reaches of the Ucayali	tail feather of oropendola (<i>Psarocolius</i>) black and white feather, possibly an owl
A7011	feather ornament	Kichwa language group	Sarayaku community on the Bonanza River in Guayas Province, Ecuador	channel-billed toucan (<i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i>)
A7091	ornament from bird skins	Kichwa language group	Sarayaku community on the Bonanza River in Guayas Province, Ecuador	white-throated toucan (<i>Ramphastos tucanus</i>)
A7019	feather ornament	Kichwa language group	Sarayaku community on the Bonanza River in Guayas Province, Ecuador	channel-billed toucan (<i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i>)
A7018	feather ornament	Kichwa language group	Sarayaku community on the Bonanza River in Guayas Province, Ecuador	channel-billed toucan (<i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i>) and scarlet macaw (<i>Ara macao</i>)
58775	feather pendant	Kichwa language group	Sarayaku community on the Bonanza River in Guayas Province, Ecuador	scarlet macaw (<i>Ara macao</i>)
A7010	skirts made of bird skins	Kichwa language group	Sarayaku community on the Bonanza River in Guayas Province, Ecuador	channel-billed toucan (<i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i>) and white-throated toucan (<i>Ramphastos tucanus</i>), perhaps a blue-and-yellow macaw (<i>Ara ararauna</i>)
58774	skirts made of bird skins	Kichwa language group	Sarayaku community on the Bonanza River in Guayas Province, Ecuador	channel-billed toucan (<i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i>) and white-throated toucan (<i>Ramphastos tucanus</i>)
45535	hanging ornament made of feathers	Kichwa language group	Sarayaku community on the Bonanza River in Guayas Province, Ecuador	channel-billed toucan (<i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i>)
45488	chief's headdress	Kichwa language group	Sarayaku community on the Bonanza River in Guayas Province, Ecuador	scarlet macaw (<i>Ara macao</i>); yellow-crowned Amazon (<i>Amazona ochrocephala</i>), Channel-billed toucan (<i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i>)

Inv. No.	Artifact	Ethnic Group	Location	Species of Bird
A7027	headband	Kichwa language group	Sarayaku community on the Bonanza River in Guayas Province, Ecuador	blue-and-yellow macaw (<i>Ara ararauna</i>); oropendola (<i>Psarocolius</i>); yellow-crowned Amazon (<i>Amazona ochrocephala</i>)
63955	headband	Kichwa language group	Sarayaku community on the Bonanza River in Guayas Province, Ecuador	channel-billed toucan (<i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i>)
A7006	headband	Yameo language group	The River Tigre in Peru	channel-billed toucan (<i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i>) or also perhaps white-throated toucan (<i>Ramphastos tucanus</i>),
A7028	headband	Yameo language group	The River Tigre in Peru	red-and-green macaw (<i>Ara chloropterus</i>), blue-and-yellow macaw (<i>Ara ararauna</i>), channel-billed toucan (<i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i>), oropendola (<i>Psarocolius</i>)
A7009	headband	Záparo	Sarayaku community on the Bonanza River in Guayas Province, Ecuador	channel-billed toucan (<i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i>) and white-throated toucan (<i>Ramphastos tucanus</i>)
45429	head ornament	Maijuna-Orejones	The upper part of the Amazon, Napo River, Peru	channel-billed toucan (<i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i>) or white-throated toucan (<i>Ramphastos tucanus</i>)
63915	a bird's body	unknown	Amazonia	<i>Psarocolius yuracares</i>
63917	a bird's body	unknown	Amazonia	feathers apparently from a white-throated toucan (<i>Ramphastos tucanus</i>), head likely from another bird
63918	a bird's body	unknown	Amazonia	golden-collared toucanet (<i>Selenidera reinwardtii</i>)
63969	a bird's body	unknown	Amazonia	many-banded aracari (<i>Pteroglossus pluricinctus</i>)
63971	a bird's body	unknown	Amazonia	ivory-billed aracari (<i>Pteroglossus azara</i>)
63972	a bird's body	unknown	Amazonia	ivory-billed aracari (<i>Pteroglossus azara</i>)
63950	a bird's body	unknown	Amazonia	ivory-billed aracari (<i>Pteroglossus azara</i>)
63970	a bird's body	unknown	Amazonia	ivory-billed aracari (<i>Pteroglossus azara</i>)
63916	a bird's body	unknown	Amazonia	feathers apparently from white-throated toucan (<i>Ramphastos tucanus</i>), head most likely from another bird
63965	a bird's body	unknown	Amazonia	apparently an arassari (<i>Pteroglossus</i> sp.), also perhaps a blue plate-billed mountain toucan (<i>Andigena laminirostris</i>)
63934	a bird's body	unknown	Amazonia	golden-collared toucanet (<i>Selenidera reinwardtii</i>)
63912	a bird's body	unknown	Amazonia	channel-billed toucan (<i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i>) or white-throated toucan (<i>Ramphastos tucanus</i>)
63940	a bird's body	unknown	Amazonia	white-throated toucan (<i>Ramphastos tucanus</i>)

Inv. No.	Artifact	Ethnic Group	Location	Species of Bird
63965	a bird's body	unknown	Amazonia	apparently an arassari (<i>Pteroglossus</i> sp.) perhaps a blue plate-billed mountain toucan (<i>Andigena laminirostris</i>)
63973	a bird's body	unknown	Amazonia	perhaps a Channel-billed toucan (<i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i>)
63974	a bird's body	unknown	Amazonia	perhaps a Channel-billed toucan (<i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i>)
63975	a bird's body	unknown	Amazonia	perhaps a Channel-billed toucan (<i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i>)
63966	a bird's body	unknown	Amazonia	channel-billed toucan (<i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i>)
63935	a bird's body	unknown	Venezuelan Amazonia	Guianan cock-of-the-rock (<i>Rupicola rupicola</i>)

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Pl. 1. Ethnographic artefacts and feather ornaments of the Guahibo ethnic group. From top: Inv. Nos. A7005, 66212, (Photo: Jiří Vaněk).



Pl. 2. Feather ornament of the Piopoco ethnic group. Inv. No. 45809 (Photo: Jirí Vaněk).



Pl. 3. Feather ornaments of the Puinave ethnic group. From top: Inv. Nos. A7003, 45513 (Photo: Jiří Vaněk).



Pl. 4. Feather ornament of the Yekuana (also called Maquiritare) ethnic group. Inv. No. 45499 (Photo: Jiří Vaněk).



Pl. 5. Ethnographic artefacts and feather ornaments of the Baniwa ethnic group. From top: Inv. Nos. 45497, A7007, A7002 (Photo: Jiří Vaněk).



Pl. 6. Ethnographic artefacts and feather ornaments of the Baniwa ethnic group. From left: Inv. Nos. 45454, 44445, 45449 (Photo: Jiří Vaněk).



Pl. 7. Feather ornaments for musical instruments from the San Antonio de Yavita community. From left: Inv. Nos. 45737, 63951, 63921 (Photo: Jiří Vaněk).



Pl. 8. Feather ornaments of the Baré ethnic group. From left: Inv. Nos. 45811a, 45810, 45811b (Photo: Jiří Vaněk).



Pl. 9. Ethnographic artefacts and feather ornaments of the Adzanene (distinct branch of the Baniwa) and Carutana ethnic groups. From top: Inv. Nos. 56620, 63923, A7012, 63926, 63960 (Photo: Jiří Vaněk).



Pl. 10. Ethnographic entities and feather ornaments of the Campas ethnic group.
From left: Inv. Nos. 63946, 63945 (Photo: Jiří Vaněk).



Pl. 11. Feather ornaments of the Kichwa ethnic group. From left: Inv. Nos. 45535, A7018, A7019; A7091, 63955, A7011 (Photo: Jiří Vaněk).



Pl. 12. Feather ornaments of the Kichwa ethnic group. From top: Inv. Nos. 45488, A7027 (Photo: Jiří Vaněk).



Pl. 13. Feather ornaments of the Yameo ethnic group. From left: Inv. Nos. A7006, A7028 (Photo: Jiří Vaněk).



Pl. 14. Feather ornaments of the Záparo ethnic group. Inv. No. A7009 (Photo: Jiří Vaněk).



Pl. 15. Feather ornaments of the Maijuna ethnic group. Inv. No. 45429 (Photo: Jiří Vaněk).



Pl. 16. Examples of feather ornaments from birds without any certain identified ethnicity. Top row from left
Inv. Nos. 63912, 63974, 63966, 63973, 63965, bottom row from left: Inv. Nos. 63916, 63969, 63971
(Photo: Jiří Vaněk).