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DANEŠ THE COLLECTOR: PACIFIC JOURNEYS OF J. V. DANEŠ AND HIS COLLECTION IN THE NÁPRSTEK MUSEUM

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ABSTRACT: J. V. Daneš (1880–1928) was not only an outstanding figure of his time in the international scientific community, but also a diplomat and a traveller. Two of his overseas trips led him to Australia and the Pacific region, where he assembled a remarkable collection of ethnographic objects and photographs. This collection, now kept in the National Museum – Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures in Prague, has been mostly neglected and unpublished for decades. This paper provides a basis for its further study by introducing Daneš's journeys around the region and comparing them to the proveniences of the ethnographic objects.

KEY WORDS: Jiří Viktor Daneš – Australia – Pacific Area – Náprstek Museum – Museum Collections

Introduction

J. V. Daneš is best known as a geographer and a diplomat. He was also a true globetrotter who, during his too short a life, set on no less than five overseas journeys. His travels around Europe and the world are well documented and have been thoroughly described and published in the past (Stěhule 1928a; Kuský 1961: 280–289; Martínek – Martínek 1998: 99–106). The main interest of this paper concerns Daneš's two expeditions to Australia and the Pacific region in years 1909–1910 and 1920–1923, the first being a study trip, the second a deployment as the first Czechoslovak Consul General in Sydney, Australia. It was during these stays that he assembled a remarkable collection of ethnographic objects and photographs, documenting all aspects of life in Australia and the Pacific region. With more than 700 objects, it forms a substantial part of the Pacific Collection of the National Museum – Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures. Despite its abundance, diversity and ethnographic value, the Daneš Collection of the Náprstek Museum has received virtually no attention in the past.

While Daneš's journeys are well documented, the assemblage unfortunately is not.

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Original information on the collection is scarce, as the area or culture of origin could only be identified for a part of the objects. The map of these known regions was juxtaposed with one based on Daneš's itineraries. It becomes apparent that some objects are products of cultures with which Daneš did not come into direct contact.

Life of J. V. Daneš

Jiří Viktor Daneš was born on 23 August 1880 in Nový Dvůr (today Pavlov) near Kladno in Bohemia to the family of Josef Daneš, a local landowner. He was the youngest, the eleventh child of his father and the only child of his mother Johanna, the second wife of Josef Daneš and daughter of Petr Fastej, a national revivalist renowned for his active participation in the events of 1848. His father, Josef Daneš dies in 1883, but Jiří Viktor grows up surrounded by his many stepsiblings. At the age of 10, he and his mother moved to Prague where he attended high school. He was a diligent student eager for knowledge, showing particular interest in the fields of geography and history. His interest in nature led him to the decision to devote his professional career – and for a great part his personal life as well – to geography and geomorphology.

It should come as no surprise that Daneš was also a zealous traveller who took advantage of every opportunity to explore foreign landscapes or participate in a scientific meeting abroad.

He specialised in the study of karst areas and did not hesitate to travel across the world to collect material for his scientific work. Not only did he explore Europe, he also took five overseas journeys visiting the North and Central America, Asia, Australia and the Pacific area [Fig. 1]. The gained knowledge and experience resulted in an abundance of publications dedicated to specific geographic areas (e.g. Daneš 1909c; 1910a; 1910b; 1910d; 1912a; 1914b; 1915; 1916a; 1924b²) and to the theory of geographic studies as well (e.g. Daneš 1908; 1916b; 1927). Daneš appealed not only to the scientific community, but to the general public as well with his popular publications; among these, the most notable



Fig. 1 Daneš (?) studying indigenous rock art. Australia, 1921 (AO I 12).

² Daneš was a fruitful author who published in Czech, German, French, Serbian, English or Hungarian. Those interested in his complete bibliography should consult the overview compiled by Stěhule (1928b).

ones are *Dvojím rájem* [*Through a Double Paradise*] (Daneš – Domin 1912) and *Tři léta při Tichém oceáně* [*Three Years in the Pacific*] (Daneš 1926). His favourite destination was, however, the Balkan Peninsula with its numerous karsts, as evidenced by the numerous publications dedicated to the Balkan area's physical, social, political and economic geography, as well as popular travel literature (Daneš 1902; 1905; 1906; 1909a; 1909b; 1913; Daneš – Thon 1905, to name a few). During the Great War, Daneš was sent to Bosna to study local resources for possible substitutions of the lacking supply of artificial fertilizers. After the war had ended, Daneš proved himself as a capable leader and organiser of volunteer public order units.

Rich travel experiences, international authority and leadership skills qualified Daneš for a diplomatic position that was offered to him in December 1919. He agreed to become the first Consul General of the newly established Czechoslovakia in Sydney, Australia, where he served in the years 1920–1922. His diplomatic duties did not allow for longer exploratory trips; Daneš and his wife Božena compensated for this on the way back to their homeland by taking a seven-months-long trip around the world. Being as assiduous an author as he was a traveller and scholar, his time spent in the Pacific region materialized in a number of publications, both popular and scientific (Daneš 1910a; 1910b; 1910c; 1910d; 1911; 1912a; 1912b; 1912c; 1912–1913; 1914a; 1916a; 1924a; 1924b; 1925a; 1925b).

After returning to Prague, Daneš once more concentrated on his academic career. In 1927, he and his wife travelled overseas once more to collect material for his comparative publication on karsts around the world. On 10 April 1928 he is hit by a car in Hollywood, California, and passes away the day after³.

J. V. Daneš died as he lived – travelling, exploring and researching. His remarkably rich life story and personality is beyond the scope of the paper, but has been in detail captured by others (*Sborník Československé společnosti zeměpisné* 1928; Martínek 2016; Martínek 2017).

First Pacific Journey (1909–1910)

Daneš set on his first trip to the Pacific area on 25 July 1909, accompanied by Karel Domin (1882–1953), a botanist, traveller and co-author of their popular travelogue *Through a Double Paradise* (Daneš – Domin 1912). The scientists travelled through Linz, Trieste, Port Said, Suez and Aden to Bombay, where they spent a week. From Bombay they proceeded to Colombo, Penang and Singapore to arrive in Batavia in September. Daneš and Domin spent several months in Java, studying the local geography and flora, respectively. On 1 December 1909 they boarded a ship in Surabaya to take them to Port Kennedy on Thursday Island and then along the Australian shore to Brisbane. Daneš and Domin were granted free railway fare throughout the whole country and they used it amply. On 24 December 1909 they travelled north to Cairns which served as a base for expeditions to the surrounding sites, such as Palmer Goldfield, Bellenden Ker or Harvey Creek. They attended a corroboree and then set on several longer expeditions to the inland before returning to Brisbane.

Daneš and Domin continue to travel together, taking a few short trips in the vicinity of Brisbane and then finally split in mid-April. Domin moves south to Sydney and

³ His grave stone in the Strašnice cemetery in Prague, however, states incorrectly that he died on 10 April 1928 (Martínek 2016: 18).

Melbourne, before returning back to Bohemia, unlike Daneš, who decides to continue his studies of Queensland's landscape and settlements [Fig. 2]. Daneš had turned back north to Queensland's saline lakes, travelling to Pentland, Cloncurry, Camooweal and the karst of Barkly Tableland at the border of Queensland and Northern Territory. Daneš further goes on to Burketowne, Normanton, Croydon and Cairns, and then eventually back to Brisbane. From there he shortly visited Sydney and the Jenolan Caves, Melbourne and Adelaide before proceeding to Western Australia to explore its Southwest and Goldfields regions. On 5 August, he embarked a ship to return home on 11 October 1910.



Fig. 2 A village in Queensland. Australia, undated (AO I 2).

Second Pacific Journey (1920–1923)

Daneš and his wife Božena left for Australia again on 22 May 1920, upon his appointment as the first Czechoslovak Consul General in Australia. Visiting Massava, Aden and Colombo on their way, the couple arrived in Fremantle in Western Australia on 6 August. They then continued by train – with minor excursions – from Perth to Kalgoorlie, Port Augusta, Adelaide and Melbourne, to reach Sydney a mere four days before assuming the office on 30 August. Daneš cooperated with his compatriots in order to establish business and cultural relations between the two countries. Consular activities kept Daneš busy, only scarcely permitting him for longer excursions to the Australian Alps, Blue Mountains Kangaroo Valley and some other destinations.

In June 1921, Daneš and his wife had the opportunity to travel to New Guinea [Fig. 3], landing in Port Moresby. The couple got acquainted with the life of the locals in



Fig. 3 A village in New Guinea, undated (AOI 113).

the adjacent villages, toured the islands of Samarai and Misima, continued to New Britain and from there back to Sydney via Cairns, Townsville and Brisbane. On Christmas of that year, they explored Tasmania and on Easter 1922 went to the North West and Northern Tablelands regions of New South Wales.

Daneš's appointment elapsed by the end of 1922. On 6 January 1923 he and his wife left for New Zealand where they spend nearly two months travelling around the North and South Islands, studying both the physical geography and the Maori traditions. In Auckland the couple boarded a ship for a journey across the Pacific Ocean. They visited Fiji, Tonga, Samoa and American Samoa before finally disembarking in Honolulu. The Daneš's toured the island of Oahu, moved to the Hawaii Island and, after exploring its landmarks, returned to Honolulu. From there they continued on their trip around the world via Japan, China, Canada, Britain and France to arrive in Prague in June 1923.

Daneš Collection of the Náprstek Museum

During his trips in the Pacific area, Daneš gathered an extensive collection of ethnographic objects and photo documentation that now forms an essential part of the Pacific Collection of the National Museum – Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures. More than half of the collection comprises of tools, hunting gear and weapons, such as bows and arrows, spears, axes, blades and scrapers, clubs, boomerangs, fishing nets or fire making tools. Ceremonial clubs, shields and paddles are also present as well as drums, bull-roarers (churingas), horns and flutes.

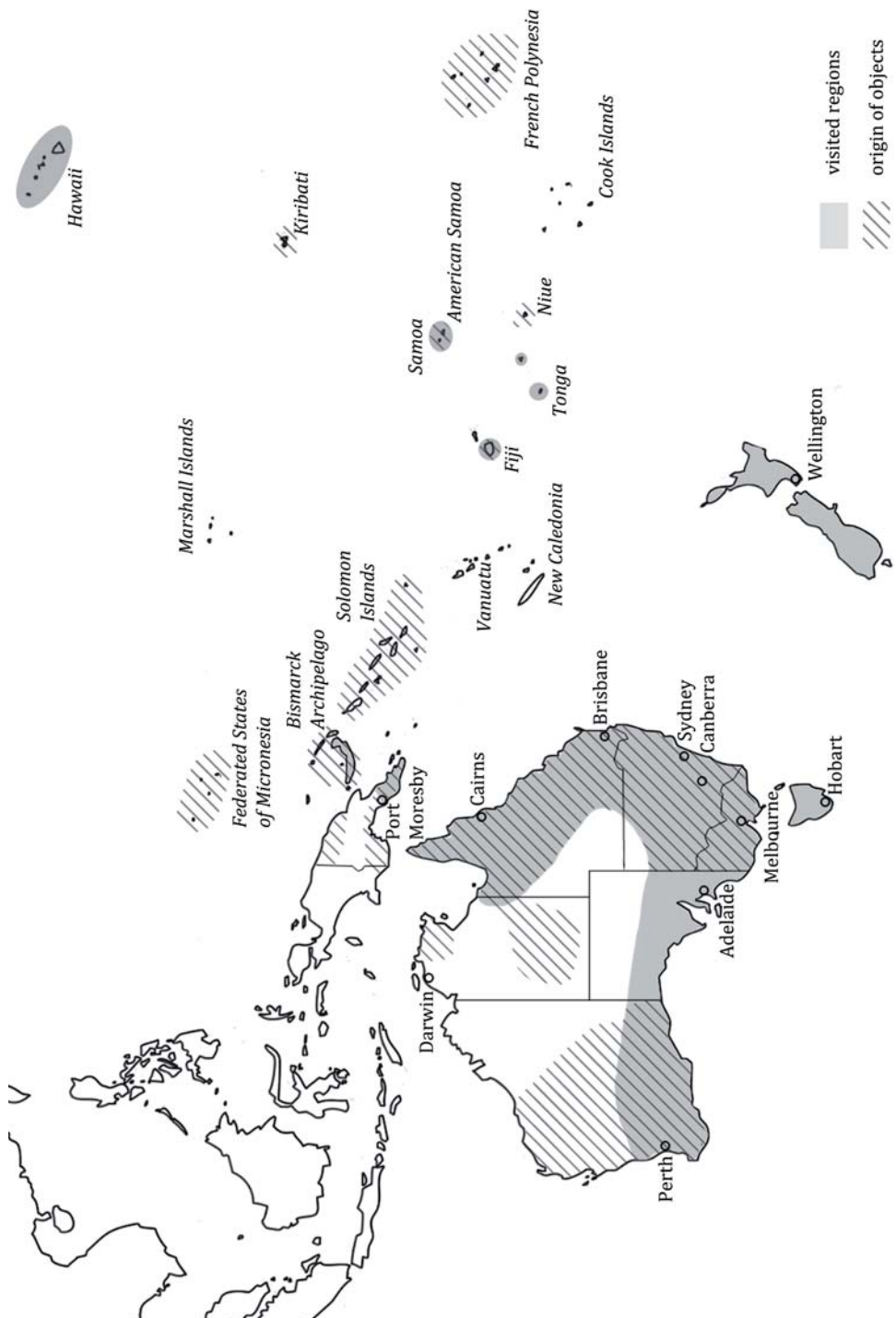


Fig. 4 Comparison of areas personally visited by J. V. Daneš and areas of origin of his collection kept in the Náprstek Museum (Drawing: Gabriela Jungová).

Other well-represented groups of objects are clothing and adornments (skirts, tapas, headdresses, armbands and bracelets, necklaces, combs) and household goods (jars and bowls made of gourd and wood, coconut shell ladles, baskets, bags). Some of the necklaces and arm/bracelets were not intended to be worn as jewelry, but served as a currency (e.g. two *mwali* bracelets used in the *kula* ring). Three overmolded skulls of ancestors are among the highlights of the assemblage.

Unfortunately, due to his untimely death, Daneš did not have the time or opportunity to organise the collection. There is, therefore, no original documentation available. In December 1941, a total of 818 objects were filed in the inventory of the Náprstek Museum, upon their transfer from the Land Museum (today's National Museum) that gained the collection from Božena Danešová, the Professor's widow. Five more items were acquired in 1983 from Emil Ballek, Daneš's colleague from the Czechoslovak Consulate in Sydney. However, during the course of time, some objects were signed away, and so the total number decreased to a still impressive sum of 706 objects.

The vast majority of the collection comes from Melanesia (531 items), most prominently from the island of New Guinea (423 items) and the adjacent Bismarck Archipelago (60 items) and Solomon Islands (40 items); some objects from the area do not have a more specific provenience. The second largest set from the collection was acquired in Australia (110 items). Surprisingly, even though Daneš's travels around the continent are well-documented, most of the objects have not been assigned to a specific region so far. Two small sets come from Polynesia (16 items) and Micronesia (12 items); the remaining 37 items have not been assigned a specific provenience. Thanks to its diversity and authenticity, the collection bears a significant ethnographic value.

The travels of Daneš around Australia, New Guinea, New Zealand and the Pacific islands are mapped in an attempt to provide a basis for a more detailed analysis of his collection kept in the Náprstek Museum in Prague. Identification of their provenience was mostly based on characteristic features for certain regions, but for a part of the assemblage the area of origin is determined very broadly (e.g. Australia, Polynesia) or has not been determined at all. To establish a foundation for further research, a map of regions that Daneš visited was compared to a map of known proveniences [Fig. 4]. These maps for a large part overlap. However, it also becomes clear that some objects (e.g. *katoua* club unique for the island of Niue or objects from the Sepik area of the New Guinea) are products of cultures with which Daneš was not in direct contact. This may have several explanations. Artefacts and objects may be subjects of exchange or trade and, especially in cases of collectibles, may be acquired in a different area than that of their origin. Daneš also established an extensive network of contacts during his trips as a private person, scholar and a diplomat, and hence some items may have been mediated or given as gifts. On the other hand, there are also areas that Daneš has visited, but no objects from these regions are known to be in the collection of the Náprstek Museum. This concerns namely New Zealand and the Hawaiian Islands. The map of areas personally explored by Daneš may therefore serve as a useful complementary tool in determining or specifying the provenience of objects from his collection; it cannot be however relied on as the sole source of information.

Conclusion

J. V. Daneš has assembled a remarkable collection of ethnographic artefacts and photographs during his two Pacific journeys. The ethnographic collection, now kept in the National Museum – Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures, has not been thoroughly investigated or published so far, and no original documentation to it is available. Daneš's travel itineraries are compared with known proveniences of some objects from his collection. It turns out that some objects come from areas or cultures that the collector has not personally visited. This suggests that, besides personal acquisitions, he may have used mediators.

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