

UCLA

American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

The Visualization of Native-American Peoples in a Late-Nineteenth-Century Sculpture Program in Vienna, Austria

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2m88q38b>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 31(3)

ISSN

0161-6463

Author

Van Bussel, Gerard W.

Publication Date

2007-06-01

DOI

10.17953

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

Peer reviewed

The Visualization of Native-American Peoples in a Late-Nineteenth-Century Sculpture Program in Vienna, Austria

GERARD W. VAN BUSSEL

In 1806, Emperor Franz I of Austria (1768–1835) commissioned the naturalist Baron Leopold von Fichtel (1770–1810) to acquire natural and ethnological material collected during Captain James Cook's (1728–79) voyages at the end of the eighteenth century at an auction in London.¹ This acquisition led to the creation of an Imperial Ethnographic Collection as a subdivision of the United Imperial and Royal Natural History Cabinets in Vienna. These were not, however, the oldest ethnographic pieces collected in Austria; several older Kunst- or Wunderkammern, or cabinets of curiosities, already housed those artifacts.² At his castle in Ambras, Archduke Ferdinand II, Count of Tyrol, assembled the most well-known Wunderkammer; he was a noble lord surrounded by the phenomena of the universe, in the midst of his collectables, which were classified according to the principles of Pliny's *Natural History*. At that time an exotic or strange appearance was a primary motive for collecting. Apart from a few short-termed special exhibitions, a global overview of this "otherness" of non-European cultures eventually became visible to the public eye in the ethnological exhibition halls of the Imperial and Royal Natural History Court Museum in Vienna at the end of the nineteenth century. The halls destined to house these objects were decorated with "ethnological" paintings and sculptures that showed representatives of different Native peoples. The manner in which these individuals are represented mediates the subjective views about non-European peoples that existed in Western societies. The sculptures of Native Americans, the scope of this study, gave the objects exhibited in the showcases a European-invented ethnological context.

Gerard W. van Bussel studied at the Universities of Groningen and Leiden in the Netherlands. From 1984–94 he was employed at the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden. In 1994 he was appointed curator at the Museum of Ethnology in Vienna, Austria.

ETHNOLOGY AT THE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY, VIENNA

In 1876 Ferdinand von Hochstetter (1829–84), professor of geology, was appointed director of the Imperial and Royal Natural History Court Museum.³ This institution was to house and unite all the various Imperial and Royal Natural History Cabinets that already existed. Hochstetter's organizational plan established five departments: mineralogical-petrographical, geological-palaeontological, botanical and zoological (organized according to the principles of evolutionism), and, on his initiative, an anthropological-ethnographical department. Hochstetter intended to present a comprehensive overview of natural history, including humanity. Being a geologist, he developed a major interest in ethnology during his travels with the Austrian frigate *Novara*, which circumnavigated the world in the years 1857–59, and during his prolonged stay in New Zealand, where he came into close contact with the Maori population, who impressed him by the level of their cultural and intellectual development.⁴ It was to Hochstetter's credit that ethnology now became firmly institutionalized in an official administrative unit: the anthropological-ethnographical department, which he headed as curator. In this department the social sciences were accommodated and apart from ethnography, which originally dealt with European and non-European peoples; it also was a home for disciplines such as prehistory and anthropology. From a long-dormant existence within the different collections in Austria, ethnology finally rose to prominence with the founding of this department at the Museum of Natural History. Over the years, Hochstetter assembled ethnological artifacts stored at different locations in Austria. At his death in 1884, the ethnological collection had grown to contain more than twenty thousand items. Soon the disciplines that he had put together drifted apart, and in 1928 the non-European ethnographical section moved away and continued its existence as the Museum of Ethnology, although for several years it was still part of the Museum of Natural History's organizational structure.⁵

EVOLUTIONISM AND THE DECORATION OF
THE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

An architectural competition for the construction of two court museums, one for natural history and one for art history, was drawn out over a long period, and ultimately the German architect Gottfried Semper (1803–79) was called in as an arbitrator. In cooperation with the Viennese architect Karl von Hasenauer (1833–94) he planned a so-called Emperor's Forum. This area was an extended square flanked on one side by an enlarged Imperial Palace, on two opposing sides by court museums, and by the Imperial Stables on the remaining side. Construction of the two museums started in 1871.⁶

Semper, with Hasenauer and Hochstetter planning the interior, officially designed the Museum of Natural History's exterior decoration. According to one visitor, these decorations "made a pleasant impression, but it cannot be denied that they at times attract more of the visitor's attention than the objects."⁷ Hochstetter did not experience the museum's official opening in

1889, but his views on the museum's policy, the decoration, and late-nineteenth-century thought can still be observed today in the museum's design.

The Natural History Museum is metaphorically encased in the sculpture program on its exterior walls. Whole figures, busts, and names of men who did "pioneering scientific research and who furthered observation and knowledge" were attached to walls of the building.⁸ None of the historic persons portrayed were alive at the time of construction, except for Charles Darwin (1809–82), who was given due respect by including his portrait.

In part, the museum's interior decoration consists of a sculpture program in five exhibition halls. Sculptures of males and females, reminiscent of the atlantides and caryatides of European antiquity, were placed in pairs below the ceiling. Two of these halls had sculptures dedicated to ethnology, as were the artifacts in these rooms, which were stored in the showcases on the ground floor. The sculptures, carved in the workshop of Viktor Tilgner and representing different Native peoples, are reminiscent of the many displays in Europe, especially in the nineteenth century, of living non-Western peoples (for example, at zoos).

There are no known records regarding what scholars and sculptors used to plan and design the sculptures.⁹ However, the types of information sources and inspiration are becoming clear: photos and engravings, paintings, and drawings in various nineteenth-century publications in the Imperial Library in Vienna, museums, and private libraries. Certain artifacts that were on display in the museum played a role in the design, for some objects can actually be seen *in situ* on these stone figures. Apart from the intention to provide the audience with information about different indigenous peoples' physical features and dress, prevailing views in the society at the time are recognizable from the sculptures. They demonstrate Europe's aesthetic principles and ideas about other cultures. Evolutionism was the main theory to which the museum was committed. For humanity this meant that man had finally reached the level of civilization (that is, Western civilization) through several stages of evolutionary development.

The main conclusion arrived at in this work, namely that man is descended from lowly-organised form, will, I regret to think, be highly distasteful to many persons. But there can hardly be a doubt that we are descended from barbarians. The astonishment which I felt on first seeing a party of Fuegians on a wild and broken shore will never be forgotten by me, for the reflection at once rushed into my mind—such were our ancestors.¹⁰

The "otherness" of cultures, important from the very start of collecting during the days of the Kunst- or Wunderkammern, had not been erased from the European mind. One of the museum's ethnological halls is decorated with sculptures of American Natives. Here, the so-called higher cultures of Mesoamerica and the Andes were intentionally presented differently than the indigenous peoples from North America or the inhabitants of the Amazonian rain forest. At the time, available images of these peoples were modified: the

Maya were depicted as more civilized, and the Amazonians as being wilder, than the published illustrations or knowledge of the time conveyed. The sculptures thus demonstrate a deliberate adaptation or, so be it, falsification. In addition, the male figures, for example, were dressed and made more muscular, whereas the female became more feminine than the illustrations used as sources conveyed. This manner of representing the human body corresponds to the atlantides and caryatides that are present on many Viennese buildings, which were and still are well-known to the public eye. These figures mostly represent anonymous, seminude powerful beings for the sole purpose of supporting and enhancing the grandeur of Viennese architecture. The eroticism was as much an aspect of Western perceptions of “savages,” as were their war-like spirit, trophy-head cult, and bodily mutilation. These characteristics were signals or thoughts, understood by nineteenth-century Westerners and, to a certain degree, still current. They functioned like a frame of reference or a mental map for Western viewers.¹¹ Every museum exhibition shows the influence of scholar and artist, of topic and audience, because all actors involved contribute their personal knowledge, interests, experiences, and expectations. No exhibition is ever free of subjectivity, and neither was this ethnological, sculptural setting at the Museum of Natural History.

These “censored” sculptures of American Natives are still on view, as part of the edifice, just as comparable figures are inseparably linked to other structures. Taking them away would ruin the building’s architectural concept and destroy the design and ideology of the structure, planned as a museum in late-nineteenth-century Vienna. After the removal of the ethnological collections from the Museum of Natural History, the original *raison d’être* of the sculptures, their link to the ethnological collections, has disappeared. Today European prehistory and temporary exhibitions are presented in these halls, leaving the ethnological sculptures, although an immobile architectural element, rather forlorn in their present setting.

The Sculpture Program—Culture and the Highest Level of Civilization

The museum’s original concept becomes evident at its entrance. On each side of the central doorway the architects placed a ground-level sculpture with another sculpture, topped by a text panel, above it. Architect Semper planned the ground-level sculptures on each side of the doorway to represent the three continents where culture arrived last: Europe, Australia, and America.¹² However, there is an alternative way of reading this configuration, one that conforms to the theory of evolutionism and may show the museum director’s influence.

A female sculpture representing Europe is prominently enthroned on the right of the museum’s entrance (fig. 1). She fits into the custom of countries symbolizing their own nation by an allegorical female figure. The close resemblance to the Statue of Liberty and their respective positions are striking. Both stand on a threshold, one of a country, the other of a research institution and museum. Like the Statue of Liberty, the sculpture of Europe holds a torch illuminating the world. She also wears a crown or diadem with seven rays, a



FIGURE 1. Europe by Carl Kundmann. Entrance of the Museum of Natural History, Vienna.



FIGURE 2. Inspiration Based on Mathematics by Carl Kundmann. Facade of the Museum of Natural History, Vienna.

configuration representing the classical conception of the seven continents or seven seas that are the known world. They are also closely related to the sun's rays, and thus bear the connotation of spreading light, insight, or knowledge. She embodies the highest level of civilization, as late-nineteenth-century ethnological theory envisioned it. Beside her stands a young man holding a lyre and writing scroll with a painter's palette at his feet. These elements represent the higher arts in a direct connection with Europe (that is, culture or civilization). A panel above this group of sculptures reads *Inspiration Based on Mathematics* and explains an accompanying sculpture: a male, Greek, philosopher-like figure who represents mathematics and culture (fig. 2)

The Sculpture Program—Nature and the Lower Levels of Civilization

On the left of the entrance a comparable vertical configuration was put in place. Here, Europe is paired on ground level with a sculpture showing a male Native American and a female Australian (fig. 3). The American-Australian side has a panel with the text *Research Unveils Nature*. In this case, and in opposition to the “cultural, civilized male” mathematician on the other side, a naked female symbolizing “nature” is being unveiled and expresses a naïve look (fig. 4). The Greek philosopher is contemplating, expressing the burden that accompanies his higher, rational stage of civilization.

According to late-nineteenth-century perceptions, the inhabitants of America and Australia represented two lower stages of human development. Australia was regarded as the lowest: the savage stage.¹³ A woman, at that time



FIGURE 3. *America and Australia* by Carl Kundmann. Entrance of the Museum of Natural History, Vienna.



FIGURE 4. *Research Unveils Nature* by Carl Kundmann. Facade of the Museum of Natural History, Vienna.

considered to be inferior to man, supportively represents Australia and its population. The North American Natives had already ascended to a higher rung on the ladder of civilization, a period known as the barbarous phase. Both, however, as *Research Unveils Nature* indicates, belonged to nature. In binary logic, the opposite side, the mathematical, male, and European side, represents culture that developed from nature. The non-European “natural” cultures, therefore, had their appropriate place in a museum dedicated to the realm of nature: the Museum of Natural History. According to this line of thinking, the entrance area thus shows three stages: savage, barbarous, and civilized represented by an Australian aboriginal, a Native American, and a European respectively. These phases derive from the explanatory scheme for human development as envisioned by authors, such as Edward B. Tylor (1832–1917) or Lewis H. Morgan (1818–81) in his work *Ancient Society*: “It can now be asserted upon convincing evidence that savagery preceded barbarism in all the tribes of mankind, as barbarism is known to have preceded civilization. The history of the human race is one in source, one in experience, and one in progress.”¹⁴ Or as Darwin put it:

The evidence that all civilised nations are the descendants of barbarians, consists, on the one side, of clear traces of their former low condition in still-existing customs, beliefs, language, &c; and on the other side, of proofs that savages are independently able to raise themselves a few steps in the scale of civilisation, and have actually thus risen.¹⁵

This separation of categories was ancient: civilization versus barbarism or Christianity versus heathenism.¹⁶ The difference at this time was that the categories were being historicized. Europeans had once been savages, but they had progressed toward civilization. Humanity is a unity and a continuum, and it is this concept that was transmitted by the museum.¹⁷

The Salvation of Disappearing Cultures

The nineteenth-century idea that many, if not all, uncivilized nations were vanishing and on the verge of extinction supports their presence in the form of sculptures in the museum. In the words of Hochstetter, "This unfortunate human race [the aboriginals] . . . seems irrevocably destined to disappear from the surface of the earth."¹⁸ Their memory, if only in stone, had to be retained. Apart from that, they showed European visitors the stages that their own ancestors had gone through in the remote past. The sculptures were complemented by the ethnological collections on display in the showcases. The collections demonstrate the elementary material culture of those early stages of human development and could be regarded as the remainder of disappearing cultures. The material culture on exhibit was also adapted or fragmentary, for it showed the views and wishes of Western collectors. The sculptures' design, the selection of objects on exhibit, and their arrangement in the exhibition demonstrated what was of importance to the collector and the museum professional.¹⁹

The salvation of memory lay at the base of Morgan's anthropology. This rescue of information and of as many ethnological artifacts as possible, before the nations producing them had disappeared, is also expressed by the influential Adolf Bastian (1826–1905), German ethnologist and founding director of the Ethnological Museum in Berlin.

Before long, being too late will make all further efforts useless, because at present we are in the last, in fact, in the last and only moment left in which something can be done. If, then now or never! What could have been acquired for hundreds, costs thousands nowadays and will soon not be available for hundreds of thousands, simply because nothing is obtainable anymore and has disappeared from the face of the earth. . . . When these products of the mind from the primitive phase of primitive peoples become observable, these peoples are already in contact with civilization, i.e. on the verge of disintegration. . . . [T]hey belong to a people that is destined to disappear.²⁰

The Native American figure on the left of the entrance resembles traditional images of European royalty, much like Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres's painting *Napoleon on His Imperial Throne* in the Musée de l'Armée in Paris or Friedrich von Amerling's painted portrait *Emperor Franz I of Austria Wearing the Austrian Imperial Robes* at the Museum of Art History in Vienna. The Native American's right foot rests on a stone with petroglyphs, demonstrating North American graphic art as rudimentary and in contrast to the beaux arts of poetry and painting on the opposite, Western, and civilized side

of the entrance. In his right hand, the Native American holds a spear that resembles a prototype lordly scepter. From his left arm hangs a shield. The arm and shield are wrapped caringly and protectively around the back of the seated aboriginal woman with a child beside her. He, the higher-developed human being, is gently guarding the woman, who has not yet risen to his level and crouches at his feet. This illustrates Morgan's quote that "the Australians rank below the Polynesians, and far below the American aborigines."²¹ The American and Australian are a visual declaration of the museum's exhibition concept. A total of six large halls stood at the ethnological collections' disposal. Two halls were designed with sculptures: one shows carvings of peoples from both American continents, and one shows carvings of peoples from Australia-Oceania. These are exactly the same two groups of non-European peoples found at the entrance.

The ethnological department's halls were especially designed and decorated to create an "ethnological space." Yet the sculptures are also partly decontextualized, for artifacts from East Asia were originally put on exhibit in the hall with the American sculptures. Text labels never accompanied the sculptures. In the catalog published by Hochstetter's successor, together all were mentioned in only a few lines. Sculptures in three nonethnological halls at the museum demonstrating metals, minerals, plants, and animals were all explained in detail, but these were the traditional topics of the original Natural History Cabinets. The catalog text describing the American sculptures only states that "the caryatides in this hall show representatives of different American tribes."²² This lack of information stresses their anonymity and mere function as decoration in the post-Hochstetter era. Although they did attract the attention of visitors, no information about them was conveyed.²³ The objects in the showcases were dealing with a similar problem, at least to a certain extent. The collection was divided in two sections: one that was on public view, the other only being accessible for study purposes. This meant that the latter was only to be seen by specialists and not by the general public. Many artifacts did not have any captions, and some available texts did not provide adequate information, which "did anything but serve the purpose of making a study of the collection by the visitor easier," according to one museum professional.²⁴

The Sculpture of a Barbarian from the North American Plains

The hall with the American sculptures presents ten pairs of different peoples, always a male and a female. The sequence is basically a geographical one, from north to south, the northernmost being an Inuit pair. It then proceeds southward with characters from North America, Central America, and South America; the southernmost group being a couple from Patagonia. One couple symbolizes a pair of mixed Native American and European ancestry. Interestingly, the sculpture is placed opposite a doorway and therefore functions as a kind of caesura: the introduction of European culture in the Americas, with indigenous nations on each side of it. This north-south configuration resembles groups of twelve lay figures at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York, organized in 1901 by William H. Holmes of the Smithsonian Institution, which were "arranged to present in the most striking manner possible a synopsis of

the Pan-American aborigines, the native peoples of America, from the Eskimo of North Greenland to the wild tribes of Tierra del Fuego.”²⁵

Major sources of documentation for certain Native Americans were the writings of German Prince Maximilian of Wied (1782–1867) and the paintings of Swiss artist Karl Bodmer (1809–93). Together, both men traveled through North America in the years 1832–34 documenting various indigenous peoples and their traditions before everything had vanished. As Wied put it: “a major part of the nations has already disappeared completely and imperfect are the reports left about them.”²⁶ Later, photography took the primary place in the pictorial documentation of Native Americans. One of these photographers was John K. Hillers (1843–1925), who worked as a photographer for the geologist and ethnologist John Wesley Powell, expedition leader and director of the US Bureau of Ethnology.

The Sculpture

One atlantid sculpture in the museum shows a Native American from the Plains, stripped to the waist, wearing a medal, and carrying a pipe (fig. 5). There is a striking resemblance to a photograph by Hillers, but the sculptor seems to have found some inspiration in the works of Karl Bodmer. In 1875 Powell and Hillers did research in the Eastern Indian Territory. In a letter to his brother, Hillers wrote, “I found six Cheyennes who had just left the war path, all strappen big fellows. I took them among the rocks and set them up as food for my camera.”²⁷ One of these Cheyenne was a man called Little Bear, who was photographed by Hillers amid rocks at the Grand Council in Okmulgee, Indian Territory, on 10 May 1875 (fig. 6).²⁸ Another photograph by



FIGURE 5. *Atlantid of a Native American from the Plains by Viktor Tilgner. Hall XIV at the Museum of Natural History, Vienna.*



FIGURE 6. *Little Bear, Cheyenne. Photo by John K. Hillers, 10 May 1875, medium size. The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, 84.XM.482.4. All rights reserved.*

Hillers shows an anonymous Native American (fig. 7). This photo was acquired in 1881 by the Museum of Natural History's anthropological-ethnographical department from George J. Engelmann (1847–1903), who was not aware of the subject's tribal affiliation.²⁹ When comparing the two pictures, it becomes evident that both persons hold the same pipe and bag and that each one is photographed in front of the same rock formation. This makes it likely that the anonymous person in the museum's photo was one of the six Cheyenne that Hillers wrote about in his letter. It is also apparent that Hillers arranged the photos according to his interpretation of indigenous life (for example, by giving both individuals the same pipe). The custom of photographers to use props to make Native Americans appear as the Western public wanted them to look was, as is well-known, widely practiced.



FIGURE 7. *Anonymous Cheyenne*. Photo by John K. Hillers, 1875. Museum of Ethnology, Vienna, photographic collections VF 593.

Similarities present themselves when the Native American in the museum's photo and the museum's previously mentioned sculpture are compared. The bearing of both persons and the way they hold their pipes are the same; the decoration of the pipes, bag, and bracelet on the upper arms is similar; and both individuals wear a similar medal and have one strand of hair tied on the left side of the head, while on the right side the hair is hanging loose. The facial features on the sculpture are slightly altered, as are the torso and upper arms, both being more muscular, for muscle-bound men correspond to the conventions of late-Baroque sculpture in Vienna. However, the sculpture was clearly inspired by the photo.

In those days, Native Plains culture was rapidly disappearing, and the idea that the Native American would vanish was most likely a reason to make this sculpture a part of the exhibition rooms' decorative program. Engelmann, owner of an archaeological museum, in his book *Labor among Primitive Peoples*, also conveys the idea of the vanishing race:

Primitive customs among our North American Indians are rapidly disappearing. As the war-bonnet of eagle plumes has given way to the unromantic felt hat—the tomahawk and bow and arrow to the revolver and breech-loading rifle—so are the original obstetric customs, traditional among the red people for ages, yielding to the influence of civilization: the few war-like tribes, who still retain the ways of their ancestors, are rapidly dying out; those who have quietly settled down upon the reservation are accepting the habits of the whites.³⁰

The sculptor added feathers, which were not worn by the Cheyenne in Hillers's photo and were inspired by the portraits drawn by Bodmer, especially the portrait of the Dakota Wak-Tae-Geli.³¹ This is a stereotype and an interpretation by either the museum's scholar who commissioned it or the sculptor. It was the second alteration subsequent to Hillers's original arrangement of his subjects (for example, adding a pipe) and was an attempt to convey to the public in Vienna and to future generations what Native Americans used to wear as apparel. The sculpture, therefore, based on a photograph, was inspired by and changed according to the romantic art of Bodmer and is rooted in Western notions of Native Americans.

Sculptures of a Civilized People from Mesoamerica

The nineteenth-century scheme of dividing human cultures around the world into three phases was envisioned by Morgan for the American continents, but these are typologies that can be projected onto other parts of the world. For the Americas, the peoples of the Amazonian rain forest represented the savage stage, the Native Americans of North America represented the barbarous stage, and the cultures of Mesoamerica and the Andes represented the civilized phase. The latter's art was in a "more advanced state" compared to that of their neighbors, and they were therefore called "cultural peoples": "Then we have among them highly cultivated next to very barbarian peoples . . . two independently developed cultures, and from them to the barbarians all kinds of different intermediate forms."³²

The Mayawere one of these civilized Mesoamerican cultures. In the American sculpture hall we encounter two figures representing Maya culture (fig. 8). The two depicted persons are actually known from scientific literature. The male was the one-time ruler of a city now known as Yaxchilán, on the Usumacinta River banks in Mexico; the woman was his consort. The ruler has been identified as Shield Jaguar or Itzamnaaj B'alam (647–742) and his spouse as Lady K'ab'al Xook (?–748).³³ The sculptured scene was inspired by a well-known stone carving at the British Museum, the famous lintel 24 from Temple 23 in Yaxchilán, a building dedicated to



FIGURE 8. *Atlantid and caryatid of Maya rulers by Viktor Tilgner. Hall XIV at the Museum of Natural History, Vienna.*

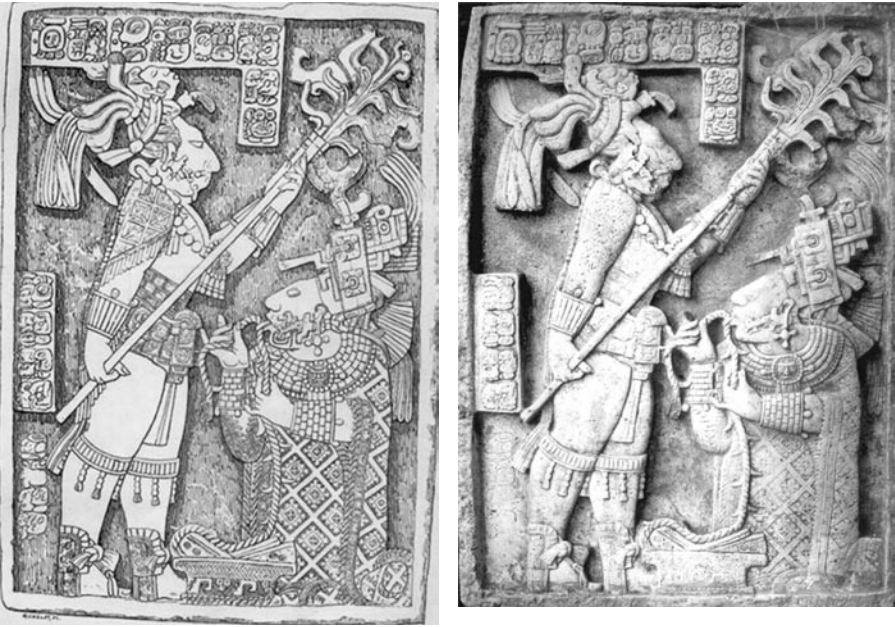


FIGURE 9. (a) Lintel 24 from Yaxchilán, Mexico (from Charnay, Ville Lorillard, *pl. IV*); (b) Lintel 24 from Yaxchilán, Mexico. Photo by Désiré Charnay. Museum of Ethnology, Vienna, photographic collections VF 705.

Lady K'ab'al Xook (fig. 9a), who is prominent on all three stone carvings from this building.³⁴

In 1882, within a few days of each other, the Frenchman Claude-Joseph Le Désiré Charnay (1828–1915) and the Englishman Alfred P. Maudsley (1850–1931) arrived at a Maya ruin in the jungles of Mexico. It was Maudsley who shipped lintel 24 to London. The site was originally named Ville Lorillard after Charnay's patron Pierre Lorillard.³⁵ The archaeologist and traveler Charnay made extensive use of photography to document the archaeological sites he visited, and the image of lintel 24 was known at the time through Charnay's publication *La ville Lorillard au pays de Lacandons*, a copy of which was once part of Hochstetter's personal library (fig. 9a). Reports of Charnay's journeys were also published in widely circulating journals (for example, the French *Le tour du monde* and the German *Globus*).³⁶

Charnay offered his photographs for sale, and this is how several specimens ended up in the museum's archives. The anthropological-ethnographical department "at the expense of the supervision of construction" acquired his photograph that depicts lintel 24. This means that the photo was financed with funds designated for actually building the museum and that the photo was to be used by the artist to produce his sculptures as an architectural element of the museum's edifice (fig. 9b).

The Maya had a considerable impact on Euro-American thinking. They were thought to be a peaceful people, who did not sacrifice humans, had

a priestly elite dedicating its time to astronomy and mathematics, and had invented a calendar and a written notation system. The relationship between the elite and the farming population was one of social harmony. The refined Maya were presented in contrast to the coarse Aztecs, with the latter being war-like, tyrannical, sacrificers of humans, and not as artistic as the Maya. This contrasting perception is deep-rooted, deriving from Europe's history, where the Greeks and Romans were presented in a similar contrast. The association of Western civilization with Greek antiquity is firm. By comparing the Maya with the Greek and, therefore, by adopting the Maya almost to their own rank as a civilized people, Euro-Americans enforced the separation of both from those human evolutionary stages that represent the childhood of humanity with characteristics that stress the dark side of savage man.³⁷ This line of thought is observable in the sculptures.

The Sculptures

Contrary to his original portrait on the lintel at the British Museum, Itzamnaaj B'alam's upper and lower body on the Viennese sculpture are covered in cloth. This is an example of the sculpture custom in which men are either dressed or certain body parts are at least covered. Like the Native American, Itzamnaaj B'alam's sculpture is more muscular than on the original Maya carving. He is holding a torch in front of his spouse, who is standing instead of kneeling, as she is on the lintel. The femininity of Lady K'ab'al Xook is emphasized on the sculpture by the visible curves of her bosom, whereas the clothing on the original lintel does not reveal any indication of womanhood. Compared to her portrait on the lintel, she received more drastic adjustments than her spouse. On the original lintel the Maya sculptor depicted her while performing a blood sacrifice by pulling a rope with thorns attached through her tongue and with drops of blood covering her cheek and jaw. According to Western theory, the Maya were not supposed to have made blood sacrifices. This did not fit into the Western perception of the Maya and was not an aspect scholars wanted to convey to the public. On the sculpture she still holds a rope with thorns, rather negligent, in her left hand, but it is not going through her tongue, and she seems to concentrate her attention on the flowers in her right hand, an element not present on the carved lintel but more fitting for the role of a queen consort of a civilized nation.

Sculptures of Savages from the Amazonian

Like the aboriginals from Australia, the indigenous peoples from the Amazonian rain forest were regarded as savages; they went about naked, were very war-like, and practiced head-hunting and cannibalism.³⁸ The museum's exhibit contained many early South American artifacts, arguing for the presence of these Amazonian sculptures.

The Sculptures

One Amazonian figure carries a trophy head in his right hand (fig. 10). The trophy's facial features closely resemble those of a Shuar's *tsantsa*, or shrunken head. However, on the sculpture, which hangs high on the wall, the head is not shrunken, thus enabling visitors to see the head properly and compare it with real trophy heads actually on exhibit. Consequently, the museum was able to convey the idea of a head-hunting savage. The female at his side carries fruits and flowers on her head and in her left hand, making the expected association of this people with nature more apparent.

The Amazonians' "wild" state is also evident in other sculptures at the museum (fig. 11). Here, the woman has flowers in her hand, and the man carries a macaw, an image

often found in illustrations of Amazonian Natives. The male also carries arrows, implying his war-like state. The arrows do not resemble those known from the Amazonian, being only half their actual length and having different arrowheads (see figs. 14, 15). The arrows depicted have an appearance more widely known to Europeans. The man on the sculpture wears the combined facial decoration of two different peoples, the Mayoruna and the Botocudos. The decoration



FIGURE 10. *Atlantid and caryatid of two Amazonians with trophy head and foliage by Viktor Tilgner. Hall XIV at the Museum of Natural History, Vienna.*



FIGURE 11. *Atlantid and caryatid of two Amazonians with facial decoration by Viktor Tilgner. Hall XIV at the Museum of Natural History, Vienna.*

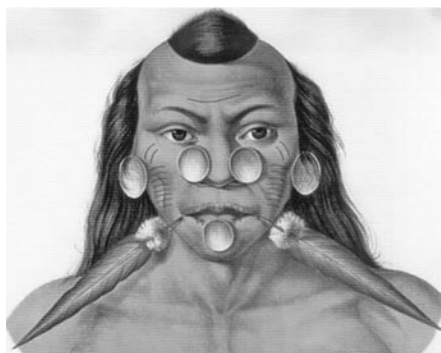


FIGURE 12. *Mayoruna (Maxuruna)*, lithography by Philipp Schmid after Johann Baptist von Spix (from Spix and Martius, *Reise in Brasilien*, Atlas, pl. 14).



FIGURE 13. A *Botocudo* family, copperplate engraving (from Wied-Neuwied, *Reise nach Brasilien*, pl. 10).

presents a beau ideal that was diametrically opposed to the Western one, making the figures a typical example of the forest-dwelling savage. Darwin stressed this aspect when he said, "It will be well first to shew in some detail that savages pay the greatest attention to their personal appearance. That they have a passion for ornament is notorious. . . . As the face with us is chiefly admired for its beauty, so with savages it is the chief seat of mutilation."³⁹ The Mayoruna lived far to the west along the Brazilian-Peruvian border. The Botocudos lived closer to the east coast of Brazil. The latter were visited by various Western travelers and were regarded as war-like cannibals.⁴⁰ Like other indigenous peoples, they were expected to vanish in due time and their presence in the museum can, once again, be regarded as a recording of the past for future generations of visitors to see.



FIGURE 14. *Botocudos*, lithograph by V. Adam after Johann Moritz Rugendas (from Rugendas, *Malerische Reise*, pl. 1).

The feathers in the male sculpture's cheeks were known from a portrait of a Mayoruna, published by Johann Baptist von Spix (1781–1826) and Carl Friedrich Philipp von Martius (1794–1868), who called the facial decoration "a dreadful appearance" (fig. 12).⁴¹ The man's haircut, however, resembles those of the Botocudos, as do the lip plugs and earplugs he wears (figs. 13, 14). The Botocudos, known in former times as Aymores or Ambures, derived their present name from the Portuguese word *botoque*, meaning plug or

labret and referring to the lip and ear decorations that “disfigured their ears and lips . . . giving their faces a highly peculiar, revolting look.”⁴² The size of these wooden ornaments attracted major attention through publications by Maximilian of Wied-Neuwied, who traveled in Brazil from 1815 until 1817 and who brought a Botocudo man as his personal servant with him to Europe. The work of Johann Moritz Rugendas (1802–58), a famous German artist who traveled extensively in South America, features illustrations of Botocudos. The lip plugs and earplugs had a diameter of up to ten centimeters, a size that the ethnologist Georg Gerland (1833–1919) called “most exaggerated.”⁴³ Examples of lip plugs and earplugs were on display at the museum. By combining the facial decoration of two different nations in one portrait, their curiosity and “otherness” as savages was heightened even further. As bodily mutilation, these decorations conveyed to Europeans the “wild state” of these humans. The sculptured woman only wears the earplugs.

The facial mutilation, nakedness, plants, animals, and arrows all placed these peoples on the lowest rung of the ladder of civilization. As Wied-Neuwied wrote, “they stood there naked and brown, like the animals of the forest, with their large plugs in ears and lower lips, bow and arrows in their hands.”⁴⁴ The sculptured pair was most likely inspired by an image in the work of Rugendas.⁴⁵ The decorations that the man and woman are wearing in his image are similar to those in figure 11. The man in the lithograph carries arrows that are much longer than the ones in the sculpture. The Botocudos did not wear any clothing, yet the woman in Rugendas’s picture wears a woven loincloth that is copied in the sculpture, and the male sex organs in figure 14 are hidden through the posture of the various bodies. The macaw in the sculpture covers that particular organ, which is present on certain images of the Botocudos and usually wrapped in a penis gourd (see fig. 13). Tolerance and acceptance in nineteenth-century Western society apparently could not be strained too much in the public domain.

CLOSING REMARKS

Identifying oneself by defining the “Other” is illustrated by the sculptures discussed here.⁴⁶ Several Western expectations regarding Native Americans can easily be recognized in the sculptures, for example, the presence of a trophy head, facial mutilation, bow and arrows, feathers, and close-to-nature state. The civilized Western peoples were not everything that the sculptures implied. The Western peoples did not associate all these implied traits with themselves. Many of these Western ideas functioned as signs, and many of these ideas about Native Americans still exist today in children’s games, storytelling, literature, the visual media, and in museums’ exhibitions. However, it cannot be denied that much of what was shown did exist in some way among the cultures these sculptures represent. Many of these features were on display in the showcases. The sculptures represent a mixture of fantasy and a varying degree of ethnographic accuracy.

Scholars and artists chose the context the carvings tried to convey, resulting in an objectification and categorization of Native peoples. The

presentation's arbitrariness was matched by the collections on display. These, too, did not show a completeness of certain cultures and were, logically, fragmentized and deliberately chosen and arranged by the Western collector and museum professional. However, it must not be forgotten that hardly any progress had been made in museum pedagogy. The sculptures provided an image of unknown peoples to museum visitors, who most likely never had a chance to travel and personally observe them. If the opportunity to travel had arisen, they might nevertheless have arrived too late to witness the nations that were expected to vanish in the near future.

The sculpture program thus demonstrates the authoritative manner in which late-nineteenth-century Europeans, the rising bourgeois, thought about and interpreted non-Western peoples.⁴⁷ Images of these peoples, which were available from publications and were already artistic interpretations of Native life, were further modified and adapted. These sculptures of Native Americans were thus Europeanized from the very beginning, as if the "Other" is consumed and transformed before he or she can enter Western surroundings. The decoration program's unilateralness allowed the beholder at the time to confirm his or her broad perceptions of "noncivilized peoples." It was a shared experience between museum and visitor and demonstrates the consensus between both parties and their collective identity in regard to their separation from those not-as-highly-developed cultures, a practice that continues, with each era making its own decisions and manipulations according to its own agenda.⁴⁸ Eventually, no matter how scholarly and objectively an exhibition curator intends to work, his or her own person is undeniably on exhibit to some extent.

The unilateralness in the presentation of the "noncivilized" nations in the nineteenth century corresponded with the authoritative manner in which the educated upper-middle classes dealt with their own societies. They were constructing their own identities and were positioning themselves and their societies. The lower classes, or proletariat, led a separate existence in a way comparable to the cleft with non-European nations. They were looked on with disdain, living a dirty and lascivious life.⁴⁹ Was the power of art in earlier days a means for the nobility and the clergy to demonstrate their positions and hold over the societies of their time? In late-nineteenth-century Austria the upper-middle classes began to use this medium to express their prominent place within society and their ideas on the development and unity of humanity and civilization. This was also reflected in other arts (for example, the genre of salon paintings), with morality as a prominent theme. The Museum of Natural History reflected this: the bourgeois scientist circled by the phenomena of the universe.

The sculptures and the peoples they represented were essentially being censored by the absence of textual explanations about the sculptures and by the silence to which they thus were doomed.⁵⁰ This was reflected by the objects on display, for these were not arranged according to an evolutionary model, as demonstrated by the carvings, but were exhibited according to geographical classifications. At the same time, it was apparently not expected that representatives of the nations on exhibit would visit the museum and

need explanations. All the above eventually transformed and alienated the sculptures, the peoples they were supposed to represent, and the Western museum's visitors. This is further enhanced by the circumstance that the function of the sculptures has changed, as ethnological artifacts are no longer on exhibit in these halls.

Acknowledgments

I wish to acknowledge my gratitude to Renée von Paschen for copy editing the text. I am further grateful to Mélanie van der Hoorn, Christine Kaufmann, Marianne Huber, and Steve Gander for their assistance and comments. I lay claim to all errors left.

NOTES

1. Ferdinand von Hochstetter, *Die ethnographische Sammlung*, manuscript in the Museum of Ethnology archives, Vienna (n.d.), 1; Ferdinand von Hochstetter and Franz Heger, "Die sogenannte Cooksche Sammlung," in *Die archäologischen und ethnographischen Sammlungen aus Amerika im k. k. naturhistorischen Hofmuseum in Wien. Festschrift herausgegeben anlässlich der Tagung des XVI. Internationalen Amerikanistenkongresses in Wien, 9–14 September 1908*, ed. Franz Heger (Vienna: k. k. naturhistorisches Hofmuseum, 1908), 5–7; Christian F. Feest, "Cook Voyage Material from North America: The Vienna Collection," *Archiv für Völkerkunde* 49 (Vienna: Freunde der Völkerkunde, Museum für Völkerkunde, 1995), 115.

2. Kunst- or Wunderkammern, or cabinets of curiosities, were collections of natural and manmade artifacts: natural-history objects, antiquities, works of art, weapons, scientific instruments, mysterious objects, etc. They were a reflection of the aspiration to compress all knowledge and many wonders within one collection. The oldest Kunst- or Wunderkammern date from the Renaissance. The chambers were the forerunners of present-day museums, where specialization led to the exhibits' division among different scientific disciplines.

3. *Wiener Zeitung*, no. 103 (Vienna, 5 May 1876), 1; F. Freiherrn von Andrian, "Ferdinand von Hochstetter," *Mitteilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien*, vol. 14 (Vienna: Alfred Hölder, 1884), 78; Franz Ritter von Hauer, *Allgemeiner Führer durch das k. k. naturhistorische Hofmuseum* (Vienna: k. k. naturhistorisches Hofmuseum, 1889), 4; Christa Riedl-Dorn, ed., *Das Haus der Wunder. Zur Geschichte des naturhistorischen Museums in Wien* (Vienna: Holzhausen, 1998), 189.

4. Ferdinand von Hochstetter, *Neu-Seeland* (Stuttgart: Cotta Verlag, 1863), 47, 467.

5. Christian F. Feest, "Das Museum für Völkerkunde," *Das Museum für Völkerkunde in Wien* (Salzburg and Vienna: Residenz Verlag, 1980), 26–27.

6. Beatrix Kriller and Georg Kugler, *Das Kunsthistorische Museum. Die Architektur und Ausstattung. Idee und Wirklichkeit des Gesamtkunstwerks* (Vienna: Christian Brandstätter, 1991), 37–43; Riedl-Dorn, *Haus der Wunder*, 186.

7. J. D. E. Schmeltz, *Ethnographische musea in Midden-Europa. Verslag eener studiereis, 19 mei–31 juli 1895* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1896), 52.

8. Hauer, *Allgemeiner Führer*, 9.

9. Personal information, 3 April 2007, from Christa Riedl-Dorn, MA, head of the Department Archives of the History of Science (*Archiv für Wissenschaftsgeschichte*) at the Museum of Natural History, Vienna.

10. Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, vol. 2 (London: John Murray, 1871), 404.

11. Mélanie Maria van der Hoorn, *Indispensable Eyesores: An Anthropology of Undesired Buildings* (PhD diss., University of Utrecht, 2005), 13.

12. Gottfried Semper, "Programm-Entwurf für die bildnerische Ausschmückung des neuen k. k. naturhistorischen Museums in Wien (1874)," in Riedl-Dorn, *Haus der Wunder*, 271.

13. Edward B. Tylor, *Die Anfänge der Cultur. Untersuchungen über die Entwicklung der Mythologie, Philosophie, Religion, Kunst und Sitte*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: C. F. Winter, 1873), 240; J. B. Polek, *Australien. Ein Natur- und Culturbild* (Vienna: Emil Weiske, 1875), 51; Friedrich von Hellwald, *Naturgeschichte des Menschen*, vol. 1 (Stuttgart: W. Spemann, 1882), 3; Alexander Freiherr von Hübner, *Durch das Britische Reich. Südafrika, Neuseeland, Australien, Indien, Oceanien, Canada*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1886), 230.

14. Tylor, *Anfänge der Cultur*, 1, 27, 31; Lewis H. Morgan, *Ancient Society or Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery through Barbarism to Civilization* (New York: Henry Holt, 1878), v, vi.

15. Darwin, *Descent of Man*, 1: 181.

16. Ton Lemaire, *De Indiaan in ons bewustzijn. De ontmoeting van de Oude met de Nieuwe Wereld* (Baarn: Ambo, 1986), 139.

17. Hochstetter, *Neu-Seeland*, 45; Hochstetter and Heger, *Cooksche Sammlung*, 3; Theodor Waitz, *Indianer Nordamerica's* (Leipzig: Friedrich Fleischer, 1865), 67; Waitz, *Anthropologie der Naturvölker. Die Einheit des Menschengeschlechts und den Naturzustand des Menschen*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Friedrich Fleischer, 1877), 475; Georg Gerland, *Atlas der Ethnographie* (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1876), 1; Hellwald, *Naturgeschichte des Menschen*, v, vi, 212; Alphonse Bertillon, *Les races sauvages. Ethnographie moderne. Bibliothèque de la nature* (Paris: G. Masson, 1883), vii, viii; Lemaire, *Indiaan in ons bewustzijn*, 213.

18. Vincenz von Haardt von Hartenthurn, *Ferdinand von Hochstetter's gesammelte Reise-Berichte von der Erdumsegelung der Fregatte "Novara," 1857–1859* (Vienna: Eduard Hölzel, 1885), 330.

19. Sally Price, *Primitive Art in Civilized Places* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 32–33; Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 231.

20. A. Bastian, *Die Vorgeschichte der Ethnologie* (Berlin: Ferdinand Dümmler, 1881), 74.

21. Morgan, *Ancient Society*, 51.

22. Hauer, *Allgemeiner Führer*, 157. The sculptor's name, Viktor Tilgner, was not published in the official catalog and passed into oblivion. It was known at the time and written down in a manuscript in the archives of the Museum of Ethnology, Vienna: Franz Heger, *Illustrierter Spezialführer durch die Ethnographischen Sammlungen* (Vienna, c. 1889), 10.

23. Schmeltz, *Ethnographische musea*, 52.

24. *Ibid.*, 53–54.

25. William H. Holmes, Smithsonian Institution, National Museum, *The Exhibit of the Department of Anthropology* (1901), <http://panam1901.bfn.org/usgov/smithsonian/smithsoniananthro.htm> (accessed 10 April 2007).

26. Maximilian Prinz zu Wied, *Reise in das Innere Nord-America in den Jahren 1832 bis 1834*, 2 (Koblenz: J. Hoelscher, 1839–41), 103.
27. John K. Hillers, The J. Paul Getty Trust, *Little Bear, Cheyenne*, <http://www.getty.edu/art/collections/objects/o67191.html> (accessed 10 April 2007).
28. Paula Richardson Fleming and Judith Luskey, *The North American Indians in Early Photographs* (London: Barnes and Noble Books, 1986), 137.
29. G. J. Engelmann, letter from St. Louis to Dr. Ferdinand von Hochstetter, 6 April 1881 in the archives of the Museum of Ethnology, Vienna, 2.
30. George J. Engelmann, *Die Geburt bei den Urvölkern. Eine Darstellung der Entwicklung der heutigen Geburtskunde aus den natürlichen und unbewussten Gebräuchen aller Rassen* (Vienna: W. Braumüller, 1884), 214.
31. Wied, *Reise in das Innere Nord-America*, Atlas, pl. 8.
32. A. Racinet, *Das polychrome Ornament. Antike und orientalische Kunst, Mittelalter, Renaissance, XVII. Und XVIII. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Paul Neff, 1880), 4; Hellwald, *Naturgeschichte des Menschen*, 216; Gerland, *Atlas der Ethnographie*, 10, 7.
33. Tatiana Proskouriakoff, "Historical Data in the Inscriptions of Yaxchilan, Part I," *Estudios de Cultura Maya*, 3 (Mexico City: Universidad Autónoma de México, 1963), 149–67; Proskouriakoff, "Historical Data in the Inscriptions of Yaxchilan, Part II," *Estudios de Cultura Maya*, 4 (Mexico City: Universidad Autónoma de México, 1964), 177–201; Nikolai Grube, ed., *Maya. Götterkönige im Regenwald* (Cologne: Könemann, 2000), 106, 127.
34. Carolyn E. Tate, *Yaxchilan: The Design of a Maya Ceremonial City* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), 203–8.
35. *Ibid.*, 5.
36. Désiré Charnay, *Ville Lorillard au pays des Lacandons. Mémoires originaux. Revue d'ethnographie*, vol. 2 (Paris: Ernst Leroux, 1883), pl. 4.; Charnay, "Voyage en Yucatan et au pays de Lacandons," in vol. 1 of *Le tour du monde. Nouveau journal des voyages*, ed. Édouard Charton (Paris and London: Librairie Hachette et Cie, 1884), 1, 95, 118; Charnay, "Désiré Charnay's Reise in Yucatan und dem Lande der Lacandonen 9," in vol. 46 of *Globus, Illustrierte Zeitschrift für Länder- und Völkerkunde mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Anthropologie und Ethnologie*, ed. Karl Andree (Braunschweig: Friedrich Bieweg und Sohn, 1884), 118.
37. Price, *Primitive Art*, 48.
38. Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom*, vol. 1 (London: John Murray, 1871), 220.
39. Darwin, *Descent of Man*, 2: 338, 341.
40. Maximilian Prinz zu Wied-Neuwied, *Reise nach Brasilien in den Jahren 1815 bis 1817*, vol. 2 (Frankfurt: Heinrich L. Brönnner, 1820–21), 105–6; R. G. Latham, *Man and His Migrations* (London: John van Voorst, 1851), 115; Hermann Burmeister, *Reise nach Brasilien durch die Provinzen von Rio de Janeiro und Minas geraës* (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1853), 261.
41. Johannes Baptist von Spix and Carl Friedrich Philipp Martius, *Reise in Brasilien in den Jahren 1817–20. Atlas zur Reise in Brasilien*, vol. 3 (Munich: Friedrich Fleischer, 1828–31), 1295.
42. Wied-Neuwied, *Reise nach Brasilien*, 2: 105–6, 108.
43. Gerland, *Atlas der Ethnographie*, 7.
44. Wied-Neuwied, *Reise nach Brasilien*, 1: 332–34.

45. Moritz Rugendas, *Malerische Reise in Brasilien, 2, Porträte und Trachten* (Paris and Mulhouse: Engelmann and Cie, 1835), pl. 1.

46. Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, 345–46; Bernadette J. Bucher, “The Savage European: A Structural Approach to European Iconography of the American Indian,” *Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication*, 2 (Washington, DC: Society for the Anthropology of Visual Communication, 1975), 80; Lemaire, *Indiaan in ons bewustzijn*, 139; James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1988), 232; Price, *Primitive Art*, 34.

47. Roland Barthes, *Das Reich der Zeichen* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1981).

48. Jacques Maquet, *The Aesthetic Experience: An Anthropologist Look at the Visual Arts* (Westford: Yale University Press, 1986), 5, 243.

49. J. Petzholdt, “*Das Buch der Wilden*” *im Lichte französischer Civilisation* (Dresden: G. Schönfeld, 1861), 6, 9.

50. Pierre Bourdieu and Hans Haacke, *Free Exchange* (London: Polity Press, 1995), 23.