

Kirsch, Otakar

**Association of museum workers in defence against counterfeiting and unfair trade practices :
comments on the origins of organised meetings of museum workers on an international basis**

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abstrakt | abstract ▷

The paper is dealing with the origins and development of the oldest international professional organisation, which from its founding at the end of the 19th century until as late as the outbreak of the World War II has united museum workers from Europe and North America. It analyses the activities of the Association and its organisational structure, shows how museum workers from the Czech lands have participated in its functioning, and follows up some forms of how this specific association has impacted the life of the then museums. On a general level it points out the significance, which the association of museum specialists has had for professionalisation of museum work and perception of the museum phenomenon in the first half of the 20th century.

Príspevek si klade za cieľ priblížiť vznik a vývoj najstarší mezinárodnej profesnej organizácie, ktorá od svojho založenia na konci 19. storočia až do vypuknutia druhej svetovej vojny združovala významné muzejní pracovníky z Európy a Severnej Ameriky. Spolu s analýzou činnosti Svazu a jeho organizačnej štruktúry si bude všímať predovšetkým spôsob participácie muzejníkov z českých zemí na jeho chodu. Sledovaný budú tiež niektoré formy pôsobenia tohto špecifického uskupenia na tehdejší muzejní denný život. Studie zároveň v obecných rovinách upozorní na význam združovania odborných zamestnancov múzeí pre profesionalizáciu muzejní práce a uvažovanie o muzeálnom fenoméne v prvej polovici 20. storočia.

Mgr. Otakar Kirsch, Ph.D.

Since 2005 he has been fellow (since 2009 lecturer) in the Museology Section of the Department of Archaeology and Museology at the Faculty of Arts of the Masaryk University in Brno. In 2009 he defended his doctoral thesis in the field of Historical sciences at the Department of History FF MU. The treatise dealing with German museums in Moravia was published in a modified form in 2014 under the title "(Po)zapomenutí nositelé paměti. Německé muzejnictví na Moravě" (Forgotten memory bearers. German museum work in Moravia). He specialises in the history of museums and museology, and museum documentation.

Otakar Kirsch

Association of Museum Workers in Defence Against Counterfeiting and Unfair Trade Practices:

Comments on the origins of organised meetings of museum workers on an international basis

Establishment of professional organisations comprising representatives of individual branches of human activity, which demand special knowledge, abilities and skills, counts among permanent and inseparable components of social evolution. From the beginning already they emerged with the aim to influence the world around them in their own favour, but they also had fundamental importance for cultivation of environment and quality of life of their members which, mainly in earlier times, considerably determined their social status.¹ However, they also have enhanced the professional level. Among the most frequent means of qualification enhancement counted the obtaining of information on the state of affairs in the one or other scope of activity, and organisation of joint events, which often resulted in regular and deeper contacts between the persons involved. It can be said that the associations of representatives of individual professions have often not only established a virtual basis for further development of the one or other discipline, but also co-formed it to a considerable extent.

Associations also played an important role in connection with museums and a newly emerging discipline – museology. Besides the establishment of academic institutions, literary acts and realisation of large conferences, they have often been referred to as milestones of their development. Apart from several “national” associations, the activities of international organisations also are pointed out, above all the post-war *International Council of Museums – ICOM*² and its integral parts such

as, for example, the *International Committee for Museology – ICOM*.³ Regular meetings of museum workers at this level, however, had a long tradition and in some cases they did not yet become part of a traditional narrative on the history of the museum phenomenon. Whereas the museum association which was active within the League of Nations during the interwar period did not escape the notice of some museum workers and museologists,⁴ this was not the case with its predecessor as well as contemporary, the *Association of Museum Workers in Defence Against Counterfeiting and Unfair Trade Practices* (Ger. Verband von Museen-Beamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebaren, hereinafter VMB). Its activities have been mentioned only marginally, or the main motivation of the authors was to capture the given topic from positions other than the point of view of the development of museum phenomenon.⁵ So how was the program content of the activities carried out by the Association? Who has participated in functioning of the Association and how was

³ E.g. MENSCH, Peter van. *Towards a methodology of museology* [online]. Zagreb: University of Zagreb, 1992. [cit. 2014-12-18]. Available from www: <<http://www.museum.ee/uploads/files/mensch03.htm>>.

⁴ E.g. BAZIN, Germain. *The Museum Age*. New York: Universe Books, 1967, p. 267; MAROEVIĆ, Ivo. *Introduction to Museology: the European Approach*. Munich: Verlag Dr. Christian Müller-Straten, 1998, p. 79; NEUSTUPNÝ, Jiří. *Otázky dnešního muzejnictví: příspěvky k obecné a speciální muzeologii*. Praha: Orbis, 1950, pp. 13–15.

⁵ Probably the most comprehensive insight into the activities and development of the Association was provided by WILSON, Timothy. *Faking maiolica in the early twentieth century: the evidence of the Museen-Verband* [online]. Oxford: Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology, pp. 1–11 [cit. 2015-05-21]. Available from www: <http://www.ashmolean.org/documents/Staff/WilsonTim/ImbertAndFakingMaiolica.pdf>

¹ Professional organisations constituted in the 19th century can be classed with a new type of groupings, the so-called associations. Unlike the previous forms of groupings: people have joined them upon their own decision, each individual was able to actively influence the objectives and further development of the association. Associations made efforts to act within the public sector for the common weal, they comprised persons of different social status and did not affect all spheres of life of their members. NIPPERDEY, Thomas. *Verein als soziale Struktur in Deutschland im späten 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhundert*. In NIPPERDEY, Thomas. *Gesellschaft, Kultur, Theorie: gesammelte Aufsätze zur neueren Geschichte*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1976, pp. 174–183.

² E.g. BAGHLI, Sid Ahmed, Patrick BOYLAN and Yani HERREMANN. *History of ICOM (1946–1996)*. Paris: International Council of Museums, 1998.

and by ANANIEV, Vitaly Gennadiyevich. *Natsionalnyie i mezhdunarodnyie muzejnyie organizatsii: uchebno-metodicheskoe posobie* [online]. Sankt Peterburg: Sankt-Peterburgskiy gosudarstvennyy universitet, Institut istorii, 2013, pp. 60–64 [cit. 2015-06-18]. Available from www: <https://history.spbu.ru/files/departments/nauchnyy/Publikacii_sotrudnikov/PDF/Ananiev_UMP.pdf>. The fundamental source of information for the study of history of the Association, which the author has used, were the so-called Verhandlungen, that is proceedings of individual meetings of the Association. Currently they are available on *Verhandlungen der ... Versammlung des Verbandes von Museen-Beamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebaren. - Hamburg 1.1898 - 34.1938* [online]. Berlin: Kunstbibliothek der staatlichen Museen zu Berlin [cit. 2015-09-18]. Available from www: <<http://www.ifskb.de/node/291>>.

it organised? To what extent it has influenced the museums of that time and the ways how they have been perceived? These questions should be answered in the following paper.

The conditions of origin and a brief outline of development of VMB

The period comprising the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, in which the professional association of museum workers in question has gradually been constituted, is in museological literature and partly also in historiography regarded as a distinct turning point in the history of museums. The doyen of Czech museology, Jiří Neustupný (1905–1981), for example, did not hesitate to declare about it: “In those days, at the end of the 19th century, museology came into being, which then should have taken the lead in museum management all over the world.”⁶ The shifts in opinions concerning the questions of purpose and way of functioning of this type of memory institutions were reflected not only in numerous discussions within the nascent “national” professional organisations or on the pages of journals dealing with the problem of museums,⁷ but also in the practice. Besides the infinite number of important events, new impulses and thoughts, which have refined the then development of the discipline, the emergence of VMB was mainly determined by two dominant factors – the effort to enhance the level of one of the fundamental components of museum work (connoisseurship) and establishment of a more suitable environment for its successful realisation (prevention of unfair art trade). Since both of the problems became topical for as good as the whole museum sphere of that time, they should have been solved by a regular exchange of the newest opinions and information, which are not confined within the narrow limits of individual states, but are discussed on a wider international basis.

The need for mutual communication and cooperation was then mainly reflected with museum experts working in specialised institutions, above all those focused on art. Besides the museums of art, which were mainly

focused on the top pictorial and sculptural works of art of the past and today, there also were very progressive institutes of applied arts tightly connected with contemporary social events.⁸ Both these types of museum institutions paid more and more attention to educational activities, but their employees still also continued their effort to apply new knowledge from several disciplines, in particular the history of art. Many joint interests of museums and the still young and in many regards undeveloped discipline have formed since the beginning already a quite tight bond, in which the museum workers also were involved.⁹ They contributed in a significant way to the establishment of academic institutions, professional organisations, and to the development of theoretic thinking within the discipline. Important was the mutual interconnection in the constitution process of the phenomenon of the so-called connoisseurship of art. Whereas to many researchers in universities it gradually became one of the components of the subject History of Art,¹⁰ museum workers have regarded it since the beginning as an integral part of the musealisation process, mainly its selection and thesaurisation phases.

Moreover, the museums of art and their counterparts focused on applied arts have turned into places where the connoisseurship activity has been developed and deepened by a direct contact with collector's items, but above all by specialised monographs, journals and catalogues published by their employees. However, despite a relatively well-developed mobility of experts at that time, many works, mainly those from abroad, were only hardly accessible to them. Therefore it is in no way surprising that they accepted with gratitude the offer to become members of the emerging association, which enabled not only an immediate confrontation with knowledge and opinions of colleagues, but also the opportunity to have a look at unique exhibits in annually organised sessions of the association. The need for mutual cooperation, however, was also felt in other branches. One of them was the problem of illegal trade in objects with cultural significance, whose result was not only their inclusion into private collections inaccessible to the public, but also the closely related phenomenon of counterfeiting. That “...transformation of an artwork

into goods”¹¹ thus became a very sensitively perceived international problem, which could not be solved just by legislative measures at the national level.

The above-mentioned burning questions related to the then museums then became an important impulse to establishment of VMB. The initiators of the first interest association of museum workers tried to encourage through these questions a quite heterogeneous mixture of experts inclined (not only) to the history of art. Even though the need for communication arose from almost all European countries as well as from overseas, it was obvious that the activity of the prepared international communication platform must be shielded by experts from countries with long museum tradition. Besides the USA where museums were traditionally more open towards the non-professional public and were relatively tightly associated with a widely conceived education of all social classes,¹² the most progressive country, at least in European context, was represented by the Imperial Germany.¹³ It was therefore in no way surprising that the crucial contribution to establishment of VMB was made by Justus Brinckmann (1843–1915) from Hamburg.¹⁴ He together with Heinrich Angst (1847–1922) from Switzerland contacted many museum workers and presented to them the main outline of how the new organisation should have functioned. Because their initiative was relatively well received, they were soon able to call the constitutive general assembly.

The development of VMB, from its beginning in 1898 when 14 out of the total number of 25 original members have gathered for the first time in Hamburg,¹⁵ to as late as its gradual decline during the World War II, can be divided into two phases about equally long. The first one, so to say, a “golden age” of the organisation, lasted until 1914. During that period it was able to attract under its wings significant representatives of the sphere of museums and at the same time solve successfully the problems given

⁶ NEUSTUPNÝ, Jiří. *Otázky dnešního muzejnictví: příspěvky k obecné a speciální muzeologii*. Praha: Orbis, 1950, p. 13.

⁷ About professional associations and museum journals of that time e.g. STRÁNSKÝ, Zbyněk, *Z. Úvod do studia muzeologie*. Brno: Univerzita J. E. Purkyně v Brně, 1979, pp. 26–27, 53–55; LORENTE, Jesús Pedro. The development of museum studies in universities: from technical training to critical museology. *Museum management and curatorship* [online]. 2012, vol. 27, iss. 3, pp. 237–238 [cit. 2015-05-02]. Available from www: <http://www.academia.edu/18446608/The_development_of_museum_studies_in_universities_from_technical_training_to_critical_museology>.

⁸ E.g. MÜNDT, Barbara. *Die deutschen Kunstgewerbemuseen im 19. Jahrhundert*. München: Prestel, 1974. Studien zur Kunst des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts, vol. 22.

⁹ KROUPA, Jiří. *Metodologie dějin umění 1. Školy dějin umění*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 1996, p. 164.

¹⁰ With this subject, after all, has also often been classed the art-historical museum management. KROUPA, Jiří. *Historik umění v galerii. Několik poznámek k aktuálnímu tématu. Bulletin Moravské galerie v Brně*, 1998, vol. 54, p. 13.

¹¹ FLÜGEL, Katharina. *Einführung in die Museologie*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2005, p. 49.

¹² ALEXANDER, Edward P. *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums*. Walnut Creek: Alta Mira, 1996, pp. 30–35; COLEMAN, Laurence Vail. *The Museum in America: A Critical Study*. Washington: American Association of Museums, 1939.

¹³ For the analysis of educational processes in the then museums of Berlin, Dresden, Munich and Hamburg see VIÉREGG, Hildegard. *Vorgeschichte der Museumspädagogik: Dargestellt an der Museumsentwicklung in den Städten Berlin, Dresden, München und Hamburg bis zum Beginn der Weimarer Republik*. Münster, Hamburg: Lit, 1991. Museen – Geschichte und Gegenwart, vol. 2.

¹⁴ About his work in the Hamburg Museum and his life story e.g. SPIELMANN, Heinz. *Justus Brinckmann*. Hamburg: Ellert und Richter, 2002.

¹⁵ *Verhandlungen der ersten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museen-Beamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren, Hamburg, 7. Oktober 1898*. Hamburg: Lütkes & Wulff, (Neudruck 1908), p. 2.

by the Association statutes. However, the subsequent decline reflected in distinct delays between individual meetings of the Association and the related break-up of many existing bonds between museum workers were not affected by war events only. The main reason was the decease of the founder and leading personality of VMB, Justus Brinckmann.¹⁶ However, the decrease in importance of the professional organisation continued in the interwar period as well. Besides external factors (economic crisis, tense domestic political situation in many member countries) it was also caused by the establishment of an international museum organisation within the League of Nations, which generated another, thematically wider, platform for grouping of museum workers and a closer shift of some of the original members towards national associations. The German component in the VMB thus became ever stronger and certain deviation from the original international concept of the organisation was also emphasized by the Nazi coup d'état in 1933. Even though the Association still tried to give new impulses to its activity and transform the organisation, the interest of many museum workers from numerous countries continued to gradually decrease.¹⁷ However, the definitive end of the museum organisation came with the beginning of the World War II, so the meeting planned for 1939 in Cambridge, England, already has not taken place.¹⁸

¹⁶ The Association was woken up from inactivity by the then executive director Richard Stettiner (Museum of Art and Industry, Hamburg). Being supported by some other members (e.g. Otto von Falke, Museum of Decorative Arts, Berlin) he initiated a 1917 meeting in Stuttgart, to which he invited representatives of associations from the allied powers (Austria-Hungary) and neutral states (Sweden, Switzerland, Netherlands, Norway). Von Falke then advised Stettiner to wait with preparations for the meeting, which according to him should not have begun until the establishment of the German professional organisation (Deutscher Museumsverband) in Frankfurt. *Verhandlungen der siebzehnten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museumsbeamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren. Stuttgart, 17. und 18. September.* Hamburg: Lüteke & Wulff, [1917], pp. 5–6. About the mutual relations between both these organisations see also KLAUSEWITZ, Wolfgang. *66 Jahre Deutscher Museumsbund. Köln am Rhein: Deutscher Museumsbund e. V., Rheinland Verlag, 1984*, p. 18.

¹⁷ At that time, the VMB representatives strived intensively to enhance the number of non-German members and live up to the reputation of an international museum organisation. They even picked some personalities, who should have been called to take part in association meetings (Barbanti, Tarchiani, Morassi, Mann, Sotiriu, Huyghe, Charbonneaux). *Verhandlungen der vierunddreißigsten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museumsbeamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren. Kassel, den 17. bis 19. und 22. Oktober 1938* [Berlin]: [1938], p. 4, 8. The share of other countries, however, still remained proportional. In 1938, for example, membership was newly granted to representatives of the USA, Great Britain, Denmark and Yugoslavia. *Ibidem*, pp. 7–8.

¹⁸ International events have already significantly affected the organising of an Association meeting in the previous year. Due to a tumultuous political situation caused by the September crisis, whose result was the secession of frontier zones of Czechoslovakia in favour of the German Reich, the original date and venue (Munich) were cancelled and the meeting has eventually taken place in German Kassel. *Ibidem*, p. 1.

Activities of the Association

A considerably limiting factor of the Association activities, of which already the founders of VMB were conscious, was the general readiness of the whole undertaking for action. Taking into consideration the communication possibilities of that time we can only hardly suppose any more extensive participation of members in joint museum activities, even though some attempts in this regard yet occurred within the Association.¹⁹ Here should be sought one of the answers to the question, why the top representatives have only focused on a narrow field of museum activity (the problem of counterfeits and unfair trade) and did not feel competitively threatened by other initiatives and activities of that time, such as, for example, the emergence of the International Museum Association, meetings of the Art Historical Congress²⁰ or activities of national professional organisations of museum workers.²¹ Most of the questions and problems have been discussed in individual Association meetings, where the attendants have familiar-

¹⁹ For example, when the possibilities of an organised international exchange of duplicates were discussed in the Salzburg meeting in 1932, it was emphasized that in this issue the Association can only play a mediating role. *Verhandlungen der achtundzwanzigsten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museumsbeamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren. Salzburg, den 29. bis 31. August 1932.* Hamburg: Lüteke & Wulff, [1932], pp. 5–6. As far as the activities themselves are concerned, for example Karl Schäfer (Museum of Applied Art, Cologne) in 1911 proposed to organise a travelling exhibition of counterfeits and pay attention to realisation of educational courses which were already planned earlier. *Verhandlungen der vierzehnten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museumsbeamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren. Brüssel, 27. und 28. September 1911.* Hamburg: Lüteke & Wulff, [1911], p. 27. The exhibition has eventually taken place in the 1927 meeting in Hamburg. *Verhandlungen der dreißigsten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museumsbeamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren. Hamburg, 12. und 13. September 1927.* Hamburg: Lüteke & Wulff, [1927], p. 1.

²⁰ When in 1933 one of the members (Johnny Roosval, Picture Gallery of the Stockholm University, Hallwyl Museum) proposed to include the VMB as a section into the Art Historical Congress, he was immediately rejected. With regard to personal interconnection of both these institutions, however, a spatial and chronological synchronisation of their meetings has sometimes been considered. *Verhandlungen der neunundzwanzigsten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museumsbeamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren. Mainz, den 21. August bis 23. August 1933.* Hamburg: Lüteke & Wulff, [1933], p. 3. About the meetings of the Art Historical Congress and their programme content SCHMIDT, Gerhard. *Die internationalen Kongresse für Kunstgeschichte. Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte, 1983*, vol. 36, pp. 7–116.

²¹ Of crucial importance seemed to be the relationship with German Museum Association founded in 1917, whose members became the most German representatives of the VMB. However, with regard to different orientation, both organisations have not regarded each other as rivals but, on the contrary, tried to maintain mutual contacts. *Verhandlungen der siebzehnten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museumsbeamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren. Stuttgart, 17. und 18. September.* Hamburg: Lüteke & Wulff, [1917], pp. 9–10. They also were forthcoming to each other in setting the dates of their meetings. E.g. *Verhandlungen der achtzehnten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museumsbeamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren. Würzburg, 27. und 28. Mai 1918.* Hamburg: Lüteke & Wulff, [1918], p. 1.

ised themselves with opinions and thoughts of their counterparts.

Another factor considerably affecting the activities of the association was the effort to keep some fields of its work secret. Still in 1931, the leading personality of VMB, Max Sauerlandt (1880–1934), complained that: "...it has repeatedly happened that some persons, who are not members of the Association, were informed on these proceedings",²² whereby he drew the attention of the other delegates to the fact that some kind of information, which was obtained in the Association meetings and from printed materials published on this occasion, are not intended for free disposal. The cautious approach to publication of sensitive data was associated with relatively frequent scandals, where many exhibited works of art have been revealed as counterfeits.²³ There was a ticking time bomb of further potential revelations, which might have not only damaged the reputation of particular museums or private collectors, but also undermined the general confidence of professional and non-professional public in the art presented.²⁴ It also remained unclear, to what extent the analysis of some objects of art has been conclusive and relevant, which might have led to legal actions by their owners. The issue eventually went so far that the leading officials of the Association called upon the others to reject giving interviews in the press, and publishing private correspondence where these issues have been discussed.²⁵

The fundamental question associated with the activities of VMB is, to what extent the Association has taken into consideration and defended the general interests of the then

²² *Verhandlungen der siebenundzwanzigsten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museumsbeamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren. Augsburg, 31. August, 1. und 2. September 1931.* Hamburg: Lüteke & Wulff, [1931], p. 2.

²³ The counterfeiter, however, often have produced high-quality work, as it was the case with one of the most famous art forgers of the first half of the 20th century, Han van Meegeren. About him KREUGER, Frederik H. *A New Vermeer: Life and Work of Han van Meegeren.* Rijswijk: Quantas Publishers, 2007.

²⁴ Some members were initially afraid of worsened relations with art merchants. Brinckmann, on the other hand, expected from the whole undertaking that in some cases they could be legally sanctioned. *Verhandlungen der ersten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museums-Beamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren, Hamburg, 7. Oktober 1898.* Hamburg: Lüteke & Wulff, (Neudruck 1908), p. 3.

²⁵ In the history of the Association it sometimes happened that the information on fakes reached the ears of the original owners. So in 1929 the assembly was informed that Karl Reichel from Munich got wind, it is not known how, of a counterfeit from his collection. In such cases then the delegates were warned to observe the rule of confidentiality. Its violation has been strictly sanctioned (exclusion from the Association). *Verhandlungen der fünfundzwanzigsten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museumsbeamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren. Leipzig, 23. und 24. September 1929.* Hamburg: Lüteke & Wulff, [1929], pp. 1–2. Later, the leaving members have even been requested to give back all printed materials of the Association dealing with the problem of forgery. These were then placed at the disposal of alternate members. *Verhandlungen der einunddreißigsten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museumsbeamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren. Haag, den 9. bis 11. September 1935.* [Berlin]: [1935], p. 5.

museum workers. Unlike the present-day international or national associations, which try to seize the problem of museums on the largest possible scale, the top representatives of the Association have only focused on some selected topics. The acuteness and topicality of the occurrence of art fakes in collections of museums and private owners thus not only became one of the immediate motifs, on the basis of which it was possible to develop the international cooperation of museum workers, but they determined in a fundamental way the form and target of activities of the Association. Even though during the development of the Association we can observe evident tendencies to pay attention to other issues related to the museum phenomenon, their proportion, also due to preference of the above-mentioned thematic circle, remained only marginal. The thematic focus of activities of the Association can thus be divided into five main thematic circles:

- providing information on revealed counterfeits, their authors and sellers;
- the problem of theft and illegal export of cultural relics;
- practical questions narrowly associated with the above two topics;
- questions related to museum practice;
- promotion of own museum activity.

As it was already indicated, the main content of the Association activity has mainly consisted in identification of counterfeits and fakes and their mediation to members. Among the wide spectrum of these items can be classed the imitations of high art (paintings, sculptures) and above all of applied art, where besides textile, tableware or furniture much attention has been paid to ceramic products.²⁶ The focal point then became not only the incriminated parts of museum collections from the prehistory until today, but also further assemblages tightly associated with museums, such as objects in private collections or in one-time presentation activities like sales exhibitions, or those offered for sale by auction houses. The Association members have been informed on individual revelations regularly in annual meetings. However, with regard to their, often limited, possibilities

of taking part in these actions and to a huge number of cases discussed, an initiative soon arose, within which the information and knowledge of fakes should have been transmitted in other ways. The first of them was the publication of the so-called *Communications* (Mitteilungen),²⁷ which was in fact the printed form of information on individual fakes or groups of fakes, sometimes supplemented with photos – an at that time already indispensable tool for examination of objects with artistic value. An important action also was the establishment of the so-called Archive,²⁸ that is accurately structured records on approved fakes from the past, ordered and kept by the leading official of the Association.²⁹ The file, which has constantly been extended by the activity of Association members and was accessible to them, was transferred later from Hamburg to Berlin where it was probably destroyed during the war events.³⁰ Within the Association activities, it was also intended to set up a bibliography which would summarise

the previous specialised publications and articles about counterfeiting.³¹

Discussions on the problem of counterfeits were soon enriched with the topic of new methods and techniques (X-rays, silicon discharge tubes, luminography), with the help of which these objects were easier to identify. Great interest was awakened by reports on revelation of individual counterfeiters, art traders knowingly selling fakes, traffickers and thieves. Particularly in the case of stolen museum objects, the representatives of the Association tried to act as mediators of the information transfer between robbed institutions and the other Association members. They even set exact rules and conditions, under which they are willing to share and pass on these data.³² The activities of the VMB, however, also exhibited an effort for prevention and appeal to an active solution of this problem. For example, during acquisition and in contact with private collectors the museum workers should have to pay an increased attention to missing works of art, which were mentioned in specialised literature.

Even though in official documents of VMB it was clearly determined that it should mainly focus on the problem of fakes and unfair trade in objects with cultural significance, the programme also often contained questions, which were directly or indirectly associated with this phenomenon. Among them were, for example, security and protection of collections, possibilities and types of insurance, the way of installing the originals, substitutes and evident counterfeits, or the legislation concerning the museums. The members have thus been familiarised with different experiences from other countries which, however, were often quite difficult to apply to the situation in their domestic environment, despite the evident benefit of the information obtained. As it was already indicated, further significant questions discussed within the VMB became the issues connected with museum practice. Among them can be classed the problem of conservation,

²⁷ In 1898 already, the chairman Justus Brinckmann came with an idea to take photos of individual fakes and send them to interested members of VMB for cost price. *Verhandlungen der ersten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museums-Beamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren, Hamburg, 7. Oktober 1898*. Hamburg: Lüteke & Wulff, (Neudruck 1908), p. 4. Mitteilungen have published fakes, about which the members have been informed in the meetings, as well as those which already did not fit in their programme. Currently it is possible to view the editions from 1899–1939. *Mitteilungen des Museen-Verbandes, Hamburg 1899–1939* [online]. Berlin: Kunstbibliothek der staatlichen Museen zu Berlin [cit. 2015-05-18]. Available from www: <<http://www.ifskb.de/node/292>>.

²⁸ Brinckmann published a part of the Archive for the needs of the Association by the medium of the so-called *Abbildungen aus dem Archiv des Verbandes von Museumsbeamten* (Illustrations from the Archive of the Association of Museum Workers) and set also the rules and provisions, under which they could be published: 1) only approved fakes could be included, 2) each picture should be equipped with a short text and with a number from the Archive, but the data on the origin, the seller or the storage place should not be given because all members could find them out on the basis of the archive number, which was accessible to them. *Verhandlungen der neunten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museums-Beamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren, Dresden, 4. bis 5. Oktober 1906*. Hamburg: Lüteke & Wulff, [1906], pp. 4–5. The illustrations can be viewed today on *Abbildungen aus dem Archiv des Verbandes von Museumsbeamten* [online]. Berlin: Kunstbibliothek der staatlichen Museen zu Berlin [cit. 2015-05-18]. Available from www: <<http://www.ifskb.de/node/293>>.

²⁹ According to the statute, the members were obliged to call attention to newly appearing fakes and immediately notify the presidium (*Verhandlungen der vierten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museums-Beamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren, London, Burlington House, 1. bis 5. Oktober 1901*. Hamburg: Lüteke & Wulff, [1901], p. 5), which could have prevented many irretrievable damages. *Verhandlungen der dreißigsten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museumsbeamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren, Danzig, den 3. bis 5. September 1934*, Hamburg: Lüteke & Wulff, [1934], p. 6. In 1935 it was also decided that the announcement requirement for members arises just in cases of particularly dangerous or significant fakes. *Verhandlungen der einunddreißigsten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museumsbeamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren, Haag, den 9. bis 11. September 1935*. [Berlin]: [1935], p. 12.

³⁰ Wilson assumes that it was destroyed during the Allied bombing of Berlin in 1944. WILSON, Timothy. *Faking maiolica in the early twentieth century: the evidence of the Museen-Verband* [online]. Oxford: Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology, p. 8 [cit. 2015-05-21]. Available from www: <<http://www.ashmolean.org/documents/Staff/WilsonTim/ImbertAndFakingMaiolica.pdf>>.

³¹ *Verhandlungen der dreizehnten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museums-Beamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren, München, 21.–24. September 1910*. Hamburg: Lüteke & Wulff, [1910], p. 29.

³² It was approved that in case of such a loss the museum concerned should immediately send a notice to the Association, which would contain a brief description of the inventory item and its photo. The presidium should then have to disseminate the obtained data quickly among the other members. *Ibidem*, p. 10. There also was an effort to set the conditions, under which the VMB would mediate the information on thefts sent by museums to its members. The notifiers should have to agree that the data would be provided to all Association museums, as well as to listed museums, merchants and collectors, and that they would pay all costs connected with printing and distribution of the data on stolen objects. *Verhandlungen der achtzehnten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museumsbeamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren, Würzburg, 27. und 28. Mai 1918*. Hamburg: Lüteke & Wulff, [1918], p. 22.

²⁶ WILSON, Timothy. *Faking maiolica in the early twentieth century: the evidence of the Museen-Verband*, pp. 1–6 [online]. Oxford: Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology [cit. 2015-05-21]. Available from www: <<http://www.ashmolean.org/documents/Staff/WilsonTim/ImbertAndFakingMaiolica.pdf>>. For the list of fakes revealed by members of the Association according to individual types see *Register über das auf den Tagungen des Verbandes von Museumsbeamten von 1898 bis 1927 behandelte Material an Fälschungen* [online]. Berlin: Kunstbibliothek der staatlichen Museen zu Berlin [cit. 2015-09-18]. Available from www: <<http://spkkunstbibliothek-cdm.gbv.de/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/VMB&CISOPTR=21206&CISOSHOW=2104>>.

visual design of exhibitions, the ways of labeling the items with registration numbers and captions, arrangement of objects in an exhibition, museum promotion, education of museum workers and youth, or establishment of a database of duplicates. Interesting is that these topics were mainly treated by members, whereas the presidium adhered to two main articles of the Association statute. One part of the meeting was then used by the delegates for presentation of their own activities on an international basis (organisation of new permanent and temporary exhibitions, acquisition of valuable collections, etc.).

Organisational structure

The successful development of an interest or professional organisation is to a great extent always dependent on the way of planning, arrangement and realisation of activities corresponding with their main objectives, and on the general functioning of the association. In order to accomplish and fulfil this purpose then usually some interconnected internal structures are created, among which the relevant competences specified in the regulations, statute or organisation rules are distributed. During the more than forty-year-long existence of VMB also gradually emerged some internal structures: besides the regular Association meetings there also was the so-called presidium (Vorort), many committees (Ausschüsse) and sub-committees (Unterausschüsse), supplemented with numerous members. Anyway, the activities and mutual cooperation of individual subjects have suffered from many maladies springing from the thematic focus of the VMB and above all from its international platform. The executive and administrative bodies thus had not only to cope with often quite turbulent conditions inside the Association, but they also very frequently had to react to the constantly changing global situation in cultural, economic and political life.

The supreme decision-making body of the Association became the Association meetings held in several languages.³⁵ Their programme did not include only the presentation of experiences and knowledge by individual attendants, even though it was often perceived as the main reason of regular meetings. Under the direction

of the chairman and an authorised body³⁴ it created space for crucial decisions on further development of the organisation. The assembly was competent to make fundamental changes in the programme and organisational structure which, however, rather remained privilege of a narrow circle of leading personalities within the VMB. In reality, the attendants of the meeting, under the direction of the chairman, have focused on the election of candidate members, establishment of various work groups, or proposed motions for partial extension of the Association activities. The meetings have taken place annually, except for several war and post-war years, and this condition was not changed by the initiative trying to reduce this usual periodicity because of meetings of other similar organisations, either.³⁵ An important role was also played by the venue of the meetings. Initially they have taken place in European cities,³⁶ the interwar period saw a considerable increase in frequency of destinations in German-speaking lands, which can be considered one of the displays of a partial weakening of the international character and prestige of the Association.³⁷

VMB had to be active in the periods between the annual meetings as well. This condition gave rise to a relatively stable executive board,³⁸ which not only factually directed some of the crucial Association activities (e.g. publishing activity, Archive administration), but played an important role in administration and communication as well. The main office was for a long time located in Hamburg, and after the onset of the Nazi regime it was transferred to Berlin.³⁹ Among the main representatives of the presidium counted the charismatic

and at the same time quite autocratic Justus Brinckmann, who gave the organisation since the beginning already an unmistakable character. Later leaders, among them Otto von Falke (1862–1942), Max Sauerlandt and Robert Schmidt (1878–1952), despite their indisputable qualities, were in some regards not able to continue Brinckmann's successful activity in the altered post-war conditions.⁴⁰ A significant coordinator and implementer of particular activities initiated by the Association meetings became the committees, sub-committees and commissions, which mostly comprised museum workers, who had proposed the one or other activity in the meetings or even commented it in more detail. Although these bodies have often addressed the problem concerning the counterfeiting of works of art, in the course of time also arose some Association bodies, which were primarily focused on solving more complicated organisational issues. In the final period of existence of the Association it has been considered to establish the post of the so-called trustees, actually something like national coordinators, who in tense times would ease the communication between the Association central and individual members from abroad.⁴¹

Anyway, the main assistance in accomplishment of the programme and objectives of the Association has been rendered by the members. As far as the national spectrum is concerned, dominant position was occupied by the representatives from Germany, but the museum workers from the USA, Great Britain, Austria-Hungary and its successor states, Denmark, Netherlands, Switzerland, Sweden, Norway, France, Spain or Italy also had significant representation.⁴² Temporary

³⁴ This body was given many titles (e.g. Bureau, *geschäftsführender Ausschuss*/executive board) and was always elected at the beginning of the one or other meeting. It comprised the chairman, his deputy, and the record-keeper.

³⁵ Particularly after the end of the World War II, discussions were held whether the meetings should be organised once or twice a year. But they resulted in nothing. In 1921, however, the representatives of the Association eventually agreed that the next meeting will take place in Wrocław two years later. *Verhandlungen der neunzehnten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museumsbeamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren*. Berlin, 27. und 28. September 1921. Hamburg: Lüteke & Wulff, [1921], p. 11.

³⁶ Among them are, for example, London, Amsterdam, Zurich, Copenhagen, Paris, Berlin, Brussels, Prague, St. Petersburg, Vienna, Budapest or The Hague.

³⁷ This practice proved to be mainly disadvantageous for the participants from overseas and resulted in a proposal for establishment of a parallel, but not rival, Association on the American continent. *Verhandlungen der siebenundzwanzigsten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museumsbeamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren*. Augsburg, 31. August, 1. und 2. September 1931. Hamburg: Lüteke & Wulff, [1931], p. 4.

³⁸ Its activity was interrupted in 1921–1926, when only the chairman and the record-keeper have been elected. *Verhandlungen der neunzehnten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museumsbeamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren*. Berlin, 27. und 28. September 1921. Hamburg: Lüteke & Wulff, [1921], p. 1; *Verhandlungen der dreiundzwanzigsten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museumsbeamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren*. Hamburg, 12. und 13. September 1927. Hamburg: Lüteke & Wulff, [1927], p. 6.

³⁹ A tendency to replace Hamburg as the headquarters was already present in 1926 (*Verhandlungen der zweiundzwanzigsten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museumsbeamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren*. Zürich, 6. und 7. September 1926. Hamburg: Lüteke & Wulff, [1926], p. 7), but the change was not definitely decided until the forced leaving of the then leading personality of VMB, Max Sauerlandt, from the Hamburg Museum and his subsequent decease at the beginning of 1934. *Verhandlungen der neunundzwanzigsten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museumsbeamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren*. Mainz, den 21. August bis 23. August 1933. Hamburg: Lüteke & Wulff, [1933], p. 4. Since 1934, the executive board headed by Robert Schmidt was seated in Berlin. *Verhandlungen der dreiundzwanzigsten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museumsbeamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren*. Danzig, den 3. bis 5. September 1934. Hamburg: Lüteke & Wulff, [1934], p. 2.

⁴⁰ The successors of Brinckmann were Otto von Falke (Museum of Decorative Arts, Berlin, since 1920 director general of Berlin Museums) in 1917–1927, Max Sauerlandt (Museum of Art and Industry, Hamburg) in 1927–1934, and finally Robert Schmidt (City Palace Museum, Berlin) in 1934–1939.

⁴¹ *Verhandlungen der dreiunddreißigsten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museumsbeamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren*. Wien, den 6. bis 8. September 1937. [Berlin]: [1937], p. 16.

⁴² For more detail see *Verzeichnis der Mitglieder des Internationalen Verbandes von Museumsbeamten* [online]. Berlin, August 1936 [cit. 2015-05-18]. Available from www: <<http://spk.kunstabtheke-cdm.gbv.de/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/VMB&CISOPTR=21566&CISOSHOW=2121>>.

³⁵ Although the main conference language over the whole period of existence of the Association remained German, the papers could have also been presented in French and English. The English colleagues, who often "were not comfortable" with German language, even had the possibility to publish their papers in Mittelungen in their native language. *Verhandlungen der vierten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museums-Beamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren*. London, Burlington House, 1. bis 5. Oktober 1901. Hamburg: Lüteke & Wulff, [1901], p. 5.

members became the representatives of some polities which were relatively untraditional with international structures of cultural organisations, such as, for example, Turkey, Iraq or the Soviet Union.⁴³ Despite the territorial disunity of the countries involved, the Association members formed a relatively homogeneous, large, and to a great extent exclusive community of experts. Most of them held the supreme posts in significant museum institutions (directors, prominent curators). Among them mostly were top researchers from the field of history of art, as well as famous archaeologists, ethnographers or historians. Besides the above-mentioned personalities (Angst, Brinckmann, von Falke, Sauerlandt and Schmidt) there also were other names, who significantly contributed to the development of the then museums, such as, for example, Wilhelm von Bode (1845–1929, Berlin), Gaston Brière (1871–1962, Paris), Jean Capart (1877–1947, Brussels), Kenneth McKenzie Clark (1903–1980, Oxford, London), Caspar Purdon Clarke (1846–1911, London, New York), George Harold Edgell (1887–1954, Boston), Robert Bartholow Harshe (1879–1938, Oakland), Otto Homburger (1885–1964, Karlsruhe), Karl Koetschau (1868–1949, Berlin, Düsseldorf), Julius Lessing (1843–1908, Berlin), Alfred Lichtwark (1852–1914, Hamburg), Eric Maclagan (1879–1951, London), José Gestoso y Pérez (1852–1917, Sevilla), Charles Hercules Read (1857–1929, London), Arthur von Scala (1845–1909, Vienna), Cecil Harcourt Smith (1859–1944, London), Wilhelm Reinhold Valentiner (1880–1956, Berlin, Detroit) or Herbert Eustis Winlock (1884–1950, New York).⁴⁴

It is to remark that the representatives of VMB tried to maintain the quality of those who have participated in the Association activities with the help of various strategies. They gradually established, despite some elements of democracy,⁴⁵ relatively strict and rigid rules, whose result was the emergence of a dynamic and circulating system comprising persons who were active within the discipline and at the same time professionally competent,

even though in many cases with a very poor moral of payment.⁴⁶ Regular members, on the basis of these rules, could only become the experts who were active in the museum management and several related disciplines.⁴⁷ In case of employment loss, the persons concerned had to give up their membership⁴⁸ and be as soon as possible replaced by new candidates. The Association representatives then thoroughly considered their selection and thought about how they might contribute to the development of the organisation.⁴⁹ Each candidate even had to have a guarantor who vouched for the level of his professional knowledge. The strict selection also resulted in implementation of the “*numerus clausus*” – the so-called closed number of museum workers active within VMB,⁵⁰ which was a reaction to the huge interest in membership. Besides regular membership thus gradually some other types also came into use, which arose from the need to appreciate meritorious members after their retirement. The institutions of honorary members⁵¹ and extraordinary members⁵² were established, but their decision-making competence was considerably limited.

⁴⁶ Financial difficulties of the Association were mainly associated with the costs for publication of printed materials and Archive administration. Their payment has been complicated by the low ability of Association members to pay. A great revision carried out in a meeting in the second half of the 1930s has revealed that many of them had for a long time made absolutely no financial contribution to the activities of the Association. From the decision of the Vienna meeting in 1937 then followed that when a person does not pay more than two years long, it will signify the exclusion from the organisation. *Verhandlungen der dreiuunddreißigsten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museumsbeamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren. Wien, den 6. bis 8. September 1937.* [Berlin]: [1937], p. 16.

⁴⁷ The initial effort to organise solely the representatives of publicly accessible collections was soon abandoned (*Verhandlungen der achten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museums-Beamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren, Amsterdam, 3. bis 5. Oktober 1905.* Hamburg: Lüteke & Wulff, [1905], p. 24). However, the recruiting of new members has for a long time observed the rule that these persons should not involve museum assistant specialists if the directors of their institutions were already members. This practice was not called into question until the Salzburg meeting in 1932. *Verhandlungen der achtundzwanzigsten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museumsbeamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren. Salzburg, den 29. bis 31. August 1932.* Hamburg: Lüteke & Wulff, [1932], pp. 2–3.

⁴⁸ Regular membership expired with premature resignation from the post, retirement, decease and in some cases also with long-time inactivity within the Association and non-payment of the membership fee.

⁴⁹ Each new member had to have a guarantor from among the VMB representatives and his admission, moreover, had to be approved by voting in the Association meeting. For more detail on how to get the membership see e.g. *Verhandlungen der achten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museums-Beamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren, Amsterdam, 3. bis 5. Oktober 1905.* Hamburg: Lüteke & Wulff, [1905], p. 23.

⁵¹ Special position among the honorary members belonged to those who have founded the Association. The still living museum workers von Falke, Purgold and Graul were remembered in a meeting on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of founding. *Ibidem*, p. 2.

⁵² Among extraordinary members were mainly retired museum workers, who were active within the Association for at least 10 years. *Verhandlungen der siebenundzwanzigsten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museumsbeamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren. Augsburg, 31. August, 1. und 2. September 1931.* Hamburg: Lüteke & Wulff, [1931], p. 7.

⁴³ MB members thus became, for example, the German archaeologist Julius Jordan, advisor to the Iraq government on matters of monuments and museums (*Ibidem*, p. 30) or significant personalities from the Leningrad museums, Oskar Waldhauer and Alfred Kube (both of German descent). *Verzeichnis der Mitglieder des Internationalen Verbandes von Museumsbeamten* [online]. Hamburg, 1931, p. 21, 23 [cit. 2015-05-18]. Available from www: <<http://spkkunstbibliothek-cdm.gbv.de/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/VMB&CISOPTR=2188&CISOSHOW=2157>>.

⁴⁴ For a complete list of members until 1936 see *Verzeichnis der Mitglieder des Internationalen Verbandes von Museumsbeamten* [online]. Berlin, August 1936, p. 30 [cit. 2015-05-18]. Available from www: <<http://spkkunstbibliothek-cdm.gbv.de/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/VMB&CISOPTR=2156&CISOSHOW=2121>>.

⁴⁵ As one of them can, for example, be regarded the rule of using no academic titles during the Association meetings. *Verhandlungen der ersten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museums-Beamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren, Hamburg, 7. Oktober 1898.* Hamburg: Lüteke & Wulff, (Neudruck 1908), p. 3.

VMB and representatives of individual states and regions – example of the Czech lands

The Association as a platform intended for meeting of museum workers on an international basis played an important role in enhancement and deepening of their knowledge, mainly on topics defined by the statutes. At the same time it must be taken into consideration that it did not function as a homogeneous union comprising persons with joint interest, but was in many regards atomised according to their citizenship and nationality. The tendencies leading to division of members by the above criteria then led to activist and relatively regular appearances of representatives of these groups in the Association meetings, which regarded their own opinions and viewpoints concerning the problems in question, activities performed and solution of organisational issues. On the other hand, the thoughts and opinions presented within the VMB penetrated the awareness of museum representatives in many European countries, even despite a certain degree of concealment, which the members were bound to observe.

Dominant position in functioning and further development of the oldest international museum organisation has over the whole period of its existence been occupied by the museum workers from Germany. Personalities from other countries, however, also were very active. A significant position among them had the representatives of the Habsburg Monarchy, particularly of its western part – Cisleithania. The local massive and rapid development of the museum phenomenon did not only concern Vienna as an important cultural centre of all-European significance, but since the second half of the 19th century it also manifested itself in a fundamental way in economically well-developed regions of the Czech lands. In this region have then gradually been established significant specialised museums, which were focused above all on applied arts. At the time of their foundation in the 1870s and 1880s already and also during further development, the vast majority of them draw many impulses from the activities of the Austrian Museum of Art and Industry in Vienna (*Österreichisches Museum für Kunst und Industrie*), but at the same time thoroughly observed the development in foreign museums.

This also is why the employees of local museums of applied arts have entered with great

interest the newly established museum organisation and became there exclusive representatives of museums in the Czech lands. In 1898 already, the constitutive assembly was thus attended by the first director of the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague, Karel Chytil (1857–1934), as well as by Gustav E. Pazaurek (1865–1935), at that time still being at work in Liberec, and by Herrmann von Trenkwald (1866–1942, Opava).⁵³ Soon they were joined by Edmund Wilhelm Braun (1870–1957, Opava), Julius Leisching (1865–1933, Brno), later by František Adolf Borovský (1852–1933, Prague) and Ernst Schwedeler-Meyer (1867–1939, Liberec). In the interwar period still František Xaver Jiřík (1867–1947, Prague) and Stanislav Sochor (1882–1959, Brno) came in addition.⁵⁴

From the above enumeration it is evident that the VMB members comprised representatives of both ethnicities living in the Czech lands – Czechs and Germans. Unlike the tense situation between both these groups, which also considerably affected the sphere of museums,⁵⁵ mutual relationships within the VMB can be appraised not only as correct, but in many regards forthcoming.⁵⁶ An unambiguous national struggle, however, gradually penetrated here as well, mainly in the interwar period. Important was that its protagonists were not the museum workers themselves. It was rather intensified by the founding institutions, which underwent a deep transformation in the newly established republic. The result thereof was a noticeable cooling down of interest in the activity of VMB, which, for example, led to resignation by two long-time functionaries of the organisation, Chytil and Borovský.⁵⁷ On the other hand, efforts can be observed to continue earlier activities by several workers with German nationality, who were forced to leave their posts.⁵⁸

As regards the way of taking part in the activity of VMB, the papers in individual meetings were mainly presented by experienced museum workers Chytil, Braun,⁵⁹ Schwedeler-Meyer⁶⁰ and Leisching, who also have regularly taken part in discussions on several other issues. Moreover, Julius Leisching, particularly in the first years of his activity, pursued many proposals which, however, did not correspond with the general focus of the organisation. They exhibited an evident tendency to extend the existing variety of Association activities by further topical problems of the then museums. He thus pursued the establishment of a generally acceptable terminology and nomenclature in the field of the history of art.⁶¹ More successful were his efforts to organise courses for professional museum workers, which began to take place on a limited scale in the following years.⁶² The meetings of the Association have also remembered his effort to set up a comprehensive collection, which would document the general history of museums.⁶³

Many of Leisching's proposals were tightly associated with his own initiative – establishment and factual management of activities of the *Association of Austrian Museums of Applied Arts* (*Verband österreichischer Kunstgewerbemuseen*, hereinafter *VÖK*).⁶⁴ Even though this professional organisation, which was soon extended by other types of the then museums, has set a little different goals than the VMB, we can find many interfacial areas and parallels in the activities of both these groupings. Since the establishment of the Austrian organisation already, Leisching used the same strategy as the representatives of the Association. He presented to profes-

sional public one of the burning topics related to Cisleithanian museums (organisation of travelling exhibitions) and then, unlike the international Association, extended the activities of *VÖK* by further topical problems of the then Austrian museums.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, analogies also occurred with internal arrangement of the associations, their organisational structure and the effort to surpass their narrow national character.⁶⁶

It would certainly be not complete to assess the impact of the activities of the Association on museums in the Czech lands only from the viewpoint of several influences, which have manifested themselves subsequently in a professional organisation active in Cisleithania. First of all, it signified a deepening of contacts, even though of a limited number of museum workers, with international museum community, particularly with its German section. Thanks to these contacts, the museum workers from the Czech lands have published their papers in prestigious museum periodicals⁶⁷ and began to cooperate in larger foreign projects. Besides the enhancement of their own knowledge and skills in the field of connoisseurship we can also identify another important aspect. They brought topical information on museums in Europe and overseas to professional as well as non-professional public.

Conclusions

More than a forty-year-long period of activities of VMB included several levels and made the organisation an important object of research into the development of the museum phenomenon. First of all, the Association became a significant cultural representative, which over a relatively long period of time influenced and co-formed one of the distinctive components of the then society – museums. By laying the focus on the problem of art forgery it has enhanced the level of connoisseurship in museum workers and led therewith to a considerable extent to enrichment of the musealisation process as such. The dissemination of information on unfair art trade led to an at least partial improvement of the conditions, in which the then museums

⁵³ Von Trenkwald acted in the Opava Museum until 1897.

⁵⁴ See *Verzeichnis der Mitglieder des Internationalen Verbandes von Museumsbeamten* [online]. Berlin, August 1936 [cit. 2015-05-18]. Available from www: <http://spkkunstbibliothek-cdm.gbv.de/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/VMB&CISOPTR=2156&CISOSHOW=2121>.

⁵⁵ E.g. KIRSCH, Otakar. Veränderungen im deutsch-mährischen Museumswesen nach 1918. Der Nationalitätsfaktor als grundlegender Träger des Wandels in den Museumsinstitutionen. *Danubiana Carpathica. Jahrbuch für Geschichte und Kultur in den deutschen Siedlungsgebieten Südosteuropas*, 2012, vol. 6 (53), iss. 1, pp. 59–82. ISSN 1863-9887.

⁵⁶ An example thereof can be a 1931 proposal by the German E. W. Braun for admission of the Czech museum worker F. X. Jiřík as a new member. *Verhandlungen der siebenundzwanzigsten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museumsbeamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren*. Augsburg, 31. August, 1. und 2. September 1931. Hamburg: Lüteke & Wulff, [1931], p. 3.

⁵⁷ Verhandlungen briefly informed that both of them announced their resignation. *Verhandlungen der neunzehnten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museumsbeamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren*. Berlin, 27. und 28. September 1921. Hamburg: Lüteke & Wulff, [1921], p. 1.

⁵⁸ This was the case with Julius Leisching, who was forced to leave to Salzburg in the early 1920s. However, his post representing the Museum of Applied Arts in Brno has since 1926 been occupied by Stanislav Sochor. *Verzeichnis der Mitglieder des Internationalen Verbandes von Museumsbeamten* [online]. Berlin, August 1936, p. 25 [cit. 2015-05-18]. Available from www: <http://spkkunstbibliothek-cdm.gbv.de/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/VMB&CISOPTR=2156&CISOSHOW=2121>.

⁵⁹ After being retired in 1935, he used the right of becoming an extraordinary member of the Association. *Verhandlungen der einunddreißigsten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museumsbeamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren*. Haag, den 9. bis 11. September 1935. [Berlin]: [1935], p. 2.

⁶⁰ Among his most significant actions counted the initiative regarding further involvement of retired members in activities of the VMB. *Verhandlungen der siebenundzwanzigsten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museumsbeamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren*. Augsburg, 31. August, 1. und 2. September 1931. Hamburg: Lüteke & Wulff, [1931], p. 3.

⁶¹ *Verhandlungen der fünften Versammlung des Verbandes von Museumsbeamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren*. Kopenhagen, den 15. bis 18. September 1902. Hamburg: Lüteke & Wulff, [1902], p. 9.

⁶² *Verhandlungen der achten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museums-Beamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren*, Amsterdam, 3. bis 5. Oktober 1905. Hamburg: Lüteke & Wulff, [1905], p. 22.

⁶³ *Verhandlungen der siebenten Versammlung des Verbandes von Museums-Beamten zur Abwehr von Fälschungen und unlauterem Geschäftsgebahren*, Nürnberg, 3. bis 5. Oktober 1904. Hamburg: Lüteke & Wulff, [1904], p. 4 (Dritte Sitzung).

⁶⁴ KIRSCH, Otakar. Julius Leisching a jeho podíl na organizaci muzejnictví v Předlitavsku. *Studia historica Brunensia*, 2010, vol. 57, iss. 1, pp. 15–29. ISSN 0231-7710; KIRSCH, Otakar. Počátky německo-moravských muzejníků na aktivitách muzejních zájmových organizací v první polovině dvacátého století. In *OUBRECHTOVÁ, Marcela and Václav ZEMAN. Fenomén muzeum v 19. a první polovině 20. století*. Ústí nad Labem: Albis International, 2011, pp. 39–60.

⁶⁵ KIRSCH, Otakar. *(Po)zapomenutí nositelé paměti. Německé muzejnictví na Moravě*. Brno: Paido, 2014, pp. 59, 61–62.

⁶⁶ As far as the Czech lands are concerned, the talk is of the institutes from Brno, České Budějovice, Chrudim, Liberec, Opava, Plzeň and Prague; Austrian Hereditary Lands were represented by Linz and Graz, from Galicia there were Kraków and Lviv, and Bukovina was represented by Chernivtsi. Another founding member, the Bolzano Museum in South Tyrol, excused itself from the meeting. Bericht über die erste Konferenz österreichischer Kunstgewerbemuseen in Wien (15.–18. März 1900). *Mitteilungen des Mährischen Gewerbemuseums in Brünn*, 1900, vol. 18, iss. 6, pp. 41–43.

⁶⁷ LEISCHING, Julius. *Museumskurse. Museumskunde*, 1905, vol. 1, iss. 2, pp. 91–96.

have existed. Even though the Association activities have at that time been to a great extent conceived as an integral part of the field of history of art, within the organisation, and above all among the persons who participated in its organisational structure, has at the same time already emerged an awareness of specificity and to a certain degree also autonomy of the museum work.

Anyway, the importance of VMB for museology and knowledge of its historical development consists in its initiation role rather than in the activities themselves. It has represented something like a new communication element, which considerably raised the level of knowledge of topical problems of the then museums. This knowledge has earlier been obtained only through not very systematically and regularly maintained personal contacts, intensive study of literature, or through visits of individual museum institutions. The organisation, whose activities raised much interest and attention among the then museum workers, was namely able to develop a general awareness of the beneficial effect and factual necessity of regular meetings on an international basis as the crucial precondition for further development of the discipline.

The international basis of the Association also appears to be fundamental and groundbreaking. It was namely the very first association which, regardless of the often somewhat different approach to perception of the problem of museums in individual member states or a complicated geopolitical situation, was over a relatively long time able to make an indeed representative sample of museum workers from Europe and North America cooperate and meet with each other. Even though the dominant role has been played by the representatives from German-speaking lands, particularly Germany, over the whole period of existence it has been a sought-after and representative international platform for the exchange of experiences and information from the museum environment. It has also significantly contributed to founding and functioning of some "national" professional museum organisations, and to subsequent establishment of internationally conceived museum associations (international Council, ICOM), although they have promoted the interest in the problem of museums on a much wider platform.

Keywords:

professional museum organisation – international meetings of museum workers – history of museums and museology – Justus Brinckmann – fight against faking and counterfeiting

Klíčová slova:

profesní muzejní organizace – mezinárodní setkání muzejních pracovníků – dějiny muzejnictví a museologie – Justus Brinckmann – boj proti padělatelství a falzifikátorství

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