Symposium with foreign participation
on the occasion of anniversary of the founder of the Brno museology school
Zbyněk Zbyšlav Stránský

Sympozium s mezinárodní účastí
při příležitosti životního jubilea tvůrce brněnské muzeologické školy
Zbyňka Zbyšlava Stránského

Muzealizace v soudobé společnosti
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Musealization in contemporary society
and role of museology

Asociace muzeí a galerií České republiky /
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2008
Sborník
ze sympozia s mezinárodní účastí
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Sborník příspěvků ze sympozia – Technické muzeum v Brně, 8.–10. listopadu 2006

Anthology
from symposium with foreign participation
on the occasion of anniversary of the founder
of the Brno museology school Zbyněk Z. Stránský

Musealization in contemporary society
and role of museology

Anthology from symposium – Technical museum in Brno, 8th–10th November 2006

Asociace muzeí a galerií České republiky

Czech Association of Museums and Galleries

Praha / Prague

2008
MUSEOLOGY AND MUSEUMS – THE INDIAN PARADIGM
MÚZEOLÓGIE A MUZEA – INDICKÁ PERSPEKTIVA

Manvi Seth
National Museum Institute of History of Art, Conservation and Museology, Janpath,
New Delhi, India
Národní muzeum – Institut pro dějiny umění, konzervaci a muzeologii, Janpath, Nové Dvory, Indie

There is no indigenous "museumology" but a culturally defined specific form of
practices on a lower level than of the global principle.1

India being a colony of the British inherited the model of the organization
called "Museum" in a readymade fashion, by the rulers and not by choice without
having gone into any evolutionary social, cultural or political process which necessi-
tated the collection, documentation and exhibition of material culture in a formal
manner. India like other colonized nations was not initiated on the various stages in
the gradual advancement of one museum function leading to other as is evident in
the six hundred years of museum evolution from Cabinets, Studios, Schultzkram-
mer, Theatrum sapientiae, repositories, and museums.

Museum like organization have been in continuation in India from the an-
cient and medieval period in form of temples, caves, chitrastalas royal galleries,
chattis karkhane, etc. But modern museums have truly never ever been an integral
part of Indian life. On the other hand ironically all the museums in India unlike west
are truly Indian in the sense that the objects they house and the place on view are
almost exclusively from India. Yet today there is no museum in India which has
been able to shake itself free of western models and identify and serve Indian
Needs. The original mission(s) of a museum in a colony needs to be re-looked into
from the point of view of both the ruler and the ruled.

The need of the British to know the country culturally, geographically and
economically, to be able to exploit it better, led to earlier collections. The exploita-
tion purpose was more explicit in museums of natural history or geology where the
mineral and other natural resources of the nation were catalogued. The same is
evident from the following examples: "Four years earlier, the Government, encour-
gaged by the satisfactory working of the coal mines at Raniganj, and anxious to de-
velop the country's mineral resources, had decided to found a Museum of Economic
Geology in Calcutta, and this new museum was actually opened in 1819." 2

"...the Indian Museum movement has a quadruple origin – firstly, the gov-
ernments and their European servants established scientific museums at the great
centers of government, and secondly, the Indian States have to some extent fol-
lowed this example; thirdly, the Archaeological Survey has developed a dozen local
museums; and fourthly, teaching institutions and learned societies have created
museums to suit their own special requirements." 3

The beginning of the modern museum movement in India started with the
research-oriented efforts of Asiatic Society of Bengal, founded in 1784 to study

1 Museology – An Instrument for Unity and Cultural Diversity? : Museology & Indigenous Cul-
www.irz-muenchen.de/lims/icofom/newsletter34-engl.pdf
2 MARKHAM, S. F. – HARGREAVES, H. The Museums of India, s. 7–6.
3 Tamtež, s. 19.
Indian environment and culture. To properly accommodate the varied collection of art, archaeology, and natural history, which grew in the course of research, "Oriental Museum of the Asiatic Society" was founded in Calcutta in 1814. It was designated "Indian Museum" in 1866 and relocated to its current building in 1875 and it became open to public on 1st April 1878. It encouraged the rapid growth of more Art and Archaeology museums in the country.

By 1857 there were 12 museums in India. Revolt of 1857 against the British, disrupted museum growth all over India till 1863.

In 1887 to commemorate the celebrations of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee and in 1897 for the Diamond Jubilee celebrations many museums were established in the British Empire. It led to the second impetus for the growth of museums in India. Victoria Memorial Hall, Calcutta, Watson Museum at Rajkot in 1888, Baroda State Museum and Picture Art Gallery at Baroda in 1894 are some of the examples of the same.

The Maharajas of Princely States also patronized Museum movement in their respective states in order to celebrate the Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1887. In the museums in the princely states the purpose was to appease the British rulers and simultaneously provide cultural patronage. Some of such museums were established at Jaipur, Udaipur, Rajkot, Vijaywada, Trichur, Bhopal etc. In the beautifully illustrated Catalogue of this museum prepared by T. H. Handley it is written "On August 26, 1881, an economic and industrial Museum was opened in Jeyapore, to instruct and amuse the common people." All the museums which were established pre-independence in the princely states had the buildings constructed specifically for the museum purpose.

The personal interest of Lord George Curzon, the Viceroy of India from 1898–1905 in preserving the glorious past of India through maintenance of its monuments and building more museums through the systematic help of Sir John Marshall, Director General Archeological Survey of India (from 1902 to 1928) led to the era of Lord Curzon and John Marshall in the history of museum movement in India.

The period saw the rapid increase in numbers of many archaeological museums and witnessed the intimate connection between museums and the Archeological Survey accentuated during this time. Sir John Marshall followed the policy of working in close cooperation with the various museums in Provinces and States. Excavated material from important sites was liberally distributed amongst museums.

Lord Curzon and Sir John Marshall were also responsible for setting up a chain of various site museums, located at important archaeological sites and historical places. Some of the important archeological museums which came up during this period were at Harappa, Sarnath (1904), Mohenjodaro (1925).

The awakening of nationalist sentiments in India the educated Indian upper class led to the development of a keen interest in their native culture. Personal collections started building which resulted in various museums such as the Museum of Baniga Sahitya Parishad (1910), Ashutosh Museum of Indian Art in Calcutta, the Tata collection in the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay, the Calico Museum in Ahmedabad.
Parallel to the art and archaeological museums were the medical, industrial, agricultural and university museums notable of which were the Pathology Museum Grant Medical College at Bombay (1845), the first medical museum in Asia.

There was no single museum for the large tribal population in India, but there were large ethnological collections at the Indian Museum, Calcutta, Madras Museum, Nagpur Museum and the Baroda Museum.

By 1936 there were 105 museums in India out of which no less than thirty seven museums were directly financed and administered by the Government of India or Provincial Governments. For example – Taj Museum at Agra, Prince of Wales Museum at Bombay, The Indian Museum, Calcutta, etc.

Most important document reflecting the broad frame-work and functions of museums is the 1912 bye-laws of Indian Museum Calcutta. The Bye-laws refer to the various sections and scope of the each, duties and powers of the superintendent, Privileges of the trustees, control over the officers of the museum, rules regarding the admission of visitors, facilities for students, norms for publications among others. The functions of the curator/superintendent as recognized in the pre-independence India at the onset of twentieth century are Collection, Documentation, Accession, De-accession, Preservation, Security, Interpretation/Exhibition, Education and Management.

There are records of regular annual reports of various museums, like the Museum Report of the Geological Museum of 1870, Calcutta. Amongst the functions of a museum recognized by the museum experts in Pre-independence India collection was of utmost importance. It was primarily done by three modes – purchases, gifts and loan material.

The principles of exhibition and its techniques as prevalent in England were applied to the Indian Museums also as per the economic resources available. The issue of labeling created problem for the colonial rulers and the system of labeling was random all over the India. In some cases where the exhibits had come from Europe the original labels were retained and put as such. "...at Karachi and Jaipur ethnological models are labeled in German and Botanical ones in French." Bilingual labeling system was followed generally.

The educational purpose of the museum, as perceived from the western understanding of museum education was also practised in Indian Museums. In general Indian Museums welcomed School Parties and students. In the Bye-laws of the Indian Museum, facilities for students have been dealt separately. There are records of the report on summer and winter courses of popular lecture delivered in Indian Museum during 1921. In 1907 and 1912 Museum Conferences were held in Calcutta and Madras respectively.

Many museums had special services like the ‘Purdah’ (veil) Day once a week during which the entire museum was reserved for ladies only. Some museums like

4 MARKHAM, S. F. – HARGREAVES, H. The Museums of India. "...the first duty of a museum official is to collect, to identify, and to preserve for posterity any material that may be useful for scientific or artistic purposes," s. 50.
5 Tamtez, "...it is the duty of the curator first of all to catalogue it ", s. 51.
6 Tamtez, "thirdly whether it requires preliminary treatment", s. 51.
7 Tamtez, "secondly to decide whether it shall go in the exhibited or the reserve collections", s. 51.
8 Tamtez, s. 63.
The Mysore State Museum, the Baroda Museum, the central Museum at Nagpur etc.
closed for two to three hours on the given day to the rest of the public while the
other museums like one at Karachi had whole Friday reserved for ladies and chil-
dren.

In 1936 a survey of the museums and art galleries in India, sponsored by
the Carnegie Corporation of New York was made by S. F. Markham (Empire Secretary
of the Museums Association) and H. Hargreaves (Former Director General of
the Archaeological Survey of India). All the existing museums of the country — the
undivided British India, i.e. modern-day India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and also
Burma (Myanmar) were for the first time surveyed and a report was prepared on
them. In 1936 in India there was no museum, which could represent country’s heri-
tage at the national level.

In 1947–48 the Great Exhibition of Indian Art was shown in the Burlington
House in London exhibiting the magnificent collection of Indian art which had been
collected on loan from museums of India. On the return of this exhibition an Indian
Art Exhibition encompassing 5000 years of Indian art was organized in the Rastrapati
Bahwan, the President House, in November 1948. With this collection at its
nucleus the National Museum was established in 1949 at the Rashtrapati Bhawan.
The foundation stone of the building was laid on the 12th May 1955. The Museum
was moved to its current house on 18th December 1960. Dr. Grace L. McCan Morley
was the first director of the National Museum.

With the attainment of independence, India adopted a new constitution and
under the new constitution, museums were put in the State list as a subject matter
signifying that the principal accountability of establishing museums and sustaining
the same was, henceforth on States.

At present there are about 659 museums in India of which 124 are under
the Central Government for example — the National Rail Museum, the National Mu-
seum of Natural History, the National Philately Museum and the National Children’s
Museum and the National Crafts Museum. Five museums, namely, Indian Museum,
Kolkata, the National Museum, New Delhi, Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad,
Chhatarpal Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sanghralaya, Mumbai and Government Museum,
Chennai have been declared as Museums of National Importance.

Around 274 museums are run by the State Government, and rest by the
Private/Public Trust, the Board, privately, various universities/colleges, Registered
Society, Municipal Corporation, as Autonomous and by the Gandhi Smriti Trust.

In 1970s the Maharajas, Kings of the erstwhile Princely states of India,
started putting up the royal collection for public viewing and museums housed in
forts, palaces and havelis mushroomed in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and
so on. Other than possessing a rich collection of miniature paintings, textiles and
arms which almost each of these museums have, there are galleries like the
“Elephant Howdah Gallery, Palanquin Gallery, Turban Gallery,” the Bagh Khana,

9 Mehrangarh Museum Trust, Jodhpur, Rajasthan. Dostupné na WWW: http://
www.mehrangarh.org/g_elephant.htm

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Chariots and Coaches Gallery, Glass and Mirror work collection etc. These museums get vast attendance during the tourist season by the travelers and during fairs and festivals by the local population and by rural folks from the surrounding villages. Such museums are being opened every in small towns and cities till date and in the process the vast cultural heritage of India is being put on record.

The Museum Association of India, founded in 1944 is an academic platform to support museum growth in India through annual conferences and journals. In 1965–66 a NGO called "Friends of Museum" was formed which works in alliance with National Museum Institute, National Museum, New Delhi to make the public relate better with museums.

Post-independence, in trying to keep pace with the western world degree/diploma courses in museology and conservation have been initiated along with national and international seminars and conferences, but a vast, almost impassable difference exist between the professional practices and Museology guidelines and there is an absolute communication gap between museum personnels and museologists. In 1952, University of Baroda started a two-year course in museology that was followed by Universities of Calcutta and Varanasi, the Technological Institute at Pilani and the Aligarh Muslim University. In 1989 National Museum Institute of History of Art, Conservation and Museology, Deemed University was started.

Museologists in India carry on the research irrespective of its feasibility fate in the Indian museum conditions and Indian museum personal are completely oblivious of the museum guiding principles.

The genesis of Indian Museums was not by choice and for reasons best suited to colonial rulers. Post-independence Indian Museums remain caught up in time wrap of colonial museum structure which has not so far sought contemporary purpose as per the need of the society. Majority of Indian Museums remain faithful only to objects and owe only object liability, and the rest are only caricatures of museums which have misplaced significance to both collection and visitors. Outdated notions of "Collection oriented approaches", "discipline based divisions of archaeology/natural History etc" and "curator as the know-all expert" remain at the core of all museum functions in India. Technological advances have made the display of some of the museums especially the Science museums tech-savvy. Techniques of display have been modernized but in attitude there is no attempt to answer any of the contemporary needs of Indian Society.

Collections are being made by the Indian Museums every year through Art Purchase Committees and field collecting. Museums run by the Archaeological Survey of India acquire collections from the annual excavations and explorations. Museums like the National Museum, New Delhi, Indian Museum, Calcutta, Allahabad Museum Society increase acquisitions through purchase and gifts. The pattern of acquisition through purchase in Indian Museums is as follows: "1306 art objects

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10 Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum, City Palace, Jaipur, established 1959 but changed in purpose and functions in 1970. Dostupné na WWW: http://www.royalfamilyjaipur.com/m_muse.htm
11 City Palace Museum, Udaipur, Rajasthan.
12 "A gold coin of Shah Alam II was gifted to the Museum by Smt. Tripti Sen Gupta of Kolkata. Two wooden masks depicting wit and wrath were received as gifts from the Royal Government of Bhutan. Three musical instruments were received as gifts from a baul of West Bengal." Annual Report 2001–2002, Ministry of Human Resource and Development. 5.61 Acquisition, Indian Museum, s. 58.
amounting to... were acquired by the National Museum Art Acquisition Committee"^{13}, "216 art objects were acquired through Art Acquisition Committee (National Museum)"^{14}, "The Museum (Indian Museum, Calcutta) also acquired through purchase a Burmese wood carving of Garuda and a Mughal gold coin"^{15}. "During the year under report (2001–2002), the Art Purchase Committee of the Allahabad Museum Society recommended the purchase of 3 Oudh Silver coins, 1 ancient silver coin, 1 silver Shah Alum coin, bunch of old group photographs of eminent personalities, 6 gold coins belonging to..., a lot of 9 silver coins belonging to..., 9 terracotta objects, a lot of 6 copper punch mark coins, 1 gold coin of... and 10 animal-shaped beads made of semi-precious stones."^{16} But at the same time the musealization of objects in India at present remains on the colonial outlines set almost hundred and fifty years ago, in another era by outsiders for a long deceased function. For retrospection, ratification and progress of Indian Museums, a working relationship on a common ground of Museology and museums is utmost required.

Public perception of the role essayed by museums in India at present can be enumerated in the following ways: "useful" for scholars, "good to think"^{17} for the elite, a compulsory educational outing for the school children, for tourists these may or may not be on their itinerary depending on the nature of the museum and its location, for the parents these may facilitate homework, and the rural folks wonder the reason behind spending so much on broken images.

**Resumé**


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^{13} Annual Report 1989–90, Department of Culture, Ministry of Human Resource and Development, 3.1 Acquisitions, National Museum, New Delhi, s. 16.
^{17} APPADURAI, A. – BRECKENRIDGE, C. A. Museums are Good to think : Heritage on View in India. In Museums and Communities : Politics of Public Culture. Smithsonian, 1992, s. 36.