WAR BONNETS AND CALUMETS IN THE HEART OF EUROPE: NATIVE AMERICAN EXHIBITION IN ROSENHEIM, GERMANY*

Indianer – Ureinwohner Nordamerikas. Lokschuppen.
Rosenheim, Germany, April 8, 2011 – November 6, 2011

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Abstract: ***This review essay focuses on representational practices of Native Americans in the exhibition* Indianer – Ureinwohner Nordamerikas *(Indians – Indigenous Peoples of North America) in Germany. Through an analysis of the exhibition contents, it aims to assess used representational practices and discuss how this exhibition deals with common stereotypes of Native Americans. It argues that, while the exhibition contests many common stereotypes, it also consciously or unconsciously reproduces a few others. In the conclusion it tries to find the reasons why this is so, despite the fact that the exhibition curator is one of the first anthropologists focusing on the issue of representations of Native Americans.***

Keywords: ***Native Americans, representations, museum, stereotypes***

Stereotypical representations of Native Americans[1] have a tradition as long as the "discovery" of America. Stereotypes emerge even with the first accounts

* This paper was supported by grant "Anthropology of Communication and Human Adaptation" (MSM 0021620843). The author would like to thanks Thomas O'Hearn and Valerie Levy for grammar corrections of the English version of the text and also to two anonymous peer reviewers for their kind suggestions and recommendations concerning final version of the text. All photographs accompanying this paper come from the exhibitions website (http://www.indianer-ausstellung.de). All photographs are used with permission.

1 Choosing the right designation for native people of North America is more complicated that it might seem because there are great differences in legal concepts (different in the U.S. and Canada), popular concepts and concepts of identification of particular Native groups. For this reason, and being aware of its problematic nature, I chose to use the term Native Americans (as used in academic discourse) for addressing all native groups of North America, be they American Indians, Eskimos or Aleuts. The only exceptions, when I will use the term Indian, are words that are established as technical terms (e.g. Pan-Indianism or Urban Indians).

of Columbus's journeys. The accounts of missionaries, traders and explorers were successively replaced by representations created by the first ethnologists and anthropologists. Since the crisis of representations (Marcus and Fischer 1986), which reflexively focus attention on the anthropological production of knowledge, some authors have even spoken of anthropology as "the Indian's Image-Maker" (Strong 2004: 342-343). Although this claim is rather an overstatement, as the main source of stereotypical representation in the 20th century became pop culture led by the movie industry (see Stedman 1982; Mihesuah 1996), the question of representation remains a significant issue in contemporary anthropology which is particularly pressing in the case of museum exhibitions (Clifford 1988a, 1988b; Bataille 2001; Lidchi 2007; for alternative perspective see Zimmerman 2010).

An extensive exhibition dedicated to the Native Americans of North America called *Indianer – Ureinwohner Nordamerikas* (Indians – Indigenous Peoples of North America) is taking place from April 8 to November 6 in Rosenheim, Germany, about 50 km from the center of Bavaria, Munich. Although Rosenheim is not the first place hosting this exhibition, which was originally exhibited in 2008 (from March 29 to October 19) at the Schallaburg Renaissance Castle in the town of Schollach in Austria, it is not surprising that this new one is taking place in Germany. This is because Native Americans had and still have a specific position in the Central European and particularly German tradition. Apparently no other indigenous group is as popular as Native Americans. This is obvious not just in public awareness and the positive attitude of mainstream society, but particularly in the existence of the so-called "Euroindian" or Indian hobbyist movement[2] (for basic review see Taylor 1988), with its largest member base in Germany. The popularity of Native Americans is to some extent due to Karl May, the creator of Apache chief Winnetou, the "noble savage" *par excellence*.

In this review essay, I would like to assess this exhibition with respect to representations of Native Americans which are conveyed to its visitors. I will start with some facts about this exhibition. Then I will summarize and assess each of its sections, moving to a critical assessment of the exhibition as a whole and to the conclusion.

[2] Although this movement is often subjected to criticism of some Native American activist for appropriating their culture (see e.g., Green 1988).

What, who, why and how...

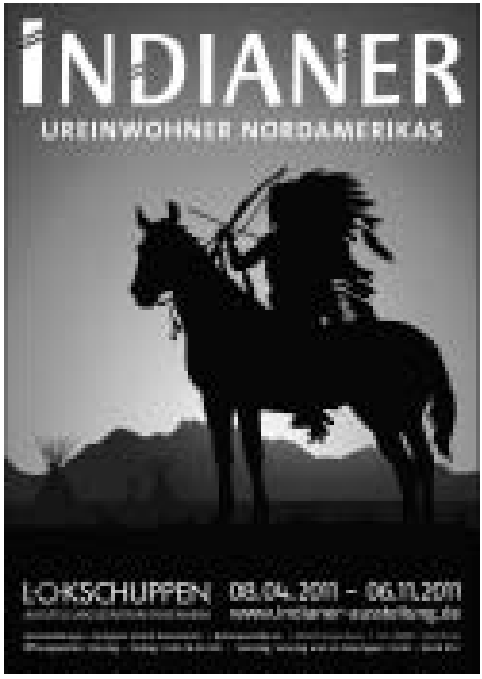
The exhibition is curated by one of the most well-known European ethnologists and ethnohistorians specializing in Native America, Dr. Christian Feest, who was the former Director of The Museum of Ethnology (*Museum für Völkerkunde*) in Vienna. Dr. Feest (born in 1945 in Broumov) is specialized in the Native American anthropology of art (e.g., Feest 1992) and is one of pioneers in the work of European-Native American contact (e.g., Feest 1999). Both of these interests have had an impact on the exhibition design and an emphasis on the displayed artifacts.

The exhibition consists of over 550 artifacts (dating from the eighteenth to the twenty-first century) and nearly 200 images. Even though it is not possible to compare it with a similar exposition in the USA concerning its size, e.g., the *National Museum of the American Indian* in Washington, DC, which encompasses an area of 17,500 m^2, it is the largest Native American exhibition in Continental Europe. Eighteen institutions from nine countries (Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Norway, Switzerland, and the Vatican) led by The *Museum für Völkerkunde* in Vienna participated in this exhibition. Since it deals with indigenous peoples in the United States, Canada, and Greenland, the title "Indians – Indigenous Peoples of North America" is rather inaccurate. The term Indians, which is used, does not usually cover Inuit and Aleut, who distinguish themselves as a specific group. The choice of title is understandable considering its intelligibility for German people, but it should be discussed and explained within the exhibition.

According to the curator, the aim of the exhibition is to "tell the story of Native Americans from their first meeting with the Europeans [...] to the present life [and to] demonstrate the diversity of [Native American] cultures" (Feest n.d.: 1, translated by the author).

The exhibition is arranged into twelve sections, each with its main theme which tries to convey the aforementioned story of the Native Americans. The underlying idea is the effect of colonization on indigenous peoples of America, which clearly exhibits the academic interest of the curator mentioned earlier.

Although the concept of culture areas is not the main ordering mechanism of the exhibition, it is still used to convey the sense of cultural diversity. Therefore all the sections, except for the first one and the last two, are dedicated to one of the culture areas or subareas (the Northeast culture area and Southwest culture area are both represented by two subareas), even though it is not explicitly stated there.



Exhibition logo employing a common stereotype of Native American, a horseback buffalo hunter. Source: http://www.indianer-ausstellung.de/

With respect to this, it is important to note that the concept of culture areas is the most common mechanism for ordering museum exhibitions in the 20th and even the 21st centuries. Even though it is not used as an explanatory tool anymore, it provides a common language for anthropologists working in a particular area. Moreover, most social scientists still specialize in just one or two culture areas and thus this concept is, despite its critique for being frozen in time, excessive focus on artifacts and arbitrarily delineated borders, still used (see Berg 2006). This is especially true for Americanists; therefore it is important to appreciate that this exhibition tries some other kind of structuring of its expositions, even though it is only partially successful.

Not all culture areas are presented though. The Subarctic and California culture area are covered only sporadically and the Southeast, Great Basin and Plateau culture areas are completely absent. The reason for this might be a lack of artifacts originating in these areas or the aforementioned alternative organizing mechanism. But because of omitting some of the less familiar cultures (e.g., specialized desert gatherers of California), the cultural diversity of Native American indigenous cultures might seem less diverse and therefore the representation even distorted a little bit.

Who is the "Indian"?

Right at the beginning, the exhibition contests the stereotype of "Indian-ness" by asserting that "Indians" are a European concept, an artifact of a colonial encounter. This is exemplified by Columbus's well-known mistake by which

Native Americans were labeled as "American Indians." The story of Pocahontas then demonstrates commodification of Native Americans by the movie industry and the emergence of the stereotype of the "Indian Princess" (see Stedman 1982).

At the same time, the first section is successful in conveying the seemingly immeasurable language and cultural diversity of Native America. A dominant feature of this section is an interactive language map projected on the wall which enables visitors to listen to words in chosen languages of different language families. Because the culture area concept is only implicitly present here, a map of culture areas, which would have shown cultural diversity, is absent. Instead, there are more than a dozen various headdresses placed all over the room which at first sight invoke a sense of astounding cultural diversity of native cultures which produced them. Thus it is possible to see a Great Plains feather war bonnet alongside a Pacific Coast basket hat, an Iroquoian headdress and a contemporary Inuit baseball cap.

First-contact situation

The second section is devoted to the Northwest Coast culture area and the first-contact situation between the *Nuuchahnulth* of Vancouver Island (formerly known as *Nootka*) and Captain James Cook on his third voyage in 1778. Cook's account describing this contact is full of respect and even idolizing admiration for these people. Visitors are thus presented with one of the contact models between Europeans and Native Americans, yet without explicitly stating that it is the product of the "noble savage" stereotype, which at the same time further reproduces.

Traditional *Nuuchahnulth* culture is shown as a culture of whalers and the photography of a landed whale which is being portioned on the beach is one of the dominant features of this section. Typical artifacts of the Northwest Coast culture area, like *Chilkat blankets* or wooden ritual masks, as well as the exclusively *Nuuchahnulth* ones, like twined "onion dome" knob-top hats, are also on display.

Besides traditional culture, there are also photographs that demonstrate the change of *Nuuchahnulth* culture in the 20th century and its adaptation to modernization trends. At the same time, it is also shown that these people preserve some features of traditional cultural knowledge, like the art of twining, wood-carving or traditional means of gathering halibut eggs by using cut-off branches immersed in a stream.

The example of *Nuuchahnulth* is also used to discuss one of the most acute problems of contemporary Native Americans – the loss of linguistic competence in native languages and the endeavor for revitalization of native languages which is arduous because of the low number of fluent speakers. But it forgot to mention that some Native American nations are successful in these revitalization attempts and that these endeavors are supported by many organizations.

Indigenous lands

The third section is dedicated to Northeast culture area (specifically the Iroquois subarea) and the issue of indigenous lands. The American Revolutionary War is claimed to be a crucial moment in which the future of indigenous lands was decided. In both this and the French and Indian War[3] it is emphasized that the Native Americans fought for the interests of European governments and their involvement often led not just to intertribal wars but also to intratribal divides, as among the *Iroquois*, where *Mohawks*, *Senecas*, *Cayugas*, and *Onondagas* fought on the British side, while *Oneidas* and *Tuscaroras* on the side of the USA[4].

The issue of Native American land, as a primary motive of European colonization, is presented as a problem of different perspective on Native Americans and Europeans concerning the sale and purchase of land. From the European perspective, the land was a commodity and, by its purchase, the owner acquired exclusive right to its disposal. From the perspective of Native Americans, it was possible only to use the land, but not to own it. What was sold were the rights of usage, not ownership. This very difference of these perspectives is claimed to be the primary source of many conflicts.

However, the issue of indigenous land seems kind of unfinished at that point. If the issue of indigenous land is to be presented in its complexity, it should not omit its importance for treatment of the Native Americans in the following centuries. Thus I would find it appropriate to also add information about the Indian Territory, the formation of Indian reservations and the infamous Allotment Act. Although is it understandable that, because of the limited extent of the exhibition and retaining of culture area principle, these facts had to be omitted; their presentation would however contribute to comprehension of the importance of this issue.

3 The *French and Indian War* is a prevalent but mistaken name of the war between Great Britain and France, because Native Americans fought on both sides, not just the British one.

4 It also interesting to note that the official statement of the Iroquois Confederacy was neutral.

Section devoted to *Iroquois,* stylized to resemble deciduous forest. Foto: Andreas Jacob.

By the means of children's painting criticizing the destruction of nature and activities of oil industries, the land issue is presented as an environmental problem. The environmental consciousness of contemporary Native Americans is also demonstrated by a 1980s flyer appealing for participation in protest meetings concerning Colorado uranium mines, where many Navajo men worked back in the '80s. These protests were aimed at drawing attention to health risks associated with mining of uranium. Emphasis on this environmental issue reproduces the stereotype of the "ecological Indian" however (see Krech 1999).

Besides weapons and medals related to these aforementioned wars, there is also presented an authentic scalp (an approximately 7 cm piece of almost hairless skin stretched on a wooden frame). The practice of scalping is asserted to be a non-universal among Native Americans. It is claimed that it spread only after the introduction of steel knives and was also practiced by Europeans (since the announcement of bounties on Indian scalps). There is an evident effort to contest another of the common stereotypes that of the "ignoble savage," the "Indian longing for scalps." While it is praiseworthy, the origin of scalping is still highly contested and it would deserve more profound discussion whether it is an indigenous or a European-introduced practice (see Axtell and Sturtevant 1980; Abler 1992).

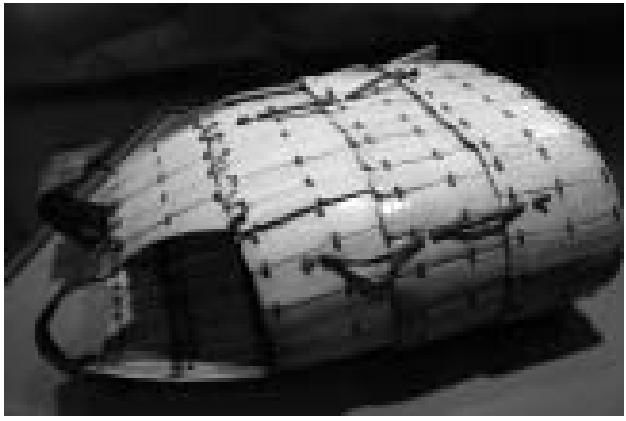
The traditional culture of the Northeast culture area is demonstrated in particular by quillwork (a form of leather embellishment using the quills of porcupines) as there are several beautifully decorated moccasins and typical buckskin clothes (leggings and shirts). A syncretism of both native and European tradition is shown by a buckskin coat of European cut decorated by Native American decoration which belonged to a German soldier. In relation to the land issue, the whole showcase is devoted to wampum belts as an important and exclusive part of treaty making.

Autonomy and abuse

The following two sections are dedicated to the Arctic culture area – the fourth to Greenland, and the fifth to the Aleutian Islands. These are the only sections that are not assigned to American Indians, but to *Inuit* and *Aleuts*. Both sections are meant as contrasting examples of European colonization of indigenous people. Greenland provides an example in which colonization ultimately led to autonomy, while in Alaska (Russian America) and particularly in the Aleutian Islands, colonizers, Russian fur traders, literally abused and enslaved native people living there.

The main feature of the fourth section is a unique artifact, an authentic plank house built in Greenland in the 1950s, which was purchased in 1987. Even more than in the Northeast culture area there is an evident syncresis of European and native culture or rather a diffusion of European artifacts into *Inuit* culture (particularly weapons, iron cookware and later also synthetic materials).

The strategies of subsistence and alimentary practices and their change brought about by the influence of European culture are the leitmotif of this section. A displayed kayak and an accompanying description of hunting and fishing techniques serve at first sight to demonstrate the enormous skill and tenacity of Inuit hunters and fishermen. Unfortunately, this combined with exhibits demonstrating the alimentary practices reproduces the stereotype of the primitive "blubber eater" who was in need to be civilized. This representation is constructed not merely by "new" foods that were introduced into the diet by the impact of Inuit-European contact (milk-powder, dried eggs, sugar, biscuits, etc.), but above all by the emic perspective of a young *Inuit* boy. His narrative consists of a description of his life in a displayed house. He emphasizes that he is happy because he no longer has to eat the seal blubber his grandmother told him she was used to because his favorite dish is spaghetti.



Torso armor made of bone. Inupiaq (?), Alaska, circa 1830. Walrossrippen Museovirasto, Helsinki. Foto: Scheueregger.

The representation of Inuit primitivism is further reproduced by the information that until the 1990s most Greenland *Inuit* communities did not possess electricity and hot water in their houses. This representation also continues in the fifth section, where one entire showcase displays traditional artifacts in contrast to their contemporary counterparts. There is a traditional sandstone bowl displayed alongside a contemporary plate, a traditional seal oil lamp and a contemporary gas lantern or a ladle made of skin and of a tin can.

Apart from the aforementioned criticism of abuse committed by European colonizers or more precisely Russian fur traders, there is great emphasis on the display of tradition arctic clothing. Besides *parkas*, pants, boots, mittens, *ulus* and other typical artifacts, there are also displayed two relatively uncommon pieces – torso armor made of bones and women's panties made of fur. These pieces are extraordinary because the armor contests the stereotype of "Eskimos as pacifists," and indigenous underwear is one of the rare exhibits that are to be seen in any exhibition[5].

What's left...

The following (quasi)section has a quite different character from all the other ones. It differs not just by its expanse, which is less than a third of the other sections, but also by an absence of any unifying component (be it a theme or

5 Except for Melanesian penis sheaths, I have actually never seen indigenous underwear before in any exhibition.

a culture area). Artifacts of three groups belonging to three different culture areas are displayed there – clothing of *Dena'ina* from the Subarctic, twined bowls and jewelry of the *Pomo* from California and *Chilkat blankets* of *Tlingit* from the Northwest Coast. The absence of any unifying principle makes this section seem as if the authors had some artifacts left and they were sorry (for whatever reason) not to display them. The only apology for this is that in the case of *Dena'ina* and *Pomo* absence the exhibition would lack any artifacts from the Subarctic and California culture areas. But if this is the case, it is not clear why there are also not similarly exhibited (even just by one artifact) the Southeast, Great Basin and Plateau culture areas. In the case of the *Chilkat blanket*, its display seems to me utterly redundant because another similar *Chilkat blanket* is already exhibited in the second section devoted to the *Nuuchahnulth*.

Indian Wars

The following two sections are special in that you can hear them before you enter the room dedicated to them. There is a roar emanating from the room in several-minute intervals. Only after entering the room can the visitor discover that the roar is a sound of a running buffalo herd projected on a screen just beside the entrance (in the shape of a *tipi*). The sections sharing this room are dedicated to the Great Plains culture area, particularly the *Lakota* (even though they are presented as *Sioux*), and to nomadic tribes of the Southwest culture area, particularly the *Apache*. Both these nations are used as contrasting examples for the origins and effects of the "Indian Wars" of the nineteenth century and, in both cases, they are represented by famous leading figures of native resistance – Sitting Bull (*Tatanka Iyotake* or *Tatanka Yotanka*) of the *Lakota* and Geronimo (*Goyathlay* or *Gokhlayeh*)[6] of the *Apache*.

The *Sioux* resistance is represented in the manner of battles and massacres. Therefore there is an account of the most famous Native American battle at Little Bighorn in 1876 and also adversely the famous massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890, which marks the end of the conquest of the Wild West. The Apache resistance is on the other hand portrayed in a manner of skirmishes and evasions of Apache warriors led by Geronimo who were able to continually escape U.S. troops until they surrendered in 1886.

6 In case of native names, I deliberately use a simplified form of their English transcription.

Besides native resistance in the "Indian Wars," a substantial part of the sixth section deals with horses and buffalos as the crucial components of the strategy of subsistence of the Plains tribes. Even the buffalo massacres are mentioned as a means of weakening the Plains Tribes population by removing their main source of subsistence and of pressuring them onto reservations. Although the exposition mentions that the horses were acquired from Europeans, this information is not emphasized enough to make apparent that the whole culture of the Great Plains is actually a product of European colonization, caused not just by introducing horses, but also by directly or indirectly forcing migration from other culture areas (e.g., the Great Lakes tribes). Because of the effect of colonization on indigenous peoples of America being an underlying idea, I found this omission an important one. The influence of European colonizers is then represented primarily just through the wagon used by a merchant on the Plains. On the wagon, there is also an interactive presentation of the trade language of the Great Plains, Plains Standard Sign Language, which was developed to overcome the great language diversity of this area. But then it is omitted again that this great language diversity was to a great extent produced by the immigration of tribes from other areas caused by European colonization.

I would like to stress that, at this point, the exhibition tries to contest the stereotype of the "Indian just as a brave warrior and bison hunter." By means of the narrative of a *Lakota* woman and artifacts concerning motherhood (e.g., a baby carrier), the issue of a woman's world view and domestic life is represented. It is but a pity that this contestation did not traverse into the gender issue by presenting the phenomenon of the third gender, the so-called Two-Spirit, formerly known as *berdache* (see Roscoe 1998), which would have contested this stereotype even more.

The contemporary culture of the *Lakota* People is demonstrated through photographs of The Big Foot Memorial Ride (a more than 450-km-long winter horse-back ride to commemorate the Massacre at Wounded Knee), a hat decorated with the traditional beadwork and a painted buffalo skull used at the Sun Dance in the 1980s.

The section focusing on the *Apache* deals, first of all, with the Karl May heritage, which, through Winnetou formed and is still forming German (and Central European) representations of Native Americans. *Apache* artifacts thus instead of a Great Plains influence shows a diffusion of Pueblo culture, which is obvious particularly on ritual masks and *Apache* pottery, but also on clothing. Besides these, there are displayed the production of traditional fermented

maize beer called a *tiswin* and also an *Apache* fiddle, called "wood that sings," whose sound is available for visitors to listen to. This unique musical instrument, which has no parallel among Native Americans, is presented as a Spanish import from the Philippines.

Rather unfortunate is the presentation of the continuation of Native American resistance in 20th century through the Red Power Movement, a movement for Native American rights. This issue is represented by one artifact only, a yellow T-shirt with the red outline of an Indian head with a war bonnet and the writing "Apache Power." Supposedly due to a lack of other artifacts this important chapter in Native American history is represented in such a modest manner. Even more, displaying this issue in this section dealing with the *Apache* creates the false impression that the *Apaches* were the leading force of this movement. With respect to this, it would be more appropriate to represent the Red Power Movement in the previous section focusing on the *Lakota*[7].

Christianity

The eighth section focuses on the Western Great Lakes subarea of the Northeast culture area and the influence of the fur trade, Christian missionaries and the emergence of Native American Christianity.

Traditional culture is represented by typical artifacts of this region – war clubs, (model of) canoe, calumets, bows and arrows, birch-bark containers and snow shoes – and also by distinctive subsistence activities – gathering of maple syrup. Consequences of European influence, demonstrated through the narrative of a *Chippewa* chief, were, above all, dependence on European goods obtained by the fur trade, leading to sedentarization of Native American bands for easier access to trading posts and the loss of some traditional cultural knowledge.

Highlighted is also the tragic effect of European diseases brought in, which are also claimed as one of the aspects leading to Christianization of the natives. While native medical practices often failed in their treatment, European missionaries were slightly more successful, which undermined the authority of native medical-religious beliefs and practices in favor of emerging Christianity.

European influence is most noticeably manifested in a change of decoration motifs – from curvilinear to floral – that were used both on profane and

[7] Even though there were many other nations who took an important part in this movement (particularly *Iroquois*, *Cree* or *Ojibwa*).

Section devoted to *Apache* stylized to resemble mesas and a desert. Foto: Andreas Jacob

sacred artifacts. The most unique artifact in this section, the only one of its kind that has been preserved until today, is an altar from the 19th century from a mission church made of birch-bark panels that are embroidered with porcupine quills.

Although this section focuses on the Western Great Lakes, I would find it appropriate to mention the e xistence of the Native American Church (which was founded in Oklahoma) as an example of the syncresis of Christianity and native religious beliefs[8].

Religions

The ninth section, dedicated to the *Hopi* as representatives of the Pueblo subarea of Southwest culture area, stands as an example for the complexity of indigenous religious and ritual practices. The *Hopi Katsina*[9] religion is presented through a set of chosen *Katsina* dolls accompanied by a description of their spiritual counterparts.

8 Also because the Native American Church is the most widespread indigenous religion among Native Americans in the United States.

9 Usually better known as the *Kachina* religion.

The life-size photograph of a *Katsina* dancer in a *Katsina* mask demonstrates the cardinal ritual practice of *Katsina* dances while the ritual calendar corroborates the elaborate ritual yearly cycle. Stress is put on the exclusion of women from active participation in *Katsina* dances, because even women *Katsinas* were impersonated by men dancers.

Alongside *Katsina* dances are also displayed photographs of the famous Snake Dance in which members of the Snake Society danced with live rattlesnakes in their mouths. Because this dance was a sought-after tourist attraction, which entails its misinterpretation, the narrative of the highest religious person of the *Hopi*, the Sun Priest, is used to convey an emic perspective on this ritual practice.

Alongside the Snake Dance, ethnotourism is also shown by the commodification of indigenous art, especially *Katsina* dolls, which are a sought-after tourist souvenir. This led not only to the manufacture of *Katsina* dolls for the tourist trade, but also to the development of new forms attractive to tourists.

The aforementioned classical stereotype of the "horse-back buffalo hunter" is contested by presenting traditional Pueblo culture as based mainly on maize planting, rain being the main focus of religious practices. Traditional clothing and pottery are also displayed as is the photograph of the famous distinct traditional hairdo of *Hopi* girls, "squash blossom," which was an indicative of their eligibility for courtship.

While some European or American influence on the *Hopi* (in the form of tourism) is mentioned, it lacks the emphasis of the long-term Spanish influence and at least a mention of the Pueblo Revolt (also known as *Popé's* Rebellion) in 1680. Additionally, there is no mention of *Hopi* witchcraft and witch-hunts.

Beadwork

The ninth section was the last which was dedicated to some culture area or subarea. The tenth and eleventh sections present Native American art, reflecting the curator's academic interest in the Native American anthropology of art.

The tenth section focuses on the quintessentially Native American art form, beadwork. Even though beadwork is an adaptation of traditional techniques used in quillwork (which was shown in the sections dealing with the *Iroquois* and the *Lakota*), it is important to be aware that it was enabled by trading glass beads manufactured in Europe and Asia to natives and therefore has to be seen as a direct consequence of European colonization of America. Besides more than a dozen artifacts presenting the diversity of beadwork (e.g., bandolier bags

from the Great Lakes region with floral motifs, a war shirt from the Great Plains area decorated with geometric designs, etc.), there are also shown various kinds of beads and especially various kinds of stitches used in beadwork (e.g., the "lazy" stitch or the "Crow" stitch). The visitor thus has an opportunity not only to see the products, but also to get to know the process itself. Various kinds of beadwork and the various techniques used in their creation illustrate that European goods (and ideas) did not necessarily level cultural differences.

Kwewu (Wolf-Katsina). Navajo, circa 1990. Holz, Fell, Stein. Museum für Völkerkunde Wien. Foto: Scheueregger.

That beadwork is alive even today is displayed by examples of contemporary beaded patches from various locations in America. It also demonstrates that beadwork is now one of the identity-forming features of Native American cultures and I really appreciate that there is a whole section devoted to this important art form.

But the compact composition of this section is somehow disturbed by a large-scale photograph of *Mohawk* skyscraper construction workers which documents participation of Native Americans in the building of New York skyscrapers, including the Empire State Building. While I find it of real importance to mention the contribution of Native Americans to American society (and this is as good an example as any other), I find it quite inappropriate to do so in the context of native art.

Native art

The following eleventh section deals with other kinds of indigenous arts (woodcarving, painting, pottery, sculpture and weaving) for which the previous section serves as a kind of introduction. It presents the basic distinction of Native American art based on gender and geographic lines. At the gender level

it defines so-called art of men, which is figural, and art of women, which is abstract. These gender distinctions are demonstrated by Great Plains painting on hides. There are *parfleshes* (rawhide bags or boxes) decorated with abstract geometric designs and buffalo robes decorated with both abstract and figural motives according to the respective gender of its creator.

Geographically-based distinction distinguishes between western art, which is mostly geometric, and eastern art, which is curvilinear, as was shown in the previous section focusing on beadwork.

Alongside historical artifacts of daily usage and contemporary products based on traditional crafts serving as tourist souvenirs (e.g., Pueblo loom-woven textiles) some works by indigenous artists are also exhibited. Visitors can thus see some pottery made by *Nampeyo*, the most famous *Hopi* potter of the second half of the 19th century and first half of the 20th century, or several stone sculptures and other works by Bill Reid, one of the most famous *Haida* artists of the 20th century. There are also other art pieces from various Native American nations from all over North America covering various designs, forms and themes, e.g., a *Maidu* picture of a trickster, an *Ojibwa* picture of fish or a *Haida* picture of a killer whale.

Through all of these artifacts, the encounter of Native American art with the Western art world is conveyed, arguing that whether it is primitive or gallery art both are made for the Western audience. Even though this opens space for questioning the authenticity of contemporary native art production and its commodification (see Ryan and Aicken 2005), the exposition leaves this question unmentioned.

Limiting the art exposition only to primitive and gallery art seems to be a significant shortcoming of this section. By omitting other relevant art forms as literature, music and film, it creates an incomplete and therefore distorted representation of contemporary Native American art. The native literature that started the wave of the so-called Native American Renaissance (Lincoln 1985) is an important example of the syncresis of Native American tradition with the Western art world. World-wide known authors such as N. Scott Momaday (who received the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1969.), Leslie Marmon Silko or Sherman Alexie, to name just few, are examples of contemporary Native American artists that cannot be omitted. Similarly, it is not possible to exclude contemporary native music, whether being based on traditional music forms (e.g., the Black Lodge Singers or Carlos N. Nakay) or having appropriated Western music styles (e.g., the punk-rock band Blackfire or hiphopers Tru

Section devoted to beadwork with various beaded bags. Foto: Andreas Jacob.

Rez Crew and Anybody Killa). Over the last 15 years, there has been a boom of independent native movies and some of these native film-makers are becoming known all over the world, e.g., Chris Eyre (Smoke Signals, Skins) or Zacharias Kunuk (Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner).

Contemporary Native America

The final, twelfth section of the exhibition focuses on the contemporary Native American experience. While it conveys many aspects of today's Native American life (from *pow-wows* and casinos to alcohol abuse and identity issues), the space devoted to this issue greatly limits its extent.

The leitmotif of this section is the contests of stereotype of the "vanishing" or even "vanished Indian." The message of this section is explicit in stating that, while Native Americans lived though the 500 years of colonization, they are more numerous in the 21st century then ever in history[10]. At the same time, it is important to know that their lives have dramatically changed,

10 This claim is a problematic one, because, according to the 2000 Census, there were approximately 4 million people identifying themselves as American Indians (i.e. Native Americans), while the pre-contact population of North America excluding Mexico is estimated between 4 and 7 million people (see Heřmanský and Hrdličková 2009).

like the lives of any other peoples on Earth and they are not to be supposed to be living in *tipis* and hunting buffalos anymore. They share their traditions with their ancestors as we (Euro-Americans) do with ours.

There is also a great emphasis on the issue of dual identity, as members of their tribes or nations and as Native Americans in a Pan-Indian sense. At this point, I would welcome a more a detailed discussion of Pan-Indianism, especially in respect to Native American boarding schools and the Red Power Movement. The concept of dual identity also omits the fact that many Native Americans are actually patriots as shown by one showcase devoted to their clothing embracing the U.S. flag pattern. Thus it would be better to talk about a triple identity[11]. This is actually also supported by the fact that Native Americans form independent nations, but, at the same time, they are also citizens of one of the U.S. states by law[12]. As enlisted members of recognized tribes, they have some special rights, but, at the same time, they are perceived and perceive themselves as disadvantaged[13].

With respect to changes which have taken place over the last century, the importance of cars for contemporary Native Americans is emphasized. It is claimed that the functions originally belonging to a horse pass to the car both on a symbolic and a practical level as the car enables mobility (as is nicely shown in the movie "Powwow Highway" based on a novel by David Seals). There is a paradox in that originally nomadic people who were forced to settle on reservations are now again forced to be mobile to get a job in cities near the reservations because job opportunities on reservations are scarce.

A substantial part of this section is devoted to *pow-wows* as manifestations of native festivities which present an important opportunity for intertribal interactions and at the same time are manifestations of native identity. The origin of *pow-wows* is presented through the narrative of an *Ojibwa pow-wow* dancer. A great effort was made to give the visitors an idea of a *pow-wow*. The atmosphere of the *pow-wow* is presented not only through parts of dance costumes, but also by two short videos displaying dancing *pow-wow* dancers.

11 I am well aware that the primordial concept of identity used here is a simplified one, omitting the situational and relational character of identity and that it would be better to talk about multiple identities (in the plural) and do not count. On the other hand with respect to the general audience, this simplification is meant to present the identity issue in a comprehensible way and thus my comment is intended to specify the issue in the context used in the exhibition.

12 Although not all of them consider themselves to be the U.S. citizens.

13 For a basic review of these disadvantages see Heřmanský and Hrdličková 2009; for a more extensive review see Johansen 2007.

Dance shirt using American flag symbolism, example of Native American patriotism. Blackfoot, Montana, circa 1990. Foto: Andreas Jacob

The light side of the contemporary Native American experience is not the only one represented there. Problems which have to be coped with on an everyday basis, such as alcohol abuse, domestic abuse, high murder rates or health problems, are also mentioned. And even the controversial issue of native casinos and bingo halls is discussed, arguing that instead of improvement of the financial situation of native tribes which have rights to operate them, they often lead to an increase of the divide between the poor and the rich.

Poetics and politics of representations at Rosenheim exhibition

For the formal aspects of this exhibition, it is necessary to applaud the authors. Each section is stylized to resemble the environment of the respective culture area. Thus the section dedicated to Vancouver Island contains spruce poles and the floor is covered with a carpet of bark; in the Northeast section you can find poles made of birch and the floor is covered with fallen leaves. The Apache section decoration resembles mesas and a desert, whereas the floor of the Great Plains looks like trampled grassland. The effort to evoke the environmental conditions of each section reaches its climax in Greenland and the Aleut section, where the temperature is noticeably lower than in the rest of the sections.

I have to appreciate the fact that the exhibition also strives to employ other senses apart from sight. In the Greenland section, for example, there are samples of skin of arctic animals to be touched. Several sections employ audio recordings (e.g., words in native languages, the sound of an *Apache* fiddle, hoofbeats of a buffalo herd) and there are also a few video projections (a stampeding buffalo herd, sign language, *pow-wow* dancers). There are also some efforts for interactivity, albeit only on occasion (language families and sign language).

Due to the location of the exhibition in the heart of Bavaria, the legend of each exhibit is only in German and just the main panels are bilingual (in German and English). Although it is understandable that the exhibition is primarily aimed at the German-speaking audience, it significantly limits conveying the message to non-German-speaking visitors. For an exhibition of this magnitude I could expect a more multilingual approach, even in the form of a special booklet in other languages.

On the other hand, it is possible to buy an audio guide which is in both German and English. Although it mostly conveys information on the main panels, it does it in a way that gives the represented the power to speak for themselves. These audio commentaries are in the form of a narrative of a person involved in the discussed issue. Even though it does not always convey an emic perspective because some of these narratives are by people of European origin (Captain James Cook, a German soldier in the Indian War, a Russian trader and a Dominican missionary), the majority of these commentaries do. It is thus possible to hear an "authentic" narrative of an *Inuit* boy, a *Lakota* woman, a *Chippewa* chief, a *Hopi* Sun priest or an *Ojibwa pow-wow* dancer and even narratives of such famous figures as Chief Geronimo or the *Hopi* potter *Nampeyo*. While the authors try, by this strategy, to evoke an impression of heteroglosy or polyphony in the ethnographic sense (Gobo 2008: 296-297), it might be just simulated because it cannot be assumed that these narratives are authentic in that sense, that these are words by which these people wanted to be represented.

Concerning the content of the exhibition, I miss representations of all culture areas, as I mentioned earlier, even if they were represented by just a few artifacts each, as was the case of the Subarctic and California culture areas. Inclusion of these would enable pointing out the issues that were not displayed at all. For example, the *Cherokee* of the Southeast culture area might have been used to represent the issue of relocations of Native Americans through the Trail of Tears and the successful syncresis of Native and European culture among the Five Civilized Tribes. The Plateau culture area might have been represented

Three tipis in front of exhibition entrance. Foto: Andreas Jacob.

by *Nez Perce* to convey the issue of cultural change induced by the diffusion of Great Plains culture traits and another example of native resistance through Chief Joseph (*Hinmaton-Yalaktit*).

Another flaw of the exhibition is the total absence of any reference of the Native American contribution to the rest of the world (Weatherford 2010). It seems as though the Native Americans were just receivers of conveniences of civilization, that they adapted to the new conditions, and that these changes were influenced by colonization. Emphasizing reciprocity would create a more compact and multi-sided representation of Native Americans. This also applies to a discussion of Pan-Indianism and Urban Indians issues, which are also absent.

Representations of individual Native American nations are, except for minor flaws, successful to the highest degree. More surprising is the inconsistency in their naming. Taking the second section, where the autonym (*Nuuchahnulth*) is preferred to the more commonly used exonym (*Nootka*), as a precedent, I assumed that it would be the same in other sections. Unfortunately, it is not the same. The exonym *Iroquois* (even though it is a derogatory term) is used instead of the autonym *Haudenosaunee*, similarly *Sioux* (again derogatory) is preferred to *Lakota*. To the contrary, instead of using the exonym *Eskimo*, which is (despite the common mistake shared in academic discourse) not derogatory (Goddard 1984), it employs the autonym *Inuit*. Although a non-professional

visitor probably does not notice this contradiction, eventually he would see it as an unimportant detail; with regard to representation of these nations I find it an important issue which should be dealt with consistently.

Since Dr. Feest was one of the first anthropologists who dealt with the problem of representations of Native Americans in anthropology and in Euro-American culture in general (see Strong 2004), it could have been anticipated that he would make a great effort to contest the common stereotypes of Native Americans. And I have to admit that, in most cases, his endeavor was successful. Probably the best result was achieved in the case of the "vanishing Indian," not just in the last section, but in the course of the whole exhibition. Almost all of the sections display some contemporary artifacts or photographs contesting this stereotype. Similarly successfully contested were other stereotypes – "ignoble savage," "Indian princess" or "warlike warrior" (see Stedman 1982). But not all these efforts bear fruit. To some extent, there are still some stereotypes that were reproduced within the exhibition, particularly "noble savage" and "ecological Indian." The worst case was then the *Inuit* stereotype of the "primitive blubber eater." There were also some rare cases of exotization of Native Americans (as in the *Hopi* Snake Dance).

Even though the exhibition tries to contest the stereotypes by its content, it is not possible to say the same about its presentation as an event. The first sight of the exhibition is three oversized *tipis* standing in front of the exhibition entrance, which serve as places of an accompanying program of games for children, etc. The fact that they are visible from a great distance and to some extent they serve as the dominant feature of the exposition makes them one of its important symbols. Since *tipis* connote the Plain Tribes, they reproduce the stereotype of Native Americans as "horseback buffalo hunters living in *tipis*."

Even more, a serious reproduction of common stereotypes occurs in the case of the exhibition logo. The logo is placed above the entrance to the exhibition, but also used on billboards and in newspapers and magazines. The logo consists of the silhouette of an Indian with bow and arrows on horseback in the sunset[14]. It reproduces not only the aforementioned stereotype of a "horseback buffalo hunter," but also that of a "noble savage."

[14] At the exhibition website (http://www.indianer-ausstellung.de) there are also five other variants of this logo, two of which try to contest this stereotype (two Indians in a canoe and an Indian woman cultivating maize). But the "two Indians in a canoe" logo is also stereotypical. And the last variant (a totem pole with three *tipis* lighted by a campfire in the background) represents one of the most erroneous and at the same time common stereotypes that mix the Great Plains and Northwest culture areas.

The stereotyping continues even after one enters the building in which the exposition takes place. There is a souvenir shop just in front of the main entrance at which you can buy plastic figurines of Native Americans. As expected, they all hold weapons in their hands and thus reproduce the stereotype of the "ignoble savage" or the "great warrior."

There it is also possible to purchase "Indian bread" that, by not stating which nation's recipe it is, e.g., *Cree* bread or *Hopi* bread, reproduces the stereotype of "commonly shared Indian-ness," the stereotype that the exhibition tries to contest the most by demonstrating their immense cultural diversity. Not to mention the opportunity to purchase "authentic" artifacts like calumets, war bonnets and war shirts. This commodification of Native Americans conveys the impression that it is possible to freely appropriate Native Americans and "have a piece of your own Indian at your home."

What kind of "Indian"?

As every exhibition, even this one is practically a product of three mutually different discourses – academic, commercial and visitors' expectations.

Curators are forced into a role in which they have to try to balance out the academic discourse with the other ones. The story that they want to tell is contested by the commercial potential of the exhibition, which in the end has to be at least partly successful. Both the logo of the exhibition and the souvenir shop, which stereotype Native Americans, can be understood as a part of this commercial discourse.

At the same time, it is necessary for curators to take into consideration the visitors' expectations (which are based on stereotypes); therefore we can see the kind of artifacts the visitor expects to see, like weapons, scalps, war bonnets, calumets. But simultaneously this curator, for example, tries to contest these stereotypes by displaying altars, a woman's world view, *katsinas* and the contemporary native experience.

And, last but not least, curators are limited in telling the story they want to tell even in academic discourse by the artifacts they have at their disposal. And also this can lead to some stereotyping of representations. In the case of this exhibition, this might lead to the absence of some culture areas or to excessive accent on some aspects at the expense of others.

But it is necessary to say that the curator of this exhibition managed to negotiate these discourses to great result and the exhibition is successful in

telling the story of Native Americans in a way which almost does not reproduce any stereotype (except for few exceptions) and on the contrary manages to contest many of these.

To an unacquainted visitor, the exhibition offers insight into the Native American experience, which to a great extent is different from the one s/he might know from the media and pop culture. For scholars, it presents an opportunity to realize the limitations of every representation and to think about how the story they know is different from the story represented here and what the reasons for and consequences of this difference are.

In every case, if the aim of the exhibition was to show an alternative history of Native Americans and to demonstrate the immense diversity of their cultures, then, in this case, it was completely fulfilled.

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