



Sri Kuhnt-Saptodewo, Dagmar Pospíšilová and Philipp Hesser (eds.).
Sulawesi and beyond. The František Czurda Collection.

**Wien: Kunsthistorisches Museum mit Museum für Völkerkunde,
Prague: National Museum, 2010. 140 p. With CD-ROM.
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The book at hand is the result of intense international collaboration under the leadership of scientists from the Museum für Völkerkunde in Vienna and the National Museum - Náprstek Museum in Prague. In close collaboration with Indonesian experts, the 'Czurda Project' aims to provide an overview of the extensive collection of South Sulawesi artifacts collected by Franz Czurda as well as place them in a cultural and historical context. An ambitious undertaking, not least because the collection of objects brought together by Franz Czurda in the nineteenth century is nowadays physically divided over three museums: the aforementioned museums in Vienna and Prague and – to a lesser extent- the Museum of Ethnology in Dresden. Working from an 1883 catalogue compiled by Czurda himself, the researchers sought to re-examine these objects and their descriptions and to bring their results together, at least virtually, in a book and CD-ROM. The result makes the reader something of an exhibition visitor. Without leaving one's study, one is able to see the objects of the collection in all three museums and peruse their entries in Czurda's catalogue from the comfort of one's favorite chair. Clearly, seeing the objects on a computer screen, no matter how good the photographs, is not the same thing as seeing them in real life, but given the dispersed nature of the objects and the likelihood that most will not be on permanent display in their respective museums, the CD-ROM is an example of the use digital media may have in displaying ethnographic collections.

The book's contributions focus on the person of Czurda, his method of collection and his goal in collecting objects, as well as on the various collections of his objects in the respective museums. Additional chapters deal with broader aspects of South Sulawesi life and culture, such as contributions on the La Galigo myth, the life and role of Bissu in Bugis society, South Sulawesi material culture and even the legacy of Buginese seafarers' encounters with indigenous peoples in North Australia. Many of these contributions are not tied directly to Czurda, his collection or his time and the reader has to content himself with accepting more general information on aspects of South Sulawesi's culture and history, or wonder about the coherence that the editors

envisaged between these pieces and Czurda. Other contributions have a precise connection to the collection and provide in-depth discussions of specific aspects such as house architecture and metallurgy. One of the most illuminating contributions is, without doubt, Halilinthar Lathief's 'Revisiting the Collection of František Czurda', in which Lathief, a Bugis himself, critically discusses the contents of the collection, Czurda's methodology and his descriptions using the insider's view with which his background provides him. Lathief provides considerable additional information and corrections. The CD-ROM also contains a number of short video clips in which specific objects are discussed by unnamed experts (I suspect these are Lathief and Kuhnt-Saptodewo), in which some fairly interesting observations are made. Unfortunately these discussions are almost entirely in Indonesian, and thus probably beyond the grasp of many viewers.

The project's results provide a delightful overview and discussion of the Czurda collection. The attention paid to the collector's life, his methods and reason for collecting is something that is lacking in many similar projects. The nucleus of the book and CD-ROM thus gives us a life portrait of this multi-sited collection, its collector and the perspectives of the institutions managing its objects.

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