

Mårten Snickare

Colonial Objects in Early Modern Sweden and Beyond

From the *Kunstkammer*
to the Current Museum Crisis



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Mårten Snickare



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Acknowledgements

When I first noticed the presence of objects from faraway lands in the collections of Swedish castles and palaces, I thought it could be the stuff of a conference paper—an interesting detour from my daily round as a scholar of the European baroque. Today, many years on, these objects and the entangled histories of museums and colonialism they bear witness to have become the focus of my research and teaching, and that first conference paper has slowly grown into the present book. In hindsight, I can see my own learning process parallels the development in academic discourse and public debate. Long ignored or dismissed as a mere curiosity, Sweden's colonial past and present have recently become burning issues. At the same time, museums' colonial legacies have been intensely debated all over the world. I hope my book will contribute to these debates, in Sweden and internationally.

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Introduction: The King's Tomahawk?

The objects at the centre of this book have been on my mind a long time. It began with an unplanned visit to the Museum of Ethnography in Stockholm. I am an art historian specializing in the baroque, with no expertise in ethnography, so I was going for a happily aimless stroll around the exhibits when suddenly my attention was caught by one particular object: a tomahawk (Fig. 1).

If I try to put my instantaneous reaction into words, and explain why the object gripped me, I think it had something to do with the way it was displayed, in splendid isolation in a glass case, strikingly lit and arranged with elaborate carelessness on green, velvety fabric. It was a display that encouraged an aesthetic approach to the object, an appreciation of its formal pregnancy: the bold curve of the wooden helve, the way it was balanced by the straight iron blade. As if it were a Brancusi sculpture. The clash between a display mode associated with modern art and design, and an object usually classified as ethnographic, heightened the tomahawk's visual attraction while at the same time evoking an uncertainty of its status and belonging.

But there was also something about the way it appeared to have a history. Remains of wampum mosaics on its helve suggested exquisite craftsmanship and high status, and even if I knew little about the ritual and social implications of wampum, it was immediately clear this was not just any tomahawk. The fact that most of the wampum tesserae had been lost suggested frequent handling and gradual decay, lending the object the aesthetic appeal of a ruin, or fragment. At the same time, there was something slightly disturbing about its shape, as if its individual parts—helve, blade, leather strap—did not really belong together. It looked as if it would fall apart if anyone struck a blow with it.

Finally, inseparable from my unprepared aesthetic response, there were the childhood memories it evoked: reading Karl May and Edward S. Ellis adventure stories cover to cover, perched in a little apple tree outside our block of flats, the overgrown orchard around me a trackless wilderness, irresistibly frightening and tempting. For me the tomahawk was a madeleine, instantly evoking a mythical, make-believe childhood landscape.

As that first moment of enchantment faded and gave way to a more detached, scholarly gaze, I read the label and learnt the tomahawk originated from the north-east of North America, where it was probably created by a Lenape or Susquehannock artist



Fig. 1. Tomahawk, wood, wampum, iron, hide, 44 × 33 cm, eastern North America, seventeenth century, Etnografiska museet, Stockholm. ↵

or craftsman in the lower Delaware River area in the early or mid-seventeenth century, and that it had been in Stockholm since at least the 1680s as part of the royal collections in the old palace Tre Kronor. The king, Charles XI, kept it in his armoury, with weapons and armour of all kinds, but also clothing, masquerade costumes, props, and curious objects from all over the world. Much later, when I started digging into the question of non-Western objects in Western collections, I shamefacedly learnt my oh-so singular experience coming across the tomahawk was merely a repetition of a museum *Urszene*, enacted by a Western visitor who, within the protective walls of the museum, stumbles across the foreign other. The most heroized and mythologized instance is Picasso's encounter with African and Oceanian masks and sculptures in the Musée d'ethnographie in Paris one day in June 1907. Picasso's museum visit, according to legend, altered the course of modern art. My visit did not have repercussions of that dignity, but it nevertheless resulted in the present book, its three key questions all following on from my chancing on the tomahawk.

First, what was this strange object from a distant continent doing in the collections of a seventeenth-century Swedish king? Under what historical circumstances did it first appear in a Swedish display context? Where and how was it displayed, watched and understood? Remarkable as it was, the tomahawk was hardly unique.

A glance into the *Kunstkammern* and armouries of seventeenth-century Swedish royalty, aristocrats, and scholars reveals hundreds of artefacts and specimens from faraway places. In Tre Kronor, the tomahawk had shared space with such objects as a stone hatchet of South American origin, decorated with red feathers, an African knife with a bone haft and wooden sheath, and a stuffed reindeer with a *geres* (a Sámi sledge), with other examples of Sámi material culture, not to mention rugs and other textiles from the Ottoman Empire and porcelain from China. Count Carl Gustaf Wrangel's armoury at Skokloster Castle, north of Stockholm, had everything from a South American hammock, a Greenlandic kayak, and a stuffed armadillo to arms and armour of European and Ottoman origin. In the humanist and scholar Johannes Schefferus' *Kunstkammer* in Uppsala, there were no less than three ceremonial Sámi drums, together with a miniature copy of the Koran, and minerals and stuffed animals from distant parts of the world. The tomahawk and its companions bear witness to a large-scale global circulation of objects in the seventeenth century, and to Sweden's active role in that circulation.

The objects also suggest the Swedish elites' preoccupation with the world beyond Christian European culture. By extension, they point to the European colonial enterprise, and Sweden's participation in it, suggesting the emergence of a colonial worldview, with European—and in this case Swedish—elites collecting and ordering the world around themselves. The first part of this book thus explores seventeenth-century Swedish practices of collecting and displaying objects from outside Christian Europe, situating the objects in two interconnected spatial configurations: the early modern world, framed by colonial encounters and exploitation, with its accelerating global circulation of objects, people, and ideas; and the *Kunstkammer*, the peculiar display space of choice in early modern Europe, in which many of these circulating objects were put on show.

Second, why did the tomahawk end up in the museum I had visited, Etnografiska museet? How had it arrived there from its elusive origins in seventeenth-century North America, via the royal palace in Stockholm? What happened to it along the way, on its move between physical localities, institutional belongings, and contexts of display? How was it reclassified and reconceptualized, and what does that say about shifting attitudes, and by extension about changing conceptions of faraway places and cultures? The second part of the book approaches these questions by tracing the itineraries of a few chosen objects. In following their physical, institutional, and interpretative shifts down the centuries, my aim has been not only a more precise understanding of the ways they have been treated at different moments in their history, and their insertion into new narratives about the world and the self, but also how the objects themselves have affected their collectors and viewers and what responses they have elicited at different times. Not only what people have done with the objects, but also what the objects have done to people.

My own moment with the tomahawk was preceded by centuries of Swedish encounters with faraway objects, each of which had its idiosyncrasies while sharing important traits with all the rest—earlier audiences too experienced wonder and aesthetic enjoyment combined with a thirst for knowledge and the projection of preconceived ideas. Thus each object itinerary charts a singular course of events, the better to understand that object, while noting the parallels with other itineraries, allowing more general conclusions in answer to two questions. How do the object itineraries relate to the histories of collecting and display in Europe, from the early modern *Kunstkammer* to modern museum and display systems? And how do they relate to the history of colonialism and decolonization and to shifting colonial worldviews?

Third, the tomahawk is not merely a trace of previous responses and uses; it is materially and visually present in the museum today (it was its tangible presence that first caught my eye, after all). Not only a centuries-old signifier, the tomahawk is also a contemporary object. This may seem a truism, valid for any object in any museum. However, when it comes to the tomahawk and its companions, their physical presence in Western museums has lately become a delicate and pressing issue with far-reaching legal and ethical implications. Being concrete, material reminders of Western colonialism and imperialism, they raise urgent questions about belonging, possession, and representation, of lingering colonial structures and the prospects for decolonization. Where do these objects belong today, legally, culturally, morally? Are there ethically defensible ways to continue to display them in Western institutions? What are we to do with them? What might they do to us? These questions and challenges are addressed in the third part of the book, in which I propose that a deeper understanding of the history of collecting and display may shed light on the present situation—in other words, that we may learn something from the *Kunstkammer*. I would also argue these objects deserve a central place in the debate about the shortcomings and potential of museums and display in a globalized world.

In their historical past and their tangible present, the tomahawk and the other objects speak volumes about two interconnected histories: the history of European colonialism and the circulation of objects it involves; and the history of collecting and display, and the museum as a typically European institution. The point where these two histories intersect is where the narrative of this book plays out.

Colonial Objects

In seventeenth-century Europe, the non-European artefacts which are the subject of this book were not clearly defined as one category or given one fixed label. They were often referred to as rarities or wonders, but these two terms were used

in the broadest sense, spanning everything from natural specimens to the most elaborate artworks. In an inventory of Queen Christina's *Kunstkammer* in Tre Kronor, drawn up in 1652, 'rarities' was the catch-all term for everything there.¹ The printed catalogue of the Danish scholar Ole Worm's collection in Copenhagen in 1655 has a similar wording—*Museum Wormianum, seu, Historia rerum rariorum* (lit. rare objects)—while its subtitle—*tam naturalium, quam artificialium, tam domesticarum, quam exoticarum*—offers a rare example from the period of the word 'exotica'.² Yet while the title contrasts the natural and the artificial, the domestic and the exotic, this clear-cut distinction did not extend to the actual display of Worm's collection, in which objects from different categories were juxtaposed according to diverse, and apparently conflicting, principles such as material, size, shape, or formal similarities. In modern scholarly and curatorial practices, the objects dealt with in this book are often categorized as ethnographic, emphasizing their connection to the academic discipline of ethnography and to the institution of the ethnographic museum, both of which first appeared in the nineteenth century. Sometimes they are also called non-European or non-Western objects, underlining their otherness in relation to the European or Western museums in which they are now displayed.

The term 'colonial objects' was not used in the seventeenth century, although their origins in regions subjected to European colonial exploitation was an important part of their identity. Even when used today, it is mostly in a descriptive, common-sense way, with little consistency or reflection. Thus it can refer to objects acquired by European colonizers and put on display in their homelands, or to objects produced by the colonial powers with stylistic allusions to the material culture of their colonies.³ My use of the term is informed by W. J. T. Mitchell, who in his essay on 'Empire and Objecthood' asks for the material and non-material 'objects of Empire':

What kinds of objects do empires produce, depend on, and desire? What kinds of objects do they abhor and attempt to destroy or neutralize? What happens

1 The inventory exists in two copies, one in French and one in Swedish, in Kungliga biblioteket (National Library of Sweden), Stockholm: 'Inventaire des raretéZ qui sont dans le cabinet des antiquitéZ de la serenissime reine de Suède fait l'an 1652', KB, S 4; 'Inventarium oppå alle dhe rariteter som finnas uthi H. K. M:ttz wår allernådigste dronings konstkammar, Deels ifrån Prag Komne: Deels upkiöpte och deels förärte, Giort Anno 1652', KB, S 4a. The words used are *Raretéz* (French) and *Rariteter* (Swedish). All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

2 Ole Worm, *Museum Wormianum. Seu historia rerum rariorum, tam naturalium, quam artificialium, tam domesticarum, quam exoticarum, quæ Hafniæ Danorum in œdibus authoris servantur* (Amstelodami: apud Lvdovicvm & Danielelem Elzevirios, 1655), title page.

3 My impression is that the term appears more frequently today. Two relatively recent examples are Annabel Cooper, Lachy Paterson & Angela Wanhalla (eds.), *The Lives of Colonial Objects* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2015); Jos van Beurden, *Treasures in Trusted Hands: Negotiating the Future of Colonial Cultural Objects* (Leiden: Sidestone Press, 2017).

to objects when they undergo a ‘worlding’ in their circulation, moving across frontiers, flowing from one part of the globe to another?⁴

Mitchell attaches great importance to part played by objects in the establishment and maintenance of empire. What he calls ‘objects of empire’ were the focal point of strong, ambivalent emotions from desire to abhorrence, and were key to the dynamic, unstable processes of production, destruction, and global circulation. I use ‘colonial object’ in a similar manner to refer to objects shaped or reshaped, defined and contested, in a colonial contact zone. Colonial objects aroused strong, ambivalent emotions in the colonizer—desire, fascination, wonder, curiosity, aversion, fear—and were subject to exchange, barter, plunder, or destruction. Once acquired by the colonizers, colonial objects were forced to migrate across geographical, epistemic, and conceptual borders. Thus the concept as I use it underscores not only the disputed, unstable situation of the object in question, but also its place at the centre of the colonial encounter. The desire for objects was a powerful driving force in colonialism. But on the other hand, objects may play an important role for the mobilization of colonial resistance.

The term ‘colonial object’ does not refer to any intrinsic quality, but rather to a stage in what Arjun Appadurai would call the object’s ‘social life’.⁵ Before it finds itself in the colonial sphere, it may have been primarily associated with other values—aesthetic, religious, magic, social, or utilitarian. Once a colonial object was incorporated into the colonizers’ collections, these original values were often downplayed, and new values and meanings added. It could become a trophy, symbolizing the triumph of the colonizer. It could serve metonymically to form notions of its producers and primary users and audiences. It could even become an object of knowledge, subject to scholarly examination and classification. In all these hypothetical cases, the object would have contributed to the negotiation of colonial relations and the shaping of a colonial worldview. Often the epistemic, conceptual transformations of a colonial object entailed physical transformations too—the addition of stamps, labels, or other marks of ownership and classification, or accidental damage from its transfer and use, or even intentional damage designed to disable a potentially dangerous object and impair its magical or religious powers. A colonial object is an object that has become reconceptualized and recontextualized in colonial encounters and confrontation.

4 W. J. T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 146.

5 Arjun Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

The act of categorizing and labelling an object is in a sense always an act of violence because it highlights some facets at the expense of others.⁶ A label curtails the object and reshapes it to fit a category. 'Colonial object' may appear a particularly problematic label because it takes the side of the aggressor in a profoundly asymmetrical colonial encounter; the object's producers and original users probably had no wish to see the colonizers to interfere in their material practices in the first place. Yet despite this, I would argue that 'colonial object' can still be a productive concept, because it stresses the conflicted history involved—a history that is downplayed, even concealed, in such concepts as 'ethnographic object' or 'non-Western object'. Even in the seventeenth century, European colonialism was a force to be reckoned with, affecting the production, reception, and circulation of objects worldwide. Colonizers and colonized alike acted in a sociocultural landscape largely defined by colonialism. To see the mechanisms that circumscribed or sanctioned the agency of the objects and their producers, traders, collectors, and consumers, we have to recognize the importance of colonialism.

Yet it remains true that 'colonial object' does not refer to any intrinsic qualities, but rather to a state in the historically situated existence of an object. In the same way as an object might have been something else before it became a colonial object, it might become something else again. A colonial object could be involved in decolonial processes. Indeed, to acknowledge an object's colonial history is an important step towards its decolonization.

The *Kunstkammer* and the Modern Museum and Display System

As my encounter with the tomahawk brought home to me, to see an object is never a self-contained act, but is always mediated by circumstance. Even if I was not prepared for that specific encounter with the tomahawk, the very act of visiting a museum had determined my gaze, making me receptive to unexpected aesthetic experiences. Once in the museum gallery, particular elements in the display—the lighting, the splendid isolation—directed my attention to the tomahawk. When we talk about the material presence of an object, it is thus never *das Ding an sich*, but always the object as mediated by display techniques. The way an object is placed in the display space, its juxtaposition with other objects, its lighting and staging: these are all factors in the encounter between viewer and object.

In seventeenth-century Europe, too, display practices and techniques varied according to their purpose, place, and the type of object. The display of relics in a church differed from classical sculptures exhibited in a gallery in a royal palace,

6 I am grateful to Dan Karlholm for provoking me to rethink my use of the term 'colonial object'.

or natural specimens in a scholar's study. There were habits specific to the time, however. As inventories and visual representations of displays show, they were often crammed full with objects, covering not only the walls but often also the ceiling and much of the floor, filling the shelves and cabinet drawers. Further, seventeenth-century displays were often heterogeneous, juxtaposing objects we think of as belonging to different categories, and thus suggesting an aesthetic and epistemological plurality, a readiness to compare and connect natural specimens with artworks, or non-European objects with European ones. This heterogeneity also implies a relative lack of hierarchy: a European artwork was not necessarily given a more prominent place than a non-European artefact. The sources show that displays were generally dynamic and flexible rather than static, with visitors taking objects down from the walls or out of drawers to examine them, so creating new, temporary juxtapositions. Finally, seventeenth-century display spaces were usually exclusive and accessible only to the elites, and thus arenas for social manifestation and distinction.

These display spaces had many names, often used without clear-cut distinctions. One example is the collection of artefacts and specimens owned by the humanist Johannes Schefferus, and displayed in a purpose-built building in central Uppsala. In three sources from around 1670 it was referred to as a 'Museum', a 'Natur-Kammer', and a 'Konst Kammer' respectively.⁷ Similarly, when Johann Daniel Major, a leading theorist of collecting and display, in 1674 drew up a catalogue of all the collections known to him, he did not distinguish between them in his title: 'Kunst- Antiquitäten-Schatz- und fürnehmlich Naturalien-Kammern/Conclavia, Muséa, Repositoria, oder auch nur kleinere Scrinia Rerum Naturalium Selectiorum'.⁸ I have chosen *Kunstkammer* as a general label for these seventeenth-century display spaces, largely to emphasize the ties between the Swedish and German collections (especially the circulation of objects and visitors), but also to draw on the literature on early modern collecting and display in the German-speaking world. *Kunstkammer* was among the commonest terms for this kind of display space in seventeenth-century Northern Europe, and is still standard in the German literature.⁹

7 'Museum' in Johan Heysig-Ridderstierna, 'Index rerum naturalium quæ servantur in Museo Schefferiano, Upsaliae', 1677, Uppsala universitetsbibliotek (Uppsala University Library), Nordin 1190, fol. 135^v; 'Natur-Kammer' in H. Albrecht, 'Reÿse Diarium oder Beschreibung deßen, was bey der A:o 1670 won H. Albrechts zu Sachßen Gotha fürstl. Durchl. naher Hollstein, Dennemarck und Schweden gethanen Reÿse von Tage zu Tage passiret und vorgegangen', British Library, Add. 15133, fol. 116^v; 'Konst Kammer' in Corfitz Braem, *Dagbok under en resa i Sverige åren 1671 och 1672*, (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1916), 46.

8 Johann Daniel Major, *Unvorgreiffliches Bedencken von Kunst- und Naturalien-Kammern ins gemein* (Kiel, 1674), n.p.

9 Examples significant for this study are Horst Bredekamp, *Antikensehnsucht und Maschinenglauben: Die Geschichte der Kunstkammer und die Zukunft der Kunstgeschichte* (Berlin: Wagenbach, 1993) (English transl: Horst Bredekamp, *The Lure of Antiquity and the Cult of the Machine: The Kunstkammer and the Evolution of*

The *Kunstkammer* as a notion is also instructive when it comes to problematizing modern conceptions of art, or *Kunst*. The manifoldness and heterogeneity of objects in a *Kunstkammer* is an echo of the premodern Latin *ars*, which not only referred to works of art in a modern sense, but also skill, craft, knowledge, science, and method. That natural specimens were an integral part of a *Kunstkammer* suggests there was no fundamental distinction between the natural and the artificial. An artefact, just like a natural object, was nothing if not part of God's Creation. When I write of *Kunstkammer* without referring to a particular site, I refer to this dominant mode of display.

Over the last couple of centuries, a completely different mode of display has developed, characterized by distinction and specialization. Objects once juxtaposed in the *Kunstkammer* have gradually been separated and put on display in specialized museums—art museums, natural history museums, ethnographic museums, and so on. Generally, displays have become less dense, particularly in art museums. There is also hierarchization: chosen masterpieces picked out with various display techniques; art museums (and particularly contemporary art museums) ascribed higher status and value than other museums. The most fundamental distinction is that between art and non-art, between art museums and other museums. Another significant difference, compared to the *Kunstkammer*, is that modern museums and other display spaces are generally open to the public. This, however, does not mean they have ceased to be arenas for social distinction. In this study, I use 'the modern museum and display system' to refer to the characteristics typical of the last two centuries of display in the Western world. My point with this unwieldy term is to emphasize the interconnection between museums and other display spaces and situations, such as Kunsthallen or biennales. The system is neither uniform nor absolute, for it comprises a great variety of display techniques and strategies, some with a critical edge to the system itself. However, much as the *Kunstkammer* set the tone in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the modern museum and display system has dominated display in the Western world for the last two centuries. At a general level, I find it useful to distinguish between these two historical display modes: the *Kunstkammer* of the early modern period and the modern museum and display system of the last two centuries. In the second part of this book, I look closely at the ways colonial objects transitioned from the *Kunstkammer* to the modern museum and display system.

When I encountered the tomahawk and the other colonial objects it was as a scholar who specializes in the art and architecture of the European and Swedish

Nature, Art and Technology (Princeton: Wiener, 1995); Elke Bujok, *Neue Welten in europäischen Sammlungen: Africana und Americana in Kunstkammern bis 1670* (Berlin: Reimer, 2004); Dominik Collet, *Die Welt in der Stube: Außereuropa in Kunstkammern der Frühen Neuzeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007).

baroque, and with a particular interest in the history of display. I already knew about the seventeenth-century Swedish collectors, and a good deal about the castles and other buildings in which their collections were housed. At first this was a study heavily focused on Swedish royalty, aristocrats, scholars, and officials, all practising collection and display. However—and this was prefigured by my first encounter with the tomahawk—the objects eventually claimed their place at the centre of things. Even if the collectors are still a feature of the narrative, this is a book about material objects; objects with weight, shape, texture, and colour; objects travelling geographically and temporally; objects that can captivate us today, just as they did in the seventeenth century. If I convey some of my original fascination with the tomahawk, convincing the reader that colonial objects deserve attention, and for their material and formal qualities as much as their politically charged itineraries, then I will have done much of what I set out to do with this book.

The gradual shift in focus, from collectors to objects, is also the trajectory of the book. While the first part concerns the collectors' practices and conceptions, the second turns to the objects as protagonists, tracing their travels. The third part then discusses the objects' potential to encourage—even force—a re-envisioning of display practices, of canons of art and artefacts. This has ethical implications. Sweden has a colonial history that dates back at least four centuries and continues to be a cause of concern in our own day, as exemplified by several lawsuits about land rights between the Swedish state and Sámi communities, and by recent actions of protest against the exploitation of natural resources on time-honoured Sámi land. The equally long history of collecting and displaying colonial objects is likewise present today, in the showcases and storage of national museums, and in the increasingly topical issue of restitution, and the questioning of the museums' self-assumed right to tell the history of others. I am as irrevocably embedded in this matrix of colonizers and collectors as the next person. I can by no means claim to speak for the producers and original users of the objects (and, worse, more often than not we do not even know their names). However, those anonymous producers and users have left materially and visually eloquent traces of their skills, practices, agencies, and worldviews, namely the objects themselves. By paying close attention to the objects, by putting them centre stage, I hope this study will contribute to the opening up of a space where more voices will be heard than those of the colonizers and collectors.

Part I

Colonial Objects in Space: Baroque Practices of
Collecting and Display



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1. The Spaces of Colonial Objects: The Colonial World and the *Kunstkammer*

Abstract

This chapter frames the first part of the book by outlining the two interrelated spaces in which colonial objects existed in the early modern period: the colonial world, bound together by an enormous circulation of objects (commodities, luxury goods, collectibles, natural history specimens); and the *Kunstkammer*, a display space peculiar to early modern Europe, in which many of these objects were put on display. The chapter states that Sweden's role in the intertwined histories of these two spaces—the colonial world and the *Kunstkammer*—deserves greater attention.

Keywords: colonial objects, colonialism, early modern Sweden, *Kunstkammer*, collecting, display

This book is a study of colonial objects on display in early modern Sweden. While showing great variety in their shape, material, and elaboration, and points of origin and intended use, these objects were connected by two important features. First, they changed hands in a colonial encounter—legally or illegally, by force or not—from the colonized to the colonizers. Second, they were removed from their origins among the colonized to the colonizers' homeland, where they were incorporated into new display spaces and involved in new practices. The concept of the colonial object thus refers to circumstances of acquisition, separation, transfer, and incorporation. A colonial object can be described and analysed in terms of spatial relations, connections, disconnections, and ruptures. By the act of acquisition, the object is literally disconnected from the place where it was originally crafted, used, and given meaning. It is moved to another locality and subject to other practices. And incorporated into its new location, the object acquires new spatial relations and connections: to other objects with which it shares display space; to its owners and viewers; to objects of the same kind in other display spaces; and to its place of origin. Colonial objects thus exist in spatial

strata from the local to the global, from the familiar to the unknown, from the real to the imaginary.

In the first part of this book, colonial objects are situated and interpreted within these spatial strata. How were they transformed—physically, conceptually, epistemologically—by the processes of acquisition, separation, transfer, and incorporation? Where, and with what other kinds of objects, were they displayed? Which practices did they become involved in? In which ways may they have affected their new owners? What kinds of relations did they establish to their places of origin? Before approaching the objects and the questions surrounding them, however, something should be said about the two decisive spatial strata in which they took place: the early modern world as marked by colonial encounters, and, for this book, Sweden's place in that world; and the *Kunstkammer*, a display space peculiar to early modern Europe, in which many colonial objects were put on display. In a sense, this book is about the interrelation between these two spaces: one immense, rapidly expanding, and eventually comprising almost the whole world and its inhabitants, voluntarily or involuntarily; the other close and intimate, often not more than one room of modest size, and open only to a chosen few.

Sweden in the Early Modern Colonial World

The concept of colonial objects not only refers to circumstances of acquisition, transfer, and incorporation. It also suggests that meanings, values, and uses of the objects are to be interpreted within the frame of colonialism. And, more generally, that *colonialism* and *objects* are closely interconnected. W. J. T. Mitchell makes a similar point about empire and objecthood.

But the thing that unites (while differentiating) all forms of empire is the brute necessity of objects, the multitude of things that need to be in place for an empire to even be conceivable—tools, instruments, machines, commodities.¹

Colonialism is not a modern European invention. Etymologically it dates back to the expansive Roman Empire and the Latin *colonia*, a public settlement of Roman citizens, usually army veterans, intended to secure a newly conquered territory.² Colonial strategies of territorial conquest and domination were later exercised by the Mongols in Asia and the Aztecs in America, to mention two prominent

1 W. J. T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 155.

2 *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

examples outside Europe. However, the European colonialism of the last five centuries has had more far-reaching and enduring global consequences, involving fundamental economic, political, social, and cultural effects—effects that still haunt us.³ Colonialism formed and was formed by ideologies, worldviews, and beliefs, and it deeply affected the lifeworlds of the colonized and the colonizers. Though primarily associated with the conquest and exploitation of overseas territories, European colonialism should rather be understood as a set of practices and strategies by which European states—usually in close collaboration with private financiers and companies—strove to control territory, labour, trade routes, and natural resources, and, by extension, religious beliefs, educational systems, and worldviews.⁴ In this sense, the European colonial project was not only the business of soldiers, sailors, officials, and traders, but also scholars, teachers, intellectuals, priests, shopkeepers, authors, artists, collectors, and other professional and social groups. And above all it impacted on the colonized, who were forced into new material and spiritual living conditions, and who had to manoeuvre in new circumstances.⁵

Sweden is rarely included in the colonial narrative. Perhaps it is because Sweden was never that successful as a colonial power when it came to overseas territorial conquest. Certainly it is because Sweden tends to see itself as the progressive, open-minded conscience of the world, a national self-image that grew strong in the second half of the twentieth century, and which does not sit well with the facts of Sweden's participation in transatlantic enslavement trade, conquest of foreign territories, exploitation of labour and natural resources, and religious coercion. 'Suggesting that Sweden in the seventeenth century was a colonizing power is not uncontroversial', as Gunlög Fur remarked in 2006.⁶ And, even though there have since been important scholarly publications on Swedish colonial history, Fur felt compelled to repeat her statement again in 2013.⁷

The moment we take a broader view of colonialism it becomes plain Sweden is clearly implicated in the European colonial project, and that colonialism must be regarded as a constituent part of Swedish history. The Swedish expansion in the Baltic—with the annexation of Estonia, Ingria, Karelia, and Livonia in the late

3 The literature on European colonialism is immense. For a critical overview, see Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 2. ed. (London: Routledge, 2005), and her references.

4 For a similar approach, see Magdalena Naum & Jonas M. Nordin (eds.), *Scandinavian Colonialism and the Rise of Modernity: Small Time Agents in a Global Arena* (New York: Springer, 2013), 4–5.

5 Ania Loomba shows that definitions of colonialism often tend to avoid any reference to 'people other than the colonizers, people who might already have been living in those places where colonies were established'. See Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 31.

6 Gunlög Fur, *Colonialism in the Margins: Cultural Encounters in New Sweden and Lapland*, (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 6.

7 Gunlög Fur, 'Colonialism and Swedish History: Unthinkable Connections?', in Naum & Nordin, *Scandinavian Colonialism and the Rise of Modernity*, 25.

sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries—should be understood as colonization: it involved a considerable transfer of material resources to Sweden, a trade policy strongly favouring Swedish interests, and the Swedish aristocracy marching in to seize control of the land and the people in the new provinces.⁸ Then in the 1620s and 1630s, when Sweden intervened in the Thirty Years War and rose to great power status in Europe, the founding of overseas colonies was being discussed in Sweden's leading political and financial circles. In 1638, with the support of Dutch financiers and entrepreneurs, Sweden established the colony of Nova Suecia at the mouth of the Delaware River, and its aims were unashamedly colonial: strengthen trade, enrich the kingdom of Sweden, profit from natural resources, and spread Christianity.⁹ Land was bought from the Lenape and Susquehannock who lived there, fortifications were built, and trade was initiated. Tobacco became the colony's most profitable product, while Swedish copper (especially processed copper such as cooking pots) was much in demand among Native Americans. On the whole, however, the enterprise does not seem to have lived up to the colonizers' expectations. The number of Swedish settlers never exceeded 400, government support gradually faded, and increasing tensions between Nova Suecia and the colony of Nieuw-Nederland further north culminated in 1655, when the last Swedish governor Johan Risingh was forced to surrender to the superior Dutch force. In its seventeen-year long history, Nova Suecia never became a stable colonial structure with Swedish civilian and military officers in control of territory and people. It could best be described as a contested borderland with a multicultural population involved in daily negotiations and compromises, temporary alliances, and sudden flare-ups of open hostility.¹⁰ But nevertheless, to the colonized it would have been a colonial situation of oppression and exploitation.

A few years after the foundation of Nova Suecia, Swedish traders embarked on the transatlantic enslavement trade, shipping textiles, metal goods, and other merchandise to West Africa to exchange for gold, ivory, and people, and then on to English and Portuguese overseas plantations, where they exchanged the enslaved people for sugar and spices, which were shipped back to Swedish and other North

8 Aleksander Loit, 'Sveriges kolonilöter', in David Gaunt & Ronny Ambjörnsson (eds.), *Den dolda historien: 27 uppsatser om vårt okända förflutna* (Stockholm: Författarförlaget, 1984), 376–395; Aleksander Loit, 'Sweden—A Colonial Power in the Baltic Provinces in the 17th Century?', *Aktuellt om historia* (2003:1), 11–16.

9 Stellan Dahlgren & Hans Norman, *The Rise and Fall of New Sweden: Governor Johan Risingh's Journal 1654-1655 in its Historical Context* (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 1988), 12–15.

10 See Naum & Nordin, *Scandinavian Colonialism and the Rise of Modernity*, in particular Fredrik Ekengren, 'Materialities on the Move: Identity and Material Culture Among the Forest Finns in Seventeenth-century Sweden and America' 147–168; Lu Ann de Cunzo, 'Borderland in the Middle: The Delaware Colony on the Atlantic Coast', 189–208; Jonas M. Nordin, 'There and Back Again: A Study of Travelling Material Culture in New and Old Sweden', 209–228.

European harbours. From 1649 the trade was organized by the African Trade Company (Afrikanska Handelskompaniet) with a royal licence and the Dutch industrialist Louis De Geer as principal financier.¹¹ A trading post was set up in the Cabo Corso colony in present-day Ghana, and for a little over a decade the company was an important agent in the triangle trade, providing overseas plantations with enslaved people and the North European market with sugar, spices, and other luxury goods. Eventually, however, the post at Cabo Corso suffered the same fate as Nova Suecia and was conquered by the Dutch Republic in 1663.

By far the most important and enduring colonial project was not overseas, though: Sweden's systematic expansion into Sámi territory in northern Scandinavia.¹² Although it had most, or all, of the features of a colonial enterprise—the conquest of territory, the encouraging of colonizers to settle, the exploitation of natural resources, the forced labour, the religious coercion, and other disciplinary strategies—it is still rarely included in the narrative of Swedish colonialism. In the seventeenth century, however, there was never any doubt. In a letter to the Lord High Chancellor Axel Oxenstierna in 1635, the royal councillor Carl Bonde reported on a newfound silver deposit in the Bihtám (Piteå) region, in the south of Sápmi: 'People here hope that—with help from God—this will be the West Indies of Sweden, for the benefit of the Swedes in the same way as the King of Spain [benefits from the West Indies]. And for this reason, the Gospel will be preached among the lost people, and learnt by them'.¹³ Bonde thus drew direct parallels between the Swedish exploitation of Sápmi and the Spanish colonization of the Americas. He also connected the exploitation of natural resources with conversion to Christianity as two inseparable elements in the same colonial project. His comparison between the colonization of the Americas and the Swedish colonization of Sápmi holds true today, four centuries on: the way the Swedish authorities and international mining companies have taken on the Sámi population has many parallels to current conflicts over land use and natural resources between authorities, industry, and indigenous populations in the Americas.

At much the same time as Sweden stepped forward as a colonial power, it was in turn subject to colonizing strategies from the core colonial powers in Europe, and primarily the Netherlands. Dutch and Flemish entrepreneurs and bankers invested in

11 György Nováky, *Handelskompanier och kompanihandel: Svenska Afrikakompaniet 1649-1663: en studie i feodal handel*, PhD Dissertation (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 1990).

12 Fur, *Colonialism in the Margins*; Naum & Nordin, *Scandinavian Colonialism and the Rise of Modernity*.

13 'Mann hoppas här, näst Gudz tillhiälp så skall det blifua dee Svänkas Wästindienn, dem frommom så gått som koningenn i Spanienn, huilket enn orsak ähr, at Gudhz ordh der iblanddh dee villa människior rätt prädikät och lärt blifua schall', in Axel Oxenstierna, *Rikskansleren Axel Oxenstiernas skrifter och brefvexling, Afd. 2. Bd n, Carl Bonde och Louis De Geer m. fl. bref angående bergverk, handel och finanser* (Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhets historie och antikvitets akademien, 1905), 82.



Fig. 2. Johannes Rudbeckius, *Orbis Terrarum* (upper part), woodcut, 128 × 62 cm, 1643, Uppsala universitetsbibliotek. ↵

the exploitation of Swedish raw materials and launched new industrial enterprises; they took control of much of the cash flow and the circulation of Swedish raw materials and merchandise; they provided technical know-how in fields like mining, casting, and printing. As Immanuel Wallerstein would have it, seventeenth-century Sweden was a semi-periphery in the emergent world system: a metropole for its colonies in America, Africa, and northern Scandinavia, but a periphery relative to the large European colonial powers.¹⁴ Similar ambivalences can be seen today, as the conflicts over land use in northern Sweden not only involve the Swedish state and the indigenous population, but also multinational mining companies.

Driven by economic, political, and religious interests, Swedish colonial enterprises in the seventeenth century were also intertwined with efforts to map the world and learn about the unknown. Johannes Rudbeckius, a professor in Uppsala and later bishop of Västerås, drew a map of the world in 1610 to use in his lectures. The map, with North pointing downwards, was printed in 1626 and again in 1643, the second time with a brief history of the world (Fig. 2).¹⁵ In 1647, Nils Matsson Kiöping, the son

14 Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System*, I-III (New York: Academic Press, 1974–1989).

15 Johannes Rudbeckius, *Orbis terrarum in gratiam privatorum Discipulorum, rudi penicillo adumbratus, a Joh. Rudb. Nericio in Academia Vbsalien. Mathematicum Professore P. A. 1610* (Västerås, 1626); Johannes

of a clergyman, set off for Japan on a journey that took him along the African coast and across the Indian Ocean. His account of the journey was published in 1667 as the first book in Swedish with eyewitness reports from foreign continents.¹⁶ It sold out rapidly and several new editions appeared over the next century. In a preface to the second edition in 1674, the publisher underlined the importance of travelogues for the formation and mediation of knowledge of the world, stressing that they served the public good.¹⁷ The year before, the humanist Johannes Schefferus had published *Lapponia*, an ambitious study of Sápmi and the Sámi, which became a European bestseller and was promptly translated from the Latin into English, Dutch, French, and German.¹⁸ In 1702, the printer Thomas Campanius Holm published a description of Nova Suecia by his grandfather Johannes Campanius, who had been the Swedish colony's priest in the 1640s and had translated Luther's Small Catechism into Algonquian, the language spoken by the Lenape, supplemented with an Algonquian dictionary.¹⁹

Distant parts of the world took visual and material shape in seventeenth-century Sweden. Foreign continents, people, animals, landscapes, and objects appeared in book illustrations, engravings, and paintings. Representations of the four known continents—Europe, Asia, Africa, and America—became a recurrent motif in the interiors of palaces and mansions. At court entertainments, Swedish royalty, aristocrats, and courtiers appeared dressed as 'Chinese', 'Indians', 'Turks', or 'Moors'. Luxury goods and commodities from Asia, Africa, and the Americas were much in demand in wealthy circles. In a panegyric addressed to Charles XI when he came

Rudbeckius, *Tabulae duae, una geographica, altera chronologica in usum privati collegii, rudi minerva adornatae*, (Arosiæ, 1643). See Charlotta Forss, *The Old, the New and the Unknown: The Continents and the Making of Geographical Knowledge in Seventeenth-Century Sweden*, PhD Dissertation (Stockholm: Stockholm University, 2018), 16–18, 65–72.

¹⁶ Nils Matsson Kiöping, *Een kort beskriffning uppå trenne reesor och peregrinationer, sampt konungariket Japan* (Wijingsborgh, 1667).

¹⁷ Nils Matsson Kiöping, *Een kort beskriffning uppå trenne reesor och peregrinationer, sampt konungariket Japan*, 2. ed. (Wijingsborgh, 1674), preface n.p.

¹⁸ Johannes Schefferus, *Joannis Schefferi Argentoratensis Lapponia, id est, regionis Lapponum et gentis nova et verissima descriptio. In qua multa de origine, superstitione, sacris magicis, victu, cultu, negotiis Lapponum, item animalium, metallorumque indole, quæ in terris eorum proveniunt, hactenus incognita produntur, & eiconibus adjectis cum cura illustrantur* (Francofvrti ex officina Christiani Wolffii typis Joannis Andreæ, 1673). *Lapponia* appeared in English translations in 1674, 1704 and 1751; German in 1675; French in 1678; and Dutch in 1682 and 1716. Strange as it may seem, it took until 1956 before a complete Swedish translation appeared.

¹⁹ Thomas Campanius Holm, *Kort beskrifning om provincien Nya Sverige uti America, som nu förtjden af the engelske kallas Pensylvania. Aflärde och trowärdige mäns skrifter och berättelser ihopaletad och sammanskrefwen, samt med åthskillige figurer utzirad af Thomas Campanius Holm* (Stockholm: Kongl. boktr. hos sal. Wankijfs änka, 1702); Martin Luther, *Lutheri Catechismus, öfversatt på American-virginiske språket*, transl. Johannes Campanius (Stockholm: Kongl. Maytz. privileg. Burchardi tryckeri, 1696).

of age in 1672, the Swedish capital was proudly proclaimed to be a global centre of trade, commerce, and conspicuous consumption:

What am I to celebrate? Stockholm's ships that will cover the whole sea or the boats with linen sails that will move quickly over the whole ocean, serving the Gothic people [...] Open your recesses, you land of India! Draw out your hidden treasures, you continent of America! [...] Clap your hands, you land of Sweden! Gold is dug out for you among the mountains of Nabathaea. The land of Panchaea flourishes for you! Ormuz sends rubies, and the banks of Ganges send glowing jewels here. Whatever Guiana keeps buried and hidden, whatever the oysters on the shores of Saida give, what fertile Guinea, what barbarian Congo has, everything will serve your needs, fortunate Stockholm.²⁰

All these different practices, texts, images, and objects in early modern Sweden were integral to an emergent colonial worldview: a sense of a Swedish self reaching out to the world, bringing back riches, and disposing of them to its satisfaction. They also bear witness to the importance of materialities and objects in this two-way gesture of reaching out and bringing back. Raw materials, merchandise, commodities, luxury goods, books, paintings, collectibles, natural history specimens: European colonialism was enormous circulation of objects, a constant producing, trading, purchasing, consuming, exchanging, presenting, plundering, and collecting.²¹ Ania Loomba suggests colonial practices 'generated and were shaped by a variety of writings', and that it falls to scholars today to make sense of these writings and practices.²² I would argue that colonial practices generated and were shaped by *objects* as much as writings. It is these objects, shaping and shaped by colonialism, which are the subject of my study.

Early Modern Display Spaces

The practice of collecting and displaying precious, rare, or significant objects is found in many cultures and periods. This way of making sense of the world by

20 Andreas Stobæus, 'Augur Apollo', in Andreas Stobæus & Maria Berggren, *Two Panegyrics in Verse*, PhD Dissertation (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 1994), 83.

21 The importance of objects for early modern colonial ventures is discussed in Daniela Bleichmar & Meredith Martin (eds.), 'Special Issue: Objects in Motion in the Early Modern World', *Art History*, 38:4 (2015); Paula Findlen, *Early Modern Things: Objects and their Histories, 1500-1800* (London: Routledge, 2013); Anne Gerritsen & Giorgio Riello, 'Spaces of Global Interactions: The Material Landscapes of Global History', in Anne Gerritsen & Giorgio Riello (eds.), *Writing Material Culture History* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 111-134.

22 Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 31-32.

ordering it around oneself or one's community might even be a universal human praxis, as suggested by James Clifford.²³ Limiting ourselves to Europe, several distinctive display spaces and practices were already established in the Middle Ages: the princely treasury was a literal and symbolic display of magnificence and dynastic continuity; the armoury was not only a store of weapons and armour, but also a material manifestation of martial virtues; the collection of relics in a church or monastery was physical proof of the sacred. But it was in early modern European cultural and social life that practices of collecting and display took centre stage. New kinds of display spaces evolved under a wealth of overlapping, interchangeable names: *Kunstkammer*, *Wunderkammer*, *Naturalienkammer*, museum, or cabinet, or combinations such as *Kunst- und Naturalienkammer* or *Kunst- und Wunderkammer*. New social groups became involved in collecting, displaying, and viewing objects of various kinds. Treatises were published along with catalogues of individual collections, and travelogues abounded in descriptions of visits to collections.²⁴

A strong link was established between collecting and intellectual life, as the Renaissance humanist tradition of the *studiolo* merged with the empiricism of Francis Bacon and John Locke. An early text by Bacon has been singled out as the urtext for the European museum.²⁵ It was written as a play for the carnivalesque Christmas revels in Gray's Inn, one of the London legal profession's colleges, in 1594–1595. In the play, the 'Prince of Purpoole' takes advice from six counsellors. When the first of them advises him to win honour in war and conquest, the second replies that the conquest of the works of Nature, or 'the searching out, inuventing, and discouering of what soeuer is hidden and secret in the world', is a much nobler

23 James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), 218.

24 Two influential treatises were Samuel Quicchebergh, 'Inscriptiones vel tituli theatri amplissimi', (1565), in Mark A. Meadow & Bruce Robertson (translators and eds.), *The First Treatise on Museums: Samuel Quicchebergh's Inscriptiones, 1565* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2013); and Johann Daniel Major, *Unvorgreifliches Bedencken von Kunst- und Naturalien-Kammern ins gemein* (Kiel, 1674). Among catalogues could be mentioned: Ole Worm, *Museum Wormianum. Seu historia rerum rariorum, tam naturalium, quam artificialium, tam domesticarum, quam exoticarum, quæ Hafniæ Danorum in ædibus authoris servantur* (Amstelodami: apud Lvdovicvm & Danielem Elzevirios, 1655); Adam Olearius, *Gottorffische Kunst-Cammer, worinnen allerhand ungemeyne Sachen, so theils die Natur, theils künstliche Hände hervor gebracht und bereitet. Vor diesem aus allen vier Theilen der Welt zusammen getragen* (Schlesswig, 1666).

25 Francis Bacon, 'Orations at Graies Inne Revells (1594-95)', in Alan Stewart & Harriet Knight (eds.), *The Oxford Francis Bacon, I: Early Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 595–606. The passage is referred to in Oliver Impey, Arthur MacGregor & Hans-Olof Boström (eds.), *The Origins of Museums: The Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 1; Andrew McClellan, *The Art Museum from Boullée to Bilbao* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 15; Paula Findlen, 'Anatomy Theatres, Botanical Gardens, and Natural History Collections', in Katharine Park & Lorraine Daston (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Science, III: Early Modern Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 272.

and more rewarding undertaking for a prince.²⁶ To achieve it, the prince would need ‘a most perfect and generall librarie’, ‘a spacious and wonderfull gardin’, and

a goodlie, huge Cabinet, wherein whatsoever the hand through exquisit arte and engine hath made rare in forme or motion; whatsoever singularities chance and the shuffle of things hath produced; whatsoever nature hath wrought in things, which want life, and maie be kept, shall be included and sorted.²⁷

This early programme for an all-embracing collection of objects as a necessary basis for the scientific exploration of the world was later elaborated on by Bacon in *New Atlantis* (1627) and other texts. It is worth pointing out the occasional character of the earlier text, and the fact that the speech was addressed by a fictive councillor to a fictive prince. This does not mean we should not take the text seriously, but it does suggest there were less distinct boundaries than we often assume between the serious and the playful, or between scientific knowledge and theatrical or social performance. In that way, Bacon’s text not only defined the content and function of the early museum, but also echoed its playful mode of display and its refusal to draw boundaries between art and science. Furthermore, Bacon’s writings on colonialism and his involvement in various English colonial enterprises in North America are indications of the entangled relationship between the history of the museum and the history of colonialism. As Sarah Irving argues, Bacon seems to have regarded colonization and imperialism not only as a political and moral issue, but also in epistemological terms. It was as much about restoring mankind’s original empire of the knowledge of Nature lost by the Fall as it was about the political and economic greatness of England.²⁸

A century later in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), Locke alluded to the museum when he likened the human mind to a ‘yet empty *Cabinet*’ waiting to be filled with ideas by the senses.²⁹ He described the senses as ‘Windows by which light is led into this *dark Room*’ of the mind.³⁰ His spatial metaphors drew a parallel between ideas entering the mind through the senses and objects or light entering the empty, dark cabinet or *Kunstammer*. Objects, and the space in which they were displayed, were thus inscribed into knowledge production and scholarship. If the sensory experience of the physical world in all its details was

26 Bacon, ‘Orations at Graies Inne Revells’, 598.

27 Bacon, ‘Orations at Graies Inne Revells’, 599.

28 Sarah Irving, ‘“In a Pure Soil”: Colonial Anxieties in the Work of Frances Bacon’, *History of European Ideas*, 32:3 (2006), 249–262.

29 John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Peter H. Nidditch (ed.), (Oxford: Clarendon Press, [1689] 1975), Book I, Chapter II, § 15, 55 (my italics).

30 Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book II, Chapter XI, § 17, 162–163 (my italics).

the principal path to knowledge, then everyone with pretensions to erudition had to surround themselves with samples of the world—artefacts and natural history specimens. In Bacon's and Locke's day this was highly topical as an increasing stream of previously unknown objects from faraway places reached Europe because of colonial exploration and exploitation. Curious objects both forced and enabled a reconsideration of the knowledge of the world.

At the time when Bacon introduced the scholar–prince, surrounded by his objects of study, a new understanding of what it meant to be an individual in society was about to evolve. In his seminal study of early modern self-fashioning, Stephen Greenblatt notes 'an increased self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process'.³¹ Greenblatt relates this to a new social, professional, geographical mobility (and dislocation) among an emergent middle class, with a fundamental insecurity about the threat of the unknown. 'Self-fashioning', he states, 'occurs at the point of encounter between an authority and an alien'. The authority might be God, the government, or a colonial administration, while the alien might be a heretic, a witch, or a non-European.³² C. B. Macpherson notes a new 'possessive individualism' in seventeenth-century European political theory, with people defined as the proprietors of their own person and capacities, and with human society defined as market relations.³³ If Greenblatt's identity is thought of as something that could, and must, be fashioned by the self, and Macpherson's individual is defined in terms of ownership, then it is a small step to adopt practices of collecting and display to model and convey one's individual identity: the scholar demonstrates erudition with a collection of scientific instruments and natural specimens; the aristocrat, lineage with family portraits and conspicuous heirlooms; the merchant, wealth and success with precious objects from distant places.

The *Kunstkammer* as a new display space in Europe thus took shape at the intersection of imperial aspiration, scholarly practice, and social ambition. Simultaneously pointing outwards to the world and inwards to its owner, the *Kunstkammer* was a response to a profound ontological and epistemological crisis; an attempt to make sense of a confusing world marked by dramatic transformations and rapid expansion. A worldview grounded in religion and tradition was shaken by religious schism, the scientific exploration of the universe, and, not least, encounters with new worlds because of colonial exploration and exploitation. Jared Hickman

31 Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 2.

32 Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, 9.

33 C. B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962). This in turn is closely related to the 'commodity fetishism' of early capitalism as defined by Karl Marx, when relations between people are redefined as relations between things.

proposes that '1492 constitutes a genuine rupture of space–time and that we are still fundamentally living in the world initially brought into being by that encounter of radically unforeseen peoples and places'.³⁴ The lived world was fundamentally and irrevocably altered by the colonial encounter, for both colonized and colonizers. The New World and the Old World transformed each other in a maelstrom of violence, destruction, and disease, and the global circulation of people, ideas, and objects.

These drastic transformations raised urgent ontological and ethical questions. They also offered new models of knowledge production, not least through the influx of objects previously unfamiliar in Europe: natural specimens and artefacts from hitherto unknown cultures.³⁵ These objects were incorporated into the *Kunstkammern* and became part of their scholarly and social practices. Colonial objects thus seem to have played an important role for the establishment of a new approach to knowledge and the *Kunstkammer* as a new kind of museum. Born out of a crisis, the *Kunstkammer* was marked by tension, ambivalence, and paradox: the embodiment of European superiority and the self-imposed right and duty to collect and order the world, it was nevertheless all-embracing, and characterized by a playful, non-hierarchical juxtaposition of European and non-European objects. It was an endeavour to bring order to a confusing world, while being all about embracing the chaotic, unknown, and constantly transformable. A manifestation of fundamental uncertainty and confusion, set against the bold statement that everything is possible, the *Kunstkammer* became a place for testing the borders of reality, knowledge, and imagination. If such a thing as a blowfish could exist, why not a unicorn or a giant?³⁶

Sweden's role in the European colonial project is still under-researched, and the same can definitely be said of the country's part in the early history of collecting and display. In Oliver Impey and Arthur MacGregor's edited volume *The Origins of Museums*, Sweden is only represented by the Hainhofer *Kunstschränk*, a German work from start to finish, which was presented to Gustav II Adolf by the city of Augsburg.³⁷ Nor is Impey and MacGregor's omission unique or even new. Johann Daniel Major, the seventeenth century's leading theorist of collecting and display, listed in his treatise on *Kunst- und Naturalien-Kammern* all the collections he had

34 Jared Hickman *Black Prometheus: Race and Radicalism in the Age of Atlantic Slavery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 33.

35 Paula Findlen, 'The Museum: Its Classical Etymology and Renaissance Genealogy', *Journal of the History of Collections*, 1:1 (1989), 66–68.

36 These are random examples from Swedish *Kunstkammern*. The blowfish is still in Carl Gustaf Wrangel's armoury at Skokloster Castle, and a giant's teeth were in Mårten Törnhielm's *Kunstkammer* in his mansion in Malmvik, west of Stockholm. Unicorn horns were legion in the *Kunstkammern* of the day.

37 Hans Olof Boström, 'Philipp Hainhofer and Gustavus Adolphus's *Kunstschränk* in Uppsala' in Impey, MacGregor & Boström, *The Origins of Museums*, 90–101.

heard of, even ones faraway such as those of ‘Der große Mogol’ in ‘Agra in Indien’, or ‘Inga/König’ in ‘Cusco in Peru’.³⁸ Germany and Italy featured prominently in Major’s list: Rome alone had twenty collections, Hamburg six. But Sweden is not mentioned other than a laconic note about a collection owned by a member of the Hußwedel family in Hamburg, said to have been transferred to Sweden.³⁹

Major’s omission underlines Sweden’s semi-peripheral position in the European network of collectors, traders, and experts. Compared to the Danish or German collections, knowledge of Swedish *Kunstammern* seems not to have travelled as fast or as far. And yet we know from the archival sources that there was lively activity in Sweden, with both collecting and display from the mid-seventeenth century onwards. Dominik Collet points to a wave of founding or refounding of *Kunstammern* in Northern Europe after the end of the Thirty Years War, citing Copenhagen, Gottorp, and Gotha as prominent examples.⁴⁰ The Peace of Westphalia’s bearing on the establishing of *Kunstammern* was strong in Sweden: as one of the victors in the Thirty Years War and the new great power in the North, it felt a need to trumpet its position. Objects from the Imperial collections in Prague, seized as war booty by Swedish troops in 1648, were a crucial impetus for Queen Christina’s founding of a *Kunstammer* at Tre Kronor in Stockholm, a complement to the palace’s existing treasury and armoury. Swedish officers and commanders, who arrived home from Europe’s battlefields newly wealthy and full of self-esteem, commissioned new residences to match the ones they had seen on campaign, and filled them with precious artworks and rare objects from near and far. Learned men, some recruited from the continent to improve the kingdom’s scholarly and cultural standards, established collections to serve their academic needs and their social ambitions.

The reality was there were several important collections in seventeenth-century Sweden in addition to the royal collections. Among the nobility there was Carl Gustaf Wrangel’s armoury and library at Skokloster Castle north of Stockholm, continued by his daughter Margareta Juliana and her husband Nils Brahe; Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie’s *Kunstammer* at Makalös, his palace in central Stockholm; and, in the early eighteenth century, Mårten Törnhielm’s *Kunstammer* at Malmvik, a manor west of Stockholm. Among the intellectuals there were the *Kunstammern* of Olof Rudbeck the Elder and Johannes Schefferus, two leading scholars at Uppsala University. In this book I concentrate on the royal collections from Queen Christina to Queen Hedwig Eleonora and on Johannes Schefferus’ *Kunstammer*, but the other

38 Major, *Unvorgreiffliches Bedencken*, fol. 16v.

39 Major, *Unvorgreiffliches Bedencken*, fol. 17r. The full quote reads: ‘D Hußwedel/ nachgehends in Schweden’.

40 Dominik Collet, *Die Welt in der Stube: Außereuropa in Kunstammern der Frühen Neuzeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 39.

collections are not forgotten. What did these Swedish collections include? How were they organized? What kinds of activities and practices were there? And, most importantly, what was the role of colonial objects? By considering these relatively unexplored collections from the semi-periphery, my purpose is to shed new light on collecting and display in early modern Europe and contribute to the lively international debate about the interwoven histories of the museum and colonialism.

2. Global Interests: Colonial Policy and Collecting in the Reign of Queen Christina

Abstract

This chapter investigates the relations between collecting and colonialism in Queen Christina's reign. Examining the roles of colonial objects in the queen's collections, it is found they were material evidence of the geographical reach of Swedish royal power. The new *Kunstkammer*, started by the queen in the late 1640s, suggests a global interest: colonial and imperial ambitions which went hand in hand with a desire for rare objects and a thirst for knowledge of the world.

Keywords: Queen Christina, Johan Printz, gift-giving, collecting, *Kunstkammer*

Johan Printz, a well-educated officer and government official from Småland in southern Sweden, served as the governor of the Swedish colony of Nova Suecia at the mouth of the Delaware River from 1643 to 1653. On 19 July 1644, he wrote to his patron Per Brahe the Younger, a royal councillor and governor-general of Finland, to report on his efforts to consolidate the settlement, and the difficulties with disciplining and Christianizing the indigenous people. 'They can hardly be converted with kindness', he stated with a sigh of resignation, 'it must happen with compulsion, so that one would strike to death and destroy the greatest part of the older people and bring the remainder under the obedience of Her Royal Majesty, and then compel them to a knowledge of God'.¹ His chilling words lays bare the brutal violence that lies beneath the surface of colonial administration. To be fair, there were other, less ruthless suggestions too. In a letter to Printz some months earlier, Per Brahe had proposed persuading a group of Native Americans to spend some time in Sweden: 'they will then see another world, we should treat them very well here. Through them one could accomplish much good among the

¹ Letter from Johan Printz to Per Brahe the Younger, 19 July 1644, in Riksarkivet (the Swedish National Archives), Stockholm, Skoklostersamlingen II, E 8160. The translation from Swedish follows Amandus Johnson, *The Instruction for Johan Printz, Governor of New Sweden* (Philadelphia: The Swedish Colonial Society, 1930), 164.

other Savages'.² Both Printz and Brahe, however, operated on the assumption the indigenous people needed correction, and it was the Swedish colonizers' right and duty to educate and discipline them.

Printz's letter voiced a conception of royal power as personal and limitless.³ The native people of recently colonized territories were expected to obey not the kingdom of Sweden as an abstract entity but Queen Christina in person. Towards the end, Printz changed subject—and tone:

I have often thought of my Royal Majesty, my most Gracious Queen, to present her with something rare, in highest humility, but could not find anything special until now, except one of the foremost bands which the Indian chiefs use on their Kinteka and greatest glory, and is so highly esteemed among them as among us gold and silver. The black is counted as gold, the white, as silver. I also send a tobacco pipe, which the Savages themselves have made of stone, from which Her Royal Majesty can graciously see what the best gifts and splendour of the Savages are, as well as how artistic they are, not only in wood, but also in stone and other metals to do and to work. If Your Excellency would deem it proper to present these things to Her Royal Majesty, then I would graciously request that this might happen through Your Excellency's servants (or in whatsoever manner Your Excellency might think it could best and most desirably be offered to Her Royal Majesty). I have now nothing rare which I can present to Your Excellency except a Savage tobacco pipe of wood and an Indian otter skin for a muff, and I request humbly that Your Excellency may not think amiss of your humble servant. May God help me some time to Your Excellency again, then I will attempt not to come with empty hands to your Excellency.⁴

The letter suggests a hierarchical society held together by client–patron relations. Brahe had been Printz's patron for a long time—Printz addressed him as 'Mechtige patron' (mighty patron)—and it was probably he who had recommended Printz for the post in Nova Suecia.⁵ The queen was regarded as the foremost patron, not only

2 Letter from Per Brahe the Younger to Johan Printz, 9 November 1643, in Riksarkivet (the Swedish National Archives), Stockholm, Skoklostersamlingen II, E 8169. The translation from Swedish follows Johnson, *The Instruction for Johan Printz*, 156.

3 Gunlög Fur, *Colonialism in the Margins. Cultural Encounters in New Sweden and Lapland*, (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 23.

4 Letter from Printz to Brahe, 19 July 1644, Riksarkivet (the Swedish National Archives), Stockholm, Skoklostersamlingen II, E 8160. Except some minor corrections made by the author, the translation from Swedish follows Johnson, *The Instruction for Johan Printz*, 166–167.

5 Johnson, *The Instruction for Johan Printz*, 16; Kari Tarkainen, 'Printz, Johan', in Göran Nilzén (ed.), *Svenskt Biografiskt Lexikon*, Vol. 29 (Stockholm: Norstedts 1995-1997), 494.

of all citizens, but also, as the letter makes clear, of the colonized. Gift-giving was essential in a client–patron system, with the patron expected to protect the client and forward his career, while the client was expected to display his gratitude by humbly presenting gifts to the patron. Printz had already sent gifts from the colony to his patron: in a letter of 9 November 1643, Brahe had thanked him ‘greatly for the rare things which you have sent us’.⁶ As the letter did not specify what the objects were it is difficult to identify them, but a 1667 inventory of Visingsborg Castle, Per Brahe’s residence in southern Sweden, mentioned an ‘Indianisk Hammar’ (a hammer from the Indies), a ‘wästindisk Sänge täke af fieder’ (West Indian quilt made of feathers), and an ‘Indianisk Fisk’ (a fish from the Indies).⁷ It is an educated guess that they originated from Printz and the Swedish colony.

Printz’s greatest concern was how best to present gifts from the colony to Queen Christina, who in December that year was to turn 18 and assume the reins of government, so he asked his patron for advice. The letter indicates that Printz was keen to present her with precious and remarkable objects from her colony. Such gifts would have been a mark of the royal official’s deference to royalty, and thus part of the hierarchical client–patron system, but should also be understood as material evidence of Sweden’s colonial and imperial ambitions, and evidence of the geographical reach of Swedish royal power. It is worthwhile looking closely at Printz’s phrasing when he discussed the intended gifts.

First, Printz said he was looking for something ‘rare’—‘sällsamt’ in Swedish meant rare or unusual, with undertones of wondrous and strange.⁸ Rather than being typical or representative of the colony, Printz wanted the gift to be rare and arouse wonder in the beholder. As Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park have noted, a predilection for the rare and wondrous was a significant feature of collecting and display in early modern Europe.⁹ Besides the collector’s desire to own the special and uncommon, this might also be understood as a way to bring out the variety and exuberance of God’s Creation; the non-hierarchical display mode characteristic of the *Kunstkammer* seems to support such an interpretation. There was another side to it, however. An emphasis on the rareness of colonial objects could also reinforce the distance between the colonizing self and the colonized other. In that way, the collecting and display of rare and strange objects from distant

6 Letter from Brahe to Printz, 9 November 1643, Riksarkivet (the Swedish National Archives), Stockholm, Skoklostersamlingen II, 8169. The translation mostly follows Johnson, *The Instruction for Johan Printz*, 157.

7 A transcript of the inventory is in Livrustkammarens arkiv (Archives of the Royal Armoury), Stockholm, ‘Vapensamlingar övriga gods och egendomar’, F 5AFB:4.

8 *Ordbok över svenska språket, utgiven av Svenska Akademien*, 33 (Lund: Akademibokhandeln Gleerups, 2001), 33, Spalt S 16160.

9 Lorraine Daston & Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature* (New York: Zone Books, 1998), 272–273.

places drove the gradual formation of a colonial worldview. This tension between the non-hierarchical and all-embracing on the one hand and the hierarchical and distinctive on the other was fundamental to the *Kunstkammer*. Eventually, with the emergence of the modern museum and display system, the tension gave way to the key principles of hierarchy and distinction.

Second, it is noticeable Printz took an interest in the material qualities of the objects, and in their material and social value among their original producers and users. He was satisfied to have got his hands on ‘one of the foremost bands which the Indian chiefs use on their Kinteka’—the latter word referring to ritual dancing.¹⁰ Printz was referring to a belt made of wampum, or beads made from the glossy insides of shells and clams. Wampum had an important, multifaceted role in the economic, social, and religious life of the coastal area of north-eastern North America—in Printz’s words it was as ‘highly esteemed among them as gold and silver among us’.¹¹ The beads could be worked into figures or arranged in geometric patterns with symbolic and aesthetic meaning, and were also used as jewellery and ornaments such as necklaces or headbands and to decorate clothing. Per Lindheström, a Swedish officer who joined the last expedition to Nova Suecia in 1654, said in his account of the journey:

The late Governor Printz had the savages make and thread up for him a suit of clothes, with coat, trousers and sword belt, entirely of their money, which was very artistic, threaded and worked with all kinds of animals, which came to a few thousand florins.¹²

From this would seem Printz took a particular interest in the material culture of the colonized, and especially wampum (‘their money’). It further indicates that collectibles, already at this relatively early stage of European colonialism, were being produced specifically for the metropole. Printz’s suit of clothes which Lindheström

10 Fur, *Colonialism in the Margins*, 164.

11 For the significance and uses of wampum, see below, p. 106–107. Margaret M. Bruchac, ‘Broken Chains of Custody: Possessing, Dispossessing, and Repossessing Lost Wampum Belts’, 162:1 (2018), 56–105; Paul Otto, ‘Wampum, Tawagonshi, and the Two Row Belt’, *Journal of Early American History*, 3:1 (2013), 110–125. See also Fur, *Colonialism in the Margins*, 161–164, who emphasizes the role of wampum as the medium of exchange in the trade network of north-eastern North America.

12 Per Lindheström, *Geographia Americae: With an Account of the Delaware Indians Based on Surveys and Notes Made in 1654–1656*, transl. Amandus Johnson (Philadelphia: The Swedish Colonial Society, 1925), 222. The quote in Swedish: ‘Salig guvernören Printzen lät ock de vilde göra och uppträda sig en klädning med rock, byxor och gehäng av idel deres penningar, vilken var mycket konstig och med allehanda slags djur uppträdd och bearbetat, vilken kom på några tusende gyllen att stå’. Per Lindheström, *Resa till nya Sverige* (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, [1691] 1962). Note the inconsistent spelling of Lindheström’s surname. In the twentieth-century editions of his travel accounts it is spelled Lindeström.

referred to was a colonial object from the outset; it did not have a history of production and reception before it became part of a colonial exchange. And this in turn means we should regard those indigenous craftsmen and traders as agents rather than only the passive victims of colonization. Adapting to new circumstances, they sought ways of acting creatively in a market framed by colonialism.

Third, in his description of the stone pipe, Printz emphasized the intrinsic qualities of the object. He wanted the queen to see with her own eyes the artistic skill of the indigenous craft persons and artists. Printz's ambivalence towards the colonized may strike us as jarring. The same people who deserved death for their unwillingness to adopt the colonizers' religious practices were in the same breath praised for their superb artistry. In reality, such ambivalence was evident in most descriptions of indigenous populations in the Americas in European diaries and travelogues of the time, suggesting that fixed racial or ethnical hierarchies were not yet established. It was still open to negotiation among Europeans how to define Native Americans.

Even if a colonial object had not necessarily had an original state before colonization—witness Printz's suit of clothes—the letter indicated that notions of origin were part of the object's value. When Printz wondered whether to present a wampum belt to the Swedish queen, a point in its favour was it had been used by 'the Indian chiefs' and wampum was held in high esteem. Matters of origin, and original use and value, thus formed part of the narrative that the colonial object conveyed in its new setting. These aspects also established parallels in the *before* and *after*. If the wampum belt originally played a role in social, ritual exchanges in singling out and confirming the centre of power, its new role as a colonial object likewise had a social, symbolic character, confirming hierarchies and power relations. It became a means for Printz to express his loyalty and gratitude to his queen, and a manifestation of the Swedish imperial power she embodied. When a colonial object entered the royal collections, it was as the materialization, or concretization, of the relations between the centre of the Swedish Empire and the colony; or, rather, of the colony as viewed from the centre of the Swedish Empire. Colonial power and authority emanated from the monarch, and the royal collections were a place where colonial objects were incorporated and displayed. The monarch was the point where colonialism and collecting converged. It bears repeating, though: there is no one-way relation between cause and effect here. Colonialism was a prerequisite for the influx of commodities and collectibles into Sweden from distant parts of the world, yet the objects on display were constitutive of an emergent colonial ideology and worldview. Colonization drove the collecting of objects and vice versa.

The objects Printz planned to give the queen do not seem to have survived. Indeed, we cannot be sure they ever reached their royal recipient, and if they did, we do not know where she placed them. Her reign saw the royal collections

reorganized and much enlarged; objects were continually added, or shuffled around between different locations and collections.¹³ Besides the queen's documented passion for collecting, this was also due to the expansive policy of the kingdom and its newly acquired military, political, and financial position in Europe. Sweden's successful involvement in the Thirty Years War saw Sweden flooded with booty from captured castles and towns on the continent, culminating in the priceless paintings, sculptures, books, and other objects from the famous *Kunstkammer* of Rudolf II in Prague, seized by Swedish troops just before the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. Intensified diplomatic relations, and thus diplomatic gifts, had an effect, as did Sweden's colonial undertakings and its increasing involvement in long-distance trade, which contributed to the inflow of artefacts and natural objects from distant continents.

In 1644, when Printz was planning what to give Queen Christina, the royal palace of Tre Kronor in Stockholm housed several interconnected and overlapping collections, most of which also included objects of non-European origin. The borders between the collections were permeable and objects were frequently transferred from one collection to another. The armoury, or actually a number of armouries, contained arms and armour for the king and his troops, with banners, standards, and war trophies of different kinds.¹⁴ Dating back to the early sixteenth century, it was transformed in Christina's day into a museum of royal history, housing objects such as the bloodstained clothes worn by Gustav II Adolf on the battlefields of Europe, saddles and caparisons used at coronations and royal funerals, and paraphernalia for royal tournaments. It also included faraway objects such as sabres and daggers from Turkey and Persia, and later in the century objects directly related to Sweden's colonial ventures.¹⁵ The treasury, today primarily associated with the royal regalia, was then the country's monetary reserve, with an emphasis on precious metals and jewels. It also came to house artworks and precious religious objects, taken as war booty by Gustav II Adolf's troops in the early 1630s, with scientific instruments,

13 An eyewitness account was given in a letter from Christina's librarian, the Frenchman Gabriel Naudé, to his colleague Jacques Dupuy, in 1652. Naudé, who had recently arrived in Stockholm, wrote that he had to stay at an inn because the rooms in the palace that had been prepared for him were suddenly being transformed into a gallery for ancient sculptures and curiosities. He also reported that he was busy transferring the queen's library to a new location closer to her newly rearranged private rooms. Naudé's letter is published in a Swedish translation in Christian Bondesson & Joacim Hansson, 'Biblioteksskvaller från drottning Kristinas Stockholm – Gabriel Naudés brev till bibliotekarien Jacques Dupuy från Stockholm den 26 september 1652', *Biblioteksbladet*, 87:5 (2002), 16–17.

14 Rudolf Cederström & Gösta Malmberg, *Den äldre livrustkammaren 1654* (Stockholm: Nordiska bokhandeln, 1930).

15 'Inventarium Livrustkammaren 1683', 2–5: 'Inventarium på än widare inkombne Saker i RustCam-maren, af Håffintendenten Sahl: H: Zachris Renberg underskrifvit d. 12 Martij 1686', Slottsarkivet (Royal Palace Archives). For the royal armoury, see further below, p. 110.

natural objects from far and near, and curiosities such as the horn captured by a Swedish nobleman in a duel with the Devil.¹⁶ The treasury was at its largest in 1640, after which the number of objects decreased.¹⁷ Like the armoury it gradually evolved from safe storage into a display space.¹⁸

In the late 1640s, Christina started a new collection in Tre Kronor modelled on fashionable European *Kunstkammern*. Apart from wanting to keep up with the continental standards so important to her, the key impetus was most likely the war booty from the Thirty Years War, culminating with the loot from Prague in 1648—the inventory of the *Kunstkammer* went out of its way to note which objects were part of the Prague haul.¹⁹ In many respects, the new *Kunstkammer* and the existing collections in the palace overlapped, but in their overall structures they pointed in different directions. The armouries and the treasury looked to the past and inwards to their originators. They were about history and the memory of past kings and their glorious deeds, their objects serving as material evidence of royal dignity and power and of the legitimacy of the ruling dynasty. The new *Kunstkammer* looked outwards to an expanding world to claim the rightful place of the Swedish kingdom in the rank of nations. It was no coincidence it was founded when Swedish colonial expansion was at its most intense. Works of art and other artefacts were juxtaposed with scientific instruments and natural specimens from around the world. Christina's *Kunstkammer* thus combined the imperial ambitions of a new great power and the well-documented scholarly interests of its founder. As

16 Stig Fogelmarck & Rudolf Cederström (eds.), *The Treasury: The Regalia and Treasures of the Realm*, 2. ed. (Stockholm: The Royal Collection, 2001).

17 See the treasury inventories in Kammarkollegiets arkiv (Archives of the Legal, Financial and Administrative Services Agency), Stockholm, 'Handlingar ang. Rikets regalier och dyrbarheter', Vol. 2: 'Inuentarium opå de Partzeler som woro uthi Cronones RäfteCammar, och blefwo inventerade den 2. Junij in til den 11. dito Anno 1640 uthi Cammar Commisariens och Revisions Assessorens, Wälb. Tönne Hindrichsons Langmans så och General Cammarererens Wälb. Mårten Perßons och Rijks Gardinens W. Hans Weilers närwaru'; Vol. 1: 'Inventarium Oppå dhe Pertzeler som woro uthi Cronones Räfte Cammar beholdne, och blefwo Inventerade dhen 13 junij Anno 1653 Effter Rijchz och Cammerådz Befallningh, aff Underschrefne'.

18 Inga Elmqvist Söderlund, 'Power, Knowledge and Taste in the Collections of Queen Christina', in Inga Elmqvist Söderlund, *Displays of Learning: Studies in Early Modern Art and Science by Inga Elmqvist Söderlund*, Peter Gillgren, Merit Laine & Mårten Snickare (eds.), (Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhets historie och antikvitets akademien, forthcoming 2022).

19 The inventory exists in two copies, one in Swedish and one in French, both in the Manuscript Collection at Kungliga Biblioteket (National Library of Sweden): 'Inventarium Oppå Alle Dhe Rariteter Som Finnas uthi H. K. M:ttz Wår Allernådigste Dronings Konstkammar' (KB S. 4a); 'Inventaire des raretés qui sont dans le cabinet des antiquitez de la serenissime reine du Suède' (KB S. 4). The relation between them has not been fully investigated, but it seems that the French is a translation from the Swedish, probably occasioned by the arrival of a new keeper in 1652: Raphaël Trichet Du Fresne, a French art connoisseur known for having published Leonardo da Vinci's *Trattato della Pittura* in 1651.

Inga Elmqvist Söderlund notes, the *Kunstkammer* inventory ‘reveals ambitions to structure the objects according to a system of knowledge’.²⁰ In praising Christina’s broad erudition, her librarian Gabriel Naudé underlined the link between collecting and knowledge:

I would not lie if I tell you that her genius is altogether extraordinary, for she has seen all, read all, and she knows all, and she gives proof of good judgement and great facility of discourse and power of thought. [...] Do not think, however, that her erudition is solely dependent on books, because she is equally learned in painting, architecture, sculpture, medals, antiquities, and in all other things beautiful and curious. [...] She has a gallery of statues both bronze and marble, medals of gold, silver, and bronze, pieces of ivory, amber, coral, worked crystal, steel mirrors, clocks and tables, bas reliefs, and other things artificial and natural; I have never seen a richer [gallery], not even in Italy. Finally, the paintings of which she also has a great quantity; you see that her mind is open to all impressions.²¹

‘Mais ne croyez pas qu’elle soit seulement sçauante en ce qui dépende des Liures’—in pointing out that the queen’s erudition depended on the objects in her collections as well as on books, Naudé’s was essentially a Baconian view of knowledge as the sensory experience of the world’s materialities.

Christina’s *Kunstkammer* was dispersed long ago. In 1654, when she abdicated and left Sweden, she took some of it—mainly the European artworks—to her new residence in Rome. Some of what remained in Stockholm was probably destroyed in the devastating palace fire in 1697. We do have a detailed inventory from 1652, however, which while silent on the spatial organization, says a great deal about how the objects were conceived and grouped.²² From its overall structure and subheadings, we see that all kinds of objects were grouped under ‘rarities’, corresponding to Printz’s and Brahe’s ‘sålsampt’ in their characterization of the gifts

20 Söderlund, ‘Power, Knowledge and Taste in the Collections of Queen Christina’.

21 Letter from Gabriel Naudé to Pierre Gassendi, 19 October 1652. Published in Pierre Gassendi, *Opera Omnia*, Vol. 6 (Lyons, 1658) 336–337: ‘si ie vous dis que son esprit est tout a fait extraordinaire ie ne mentiray point, car elle à tout veu, elle à tout leu, elle sçait tout, & elle en donne de preuues iudicieuses, & avec telle facilité de discours & force de raisonnement [...] Mais ne croyez pas qu’elle soit seulement sçauante en ce qui depende des Liures, car elle l’est pareillement en Peinture, Architecture, Sculpture, Medaille, Antiquitez, & en toute autre chose belle & curieuse [...] elle à une Galerie de Statues tant en bronze qu’en marbre, de Medailles, tant d’or, d’argent, que de bronze, en pieces d’iuoire, d’ambre, de coral, de crystal trauaillé, de Miroirs d’acier, d’Horloges, de Tables, de guises, bas-reliefs & autres choses non moins artificielles que naturelles que ie n’en ay iamais veu en Italie de plus riches. Reste les Tableaux desquels elle a aussi une merueilleuse quantité, & ainsi vous voyez que *habet animum apertum ad omnia*’.

22 Kungliga biblioteket (National Library of Sweden): KB S. 4a (Swedish) and KB S. 4 (French).

from the colony.²³ Most striking is the sheer variety of the collection and its apparent lack of hierarchical organization. There is no distinction between artefacts and natural specimens in the inventory, neither is there any hint of the categorizations which have governed museum displays since the early nineteenth century, such as European versus non-European or art versus non-art. Its primary categorization is by material—however, not even that principle is carried through systematically. It begins with ‘Les statues de bronze’ (bronze sculptures) followed by ‘Les statues de marbre’ (marble sculptures), ‘Les medailles’ (medallions), ‘Les raretés d’ivoire’ (rarities made of ivory), ‘Les raretés d’ambre’ (amber), ‘Les raretés de corail’ (coral), and ‘Les raretés de rocailles’ (shell). Most of the subheadings include both natural specimens and artefacts. A significant number of objects were of a hybrid character, combining unworked natural specimens with elaborately worked additions, ornaments, or settings. One example was among ‘Les raretés d’ivoire’: ‘141. Une coupe d’un oeuf d’autruche garni d’argent doré, porté sur un piedestal d’ivoire, dont le couvercle est orné d’un rocher’ (a cup made of an ostrich egg, decorated with gilded silver on a pedestal of ivory and with a lid crowned by a rock).²⁴ Not only did this object combine unworked specimens (an ostrich egg, a rock) with fine craftsmanship (gilded silver); it also joined materials from different parts of the world. In the inventory, there were also objects that leave the realm of physical reality, such as a unicorn horn, an indispensable element in a *Kunstkammer*, and, more unusually, a unicorn skull.²⁵

The latter part of the inventory includes groups of objects not primarily defined by material, but by use or function, such as ‘Les horloges’ (clocks) and ‘Les instrumens mathématiques’ (mathematical instruments). The only subheading that distinguishes objects by place of origin is ‘Les raretés des Indes’ (rarities from the Indies) with 52 entries, many including more than one object. The concept of ‘des Indes’ was broad. Not only did it refer to objects from India and the Americas, but sometimes it was a generic term for everything from outside the Christian, European sphere.²⁶ In this particular case, the mention of materials such as ivory and ebony suggest that a substantial proportion of the objects were from the East Indies, but others may well have originated from the Americas: ‘Deux chaînes d’écailles de noix’ (two strings of nutshells), ‘Trois chaînes de dents de toute sorte d’animaux’ (three strings of teeth from all kinds of animals), and ‘Trois chaînes de

23 The heading of the French inventory is ‘raretéz’, the Swedish ‘Rariteter’.

24 Kungliga biblioteket (National Library of Sweden), Stockholm, KB S. 4, 21 [later pagination].

25 Kungliga biblioteket (National Library of Sweden), Stockholm, KB S. 4, 57 [later pagination].

26 For the early modern use of the terms ‘Indian’ and ‘the Indies’, see Jessica Keating & Lisa Markey, ‘Indian Objects in Medici and Austrian-Habsburg Inventories: A Case-Study of the Sixteenth-Century Term’, *Journal of the History of Collections*, 23:2 (2011) 283–300; Elke Bujok, ‘Ethnographica in Early Modern *Kunstkammern* and their Perception’, *Journal of the History of Collections*, 21:1 (2009), 17–32.

coquille' (three strings of shell). The latter might have been wampum—it might even have been the wampum belt discussed by Printz—but the vagueness of the descriptions makes it hard to draw a conclusion. A group headed 'Un meslange de diversés pièces' (a mixture of various objects) includes artefacts and specimens from far-flung places: 'Une mommie dans un armoire' (a mummy in a cupboard), '32 dens de lions, de leopards, et des ours, avec une chaine faite de griffes de lions' (32 teeth of lion, leopard, and bear, with a string of lion's claws). Here is also 'Une pipe a tabac' (a tobacco pipe) that could possibly refer to the stone pipe mentioned by Printz.

The collecting and display of artworks and other objects occupied a prominent place among Christina's cultural practices. Archival sources give plenty of evidence of the queen's preoccupation with the enlargement, reorganization, and redisplay of the royal collections. Likewise, colonial affairs seem to have occupied her time and that of the government. In several royal decrees and proclamations about Sweden's colonies, profitable industry and missionary work stand out as the two main concerns, often treated in conjunction, as if closely connected or even mutually dependent. One example was a royal proclamation issued by the 14-year-old queen in September 1640, which complained about the religious ignorance of the Sámi, 'living as heathens and savages, practising all sorts of idolatry'.²⁷ A recently discovered silver mine at Nasafjäll in the Bihtám (Piteå) region was understood as a sign from God that 'he intends to help our subjects and Lapps out of their miserable conditions'.²⁸ The proclamation announced the best way to help the Sámi was to build churches where they could 'gather with other people', meaning Christian Swedes, 'and learn from them how to practice true worship'.²⁹ The official royal attitude towards the colonized thus seems to have been in line with Per Brahe's idea

27 Erik Nordberg, *Källskrifter rörande kyrka och skola i den svenska lappmarken under 1600-talet* (Umeå: Kungliga Skytteanska Samfundets Handlingar, 11, 1973), 162: 'wåre Vndersåtere och Lappar vthi Wåster Norlanden hafua här till daghz fögo wettat af Gudhz ord och deras Saligheetz medel, vthan mästedeeles /: ty werr :/ lefuat som hedningar och wilde Menniskior, öfuandes allehandha afgudedyrkan'.

28 Nordberg, *Källskrifter rörande kyrka och skola i den svenska lappmarken under 1600-talet*, 163: 'Nu alldenstundh, at i Pitheå Lappmark sigh för någre åhr sådan, et skönt och ymnogt Sillfuerstreek yppat hafuer och Wij vthi den otuiflachte förhoppningh lefue, at Gudh som den Landhzorten medh ett sådant skönt bärgwårk hafuer wällsignat, ärnar derigenom förhielpa ombörerde wåre vndersåtere och Lappar vtur det ynckelige tillstånd'.

29 Nordberg, *Källskrifter rörande kyrka och skola i den svenska lappmarken under 1600-talet*, 163: 'Hafue Wij för gott ansedt, och högnödig befunnit, den förordning och Stadga giöra, förmedelst wårt der öfuer af Trycket vtgångne öppne breff, att någre kyrkor på tiänlige Orter vthj wåre Lappmarker, medh förderligaste opbyggias skola, der wåre vndhersåtare af Lapparne kunne medh annat folck komma tillsamman, och sigh öfua vthi een san Gudhztienst'. Royal proclamations and other official documents should not be thought direct expressions of Christina's will; however, the insistent repetition over the years of similar questions and conclusions indicates a consistent attitude on the part of the queen, or the Crown as represented by the queen.

of positive influence rather than Johan Printz's brutal resolve to kill the reluctant. In reality, however, the silver mine proved an economic failure and a human disaster, inflicting suffering and death on many Sámi in the area, and working their reindeer to death carrying heavy loads of ore down the mountain. There were reports of Sámi fleeing over the border to Norway to escape forced labour, the path down the mountain lined with dead reindeer.³⁰ This tragedy, however, took place at a safe distance from the queen in Stockholm.

Even if colonial objects in a narrower sense, as objects directly related to Swedish colonial enterprises, do not seem to have occupied a prominent place in the royal collections in Christina's reign, the collections and the way they were displayed suggest a global interest, and colonial and imperial ambitions which went hand in hand with a desire for rare objects and a thirst for knowledge of the world. The correspondence between Printz and Brahe underlined the close connection between colonialism and material objects. It was of central importance for the governor of Nova Suecia to present rare objects from the colony to the queen in Stockholm.

30 Janrik Bromé, *Nasafjäll: ett norrländskt silververks historia* (Stockholm: Nordiska bokhandeln, 1923), 157–158, 268.



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3. Performing Difference: Court Culture and Collecting in the Time of Hedwig Eleonora

Abstract

This chapter explores Queen Dowager Hedwig Eleonora's cultural interests: her commissioning of art, architecture, and theatrical performances together with her vast collections of art and other objects from near and far. It is argued that these activities and objects formed part of the negotiation of positions and relations in an expanding world. There was a noticeable ambivalence though, because objects, images, and performances were about establishing hierarchies, with Sweden and its royalty at the top, and yet the display of objects, like the artworks and performances, abounded in playful non-hierarchical juxtapositions.

Keywords: Queen Hedwig Eleonora, collecting, David Klöcker Ehrenstrahl, Drottningholm, festivity, performance

Queen Hedwig Eleonora, wife of Charles X Gustav and mother of Charles XI, became a widow at 24. The formal political power of the queen dowager was limited, but in culture and the arts she had an enormous impact as the leading collector and commissioner of art and architecture of her day.¹ In 1670, she commissioned a painting from her court painter David Klöcker Ehrenstrahl, probably intending to have it at Drottningholm, her palace under construction west of Stockholm. The painting depicts a young black man dressed with relaxed elegance, leaning against a marble balustrade and surrounded by birds and monkeys (Fig. 3).² Careful handling of the painterly details, such as the plumage of the birds and the grain

¹ Kristoffer Neville & Lisa Skogh (eds.), *Queen Hedwig Eleonora and the Arts: Court Culture in Seventeenth-Century Northern Europe* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017); Lisa Skogh, *Material Worlds: Queen Hedwig Eleonora as Collector and Patron of the Arts*, PhD Dissertation, Stockholm University (Stockholm: Center for the History of Science at the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, 2013).

² David Klöcker Ehrenstrahl, *Young Man with Parrots and Monkeys*, oil on canvas, 144 × 120 cm, 1670, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, NM 1407, transferred in 1888 from Gripsholm Castle and before that at Drottningholm Palace.



Fig. 3. David Klöcker Ehrenstrahl, *Young Man with Parrots and Monkeys*, oil on canvas, 144 × 120 cm, 1670, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm. ↻

of the marble, is balanced by its geometrical structure and clarity of composition. The lively movement of man and animals is inscribed in a fixed grid of verticals and horizontals. Two circles in the upper-right section add to the geometrical clarity, mediating between the straight lines of the architecture and the flowing contours of the man and animals. In that way, the painting can be said to combine the preoccupation with surfaces, textures, and materialities characteristic of seventeenth-century Dutch art with the idealizing baroque classicism promoted

by the art academies of Italy and France. Ehrenstrahl had spent considerable time in the Netherlands, Rome, and Venice, and his *oeuvre* ranged from meticulous studies of an albino squirrel or an oversized melon grown in a royal garden to the grand allegorical staging of royal virtue and power.³

The painting's dual character encourages the viewer to approach it both as an instance of 'the art of describing'—a careful rendering of a material reality—and an *istoria*, an allegorical narrative with moral and ideological subject.⁴ The image of the young man suggests a portrait. His features are carefully studied and individualized, and he appears to be caught on the cusp between theatrically posing for the painter and remaining absorbed in the world of the painting. He has not been identified, but there were people of African origin in Stockholm and at the court in Hedwig Eleonora's time. In the 1680s Ehrenstrahl was commissioned to depict a black infant, 'ein kleines Mohren-Kind', in Stockholm.⁵ In the royal accounts of 1696, a black man named Carl Ulrich ('Een Mourian vid namn Carl Ulrich') was listed among the queen dowager's painters.⁶ In a portrait of Hedwig Eleonora painted in 1659 by the Dutch–Danish artist Abraham Wuchters, a black boy in red livery stands behind the queen.⁷ His features are not dissimilar to the man in the Ehrenstrahl painting eleven years later, and it is tempting to assume they are depictions of the same member of the queen's court, as a boy of 15 in the one and a man of 25 in the other.

We may never identify the man in Ehrenstrahl's painting, but we can see he appears confident and relaxed in his courtly outfit, standing in the grand architectural setting. The five animals with him might well be some of the royal menagerie of exotic and domestic animals at Tre Kronor in Hedwig Eleonora's day.⁸ The artist's

3 David Klöcker Ehrenstrahl, *Albino Squirrel*, oil on canvas, 61.5 × 64 cm, 1696, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, NM 5234; David Klöcker Ehrenstrahl, *Melon*, oil on canvas, 59.5 × 71 cm, 1677, Eric'sberg Castle. Ehrenstrahl's allegorical paintings may be exemplified by *Allegory of Queen Dowager Hedwig Eleonora's Regency*, oil on canvas, 353 × 222 cm, 1692, Drottningholm, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, NMDrh 125.

4 Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

5 David Klöcker Ehrenstrahl, *Vanus labor*, oil on canvas, 145 × 122 cm, Gripsholm, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, NMGrh 3685. The artist described the commission and the painting in David Klöcker Ehrenstrahl, *Die vornehmste Schildereyen, welche in denen Pallästen des Königreiches Schweden zu sehen sind* (Stockholm: Burchardi, 1694), 32–33.

6 Slottsarkivet (Royal Palace Archives), Kungl. Maj:ts hovstatsräkenskaper, 1696, fol. 145. See also Skogh, *Material Worlds*, 219 and n. 830.

7 Attrib. Abraham Wuchters, *Portrait of Hedwig Eleonora with a Young Boy*, oil on copper, 35 × 23 cm, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, NMGrh 469.

8 This has been suggested by Axel Sjöblom, *David Klöcker Ehrenstrahl* (Malmö: Allhem, 1947), cat. 24; in Torsten Gunnarsson (ed.), *David Klöcker Ehrenstrahl*, exhibition catalogue (Stockholm: Nationalmuseum, 1976), 69, it is presented as an established fact. See also Eva-Lena Karlsson & Hans Öjmyr, *Främlingen. Dröm eller hot*, exhibition catalogue (Stockholm: Nationalmuseum, 1996), 136.

care with the details makes it possible to identify their species: an African Barbary macaque sitting on the man's left shoulder; a South American squirrel monkey climbing up the metal perch to the right; a sulphur-crested cockatoo from Indonesia or Australia in the larger of the two rings of the perch; a hawk-headed parrot from South America in the smaller ring; and what was possibly a peach-fronted parakeet sitting on the man's right hand.⁹ Together, these animals represented the world outside Europe as Hedwig Eleonora and her contemporaries knew it.¹⁰ By compositional means, gesture, and gaze, Ehrenstrahl has emphasized the close relation between man and animals. It has been suggested the man was employed as the keeper of the royal menagerie.¹¹ It might be true, but of greater interest is his in-betweenness, mediating between culture and nature. He seems at home in the grand, classical architectural setting and his fashionable clothes, yet in his gaze, gestures, and physical contact he interacts closely with the animals. He is depicted at the intersection of two worlds: with the animals he forms part of the strange, mysterious, and faraway; with his informally elegant dress and relaxed gestures he fits in with the Swedish court milieu.

The painting can be juxtaposed with emblematic representations of the four known continents, a popular motif in interior decoration and print culture from the late sixteenth century onwards, codified in Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*.¹² The emblematic image of Europe usually shows a fully dressed woman surrounded by cultural artefacts such as buildings, works of art, books, scientific instruments and weaponry, while the other continents are often personified by semi-nude women surrounded by trees, plants, and animals. A polarity is thus established between, on one hand, dress and culture and, on the other, nudity and nature.¹³ Ehrenstrahl's painting could be interpreted as a condensed, elliptical variation on this emblematic theme, leaving out the female personifications. Europe would then be represented by the architectural setting, its classicism alluding to stability, continuity, and empire, the weathered marble suggesting tradition and history,

9 I owe a debt of thanks to Ulf Johansson, Didrik Vanhoenacker, and Daniela Kalthoff of the Museum of Natural History, Stockholm, who generously helped me identify the species.

10 It might be objected that none of the animals appears to originate from what is today defined as the Asian continent. In the seventeenth century, however, Indonesia and the still largely unexplored Australia were not thought of as continents in their own rights but rather as parts of, or islands belonging to, Asia.

11 See Sjöblom, *David Klöcker Ehrenstrahl*, cat. 24; Gunnarsson, *David Klöcker Ehrenstrahl*, 78; Skogh, *Material Worlds*, 219.

12 Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia overo Descrittione Dell'imagini Universali cavate dall'Antichità et da altri luoghi*, (Roma, 1593). Swedish examples of the motif include the stucco ceiling of the King's Hall at Skokloster, the painted ceiling of the Hall of State at Drottningholm, and paintings at Per Brahe's Visingsborg. See also Cecilia Mårdh, 'De fyra världsdalarna', in Karlsson & Öjmyr (eds.), *Främlingen: Dröm eller hot*, 12–19.

13 There are exceptions and variations, as in the King's Hall at Skokloster where Asia is opulently dressed but surrounded by nature.

and the man's dress indicating civilized manners and material wealth. Asia, Africa, and America are personified by the animals, vivid and wondrous but lacking in culture and history. A reference to Africa—or perhaps to non-Europe as a whole—the black man also serves as an intermediary between (European) culture and (non-European) nature.

On a more concrete, descriptive level, the painting constitutes a condensed visual representation of the world in which Hedwig Eleonora lived and acted, a world characterized by emergent colonialism and the increasing global circulation of commodities, collectibles, and people. The black man and the animals from foreign continents could well have been there, before the eyes of the queen dowager and her painter. Colonial enterprises and global trade routes brought commodities, collectibles, and people from the most distant corners of the world to Stockholm. The painting could equally be interpreted as an *istoria*, a complex allegory of the increasingly globalized world and the unique position of Europe in it; of the right and duty of European elites to collect the world and order it on a scale between culture and nature, civilization and barbarism. Materially and ideologically, the painting thus depicts a colonial world order, a world in which people could be reduced to collectibles or exploited as slave labour. There is an undeniable link between the participation of Swedish merchant vessels in the transatlantic enslavement trade and the image of the black man at the Swedish court. However, the painting also suggests a world in which borders and dichotomies were not yet fixed. There is a lot of motion in the image, physically, spatially, and culturally. Its main character is not a static collectible, pinned down by a colonial gaze, but rather an individual with agency, dignity, and an active gaze of his own. The painting could be regarded as the material outcome of an encounter between portrayer and portrayed in which neither had sole control. Blurring the borders between portrait, still life, genre painting, and allegory, and between realism and idealism, it constitutes a congenial visualization of a wondrous, multifaceted, and only partially mapped and controlled world as it appeared to Hedwig Eleonora.

Unlike Christina, Hedwig Eleonora never was queen regnant. She did not exercise formal power over Swedish colonial enterprises or trade policy. However, she came from a background where global interests seemed natural, having grown up in Holstein-Gottorp, where her father, Duke Friedrich III, had assembled one of the richest *Kunstkammern* in Northern Europe, housing natural objects and artefacts from all quarters of the known world.¹⁴ The keeper of the *Kunstkammer* was Adam Olearius, a scholar who travelled extensively in Asia and whose detailed travel

14 See Skogh, *Material Worlds*, 249–250. See also Adam Olearius, *Gottorffische Kunst-Cammer, worinnen allerhand ungemeyne Sachen, so theils die Natur, theils künstliche Hände hervor gebracht und bereitet. Vor diesem aus allen vier Theilen der Welt zusammen getragen* (Schlesswig, 1666).

books were widely read and translated to the leading European languages. Hedwig Eleonora stayed in touch with Olearius, and after the death of her father in 1659 she seems to have taken over the role as his patron.¹⁵ Hence, the queen had brought to Sweden a notion of the global world and its material manifestations as her concern.

The queen dowager's global interests were in evidence in her extensive collections. In her study of Hedwig Eleonora as a collector, Lisa Skogh notes an increase of non-European objects in the royal collections during her long widowhood from 1660 to 1715.¹⁶ This was plain in the *Kunstkammer* or 'pretiosa cabinet' that she put together at Ulriksdal, her palace just outside Stockholm. In seven cabinets, placed together in one room in the palace, she displayed a wealth of precious, mainly small artefacts and natural objects.¹⁷ Their materials—crystal, amber, ivory, rhinoceros horn, coral, tortoiseshell—gave the objects a global scope, similar to the animals in Ehrenstrahl's painting. Generally crafted in Europe, they can also be interpreted as a material representation of a colonial economy in which natural resources from the colonies were exploited and refined by the colonizers. The *Kunstkammer* at Ulriksdal was thus the colonial world in microcosm. Many of the objects were commissioned or purchased by the queen dowager; others were transferred from Tre Kronor's armoury and *Kunstkammer*, creating a tangible link to Queen Christina's collecting activities. Compared to Christina's *Kunstkammer*, Hedwig Eleonora's seems to have had a stronger emphasis on the strange, distant, and wondrous.

The world outside Europe likewise took material form in other royal palaces in Hedwig Eleonora's time: Chinese porcelain, Japanese lacquerware, Persian rugs, and Ottoman arms and armour formed part of the interiors at Gripsholm, Drottningholm, Tynnelsö, and Tre Kronor. There was even a piece of Mexican featherwork, an African knife, and a dagger from Java in the queen dowager's collections (Fig. 4).¹⁸ Drottningholm is an interesting case because the queen dowager orchestrated it from construction all the way to decoration and furnishing. Here, the global world was present not only in objects and materials from faraway places, but also in paintings such as *Young Man with Parrots and Monkeys*, in frescoes and other parts of the fixed decoration, and in courtly practices. The Hall of State, the largest room in the palace, is crowned by a plafond by the French artist Évrard Chauveau. Its main mythological motif, the birth of Pandora, is intertwined with depictions of exotic birds and plants, and, in the corners, representations of the four known continents. The magnificent staircase is decorated with frescoes by Johan Sylvius,

15 Skogh, *Material Worlds*, 57, 249. Skogh has discovered a copy of Olearius, *Gottorffische Kunst-Cammer*, with a personal dedication to Hedwig Eleonora, see Skogh, *Material Worlds*, 249 n. 965.

16 Skogh, *Material Worlds*, 178.

17 For the 'pretiosa cabinet', see Skogh, *Material Worlds*, 151–159.

18 Skogh, *Material Worlds*, 160–188.



Fig. 4. Knife with bone haft and wooden sheath, Africa, seventeenth century, Etnografiska museet, Stockholm. ↵

a Swedish artist with long experience of the contemporary Roman art scene.¹⁹ On a wall in the upper part of the staircase, Sylvius has depicted two bearded men leaning out over a balustrade, apparently interested in what is going on in below (Fig. 5). For a seventeenth-century observer their plumed turbans would have said they were Turkish. The fresco forms part of a European iconographic tradition. In Agostino Tassi's frescoes in Palazzo del Quirinale, painted in the 1610s, turbaned men are seen leaning out over balustrades, and among Sylvius' preserved drawings there is a sketch after a similar fresco in Huis Honselaarsdijk, a baroque palace outside The Hague (Fig. 6).²⁰ While echoing that pictorial tradition, the turbaned men at Drottningholm also bear witness to a world criss-crossed by trade routes and diplomatic relations. Arms, rugs, and artworks produced in the Ottoman Empire were highly desirable among European elites, as exemplified by their presence in Hedwig Eleonora's collections. There were diplomatic relations between the

19 For Sylvius' frescoes at Drottningholm, see Clara Strömberg, 'Making Carolean Theatre Real: Johan Sylvius' Painted Performances and their Surroundings in the Drottningholm Palace', unpublished thesis in art history, Department of Culture and Aesthetics, Stockholm University (2019).

20 The drawing by Sylvius is in Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, NMH THC 5616.



Fig. 5. Drottningholm, the staircase, with frescoes by Johan Sylvius and sculptures by Nicolaes Millich. ↻



Fig. 6. Johan Sylvius, *Turbaned Men Leaning over a Balustrade*, pen and brown ink, brown wash on paper, 17.1 × 27.8 cm, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm. ↻

Swedish Crown and the sultan in Constantinople, exploring the possibilities of joining forces against Russia, their expansive mutual enemy. A material aspect of these embassies was the exchange of precious gifts that made their way into the royal collections. The visual presence of well-dressed turbaned men on the Drottningholm staircase is thus not only a pictorial fantasy, but a reminder of the actual presence of merchants and ambassadors from the Ottoman Empire in the world of Hedwig Eleonora.

In their festive costumes, the men on the staircase also relate to a tradition of court entertainments in which music, dance, masquerade, and theatre were combined—and where collectibles often were used as props, costumes, or setting. Hedwig Eleonora was the prime mover and the Drottningholm staircase was a frequent setting for her festivities. The men in Sylvius' fresco would have been involved as audience, actors, and scenery, the borders between the categories being fluid in a baroque aesthetic. A recurrent element was that host and guests dressed up as imagined representatives of faraway cultures. In 1664, Hedwig Eleonora threw a party taking the four seasons as her theme. She appeared as Spring, attended by Turks, Moors, Poles, Hungarians, and Tatars. Summer was accompanied by Swiss, Indians, Venetians, American Indians, and Africans; Autumn by French, Spaniards, Dutch, Don Quijote, Sancho Panza, and Dulcinea; while Winter was accompanied not only by attendants from the Swedish province of Dalarna, but by Irishmen, Geats, Muscovites, and Sámi.²¹ A striking feature of the setting was the blurring of borders between reality and fiction (Dutch and Don Quijote), Europeans and non-Europeans (Venetians and American Indians), present and past (Irish and Geats). Like the juxtaposition of objects in the *Kunstkammer*, the blend of characters at the court entertainment suggests an encyclopaedic, non-dichotomous worldview. An image was given of the world and its imagined inhabitants living in harmony. Indigenous Americans, Africans, and Sámi appeared as parts of a diverse world rather than as contrasts to Europeans. On the other hand, they represented the regions of the world where Sweden had colonial interests, and their expected role was to pay their respects to the queen.

Five years later, in 1669, Hedwig Eleonora hosted a festivity with a similar theme: the four continents. Four ladies-in-waiting took the roles of the continents. Each of them presided at a table where the other guests represented people or creatures from their continent. At America's table, for example, Mexicans, Peruvians, and Brazilians were seated with a giant from the Amazonas, in a mixture of real and mythical similar to the party in 1664.²² Here too there was a sense of a whole world,

21 Riksarkivet (The Swedish National Archives), Stockholm, Enskilda arkiv, Tessinsamlingen, Räkenskaper E 5721. See also Kurt Johannesson, *I polstjörnans tecken: studier i svensk barock*, PhD Dissertation, Uppsala University (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1968), 140.

22 Riksarkivet (The Swedish National Archives), Stockholm, Handlingar rörande teatern, I, 1624–1792. See also Johannesson, *I polstjörnans tecken*, 140.

the four known continents, in harmony. Nor did the royals necessarily appear as Europeans: at this event the 14-year-old king, Charles XI, dined at Asia's table, dressed up as a Turk.

At an entertainment held in Tre Kronor in 1688 the theme and casting was less ambivalent. It was staged by the queen dowager to celebrate the end of the Siege of Belgrade, when the Holy League retook Belgrade from the Sultan's forces. The setting was several Turkish tents—desirable collectibles. Members of the royal family and the court took the roles of the Habsburg Emperor and Empress, the King of Poland, and other rulers on the victorious side. They were attended by eight ladies-in-waiting, dressed as Turkish and Persian enslaved persons, to the tune of orientalizing dances and marches.²³ Compared to the earlier festivities, the event of 1688 was an unmistakably political performance, designed to display the hierarchy of victorious European princely houses and defeated Ottoman Empire. The fact that the latter were represented by female enslaved persons underlined the supposedly effeminate character of Oriental culture, while also suggesting that the idea of the Orient as a place of erotic desire and female submission, so prominent in nineteenth-century Orientalism, could be traced back to the seventeenth century.


A painting by Ehrenstrahl in 1689 and placed in a room off the Drottningholm staircase may be understood as the pictorial counterpart to the festivities of 1688. A dromedary, full-size and close-up, occupies most of the large canvas, while its keeper, turbaned and dressed in red, is placed at the extreme right (Fig. 7).²⁴ The artist has painstakingly rendered the animal's anatomy and matted fur with varying textures and shifting nuances of brown and beige. Everything seems to indicate it was a study of a live animal. In contrast, the orientalizing landscape appears unspecific and generic, and reminiscent of stage scenery. Both the dromedary and its keeper were war trophies, taken by the Swedish officer Nils Bielke, who had fought for the Holy League against the Ottomans.²⁵ Back in Sweden, Bielke presented them to Charles XI, Hedwig Eleonora's son, who installed them in Kungsör, his favourite country castle, and commissioned Ehrenstrahl to paint them. The dromedary seems to have died less than a year later in its strange new habitat; the keeper eventually converted and was given the baptismal name Nils after his capturer. In that way, a living person and an animal were appropriated, reduced to exotic specimens, and incorporated into the royal collections. Their status as collectibles or curiosities was underlined by the fact that court architect, Nicodemus Tessin the Younger, planned

23 E. Wrangel, 'Bidrag till svenska dramatikkens historia från utländska källor', *Samlaren* (1900), 36–37. See also Johannesson, *I polstjärnans tecken*, 157.

24 David Klöcker Ehrenstrahl, *Dromedary with Keeper*, oil on canvas, 258 × 360 cm, 1689, Drottningholm, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, NMDrh 9.

25 Bertil Rapp, *Djur och stilleben i karolinskt måleri*, PhD Dissertation (Stockholm: Stockholms högskola, 1951), 120–123.



Fig. 7. David Klöcker Ehrenstrahl, *Dromedary with Keeper*, oil on canvas, 258 × 360 cm, 1689, Nationalmuseum/Drottningholm. 

to use them as props for the party for Hedwig Eleonora's birthday at Drottningholm in 1689.²⁶ Like the 1688 entertainment, the painting was unequivocally inscribed in a context of conquest, submission, and the establishment of hierarchical relations.

The second half of the seventeenth century thus saw the arrival in the Swedish royal collections of an increasing number of natural objects, artefacts, and live animals from faraway regions. Even people from distant parts of the world became part of the Swedish court milieu. As shown by the examples above, these objects, animals, and humans were involved in an intermedial exchange with visual imagery and different performances. Objects, animals, and humans were represented in paintings, and they were used as props, scenery, and walk-ons in ballets, masquerades, and theatrical performances. Making the picture even more complex, Swedish royalty and courtiers dressed up as people from distant cultures, sometimes using objects from the collections for their fancy dress. At the centre of this intermedial circulation of humans, animals, objects, images, and performances was the queen dowager. With her background, she was a link to continental court

26 Uppsala universitetsbibliotek (Uppsala University Library), Allmänna handskriftsamlingen, L 512, Hovdramatik. See also Johannesson, *I polstjärnans tecken*, 156.

culture, and especially the German culture of collecting and display manifested in the *Kunstkammer*.

It was in Hedwig Eleonora's day that Sweden lost its colonial possessions in North America and West Africa. However, colonial control and exploitation of Sápmi was gaining momentum. New mineral deposits were explored and exploited; a royal decree encouraged Swedish settlement in Sámi territories; missionary work was intensified, including the building of churches and the confiscation of objects related to Sámi religious practices.²⁷ These confiscated objects became highly desirable collectibles among Swedish and European princes, aristocrats, and scholars. Sámi ceremonial drums, *goavdát* or *gievrie*, were found with other examples of Sámi material culture in *Kunstkammern* all over Europe.²⁸ In 1673, the first edition of Johannes Schefferus' *Lapponia* appeared. In the preface he explained the principal aim of his book: to refute rumours saying that Sweden's martial triumphs, in the Thirty Years War and later, were due to Sámi witchcraft. It was important to take control, not only of territory and natural resources but also of objects and, crucially, knowledge of the Sámi people and their land, Sápmi.²⁹

It thus comes as no surprise that Sápmi and Sámi culture came to play a vital part in the queen dowager's material and visual world. Not only did the 'Sámi' figure in royal masquerades and festivities, among other stereotyped characters from outside the Christian European sphere, like the 'Moor' or the 'Indian', but objects from Sápmi also entered the royal collections. Reindeer, together with their Sámi keepers, had long been part of the royal hunting grounds north-east of Stockholm.³⁰ In 1670, the same year as he painted *Young Man with Parrots and Monkeys*, Ehrenstrahl had a royal commission for a large painting, *Reindeer with a Sledge*, showing a man in a *geres* or Sámi sledge (Fig. 8).³¹ The painting, completed in 1671, was eventually

27 For Swedish colonial expansion in Sápmi in the seventeenth century, see Janrik Bromé, *Nasa fjäll: ett norrländskt silververks historia* (Stockholm: Nordiska bokhandeln, 1923); Gunlög Fur, *Colonialism in the Margins: Cultural Encounters in New Sweden and Lapland*, (Leiden: Brill, 2006); Daniel Lindmark, 'Colonial Encounter in Early Modern Sápmi', in: Magdalena Naum & Jonas M. Nordin (eds.), *Scandinavian Colonialism and the Rise of Modernity: Small Time Agents in a Global Arena* (New York: Springer, 2013), 131–146; Jonas M. Nordin, *The Scandinavian Early Modern World: A Global Historical Archaeology* (New York: Routledge, 2020).

28 Gunilla Edbom, *Samiskt kulturarv i samlingar: rapport från ett projekt om återföringsfrågor gällande samiska föremål*, Arkeologisk rapport 2005:1, 2. ed. (Jokkmokk: Åjtte, 2005), 33–42.

29 Johannes Schefferus *Joannis Schefferi Argentoratensis Lapponia, id est, regionis Lapponum et gentis nova et verissima descriptio. In qua multa de origine, superstitione, sacris magicis, victu, cultu, negotiis Lapponum, item animalium, metallorumque indole, quæ in terris eorum proveniunt, hactenus incognita produntur, & iconibus adjectis cum cura illustrantur*, (Francofurti ex officina Christiani Wolffii typis Joannis Andreae, 1673). *Lapponia*, is discussed further in Chapters 4 and 7.

30 Gösta Berg, 'Lapland och Europa: Några anteckningar om renar som furstegåvor', *Scandinavica et fenno-ugrica: Studier tillägnade Björn Collinder den 22 juli 1954* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1954), 221–244.

31 The *geres* (Sw. *ackja*) is an open Sámi sledge used in winter to transport people and goods.



Fig. 8. David Klöcker Ehrenstrahl, *Reindeer with a Man in a Geres*, oil on canvas, 224 × 348 cm, 1671, Nationalmuseum/Gripsholm. ↵

hung at Hedwig Eleonora's Drottningholm.³² Like his *Dromedary with Keeper*, the full-size reindeer is the centre of interest. Rendered against a hazy yellowish light, in a lively—if somewhat peculiar—pose, it was most likely based on studies of live reindeer. It has been linked to the Swedish government's gift of a reindeer and a *geres* to an old ally from the Thirty Years War, Duke Eberhard of Württemberg.³³ The gift was in Stockholm in the winter of 1670 en route to its recipient, which would have given Ehrenstrahl the chance to study it. He would also have had access to the reindeer in the royal hunting grounds.

Like *Dromedary with Keeper*, the setting of Ehrenstrahl's painting of the reindeer is less convincing, its steep, icy rocks bearing little resemblance to the landscape of the North. The man seated in the *geres* has rather unspecific features; like the reindeer, he is against the light, which leaves much of his face in shadow. His clothes and the harness, though, are painted with attention to surface textures and material distinctions, like the thickness of the fur and how its hairs catch the sunlight, or the

32 David Klöcker Ehrenstrahl, *Reindeer with a Sledge*, oil on canvas, 224 × 348 cm, 1670, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, NMGrh 2351. See Rapp, *Djur och stilleben i karolinskt måleri*, 95–98; Maj Nodermann-Hedqvist & Ernst Manker, 'En lapp, kiörandes en oppstoppad rehn: Kommmentar till en kunglig representationsgåva', *Livrustkammaren/Journal of the Royal Armoury*, XII:7–8 (1971), 193–213.

33 Gösta Berg, 'Undersåtarna: Vardagens samhälle och Ehrenstrahls konst', in Torsten Gunnarsson (ed.), *David Klöcker Ehrenstrahl*, exhibition catalogue (Stockholm: Nationalmuseum, 1976), 48.



Fig. 9. Assemblage with reindeer, harness and geres, reindeer skin, antler, wood, wool, etc., 1694, Livrustkammaren, Stockholm. ↻

soft, colourful wool and the shimmering tin thread embroidery—the latter being characteristic of Sámi craft then and now. The *geres* is rendered with a similar care for materials and details, for example how the stiff leather covering the front is fastened to the wood with an even row of gleaming nails or tacks, serving both a functional and an aesthetic purpose.

The three paintings by Ehrenstrahl discussed in this chapter show a similar attention to materials and textures, be it the magnificent plumage of a South American parrot, the moth-eaten fur of a dromedary, or the subtlety of Sámi tin thread embroidery. The interest in the foreign was to a high degree an interest in its material manifestations and idiosyncrasies. Very material, in fact, as Ehrenstrahl's visual rendering of a reindeer and a *geres* may be juxtaposed with a remarkable object—actually an assemblage of several objects—that entered the royal armoury in 1694 (Fig. 9). It first appeared in the inventory of 1696, under the heading 'Monuments':

A Sámi with a fur coat, a homespun shirt with tin links, a belt with a pouch and a carved antler spoon, and also a tobacco pipe of clay, and with it a cap made of blue cloth, lined with black leather, seated in an *ackja* [*geres*] with a Sámi drum and its sticks in his lap, and driving a stuffed reindeer with its proper harness, and also a bell around its neck and antlers, the which Sámi and reindeer were presented by the county governor of Västerbotten, the Right Honourable Count Douglas.³⁴

34 The post is found in Slottsarkivet (Royal Palace Archives), Stockholm, 'Kongl: Maj:tz LijfRustCammare Inventarium Oprättat Åhr 1696', 538, under the category 'Monumenter': 'Een Lapp medh en Lappmudd,

In the unusually detailed inventory entry, it was noted as a gift from Gustaf Douglas, county governor of Västerbotten in the north of Sweden, to Charles XI. In the summer of 1694 the king visited the town of Torneå, over 1,000 kilometres north of Stockholm.³⁵ The ostensible reason for the journey was to inspect the kingdom's northern defences and to see the midnight sun, which had special symbolic importance for the ruler of a kingdom where the sun never set.³⁶ The strenuous, time-consuming journey also suggests a conception of royal territorial power as personal, wielded through the physical presence of the king's body. In terms of territorial power, Douglas' gift to the king was a parallel to Printz's intended gifts for Queen Christina: both were examples of the client–patron system as a cornerstone of social and political life of seventeenth-century Sweden, and they may both be interpreted as material manifestations of the reach of Swedish imperial power.

The governor's gift still survives in the royal armoury, which is today a public museum.³⁷ It is catalogued as fourteen objects, broadly corresponding to the description of 1696.³⁸ These fourteen individual objects are made of different materials, by different originators, in different cultural contexts, and with different purposes. The largest group consists of crafted objects belonging to the realm of Sámi material and cultural life: the *gievrie*, or Sámi drum, made of pine, spruce, and reindeer skin, and its stick, a hammer made of reindeer bone, skin, and sinews, played a central role in Sámi religious practices; the pouch, with preserved fragments of the clothing, are colourful and elaborately decorated with woollen applications and tin thread embroidery, going far beyond the practical function of protection against cold; the same went for the harness, which, with the *geres*, was an important

Wallmarströija med Thenn Mallior uthi, Bälte med een widsatt taska och en rijstat Hornsked, sampt een Tobaakz Pijpa af Gÿpzs uthi, deslijkst Mössa Uppå af blått klåde, omkring fordrat med swart skin, sittianandes uthi en Aikia med en lapprumba och des pinnar i knäät och för sigh kiörandes en opstoppat Reen med sitt behörige tygh sampt en klåcka under Halsen och Horn på hufwudet, hwilcken lapp och Reen Landzhöfdingen af Wästerbottn Högwelb: Hl. Gref Douglas förährat'.

35 The assemblage has recently been discussed in Jonas M. Nordin & Carl-Gösta Ojala, 'Collecting, Connecting, Constructing: Early Modern Commodification and Globalization of Sámi Material Culture', *Journal of Material Culture*, 23:1 (2018), 58–82.

36 Margaretha Rossholm Lagerlöf, *Fate, Glory, and Love in Early Modern Gallery Decoration: Visualizing Supreme Power* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 199–228.

37 The assemblage was kept at Gripsholm Castle for a while, but in 1927 was returned to the armoury in Stockholm. It is now in the museum's store, its different elements kept separately depending on the materials' optimal storage temperature, atmospheric humidity etc.

38 Livrustkammaren (The Royal Armoury), Stockholm, inv. numbers: 20629–35 (27:201); 21449–21451 (27:201); 29572–219574 (27:201); 33396 (27:201). The antler spoon and the clay pipe mentioned in the 1696 inventory are missing. On the other hand, there are two similar collars for the reindeer, 20631 (27:201) and 20632 (27:201), one of which might be a later addition. I owe a debt of thanks to Sofia Nestor and Ann Hallström at Livrustkammaren, who showed me the objects in the store, and who generously shared their expertise.

means of transport among the Sámi. To this group of artefacts can be added natural objects related to Sámi life, viz. the fur, hoofs, and antler of a reindeer. Today, the fur looks worn down to the nap except for some patches on the belly and the hoofs; around the nose the fur is missing. Finally, there are objects directly connected to the creation of the assemblage: the wooden frame, on which the reindeer's fur, hoofs, and antler were mounted, and the manikin, carved in pine and designed to be dressed and placed in the *geres*. Frame and manikin together assembled the diverse objects into a comprehensible whole; they recontextualized them and transformed them into a perspicuous exhibit. Details meant to be visible, such as the reindeer's tongue and eyes or the face and hands of the manikin, are smoothly carved and painted to enhance the impression of life.

The assemblage parallels Ehrenstrahl's painting, not only in its overall composition of rearing reindeer and man seated in a *geres*, but also in its careful display of textures and materialities. Both assemblage and painting were products of an emergent colonial gaze and conducive to it. The assemblage was also an early example of musealization, constructing and being constructed by a museum gaze. It is thus an early and eloquent example of colonization and musealization as two inseparably entwined processes. It also prefigures the modern ethnographic museum (a nineteenth-century construct) in the way its items were ripped from their previous contexts, uses, and value systems, and organized according to a new logic. They were transformed into material evidence of a foreign culture. In their new material context, the objects of the assemblage became objects of knowledge and part of an ideological construct, ultimately embodying the interconnectedness of knowledge and ideology.

Jonas Monié Nordin and Carl-Gösta Ojala have rightly suggested the assemblage on display in the royal palace would have formed part of 'an ongoing imperial masquerade'.³⁹ I would add that it was likely involved in the world of courtly masquerades and festivities in a more than metaphorical sense. Colonial objects were frequently used as props or settings for courtly performances and festivities. Tessin the Younger's plans for Hedwig Eleonora's birthday in 1689 not only called for the royal dromedary and its keeper, but also a wooden crocodile to be pulled across the stage with 'Moors' carrying torches sitting on its back.⁴⁰ Nordin and Ojala note that the underside of the *geres* is scraped, as is the platform on which the reindeer is mounted.⁴¹ It is reasonable to assume that some of it was caused during some court entertainment when the assemblage was dragged around as a mobile prop.

39 Nordin & Ojala, 'Collecting, Connecting, Constructing', 59.

40 Johannesson, *I polstjärnans tecken*, 156.

41 Nordin & Ojala, 'Collecting, Connecting, Constructing', 74.

In the royal armoury, items of Sámi material culture (and nature) came to share a display space with other colonial objects, among them one object first mentioned in an inventory of 1686 under the heading 'Kruthflaskor och Annat' (Powder flasks and other things): '1 Indiansk hacka, skafftet inlagdt medh blå och hwijta steenar, hwar av een stor Deel uthfallne' (One Indian hatchet, the helve inlaid with blue and white stones, many of which have fallen out).⁴² This was the first appearance in the sources of the tomahawk that sparked this book. I will return to it later.

All this collecting, commissioning, painting, displaying, and performing by Hedwig Eleonora's circle formed part of an intense negotiation of positions and relations in an expanding world. Sweden's position in relation to the rest of the world in the era of emergent colonialism was negotiated in several interconnected media and representative modes, as were the reach of Swedish royal power and the glory of the Swedish royal house. An ambivalence is noticeable here. The objects, images, and performances were about power and control; about subjecting the world to the superiority of Swedish royal power and the Swedish Church; about establishing hierarchies, with Sweden and its royalty at the top. Yet the display of objects and the images and performances were anything but. They abounded in playful, non-hierarchical juxtapositions and in the blurring of borders between nature and culture, myth and reality, self and other.

42 Slottsarkivet (Royal Palace Archives), Stockholm, Inventarium Livrustkammaren, 1683: 2–5, 'Inventarium på än vidare inkombne Saker I RustCammaren, af Håffintendenten Sahl: H: Zachris Renberg underskrifvit d. 12 Martij 1686', 266. The inventory is an addendum to the main inventory of 1683, registering objects that had been added to the armoury between 1683 and 1686.



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4. Object Lessons: Materiality and Knowledge in the *Kunstkammer* of Johannes Schefferus

Abstract

This chapter examines the collections of Johannes Schefferus, a leading scholar and humanist in seventeenth-century Sweden, and in particular the ways he used his collections in his scholarly practice. Concretized by *Lapponia*, the most influential text on Sámi culture of its time, the chapter traces how Schefferus used drums and other Sámi objects as sources, complementing and sometimes correcting the textual sources. Informed by Homi Bhabha, the chapter concludes by suggesting the conceptual triad of discipline, desire, and knowledge as a tool with which to understand colonial practices in early modern Sweden.

Keywords: Lars Nikodemus Nilsson, Johannes Schefferus, Museum Schefferianum, *goavddis* and *gievrie*, *Lapponia*, *sieidi*

The late seventeenth century meant a hardened political and religious climate in the Swedish Empire. At the Diet in 1680, Charles XI proclaimed himself an absolute ruler, taking a decisive step in the long power struggle between aristocracy and monarchy. The new Church law, issued by the king in 1686, stressed the obligation of all subjects to profess the Lutheran faith and regularly attend mass. Religion was a public duty and the church was not only a place for worship but also for the manifestation of royal power and social unity. This was also true for the colonized territories in the north. In the new churches built all over the part of Sápmi under Swedish control, royal power was visually and materially present in the shape of monograms, insignia, and centrally produced and distributed propaganda prints.¹

¹ Per Gustaf Hamberg, *Norrländska kyrkoinredningar: från reformation till ortodoxi: idéhistoria, kulturförbindelser, mästare* (Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhets-, Historie- och Antikvitetsakademien, 1974); Mårten Snickare, *Enväldets riter: Kungliga fester och ceremonier i gestaltning av Nicodemus Tessin den yngre*, PhD Dissertation, Uppsala (Stockholm: Raster, 1999), 147–177. Sápmi is the North Sámi name for the land of the Sámi, referring to the geographical territory in northern Scandinavia and Russia that was historically inhabited by Sámi. In the early modern period, the territory was divided between the

Royal proclamations were read from church pulpits as part of Sunday service. Efforts to Christianize the Sámi population were increasingly systematic and rougher. Swedish clergy and colonial officials used any means available to stamp out the Sámi religious practices which had survived side by side with state-sanctioned worship. In official legal and ecclesiastical documents from the time, *goavdát* or *gievrie*, the ceremonial drums that played a central part in Sámi religious practices were described as the Devil's instruments.²

One Sámi who was confronted with the growing oppression was Lars Nikodemus Nilsson, who lived in a village in the southern part of Sápmi, in the colonial administrative unit of the Bihtám (Piteå) region (between the Pite and Skellefte rivers). The detailed report of the legal proceedings against Nilsson stated that he had faced tragedy in the early 1690s when his 6-year-old grandson fell into a well and drowned.³ In an effort to bring the little boy back to life, Nilsson turned to his traditional gods. Per Noraeus, a clergyman known for his severity towards his Sámi parishioners, commissioned some of Nilsson's Sámi neighbours to investigate and persuade him to stop. When the investigators arrived at Nilsson's home he was not there, but they found a place of sacrifice nearby with traces of recent animal sacrifices, and three wooden idols with a wooden thunderbolt. Eventually, they found Nilsson in an adjacent stream, genuflecting, and playing his *gievrie* and chanting. When they asked him to stop and tried to take the drum away from him, he said no and fought them off. Nilsson was put on trial, and his *gievrie* and the other sacred objects were confiscated. In court, he explained he had often invoked the help of the Christian God; however, he had noticed that he often received better help by playing his drum, praying, and sacrificing to his old gods—as for example when his reindeer were stricken with a severe illness a few years earlier. The confiscated objects were shown to the court and Nilsson was asked to explain the details and

new nation-states of Denmark, Sweden, and Russia. Today, Sápmi spans Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia. For churches in Sápmi, from the Middle Ages to the early modern period, see also Siv Rasmussen, 'Churches in Finnmark County and the Torne Region in the Early Modern Period', in Sigrun Høgetveit, Rognald Heisedal Bergesen & Roald E. Kristiansen (eds.), *The Protracted Reformation in Northern Norway*, Vol. 2: *Towards a Protestant North* (Hannover: Wehrhahn Verlag, 2016), 47–79.

2 *Goavddis* (pl. *goavdát*) is the North Sámi term for the ceremonial drum, *gievrie* (pl. *gievrie*) the South Sámi term. Here I use *gievrie* for the frame drums that were typical of the southern parts of Sápmi, and *goavdát* for the bowl-shaped drums that were predominant in the northern parts. A number of documents, from 1666 to 1730, are quoted in Ernst Manker, *Náidkonst: Trolltrummans bildvärld*, (Stockholm: LTs förlag, 1965), 113–114. A legal document from Åsele, 1689, speaks of 'Diefwulswärcktyg' [the Devil's tools], and another document from Jukkasjärvi 1694 speaks of 'diefwulske Instrumenter' [devilish instruments]. In 1729, Henrik Forbus, dean in Torneå, writes: 'O tu fördömde Trumma satans redskap och instrument' [You damned drum, Satan's tool and instrument].

3 The report is quoted in full in Manker, *Náidkonst*, 122–128. The report, of course, is the colonizers' version of events. However, between pejorative phrases and downright invective, it pieces together a coherent and broadly convincing narrative.

what they meant. Asked if he had not been taught to fear and worship the Almighty God in heaven, and no other gods or idols, Nilsson answered that he was familiar with the Christian faith. However, as his old religion often proved better for him and his reindeer, he intended to conform to the customs of his forefathers if he lived, despite the ban by the new authorities.

Lars Nikodemus Nilsson was sentenced to be burnt at the stake with his *gievrie* and other religious objects. Per Noraeus was commissioned to prepare him for death by bringing him into the Christian fold. According to a report to the Supreme Court, the preparations succeeded. Nilsson pleaded guilty and professed his Christian faith. As the sentence was carried out in the village of Árjapluovve (Arjeplog) on 4 April 1693, he is said to have cried out from the stake 'Jesu wallde falle minu siehlo' (Jesus, take my soul).⁴

Almost 1,000 kilometres south in Stockholm, Lars Nikodemus Nilsson's namesake, the court architect Nicodemus Tessin the Younger, had met with difficulties in his efforts to add to his already large collection of prints and books. The lavishly illustrated description of the wedding of Christina of Lorraine and Ferdinando de' Medici in Florence in 1589 seemed impossible to get hold of. In 1706, after several years of futile effort, a solution seemed close at hand when Grand Duke Cosimo of Tuscany offered Tessin a copy in exchange for a Sámi drum.⁵ When Tessin had obtained the desired object along with a description of its proper use, his middleman in Paris, Daniel Cronström, informed him that Cosimo also wanted a little Sámi boy who could play it. Tessin and Cronström seem to have felt uncomfortable about this new request—the word 'embarrassante' appears in their correspondence—but Tessin's desire for the volume of prints overrode his concerns.⁶ He managed to recruit not a little boy, but a Sámi man whom he sent to Paris en route to Florence. A few weeks later, Cronström confirmed the man had arrived, but added he was a drunkard.⁷ The whereabouts of the anonymous Sámi became vague. He seems to have arrived in Florence, but died there not long after.

The stories of Nikodemus and Nicodemus have a lot in common. Both were about encounters between colonized and colonizer, which ended in death for the colonized. Both stories involved ambivalences and shifts. Lars Nikodemus Nilsson

4 Quoted from Soili-Maria Olli, *Visioner av världen. Hädelse och djävulspakt i justitierevisionen 1680-1789*, PhD Dissertation (Umeå: Umeå University, 2007), 131.

5 This story unfolded in the correspondence between Nicodemus Tessin the Younger and the diplomat Daniel Cronström, Tessin's middleman in Paris. Much of the correspondence is published in R. A. Weigert & C. Hernmarck (eds.), *Les relations artistiques entre la France et la Suède 1693-1718: Extraits d'une correspondance entre l'architecte Nicodème Tessin le jeune et Daniel Cronström* (Stockholm: Nationalmuseum, 1964), see pages 352–356.

6 Weigert & Hernmarck, *Les relations artistiques*, 354–355.

7 Weigert & Hernmarck, *Les relations artistiques*, 356.

seems to have switched between the Sámi gods and the colonizers' God—it is worth noting his name, Nikodemus, with its biblical connotations. And Nicodemus Tessin seems to have had scruples about sending a Sámi to Tuscany, although on what grounds is hard to tell given the terseness of the sources. But above all it is the objects they revolved around which connect the stories: Sámi drums. Those involved obviously accorded great significance to them. Lars Nikodemus Nilsson was prepared to die for his right to possess and use his *gievrie*; Per Noraeus was prepared to go to extremes to seize and destroy it; the Grand Duke of Tuscany expressed his great desire for one.

The case of Lars Nikodemus Nilsson may offer a wealth of detail in the legal record, but where it stands out is for its cruelty, sadly all too typical of the time. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Swedish clergy and officials confiscated and destroyed hundreds, perhaps thousands, of *goavdát* or *gievrie*, threatening their possessors and users with imprisonment, whipping, or death.⁸ The story of Nicodemus Tessin and Grand Duke Cosimo was also very much of its time. In the last decades of the seventeenth century, *goavdát* or *gievrie* emerged as one of the most desirable collectibles among Swedish and European elites. Inventories and other sources indicate they became an almost compulsory element in the *Kunstkammern* and armouries of Swedish aristocrats.⁹ They were also to be found in several German *Kunstkammern*, and in collections as far away as Florence, Rome, Madrid, London, and Moscow.¹⁰ Thus the stories of Lars Nikodemus Nilsson and Nicodemus Tessin are illustrative examples of how *goavdát* or *gievrie*, objects that for centuries had been at the heart of Sámi religious and cultural practice, in the late seventeenth century were sucked into the seemingly contradictory colonial practices of destructing and collecting. The stories suggest an intense, often brutal struggle for the right to possess, use and—not least—define the *goavddis*

8 Rolf Christofferson, *Med tre röster och tusende bilder. Om den samiska trumman*, PhD Dissertation (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2010), 70.

9 See, for example, the transcripts and copies of armoury inventories, in Livrustkammarens arkiv (Archives of the Royal Armoury), Stockholm: 'Avskrifter och kopior av rustkammarinventarier', LRK arkiv F 5AFB: 1–6. In addition to the drums in the royal collections, these transcripts give proof of *goavddis* or *gievrie* in the collections at Örbyhus, Rosersberg, and Skokloster, all three in Uppland. From Ernst Manker, *Die Lappische Zaubertrommel: Eine ethnologische Monografie, Vol. 1: Die Trommel als Denkmal materieller Kultur*, Acta Lapponica (Stockholm: Thule, 1938), we can add a drum in the collections of Mem Castle in Östergötland (no. 22), one in Fullerö in Uppland (no. 50), one in Bysta Gård in Närke (no. 57), one in Bergshammar in Södermanland (no. 60), one in Grönsö Gård, Uppland (no. 66), and a couple of drums in Magnus Gabriel De La Gardie's collection (nos. 43 and 64).

10 Manker, *Die Lappische Zaubertrommel, Vol. 1*, identifies 71 Sámi drums surviving from the early modern period, 42 in Sweden and 29 elsewhere in Europe. Gunilla Edbom, *Samiskt kulturarv i samlingar: rapport från ett projekt om återföringsfrågor gällande samiska föremål*, Arkeologisk rapport 2005:1, 2. ed. (Jokkmokk: Åjtte, 2005), identifies further drums in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Madrid.

or *gievrie*.¹¹ One person in the eye of that whirlwind was the scholar and collector Johannes Schefferus.

Johannes Schefferus was one of the most versatile and influential humanists in seventeenth-century Sweden. Born in Strasbourg and educated at universities in Germany and the Dutch Republic, he was recruited by Queen Christina in 1648 to be professor of rhetoric in Uppsala. Philology and Latin eloquence were his principal fields, but he also contributed to the areas of law, history, classical archaeology, and ethnography. In 1666, he was appointed to the newly founded College of Antiquities (Collegium Antiquitatis or Antikvitetskollegiet), which was dedicated to the history of the Swedish kingdom and the preservation of domestic antiquities.¹² Even the politically topical discourse on colonialism seems to have formed part of Schefferus' scholarly interests: in 1668, his student Johan Hoffman defended a dissertation on the reasons for founding colonies.¹³ As professors were expected to take an active role in the writing and defence of a dissertation, it is reasonable to assume the text coincides with Schefferus' own interests and opinions. To argue for the foundation of colonies, Hoffman turned to ancient Greek and Roman authors, who primarily stressed the importance of expanding the empire and defending its borders, but also of spreading the greatness and nobility of the colonizing power.¹⁴ Strikingly, the exploitation of natural resources and the proselytization of the true faith, the two most frequent arguments for colonization in the Swedish seventeenth-century discourse, were largely absent from the dissertation.

Besides his scholarly work, or more correctly as an essential part of it, Schefferus was a keen collector of books, manuscripts, natural objects, and antiquities. He commissioned a stone building next to his home in central Uppsala to house his collections, called the Museum Schefferianum in a contemporary source (Fig. 10).¹⁵ Owned today by the Royal Society of Sciences at Uppsala (Kungl. Vetenskaps-Societeten i

11 Rognald Heisedal Bergesen even talks of a 'war of drums', see Rognald Heisedal Bergesen, 'Lapponia and the Drum: Instruments of Integration and Othering during the Age of Confessionalisation in Northern Sweden', in Sigrun Høgetveit, Rognald Heisedal Bergesen & Roald E. Kristiansen (eds.), *The Protracted Reformation in Northern Norway, Vol. 2: Towards a Protestant North* (Hannover: Wehrhahn Verlag, 2016), 137.

12 According to its foundation charter, the College existed to shed light on 'the ancient, remarkable exploits of our Swedish and Geatish nation'. See further Sten Lindroth, *Svensk lärdomshistoria, II, Stormaktstiden* (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1975), 320–327.

13 Johannes Schefferus & Johan Hoffman, *Om anledningnar till att anlägga kolonier: en dissertation framlagd 1668*, translated and commented by Anna Fredriksson (Uppsala: Bibliotheca Neolatina Upsaliensis, XIV, 2019).

14 Schefferus & Hoffman, *Om anledningnar till att anlägga kolonier*, 77, 83, 93.

15 Johan Heysig-Ridderstierna, 'Index Rerum Naturalium quæ servantur in Museo Schefferiano Upsaliæ', Uppsala universitetsbibliotek (Uppsala University Library), Nordinska samlingen, N. 1190, fol. 135r–138v. Schefferus himself referred to the building as *Musæum meum* (my museum), see Allan Ellenius, 'Johannes Schefferus and Swedish Antiquity', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 20:1-2, (1957), 66. See also Andreas Klein, *Early Modern Knowledge about the Sámi: A History of Johannes Schefferus' Lapponia (1673) and its Adaptations*, PhD Dissertation (Tromsø: UiT The Arctic University of Tromsø, 2020), 126–134.



Fig. 10. Johannes Schefferus' museum building, Uppsala, 1660s. ↻

Uppsala), this was most likely the first building in Sweden to be designed as a museum. It was certainly part of a European humanist tradition, with which Schefferus was well acquainted, from the *studiolo* of the Italian Renaissance to the German *Kunst-kammer*. A characteristic feature of that tradition was a strong connection between collecting and scholarship, a connection that often took a physical form because the space for the collection adjoined a study and library. According to an early visitor, Schefferus' main reason for building a freestanding museum was to minimize the risk of fire—unlike his home, his museum was built of stone and had no fireplace.¹⁶ It can also be related to a German tradition begun by the freestanding buildings for the *Kunst-kammern* in Munich and at Ambras Castle about a century earlier.¹⁷

Museum Schefferianum is a square, one-storeyed building of modest size, roughly 8 × 8 metres.¹⁸ Its only entrance opens into an oblong room (c. 7.3 × 3.1 metres) with

16 Corfitz Braem, *Dagbok under en resa i Sverige åren 1671 och 1672*, (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1916), 46.

17 Oliver Impey, Arthur MacGregor & Hans-Olof Boström (eds.), *The Origins of Museums: The Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 29, 76–77.

18 For the building and its history, see Per Gustaf Hamberg, 'Johannes Schefferus' bibliotekshus: En historisk orientering samt några ord om den byggnadshistoriska undersökningen i samband med restaureringen', *Kungl. Vetenskaps-Societetens årsbok* (1960), 51–62; Ragnar Josephson, *Det hyperboreiska*



Fig. 11. Johannes Schefferus' museum building, Uppsala, 1660s, the largest room that probably housed the collections. ↻

plain plastered walls, a stone floor, a vaulted ceiling, and three comparatively large windows (Fig. 11). Since this was the largest and best-lit room in the building, it is reasonable to assume it was used for the display of objects—its oblong, gallery-like shape calls to mind the better-known European display spaces of the time. It leads into two smaller, almost square rooms that might have been used as a library and study. There are no images or complete inventories from which to reconstruct how objects were displayed in the main room, but from written descriptions and an assessment of the number of objects, one may conclude that they were tightly placed, corresponding to better-documented contemporary *Kunstkammern*. For a sense of what it might have looked like, there is a much-used engraving of the *Kunstkammer* of another multitalented North European scholar, the Danish physician and antiquarian Ole Worm (Fig. 12).¹⁹ The engraving, which

Upsala (Stockholm: Svenska humanistiska förbundet, 1940); Nils Sundquist, 'De arkitektoniska miljöerna i Uppsala före och efter branden 1702', offprint from *Byggnadsfirman Anders Diös 30 år som byggmästare i Uppsala 1925-1955* (Uppsala, 1956). The sources indicate the building was completed before September 1670, while Josephson dates it to the early 1660s.

¹⁹ For Ole Worm's *Kunstkammer*, see Camilla Mordhorst, *Genstandsfortællinger: Fra Museum Wormianum til de moderne museer*, (Köpenhamn: Museum Tusulanums Forlag, 2009).

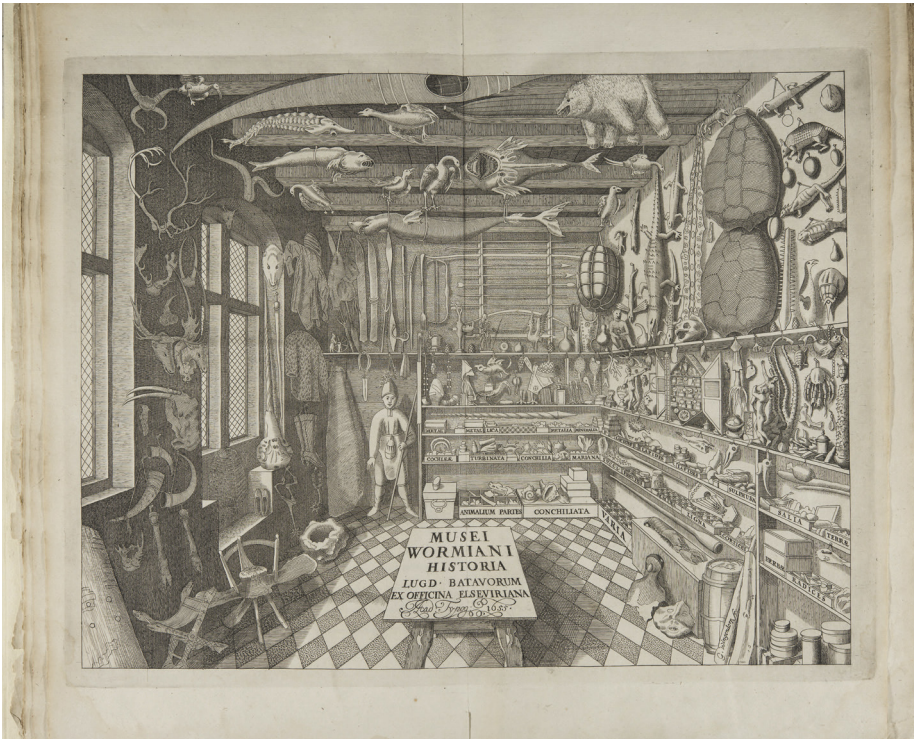


Fig. 12. Olaus Wormius, *Musei Wormiani Historia*, frontispiece, woodcut, 28 × 36 cm, 1655. ↵

is the frontispiece of the catalogue of Worm's collection published in 1655, depicts a space of comparable size and proportions to Schefferus' main room, lit by two large windows and stuffed with objects: hanging on the walls and from the ceiling, standing on the chequerboard floor, and placed on long, open shelves.²⁰ No particular systematization or categorization is evident, with *naturalia* and *artificialia* arranged together. *Naturalia* predominate: stuffed or dried animals above; antlers and horns on the wall; boxes or compartments on the shelves with labels such as *sulphura* (sulphur) and *lapides* (stones). In Schefferus' *Kunstkammer*, *naturalia* also seem to have been in the majority. In the 1670s, Schefferus' assistant, Johan Heysig (later Ridderstierna) worked on a catalogue of the natural objects in the collection. Only the section on minerals survives, but it lists no fewer than 144 objects divided into seven categories.²¹

20 Ole Worm, *Museum Wormianum. Seu historia rerum rariorum, tam naturalium, quam artificialium, tam domesticarum, quam exoticarum, quæ Hafniæ Danorum in œdibus authoris servantur* (Amstelodami: apud Lvdovicvm & Danielelem Elsevirios, 1655), frontispiece.

21 Johan Heysig-Ridderstierna, 'Index Rerum Naturalium quæ servantur in Museo Schefferiano Upsaliæ', Uppsala universitetsbibliotek (Uppsala University Library), Nordiska samlingen, N. 190, fol. 135r–138v.

Among the *artificialia* visible in the engraving of Worm's collection, objects from cultures outside the Christian European sphere seem to play an important role: bows, arrows, and other weapons, ornaments, and equipment such as a pair of skis, a kayak, and a double-bladed paddle (a sign of Danish colonial interest in the Arctic). Similarly, objects from Sápmi seem to have played a prominent role in Schefferus' display. Unlike Worm's collection, at least as it appears in the engraving and the printed catalogue, Schefferus' display featured books and manuscripts, probably in one of the smaller rooms off the main room.²² Schefferus brought a library of around 900 volumes from Strasbourg and he continued to collect books and manuscripts throughout his time in Uppsala.

On Schefferus' death in 1679 his collections were dispersed. Some of the Sámi objects went to the College of Antiquities' collection, which was later subsumed into the Swedish History Museum (Historiska museet).²³ One Sámi drum was taken to London by Heysig in 1681 and donated to the Royal Society—it might be identical with the *goavddis* in the British Museum.²⁴ A *sieidi*, a Sámi cult object in the shape of an undressed stone or a rock, and several other objects were eventually purchased by Mårten Törnhielm, a Swedish nobleman and gentleman scholar who put together an extraordinarily rich *Kunstkammer* in his mansion outside Stockholm in the early eighteenth century.²⁵ Some of the *naturalia*, and in particular the minerals from northern Scandinavia, ended up in the collection of Magnus von Bromell, a physician in Stockholm and president of the College of Medicine (Collegium Medicum).²⁶ A number of manuscripts from Schefferus' library have been in Uppsala University Library since 1719. One object which may have been in Schefferus' collection is in his museum building to this day: a *sieidi*, carelessly placed on the floor in one of the smaller rooms. Well into the twentieth century it stood outside in the garden.²⁷

22 A manuscript discovered by Andreas Klein confirms the close conceptual and spatial relations between museum and library in Schefferus' own understanding. The manuscript 'Museum seu de optimo librorum genere Commentatio', is in Uppsala universitetsbibliotek (Uppsala University Library), U258c. See further Klein, *Early Modern Knowledge about the Sámi*, 127–128.

23 T. J. Arne, 'Antikvitetskollegiets och Antikvitetsarkivets samlingar', *Fornvännen: Journal of Swedish Antiquarian Research*, 26 (1931), 48–93.

24 Manker, *Die Lappische Zaubertommel*, Vol. 1, no. 56, 750–755, Edbom, *Samiskt kulturarv i samlingar*, 37–38.

25 Kungliga biblioteket (National Library of Sweden), Manuscripts, X 526, Törnhielm, 'Continuation af några få Anmärkingar, Cataloguen konstkammaren tillhörige', 135. Mårten Törnhielm's *Kunstkammer* will be treated in a forthcoming study by the author.

26 Kungliga biblioteket (National Library of Sweden), Manuscripts, Engeström C.X.1.34, Hof, 'Oryctophylacium Bromelianum', 1751, fol 3v–4r [s.n.].

27 Ernst Manker, 'Schefferus och seitarna', *Kungl. Vetenskaps-Societetens årsbok* (1960), 63–70, plates at 67–69. Three photographs show the *sieidi* standing in the garden in the 1950s.

Unlike Worm, Schefferus' activity as a collector has left few traces. In his lifetime, however, his collection was well known and highly rated. Students, scholars, and collectors from across Northern Europe visited Uppsala to study the Museum Schefferianum in the company of its hospitable owner. One of these visitors was Albrecht, second surviving son of Duke Ernst of Saxe-Gotha. His journey was closely linked to his father's efforts to extend the *Kunstkammer* in the Friedenstein Palace in Gotha; indeed, the prince had been commissioned to gather information about collections along his route.²⁸ A travel diary by an anonymous attendant recorded the prince's journey through Holstein and Denmark to Sweden in the summer and autumn of 1670.²⁹ The *Kunstkammer* in Gottorp was briefly described, with a reference to the printed catalogue by Adam Olearius.³⁰ The royal *Kunstkammer* in Copenhagen was the subject of a detailed description that ran to seven pages, and included the main part of Worm's collection, which Frederick III had bought after the collector's death in 1655.³¹

On Wednesday 14 September, the prince and his retinue arrived in Uppsala, where they first visited the cathedral. The diary indicates that they saw the cathedral as a museum of Swedish history and genealogy as much as a sacred space: their focus was the tombs and monuments and their inscriptions.³² The next day they were received by Schefferus, who showed them his 'Naturkammer'; the diarist's term seems to confirm that natural objects were in the majority in the collection, while suggesting that the terminology was fluid, as the same collection could be labelled in different ways.³³ Together they looked at the objects on display, and the diarist implies their host took his time to explain some of them in detail. A group of Sámi objects seems to have been of particular interest. They examined the Sámi clothing, a sledge with a harness for reindeer, a pair of skis (one of which was much longer than the other), a coat, boots, and a bag made of reindeer leather, and a cap made of duck skin—a stuffed specimen of the same kind of duck was hanging on the wall above.³⁴ Something else held their attention, though.

Three Sámi drums, made of wood and somewhat elongated, about two span long, 1½ span wide, and a palm high. On the underside they had two holes so one

28 Dominik Collet, *Die Welt in der Stube: Außereuropa in Kunstkammern der Frühen Neuzeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 63–64.

29 'Reyse Diarium oder beschreibung deßen, was bey der A:o 1670 won H. Albrechts zu Sachßen Gotha fürstl. Durchl. naher Hollstein, Dennemarck und Schweden gethanen Reyse von Tage zu Tage passiret und vorgegangen', British Library, Add. 15113.

30 'Reyse Diarium', British Library, fol. 34v–35r.

31 'Reyse Diarium', British Library, fol. 72r–75r.

32 'Reyse Diarium', British Library, fol. 111v.

33 'Reyse Diarium', British Library, fol. 116v.

34 'Reyse Diarium', British Library, fol. 117r.

might seize and hold the drums with the hand. The drums were covered with vellum on which signs were written overall. The Sámi use these drums to tell fortunes, using for that purpose a brass ring and a small hammer made of bone. They put the ring on top of the drum, which they hold in one hand, and use the other hand to beat with the hammer on the drum, so that the ring moves. When the ring ends up on a sign, they predict something good or bad. These drums are now being confiscated by the officials in Lapland, on royal command, and those who continue to use them are being punished for that.³⁵

Plainly the host and his visitors studied the objects carefully, turning them around to examine them from all sides, and Schefferus took his time to expand on their ritual function among the Sámi and the efforts on the part of the Swedish colonizers to ban their use. The diary entry also sheds an unforgiving light on the violent, yet ambivalent, reconceptualization of objects inscribed in colonial relations. *Goavdát* or *gievrie* were elaborately crafted, materially pregnant, and symbolically charged objects at the heart of Sámi religious and cultural life. They were powerful objects, and spoke eloquently to the colonial conceptualization and exploitation of Sápmi.

Four categories of agents can be identified in what the diarist wrote, all involved in an intense struggle over the meaning, value, and proper use of Sámi drums. The first category consisted of skilled Sámi *duojárat* (craftspersons or artists), not explicitly mentioned in the diary, but evoked by the initial description of material and shape, and particularly the verb 'gemacht' (made) in the first sentence.³⁶ The anonymous

35 'Reyße Diarium', British Library, fol. 117r–117v: 'Dreÿ Laptrommeln, die waren von Holtz etwas ablänglich gemacht, und etwa zweÿ gute Spannen lang, 1 ½ breit, und einer Handbreit hoch, hatten unten am Boden zweÿ Löcher, daß mann mit der Hand hinein greiffen und sie halten konte, waren oben mit Pergamen überzogen, welches gantz voll characteren geschrieben war. Diese Trommeln brauchen die Lappen zum Warsagen, haben darbey einen Meßingenen Ring, und klein Hämmerlein von Bein, den Ring legen sie oben auf die Trommel, welche sie in einer Hand halten, und schlagen mit dem Hämmerlein so sie in der andern Hand führen, auf die Trommel, daß sich der darauf liegende Ring beweget – Nachdem nun derselbe auf einen characterem fällt, propheceÿen sie etwas gutes oder böses. Diese Trommeln läßet ihnen der König durch die Amtleute in der Lapmarck wegnehmen, und die, so sich derselben bedienen, deswegen bestraffen'. A span was roughly 23 cm, a palm roughly 10 cm.

36 The modern Western concepts of art and artist, with their connotations of authorship and genius and their close relation to capitalism and market value, are not easily applicable to Sámi aesthetic and material practices, even though there are early examples of Sámi artists/craftspersons who signed their work and produced objects for the market. Neither is the modern Western distinction between art and craft relevant. The northern Sámi term *duodji*, usually translated as craft, refers to a wider spectrum of creative, material practices, as does *duojár*, usually translated as craftsperson. For a recent discussion of these issues, see Svein Aamold, Elin Haugdal & Ulla Angkær Jørgensen (eds.), *Sámi Art and Aesthetics: Contemporary Perspectives* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2017). See in particular Svein Aamold, 'Unstable Categories of Art and People', 13–27; Charlotte Bydler, 'Decolonial or Creolized Commons? Sámi Duodji in the Expanded Field', 141–162.

duojárat were capable of shaping materially appealing, visually striking, and ritually effective objects out of local, culturally significant materials such as pine, spruce, birch, and reindeer skin and sinews, and of diversifying their design and material elaboration within the framework of aesthetic tradition and ritual practice. Next followed a category explicitly referred to in the quote, consisting of the *noaidit* (shamans) and other Sámi with a relationship with the drums, and interacting with them musically and ritually.³⁷ The third category, also explicitly referred to, were the Swedish colonial officials and clergy, busy confiscating drums and preventing their traditional use as part of their attempt to discipline the colonized Sámi and make them conforming Christians. Most drums were confiscated and destroyed by the colonizers in the space of a few decades in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and those who defied the ban faced death, as Lars Nikodemus Nilsson's trial showed in all its brutality. Finally, the scene of Schefferus going into the detail of the objects for his eminent guest is evidence of the fourth category, the Swedish and European scholars and antiquarians for whom an object like a *goavddis* or a *gievrie* was a material source of knowledge about things temporally, spatially, or culturally foreign.

To these four categories we could add a fifth, often overlapping with the fourth and exemplified by Ernst of Saxe-Gotha, without whose interest in *Kunstkammern* the prince would probably have never made the journey and the diary would never have been written. This category consisted of Swedish and European collectors for whom Sámi drums were eminently collectible, which would add to the prestige and value of their collections. Ernst did not get his hands on a drum, but in 1729, some decades after his death, one had been added to the collections in Gotha. By that time, *goavdát* or *gievrie* were since long standard objects in European *Kunstkammern* or museums.

While these categories of agents related to the *goavdát* or *gievrie* in very different ways, their actions and practices confirmed the importance of the objects, and the value attached to them by the colonizing culture and the colonized. It is not far-fetched to think of the drums as agents in themselves. With their power to trigger strong emotions and actions of different kinds, they became a focal point of colonial encounter. For the colonized, they were a matter of cultural and religious belonging, and a way to handle the relations between the profane and the sacred. They were materially and visually powerful objects, whose meanings and values were actualized and activated in ritual and musical performances in which their

37 *Noaidi* is a North Sámi word for people with special abilities and a central position in Sámi religious practice. It is often translated as shaman. See further Konsta Ilari Kaikkonen, 'From, Into and Back: Translations of the Sámi Words *noaidi* and *noaidevuohta* in Context', *Religion*, 49:4 (2019), 539–570. For Sámi drums as both ritual and musical instruments, see below, p. 127–128; see also Christoffersson, *Med tre röster och tusende bilder*, 125–151.

rhythms became fused with the *yoik*, a semi-improvised chant.³⁸ In a time of colonial oppression and increasingly circumscribed possibilities of cultural and religious belonging, we can assume that the importance of powerful objects grew even stronger.

For the colonizers, *goavdát* or *gievrie* became entangled in ambivalent notions and acts of discipline and desire.³⁹ As instruments for heathen practices, they were confiscated by officials and clergy in a systematic and often brutal campaign to discipline the Sámi population and make it conform to the established Church. The sheer violence by which the drums were confiscated and destroyed seems to confirm their importance. Not merely instances of primitive superstition, but actually believed to be instruments of the Devil, they were regarded a serious threat to Christianity. At the same time, notions of the inherent magical, performative power of the *goavddis* or *gievrie* seem to have contributed to their rise as desirable collectibles among Swedish and European elites. The need to destroy and the desire to possess were two sides of the same coin, each in its way acknowledging the value and power of the object.

Having looked at the Sámi objects, Schefferus and his visitors turned to the collection of minerals which, judging by the description in the diary, they found very interesting—borne out by the prince, after his stay in Uppsala, continued to Falun to visit the famous copper mine.⁴⁰ Many of the minerals originated from Sápmi and again were redolent of Swedish colonialism, which was in part driven by the exploitation of silver, iron, and copper. There were also pearls ‘from very clean waters’, another item from Sápmi that the Swedish colonizers set great store by.⁴¹ Then the company continued to the collection of European paintings and wooden sculptures, some of which were carved by the versatile Schefferus himself. They also admired a copy of the Koran, an example of virtuoso craftsmanship: octagonal, as small as a coin, thick as a finger, the text written in circles on the pages. The visit ended in the library section, where host and guest studied books and manuscripts.⁴²

A year later, around Christmas 1671, there was another foreign visitor to Uppsala and the Museum Schefferianum: Corfitz Braem, from a leading Danish merchant family deeply involved in the colonial enterprises of the time. His background underlined the close relation between collecting, colonialism, and the capitalist circulation of commodities. Braem, who later became mayor of Helsingør, made

38 Christoffersson, *Med tre röster och tusende bilder*, 121–151.

39 For the concepts of discipline and desire, see Homi Bhabha, ‘Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree outside Delhi, May 1817’, *Critical Inquiry*, 12:1 (1985), 144–165. For these concepts in relation to the Swedish colonization of Sápmi, see below, p. 90–91.

40 ‘Rejse Diarium’, British Library, fol. 117v–118r.

41 ‘Rejse Diarium’, British Library, fol. 117v.

42 ‘Rejse Diarium’, British Library, fol. 118v.

several educational tours in the 1660s and 1670s. In a travel diary from his Swedish visit, he described the voyage from Denmark, through Sweden, to Stockholm and Uppsala.⁴³ There was an emphasis on buildings and physical objects, such as furniture, art, and collections of different kinds. The visit to Uppsala was the highlight of the trip. Braem described the three days he spent in far more detail than any other part of the journey. Schefferus received him with great hospitality. On Christmas Day they went together to the cathedral to attend the service and study the tombs and other historically significant objects.⁴⁴ Later they continued to Old Uppsala with its famous pre-Christian burial mounds. The next day they visited the Botanical Gardens, before they went to Schefferus' 'Konst kammer', yet another name for it, confirming the assumption that the terms—museum, *Kunstkammer*, *Naturkammer*—were interchangeable.⁴⁵ Braem's notes of his visit give a similar impression as those of Albrecht's attendant, of host and guest looking through the collections together and talking about certain objects, especially in the Sámi section. Braem singled out an object not mentioned by Albrecht's attendant: a small magic ball or *tyre*, made of animal hair and supposedly used by the Sámi to strike down a person or animal.⁴⁶ It was a bezoar from the stomach of a reindeer. In many cultures, bezoars were used as medicine and were often associated with magical qualities. They also became collectibles in the European *Kunstkammer* culture. Hedwig Eleonora, for example, had several bezoars, one of them mounted on a golden ring.⁴⁷ Braem further noted the Sámi drums before turning to the minerals, and at the end he mentioned the library with its many precious manuscripts.

Albrecht's and Braem's diaries reflect a standard practice in Northern Europe of members of the societal elite visiting one another's *Kunstkammern* and studying the objects there. It should be noted that the two travellers represented different elites—the aristocracy and the rising capitalist class—while their host represented yet another, the scholarly or academic elite. The diaries also indicate that Swedish collectors and collections were part of this exchange to a greater extent than is usually assumed. Social prestige was one motive for the exchange: aristocrats, scholars,

43 Braem, *Dagbok under en resa i Sverige*.

44 Braem, *Dagbok under en resa i Sverige*, 42–43.

45 Braem, *Dagbok under en resa i Sverige*, 46.

46 Johannes Schefferus gives a detailed description of the *tyre*, together with an illustration, in Johannes Schefferus, *Joannis Schefferi Argentoratensis Lapponia, id est, regionis Lapponum et gentis nova et verissima descriptio. In qua multa de origine, superstitione, sacris magicis, victu, cultu, negotiis Lapponum, item animalium, metallorumque indole, quæ in terris eorum proveniunt, hactenus incognita produntur, & eiconibus adjectis cum cura illustrantur* (Francofvrti ex officina Christiani Wolffii typis Joannis Andreae, 1673), 148–149.

47 Lisa Skogh, *Material Worlds: Queen Hedwig Eleonora as Collector and Patron of the Arts*, PhD Dissertation (Stockholm: Center for the History of Science at the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, 2013), 151, 197.

and merchants could bask in their mutually reflected glory, appearing on the stage of the *Kunstammer* as men with the wherewithal to collect valuable objects and the cultural capacity to appreciate one another's collections. Education was another driving force: Albrecht and Braem were on what amounted to educational tours, and their diaries abound in precise information about the objects, as mediated by Schefferus. The *Kunstammer* was thus a place for the transfer of knowledge—in Albrecht's case very much so, as his father had entrusted to him the gathering knowledge about *Kunstammern* and their contents. Most likely, Schefferus also used his collection in his role as a university teacher, in the same way as we know Worm had done in Copenhagen a few decades earlier.

While the diaries of Albrecht and Braem provide an insight into the role of the *Kunstammer* for the *mediation* of knowledge, Schefferus' scholarly writings offer examples of its importance for the *production* of knowledge. In 1671, Magnus Gabriel de la Gardie, chancellor and patron of Uppsala University, commissioned Schefferus to write a study of Sápmi and the Sámi. The result, *Lapponia*, published in Latin in Frankfurt in 1673, became a European bestseller, and was soon translated into several languages: English in 1674 (with new editions in 1704 and 1751), German in 1675, French in 1678, and Dutch in 1682 (with a new edition in 1719).⁴⁸ The commissioning and publication of *Lapponia* coincided with accelerating colonial activities in Sápmi. New ore deposits were about to be exploited and conflicts loomed with both the neighbouring kingdom of Denmark–Norway and the exploited Sámi miners. In 1673, Lappmarksplakatet was issued, a royal decree intended to encourage Swedish settlement in Sámi territories. On a general level, *Lapponia* thus exemplifies how the production of knowledge formed part of the colonial project. It was important for the colonizers to construct and control their knowledge of the colonized. In his preface, Schefferus provided a more specific motive for writing *Lapponia* that broadly confirmed the close link between colonialism, imperialism, and the production of knowledge: rumours abroad that claimed Sweden's recent military victories had been engineered by Sámi witchcraft. It was important to refute the notion that the great military power of Sweden, the protector of the Lutheran faith, was based on heathen practices, specifically the use of *goavdát* or *gievrie* which were 'the devil's instruments', and restore the honour of the kingdom by presenting true knowledge about the customs and character of the Sámi people, and the nature of their land.⁴⁹

48 In the following, I refer to the Swedish edition of 1956, which is the most thorough scholarly edition to date: Johannes Schefferus, *Lappland*, Nordiska museet: Acta Lapponica, VIII (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1956). When discussing the book in the running text, I will use the Latin title *Lapponia*, as it is the established title of the book among scholars in Sweden and internationally. For *Lapponia* and its European reception, see also Klein, *Early Modern Knowledge about the Sámi*.

49 Schefferus, *Lappland*, 32.

Schefferus never visited Sápmi himself. In the preface to *Lapponia* he introduced his sources, thus giving an insight into his premises and scholarly methods. His principal source consisted of several recent reports by Swedish clergy working in the region.⁵⁰ Being part of the colonial project of assimilating the land and its people into the Lutheran kingdom, the clergy probably had closer contact with the Sámi population than any other group of Swedish officials. As a complement to the reports, Schefferus had also consulted the Sámi who came to Uppsala as merchants or students.⁵¹ He gave equal weight to the fifty-four authors he listed, from ancient authorities such as Pliny the Elder and Tacitus, the medieval historians Adam of Bremen and Saxo Grammaticus, to contemporary scholars such as Ole Worm and Isaac Vossius.⁵² Finally—and of greatest importance for this study—Schefferus referred to material objects as his sources. He stressed he himself had done the preparatory drawings for the woodcut illustrations in the book, and, more than merely illustrations, they were a way of elucidating what could not be explained in words.⁵³ The practice of drawing appears to have served an important epistemological function in Schefferus' effort to grasp the material culture of the Sámi. The importance of material objects was further stressed in Schefferus' dedication to his employer and patron, Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie, expressing his gratitude for having generously put a collection of Sámi objects at Schefferus' disposal, thus providing a richer source material and enabling detailed comparative studies.⁵⁴

Armed with these sources Schefferus set to work, most likely in the study in the small museum building, with direct access to the literary and material sources—the frequent references to texts and objects throughout the book seem to strengthen that assumption. We can imagine him moving between study, library, and *Kunstkammer*, browsing through manuscripts, taking objects down from the wall or out of a drawer to examine them, and comparing them to other sources. His work was characterized by a critical attitude.⁵⁵ Sources were neither dismissed nor taken for granted until they had been scrutinized and compared with one another. In this critical process, the material objects played an important role, complementing and sometimes correcting the written sources. An illuminating example is the long chapter on what Schefferus labelled Sámi 'witchcraft'. Supported by the clergy's reports and earlier authorities, he stated that the Sámi had a certain faculty for witchcraft, a fact that he put down to the devil's influence.⁵⁶ He continued by pointing out the importance

50 Schefferus, *Lapland*, 32.

51 Schefferus, *Lapland*, 33.

52 Schefferus, *Lapland*, 35.

53 Schefferus, *Lapland*, 33.

54 Schefferus, *Lapland*, 29.

55 See Ellenius, 'Johannes Schefferus and Swedish Antiquity', 59–74.

56 Schefferus, *Lapland*, 151ff.

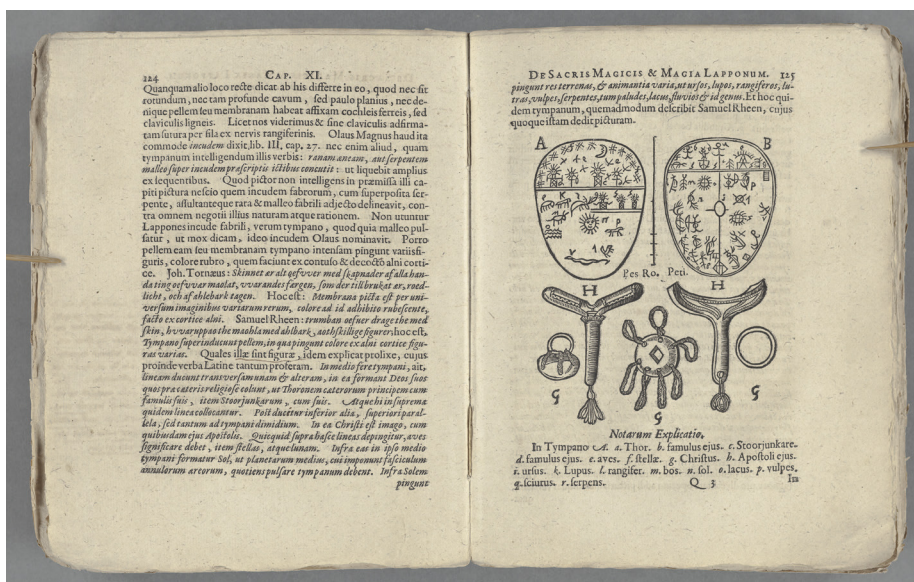


Fig. 13. Two Sámi drums, bone hammers and rings, woodcut, 21.5 × 17 cm (page), in Johannes Schefferus, *Lapponia*, 1673, p. 125. ⁵⁷

of certain tools or instruments for the practice of witchcraft, in particular Sámi drums. The main part of the chapter is a detailed study of ceremonial drums and how they were used. Schefferus' understanding was based on the clergy's reports, but he carefully compared their accounts with no fewer than six examples to which he had direct access: three in his own possession and three that De la Gardie had made available. All six *goavdát* or *gievrie* are represented in detailed woodcuts, in the detached, matter-of-fact style then typical of scientific images: distinct contours, accentuated details, a blank, neutral background, and letters or numbers referring to a written description. In three cases (C, D, and F) both front and back of the objects are depicted, and in two cases (A and B) the bone hammer and the rings put on the drumhead are included in the illustrations (Fig. 13).⁵⁷

Schefferus' account of the design and the material qualities of the *goavdát* and *gievrie* was precise and detailed. He compared the physical objects with the written sources and he sometimes felt called upon to elucidate or correct the latter. When one of his informants reported that the drumheads were fastened by means of small sticks, Schefferus commented he had seen at least one drum on which the head was fastened with threads of reindeer sinews.⁵⁸ In constant dialogue

57 Images A and B are found in Schefferus, *Lapland*, 157 (125 in the original edition of 1673); C and D on 158 (127); E on 160 (128); F on 161 (129) and the back of F on 171 (137).

58 Schefferus, *Lapland*, 156.

with the physical objects, and the woodcuts made for the book, he carefully, and usually accurately, described how the drums were made out of either a frame or a carved burl on which a drumhead of reindeer skin was fastened. On the drumhead, signs and figures were painted with a decoction of ground alder bark, producing a dark red colour suggestive of blood. Comparing his informants' descriptions with the *goavdát* or *gievrie* in his possession, Schefferus noted significant differences between the paintings on the drumheads regarding composition and individual signs. The ever-present representations of Sámi gods might be combined in different ways with reindeer, bears, wolves, and other animals from the region; landscape types, such as lakes or mountains; specific geographical localities such as a nearby town or a church; or the sun and other celestial bodies. Christ and other biblical characters were also recurrent motifs, suggesting a long period of cultural and religious encounter and exchange. Schefferus suggested that the points of distinction between different drumheads depended on the specific magical purpose of each drum. He also hypothesized that signs and figures might be added, erased, or changed depending on the aim of a certain ceremony.⁵⁹

In other cases, Schefferus used objects to concretize and clarify a more general statement. In a chapter on craft practised by Sámi men, he singled out making boxes and cases as an important craft, referring to Samuel Rheen, one of his informants. Schefferus then described an oval case in his own collection, made of birch and ornamented with reindeer bone. His description ended with the following reference: 'In order for the appearance [of the case] to be clearer, I attach at the end of this chapter a depiction of the whole case. It is indicated with the letter C'.⁶⁰ The illustration, a woodcut from a drawing by the author, shows several crafted objects (Fig. 14). The case, in the centre of the picture, is shown with distinct outlines, hatching to indicate the rounded shape of case and lid, and a clear, artless rendering of the bone ornaments. Accuracy and clarity seem to have been Schefferus' guiding principles.


Schefferus' research on Sápmi and the Sámi did not end with the publication of *Lapponia* in 1673. The author's own copy of the first edition, which survives in the National Library of Sweden, is full of marginal notes and inserted sheets with text and drawings, probably intended for a revised edition—and they were used for the second English edition of 1704 and for the Swedish edition of 1956.⁶¹ The additional notes and drawings further highlight the importance attached to material and visual evidence in Schefferus' work. A particularly illuminative example is in Chapter X about Sámi idols. In the original text, Schefferus discussed *sieidi*. Building his

59 Schefferus, *Lapland*, 159–160.

60 Schefferus, *Lapland*, 285.

61 Kungliga biblioteket (National Library of Sweden), Manuscripts, F.e.7, Schefferus, *Lapponia*, 1673, with additional notes and drawings by the author.



Fig. 14. Boxes, cases and other examples of Sámi craft, woodcut, 21.5 × 17 cm (page), in Johannes Schefferus, *Lapponia*, 1673, p. 259. 

discussion on textual sources, he eventually put the rhetorical question, ‘But what did these stones look like?’⁶² His tentative answer is given in a woodcut of one of his own drawings, based on the clergy’s written reports, of a *sieidi* in a mountainous landscape, surrounded by reindeer antlers neatly arranged in a semicircle (Fig. 15). The *sieidi*, of about the same height as the antlers, is a rough stone, standing in an erect position with a shape vaguely reminiscent of a sculptural bust. A bearded Sámi man is seen bowed before the *sieidi*, apparently in deep prayer.⁶³ After the publication of the book, Schefferus eventually got to see a couple of *sieidi* with his own eyes (one or two *sieidi* were eventually incorporated into his collection). He added the following note on an inserted sheet of paper, facing the woodcut in the print edition:

The image is a slightly imaginative drawing of the Sámi stone idol, but in its making, I have followed the descriptions and memories of others. Now I am able to present an entirely true image of it, drawn from a stone from Torne Lappmark that was given to me by Mr Grape, an excellent young man. This is how it looks, drawn with my own hand.⁶⁴

62 Schefferus, *Lapland*, 138.

63 Schefferus, *Lapland*, 140 (p. 108 in the original edition of 1673).

64 Schefferus, *Lapland*, 139–141. The Latin original, handwritten on an inserted sheet opposite p. 108 in the original edition of *Lapponia*, 1673 (Kungliga biblioteket (National Library of Sweden), Manuscripts, F.e.7): Ita delineaream hunc lapideum ipsorum deum ex conjectura, secutus descriptiones et commemoraciones

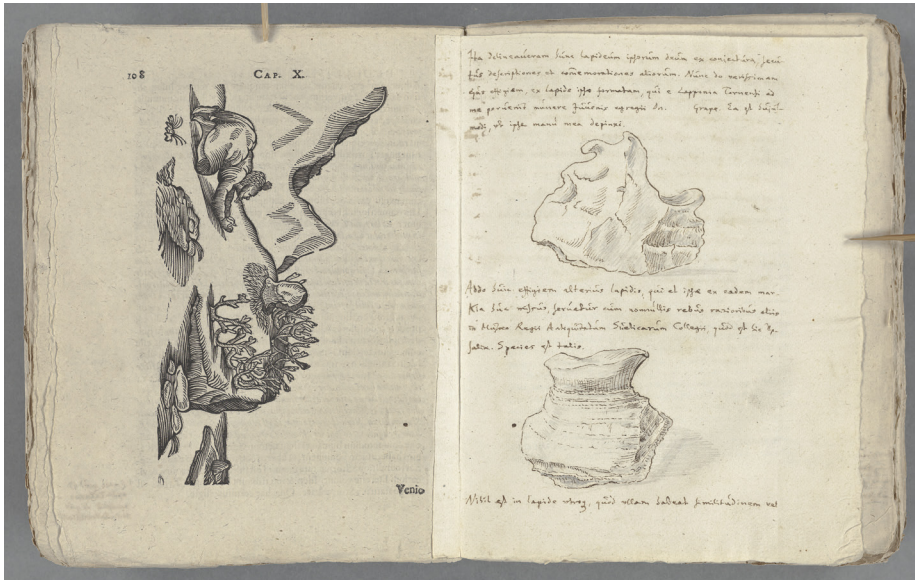


Fig. 15. Johannes Schefferus, Drawings of two *sieidi*, with written descriptions, pen and brown ink, shadings in graphite, 21 × 17 cm (inserted sheet), opposite p. 108 in Schefferus' own copy of *Lapponia*, 1673. ↵

Schefferus thus spelt out the importance of the material object for the scholar, how it enabled a 'true image' as compared to the 'imaginative' woodcut based on the textual sources. By doing that, he also implicitly claimed the importance of visual and material knowledge: to understand the Sámi and their culture, it is essential to know the objects they surrounded themselves with. And hence, the *Kunstkammer* with all its objects became an invaluable resource for the scholar, the producer of knowledge. 'Mr Grape' has been identified as Johan Grape, an Uppsala student and son of the German-born merchant Arndt Grape who owned an ironworks in Övertorneå—the same part of Sápmi the *sieidi* supposedly came from.⁶⁵ It is yet another indication of the entangled relations between colonial exploitation, collecting, and the production of knowledge.

In drawing the *sieidi* Schefferus paid close attention to the shape of the object, the effect being distinctly different to the 'imaginative' woodcut in the printed book (Fig. 15). Its outlines are carefully drawn with pen and brown ink, apparently the same pen and ink used for the written note. Continuous breaks in the line suggest the draftsman paused repeatedly, shifting his attention back and forth between the movement of his hand and the appearance of the object. Accuracy seems to

aliorum. Nunc do verissimam ejus effigiem, ex lapide ipso formatam, qui e Lapponia Tornensi ad me peruenit munere Juuenis egregii. Dn. Grape. Ea est hujusmodi, vt ipse manu mea depinxit.

⁶⁵ Schefferus, *Lappland*, 422 n. 1.

have been the guiding principle, rather than imagination or stylistic elegance. By means of simple hatching in pen and ink, the draftsman has indicated the volume of the *sieidi* and its irregular surface. Faint shading in graphite further clarifies the surface structure. The space around the object on the page is left blank besides a barely noticeable shading in the lower-right corner. On the same sheet of paper, below the drawing, Schefferus added:

To this, I add a drawing of another stone, sent here from the same region. It is kept, together with other rare objects, in the collections of the College of Antiquities here in Uppsala, and it is seen below:⁶⁶

The style of the second drawing is similar to the first: broken outlines, simple hatching, shading in graphite. The shape of the object differs, though, showing some similarity with the bust-like shape of the *sieidi* in the original woodcut, but turned upside down.

European colonialism can be described as a project of uniformity and control. By education, missionary work, and state-sanctioned violence, the colonizers endeavoured to control the colonized and make them more uniform; by naming, mapping, and dividing the colonized territory into administrative units they took control of it and slotted it into a geopolitical power structure. Correspondingly, the objects of the colonized had to be ordered and controlled by the colonizers. The struggle over *goavdát* or *gievrie* and other objects from the Sámi religious sphere can be understood as an instance of that endeavour. It was about objects related to non-Christian religious practices, objects with a cultural and religious independence the colonizers refused to tolerate. Swedish officials, clergy, collectors, and scholars were all involved in a project of taking control of these objects, subordinating them to a Christian worldview and a Lutheran established Church and an autocratic state. Their apparently contradictory practices of confiscating and destroying versus collecting and studying might be understood as parts of the same colonial project. *Goavdát* or *gievrie* had had their meaning as aesthetically, musically, and ritually powerful objects in a Sámi cultural context. Now, because of various colonial practices, they were being transformed into colonial objects—objects for which colonialism was the context which gave them meaning. However, the new status of *goavdát* or *gievrie* as colonial objects was far from stable and unambiguous; on

66 Schefferus, *Lappland*, 141. The Latin original, handwritten on an inserted sheet opposite p. 108 in the original edition of *Lapponia*, 1673 (Kungliga biblioteket (National Library of Sweden), Manuscripts, F.e.7): *Addo huic effigiem alterius lapidis, qui et ipsæ ex eadem markia huc missus, seruat cum nonnullis rebus rarioribus aliis in Musæo Regii Antiquitatum Sueticarum Collegii, quod est hic Vpsaliæ. Species et talis.*



Fig. 16. Sámi drum with damages on the drumhead, seventeenth century, Historiska museet, Stockholm. ↻

the contrary it was characterized by ambivalence and a constant shift between aversion and fascination.

Homi Bhabha has described the ambivalent and unstable relations between colonizer and colonized in terms of ‘colonial desire and discipline’.⁶⁷ The struggle over *goavdát* or *gievrie* appears as an example of such ambivalent colonial relations. The need for discipline found expression in confiscation, destruction, and cruel punishment, while the desire manifested itself in collecting and display. Contradictory as they may appear, these practices were two sides of the same coin. On the basis of Schefferus’ dealings with the objects, we can add a third concept, closely related to Bhabha’s ‘desire’ and ‘discipline’, yet distinguishable from them: knowledge. For Schefferus, *goavdát* or *gievrie* were objects of knowledge, in a double sense. They were objects about which knowledge was produced and codified in written text, and they were material sources to knowledge about Sámi cultural and religious practices. The production of knowledge was closely related to control, or discipline—hence *Lapponia*, where the explicit reason for the work was to take control of knowledge about Sápmi and the Sámi. Knowledge was also associated with desire, as became clear in the practices of the *Kunstammer*, where the desire to possess and the will to understand seemed inseparable. Colonial practices

67 Bhabha, ‘Signs Taken for Wonders’.

as they related to Sámi drums in late seventeenth-century Sweden may thus be approached and interpreted with the conceptual triad of discipline, desire, and knowledge, the three concepts being related to, and coloured by, one another. For the clergyman Per Noraeus it was mainly about control: for Grand Duke Cosimo of Tuscany, desire; for Schefferus, knowledge. However, the concepts are entangled, working together in different colonial practices.

How devastating these practices could be for the colonized was shown by the destinies of Lars Nikodemus Nilsson and the anonymous Sámi man sent to Florence. That also objects were affected by colonial violence is exemplified by the drum of Lars Nikodemus Nilsson, that was burnt at the stake with him. In the Swedish History Museum in Stockholm there is a *gievrie* that probably originated from the area north of the River Ume in southern Sápmi (Fig. 16).⁶⁸ In the eighteenth century, it formed part of the *Kunstkammer* in Fullerö Castle north of Uppsala, and was said to have been a gift from Carl Linnaeus. The drumhead is broken and cracked, a fact that might be explained by the age and thinness of the hide. However, on closer inspection some of the cracks appear to have been caused by sudden physical violence: they are markedly straight, suggesting that they were made by a knife or other sharp tool. There are also dark patches at the lower end which look as if they were made by fire. It may not be possible to prove what has happened to the drum. In its present state, however, it appears a painfully expressive materialization of colonial violence, a violence that constitutes a more important element of Swedish history than we often want to acknowledge.

68 Historiska Museet (The Swedish History Museum), Stockholm, inv. no 20812; Manker, *Die Lappische Zaubertrommel*, Vol. 1, no. 50, 723–727.



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Part II

Colonial Objects in Time: Object Itineraries



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5. Objects and their Agency and Itineraries

Abstract

This chapter frames the second part of the book by discussing the material turn—a renewed appreciation of matter and materiality in the humanities and social sciences, and an awareness of objects as something more than mere settings for human action. Informed by the writings of Jane Bennett, the chapter stresses the ethical aspects of paying close attention to the materialities of colonial objects, counterbalancing the ways the objects have been reduced and exposed to colonial violence. The chapter further introduces the concept of the ‘object itinerary’ as a methodological and narrative framework for the discussion in Part II.

Keywords: materiality, new materialism, agency, object itinerary, thing-power, agentic assemblage

Thus far I have located the colonial objects spatially, whether in the vast expanses of the colonial world or the enclosed, intimate spaces of the *Kunstkammer*. In-depth studies of chosen collections—the royal *Kunstkammer* and armouries from Christina to Hedwig Eleonora, and the *Kunstkammer* of Johannes Schefferus—have shown these two distinct spatialities were interconnected and constitutive of each other. The Swedish *Kunstkammern* were stimulated and enriched by the inflow of natural objects and artefacts from colonized peoples far away and closer to home. At the same time, they were spaces for the production of knowledge about the colonial world, and thus spaces in which a colonial worldview was negotiated and mediated.

In the first part of the book, I have been concerned with people: royalty, aristocrats, scholars, clergy, and colonial officials involved in desiring, destroying, collecting, displaying, and researching objects. The practices and attitudes of these colonial collectors were located somewhere on a spectrum from vague interest in the strange and faraway to emphatic curiosity about the material culture of a colonized people or territory, from crude manifestation of imperial power to scholarly urge to know the world. It must be borne in mind, however, that all conceivable positions on that spectrum contributed to the colonization of the objects—and to a spiralling colonial worldview.

The focus now shifts from the people who handled the objects, to the objects themselves as material entities with their own trajectories and their own ways of acting and affecting. This part of the book is informed by the material turn in the humanities and social sciences.¹ At the most general level, it is about a renewed appreciation of matter, things, or objects, an awareness of them as something more than merely settings for human action, or props in what Victor Turner calls ‘the social drama’.² In a now classic text, Arjun Appadurai argues for ‘methodological fetishism’, meaning an alertness among scholars to things and their forms, materials, and trajectories as sites of meaning.³ Appadurai frames this turn to things and their materialities as a question of method, arguing that things have no meaning in themselves, besides what humans endow them with. There are times when he comes close to an understanding of things as having agency, however. Discussing *Kula*, a formalized system of gift-giving in Papua New Guinea, where men undertook lengthy, often perilous voyages to exchange shell necklaces and bracelets, he quotes Nancy Munn: ‘Although men appear to be the agents in defining shell value, in fact, without shells, men cannot define their own value; in this respect, shells and men are reciprocally agents of each other’s value definition’.⁴

The notion suggested by this quote, of a distributed agency connecting humans and objects in chains, or networks, of mutual dependency and meaning-making is a central feature of the heterogeneous theoretical field, predictably labelled ‘new materialism’.⁵ Jane Bennett proposes ‘thing-power’ as a concept that destabilizes the subject–object binary and brings out ‘the curious ability of inanimate

1 The literature is vast. See e.g. Daniel Miller (ed.), *Materiality* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005); Tony Bennett & Patrick Joyce (eds.), *Material Powers: Cultural Studies, History and the Material Turn* (London: Routledge, 2010).

2 Victor Turner, ‘Social Dramas and Stories about Them’, *Critical Inquiry*, 7:1 (1980), 141–168; Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982); Victor Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance* (New York: PAJ, 1986).

3 Arjun Appadurai, ‘Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value’, in Arjun Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 5.

4 Appadurai, ‘Introduction’, 20. Appadurai quotes Nancy Munn, ‘Gawan Kula: Spatiotemporal Control and the Symbolism of Influence’, in J. W. Leach & E. Leach (eds.), *The Kula: New Perspectives on Massim Exchange* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 283.

5 For new materialism, see Diana H. Coole & Samantha Frost (eds.), *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010). Three key contributions to the field are Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford: University Press), 2005; Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 2010); Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chtulucene* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2016).

things to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle'.⁶ Thus it is not only humans but also things that have agency, or the ability to act. In Bennett's understanding, however, the primary locus of agency is not the individual thing (or human) in itself but rather an 'agentic assemblage', a grouping of human and non-human elements.⁷ Each member of an assemblage (human or non-human) may have a vital force of its own, but it is together that they form the agency of the assemblage. Bennett exemplifies this with the big power blackout in North America in 2003, suggesting that we understand the electrical power grid as an agentic assemblage of 'coal, sweat, electromagnetic fields, computer programs, electron streams, profit motives, heat, lifestyles, nuclear fuel, plastic, fantasies of mastery, static, legislation, water, economic theory, wire and wood'.⁸ Correspondingly, the colonial objects at the centre of this book may be regarded as parts of agentic assemblages including other collectibles, landscapes and raw materials, original producers and users, colonizers, law, travelogues and other texts, images, museums and other architectural spaces, imperial ambitions, and decolonial resistance.

If the turn to things for Appadurai is a question of scholarly method, for Bennett it is a matter of ontology, a fundamental questioning of the anthropocentric notion of agency as something reserved for people. But it is at least as much an issue of politics and ethics:

the image of dead or thoroughly instrumentalized matter feeds human hubris and our earth-destroying fantasies of conquest and consumption. It does so by preventing us from detecting (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling) a fuller range of the nonhuman powers circulating around and within human bodies.⁹

In this study, too, the close attention to materiality and objects has an ethical motive. Colonial objects have been exposed to epistemic and physical violence, they have been reduced to colonial trophies, to exotica, or, recently, to signifiers of Western colonial guilt. Now it is high time to listen carefully to these objects to detect a fuller range of their aesthetic, agentic powers. *Who* are these objects? Why have they fascinated their viewers and aroused their desires, from the time of their creation until the present time, and how? How is their formal appeal (shapes, colours, materials) intertwined with the layers of narratives they carry? In what ways have they acted on their surroundings? What do they want?

6 Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 6.

7 Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 21.

8 Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 25.

9 Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, ix.

One possible objection to Bennett's approach is that, in her enthusiasm to destabilize the object–subject binary, she construes a new binary between object and thing. She quotes W. J. T. Mitchell:

objects are the way things appear to a subject—that is, with a name, an identity, a gestalt or stereotypical template [...] Things, on the other hand, [...] [signal] the moment when the object becomes the Other, when the sardine can looks back, when the mute idol speaks, when the subject experiences the object as uncanny.¹⁰

Mitchell seems to offer a way to avoid the object–thing binary and think of it as two theoretically construed poles—'object' and 'thing'—between which any object or thing oscillates. Every object also has 'thingness', a side that turns away from the human viewer, resisting objectification and the human urge to define and categorize. Likewise, every thing also takes on objecthood as soon as it is entangled with humans. If there exists such an entity as a pure thing, without a hint of objecthood, it is not approachable for the human agent. In what follows, therefore, 'object' is used to refer to the material entities which are my focus.

Parallel to this renewed attention to materiality and objects, the 'object biography' has emerged as a method—or perhaps rather a narrative strategy—with the aim of putting objects centre stage. A beginning may be found in the text by Appadurai stating that things 'have social lives'.¹¹ Like human beings, things have a capacity to change over time and take on new roles in new cultural and social circumstances. Igor Kopytoff developed this into a 'cultural biography of things'—as it was originally named—as a scholarly method.¹² It is reasonable, he claims, to ask the same questions of a thing as we usually ask about people. Questions about where it comes from and who made it; about its career and distinguishable periods in its 'social life'; about its ageing and how that affects the way it is treated and valued.¹³ The biography method, Kopytoff proposes, may elucidate what otherwise remains obscure. What happens, for example, when an object, because of cultural contacts or conflicts, travels from one cultural and social context to another? When it migrates from the familiar to the unknown? Which new roles will this hypothetical object play in its new circumstances?¹⁴ The method requires a close

10 Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 2, quoting W. J. T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 156–157.

11 Appadurai, 'Introduction', 3.

12 Igor Kopytoff, 'The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as a Process', in Arjun Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 64–91.

13 Kopytoff, 'The Cultural Biography of Things', 66–67.

14 Kopytoff, 'The Cultural Biography of Things', 67–68.

study of the object, in which its material composition, shaping, traces of use and wear, additions, and alterations become important clues to its biography. Great importance is ascribed to the object's materiality.

Object biography is a long-established method, especially in archaeology and anthropology but also in art history and other disciplines. One of its strengths is its ability to give material concreteness to historical processes that are otherwise conceptualized in abstract, general terms. This book is thus concerned with the entangled histories of colonial exploitation and the emergence of museums: large and complex processes that become intelligible and concrete if subject to a close study of singular objects. By shedding light on the particular and specific, the object biography may thus counterbalance historical simplifications and generalizations, and bring out history's nuances, distinctions, obscurities, and contradictions. Another advantage of the method is that it resists the tendency to reduce the individual object to an illustration, or an example, of something supposedly more fundamental, such as human actions or conceptions. The object biography attaches value to the object, and often some agency or independence in relation to history's human agents. Imagined as protagonists of object biographies, the tomahawk and the other objects at the centre of this study do not appear passive objects for human actions, but agents in themselves, with the power to attract, to give rise to conflict or renegotiation, and to entice people into new ways of relating to their past and their present.

Like any scholarly method, object biography also has its pitfalls, one of which is that 'biography' is such a solidly established narrative form, governed by tacit assumptions. It typically presupposes a 'linear temporality', with significant events and occurrences in a person's life structured along a timeline with a clear beginning (birth) and end (death).¹⁵ Between them, the life is expected to be coherent, with a main thread of progress and maturity. Even if a more recent discussion of 'biography' has problematized these assumptions, it is still all too tempting to cast an object biography in the established mould, missing the fragmentary, the prolonged time gaps, and the lack of coherence that often characterize the trajectories of an object through time and space. Those aspects of an object that do not fit the mould, which appear strange and contradictory, might often be the ones most worth considering. Moreover, the fashion for metaphorically placing an object on a par with a human agent by using the word 'biography' may—apparently paradoxically—serve to sustain an anthropocentric perspective, implying that the object does not deserve attention until it is likened to a person.

15 For a critical discussion of 'object biography', see Nanouschka M. Burström, 'Things in the Eye of the Beholder: A Humanistic Perspective on Archaeological Object Biographies', *Norwegian Archaeological Review*, 47:1 (2014), 65–82 (on linear temporality, see particularly 77).

Rosemary Joyce and Susan Gillespie have proposed an alternative to ‘object biography’: ‘object itinerary’.¹⁶ The term itinerary suggests a more vaguely connected course of events, with fewer expectations of consistency and development than biography. An itinerary does not necessarily have a clear beginning and a definite goal. It is not inevitably coherent, and it might be interrupted by prolonged discontinuities. To talk of an object’s itinerary still offers a narrative structure. One may imagine how an object moves between different places, how it pauses and enters into relation with other objects and people along the route. Approaching the history of an object as an itinerary may also emphasize how the object not only *moves* through time and space, but that it also *produces* space and a series of spatial connections, like lines drawn on a map.

Thus I will now turn to two colonial objects: the tomahawk that first sparked my interest in the subject; and a *goavddis*, or ceremonial Sámi drum, which was among the objects lent by Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie to Johannes Schefferus in 1672. Here the ‘object itinerary’ forms a methodological and narrative framework, while Bennett’s ‘thing-power’ and ‘agentic assemblage’ have informed the theoretical approach. What I have taken from Bennett is the importance of being attentive and open-minded in the encounter with non-human materialities, and an acceptance that things or objects will elude capture by the scholar’s analytical, linguistic manoeuvres. As a scholar, I must accept there is always something resisting my understanding of an object, something that sidles away from my efforts to describe and interpret it. Any description or interpretation of a thing-materiality (or an assemblage of thing-materialities) is necessarily crude, incomplete, and fragmentary, no matter how attentive I am. The richness of an object will always exceed the scholar’s control and capacity to grasp, describe, and interpret it.

Finally, Bennett encourages the scholar to admit to moments of ‘methodological naiveté’ in the sensory encounter with objects and the materialities of the world; to ‘linger in those moments during which we find ourselves fascinated by objects, taking them as clues to the material vitality we share with them’.¹⁷ This is a hard, but beneficial, challenge for any scholar: to let go of the critical mindset and the ingrained analytical tools and, for a moment, give one’s full sensory attention to the object. It is only too easy to slip back into the linguistically comfortable subject–object binary, and other related binaries, such as human–non-human, nature–culture, active–passive. It can of course be argued this moment of ‘methodological naiveté’ and uncritical attention is just another analytical tool. However, I still think that it is worthwhile, that it may help us to reach a deeper understanding of the object and our relation to it.

16 Rosemary A. Joyce & Susan D. Gillespie, ‘Making Things out of Objects that Move’, in Rosemary A. Joyce & Susan D. Gillespie (eds.), *Things in Motion: Object Itineraries in Anthropological Practice* (Santa Fe, New Mexico: School for Advanced Research Press, 2015), 11–14.

17 Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 17.

6. From North America to *Nordamerika*: A Tomahawk

Abstract

This chapter traces the object itinerary of a tomahawk from its elusive origins on the North American east coast, via the armoury at Tre Kronor, the old royal palace in Stockholm, to its present location in the Museum of Ethnography in Stockholm. A careful examination of its shape and materiality proves that the tomahawk was a creole object from the outset, shaped and given meaning in a colonial contact zone. Where it is now in the museum, the tomahawk is an example of the desire of the Western world to collect and control, yet at the same time it manifests the power of a single object to wriggle free of given categorizations.

Keywords: tomahawk, wampum, art and concepts of art, ethnography, display, creole

In its present display in Stockholm, the tomahawk does not immediately stand out as a remarkable object. Placed at a low level on a simple wooden board, it is part of a miscellaneous assemblage of objects, images, and texts in a showcase dedicated to the encounters between Swedish colonizers and indigenous people in the mid-seventeenth century (Fig. 17). The display is part of *Nordamerika/Native Americans*, a permanent exhibition about Native North American culture and history, on the upper floor of the Museum of Ethnography (Etnografiska museet).¹ A short wall text points out the tomahawk's wampum inlay and suggests the iron blade might be later. The label relates this tomahawk to a similar object in the National Museum in Copenhagen, saying they might have a shared provenance in Nova Suecia, the Swedish colony established in 1638 at the mouth of the Delaware River.² By its

¹ Originally, the exhibition was called *Nordamerikas indianer* (North America's Indians) but recently the last word has been deleted, although it is still frequently used in the exhibition texts. Its English name, *The First Nations of North America*, has recently been changed to *Native Americans*. There is no exhibition catalogue, but there is an introduction online, <http://www.varldskulturmuseerna.se/en/etnografiskamuseet/exhibitions/current-exhibitions/native-americans/> (visited 8 May 2020).

² The exhibition texts are in Swedish and English. The full text for the tomahawk, transcribed 25 September 2019: 'Tomahawk pickaxe with inlay of shell (wampum). The iron blade is likely of a later date. It



Fig. 17. Display case in the exhibition *Nordamerika* including the tomahawk, Etnografiska museet, Stockholm. ↵

display and labelling, the museum thus frames the tomahawk as a material trace of a history of colonial encounter and exchange. Nothing about it encourages a sustained contemplation of the material and visual particularities of the object.

A museum visitor who takes the trouble to bend down and look closely at the tomahawk would notice it is an elaborately worked object, composed of a rich diversity of materials, each with its specific significance and qualities (Fig. 18). It consists of two principal elements: helve and blade. The helve, which measures about 44 cm, has a warm, reddish-brown tone and a dense grain, suggesting it was carved from a hard, durable piece of wood, possibly hickory.³ A bold curve at its upper end suggests vigour and motion, as if a forceful strike were inscribed in the very shape and materiality of the object. Originally, most of the helve's

was owned by Swedish kings Charles X (1622–1660) and Charles XI (1655–1697). At the National Museum in Copenhagen there is a similar tomahawk pickaxe which was owned by Friedrich III of Gottorp (1597–1659), whose daughter Hedvig Eleonora was married to Charles X. These tomahawk pickaxes can share a common story as to how they were acquired, possibly New Sweden, and in such case Lenape or Susquehannock'.

3 I am very grateful to Martin Schultz, curator of the North America collections at the Museum of Ethnography, for generously sharing his expertise on Native American material culture in general and the tomahawk in particular.



Fig. 18. The Tomahawk in its display case in *Nordamerika*, Etnografiska museet, Stockholm. ↩

surface would have been covered with wampum inlay: small, oblong shell beads, halved longitudinally, and used as tesserae to form a mosaic. Today, however, only fragments remain. Most of the surviving beads are off-white, probably originating from the shell of the channelled whelk, a large sea snail endemic to the American coast from Massachusetts to northern Florida. Interspersed among them are a few greenish glass beads.

The slender blade, forged of iron and with a length of about 33 cm, is symmetrically shaped with similar edges at both ends, like the blade of a pickaxe. Its surface is matt, with patches of rust, scratches, and notches suggesting wear and handling. Five symmetrically placed, straight indentations mark the centre of the blade. They make it evident that the blade is not centred on the helve. According to Martin Schultz, curator of the museum's North America collections, blade and helve are kept separately while in store.⁴ When putting it in place for the present exhibition, the museum deliberately chose not to insert the blade all the way, in order not to expose the old leather straps to excessive tension. Sensible as this decision might be, it nevertheless affects the visual impression of the object: in earlier photographs,

4 Personal communication with Martin Schultz about the tomahawk, 25 September 2019.

with the blade centrally placed, its overall shape appears more balanced and forceful.⁵ The separate storage of blade and helve might explain why both parts are similarly marked with the inventory number, written in capital letters with a white pen: 'LIVRUSTKAMMAREN 3932.131'. On the helve, the inscription is at the lower end; on the blade, it is in the centre, partly concealed by the helve.⁶

On the helve, traces of wampum inlay are not only found on its broader sides, but also on its thinner spine, including the upper side of the curved end where the blade is fastened. Given the symbolic and exchange value historically attached to wampum by indigenous cultures in the eastern parts of North America, it would not have been used on a surface not meant to be seen, which makes it reasonable to assume that the blade is secondary.⁷ This assumption is further strengthened when one looks at the holes for the leather thongs by which the blade is fastened, bored straight through wampum beads, which would be an improbable way of treating wampum among indigenous artists or craftsmen in the seventeenth century. Another leather thong is fastened to a hole towards the lower end of the helve, in a smoothly polished section with no traces of wampum. A tassel of red-dyed deer hair is attached to the thong, held together with a thin braid. Upon close inspection, the leather thongs do not seem to come from the same hide: the pale thong at the lower end might be made of rawhide from bison, while the thongs that keep the blade in place look like pigskin. The difference suggests that the leather thongs did not belong to the same phase of the tomahawk's early social life.

A careful look at the tomahawk thus indicates a complex history of creation and transformation. One could tentatively distinguish between a first phase of carving the helve and decorating it with wampum, and a second phase of attaching the blade to the helve. The leather thong with the tassel of deer's hair might be part of the first phase, or it might constitute a phase of its own between the other two. The first phase (with the possible addition of the thong with the tassel) involves materials available along the North American east coast, and techniques used by North American artists and craftsmen before they encountered European traders and colonizers. The second phase includes forged iron, a material and technique not part of North American material culture before contact. It might seem reasonable to assume a first phase of Native American crafting and artistry, uninfluenced by European contact, and a second phase marked by colonial interference; however, such a clear distinction between before and after colonization is blurred by the presence of green glass beads. Glass did not form part of the material culture of

5 Compare Fig. 19, where the blade is centred.

6 'Livrustkammaren' is the Swedish name for the royal armoury, thus indicating the previous location of the tomahawk.

7 For the value of wampum, see p. 42, 106–107.

pre-contact Native North Americans, but was introduced in the sixteenth century by European fur traders and fishermen along the North American east coast. The glass beads on the helve of the tomahawk thus indicate a transcultural material exchange throughout the whole process of its coming into being.⁸ In fact, even the white wampum beads used to decorate the tomahawk suggest a colonial encounter—cylindrical beads of this kind were difficult to produce without metal drills, a tool that was not available before contact.⁹

In the seventeenth century, a great variety of striking weapons were produced and used by Native North Americans.¹⁰ Stone and wood were the most common materials, before the introduction of iron by European traders and colonizers. Sometimes antler was used. The differences between the types of weapons were fluid, as was the terminology. ‘Tomahawk’, a word derived from the Algonquian languages spoken in the eastern parts of the continent, and introduced in the English language in the seventeenth century, could refer to an axe-like weapon and tool, but also to a variety of clubs. A common type was the ball-headed club, made of hard wood and consisting of a helve with a curved upper end and a ball to strike with.¹¹ Sometimes helve and ball were carved in one piece; sometimes the ball was attached to the curved end of the helve. Balls could also be made of stone. It has been suggested that the object under discussion here might originally have been a helve of a ball-headed club—before the attachment of the blade, that is.¹² Assuredly, the shape of the helve is similar to the helve of many ball-headed clubs, but there are no traces that a ball was ever fastened to it. Colin F. Taylor proposes the existence of an early tomahawk with a stone blade attached to a helve with a rawhide cord, and suggests that the Stockholm and Copenhagen tomahawks might be two rare examples—in the Stockholm case with an imagined original stone blade eventually replaced by the present iron blade.¹³ However, the fact that the upper side of the Stockholm helve has traces of wampum inlay speaks against it.

8 Janet C. Berlo and Ruth B. Phillips criticize the clear-cut distinction made by Western scholars of Native North American history and culture between a ‘prehistoric’ period preceding European colonization and a period marked by the colonial encounter. Native North American culture, they claim, could better be understood as a continuous history of encounters, exchange, and adaptation, even if European colonization was a particularly violent and traumatic encounter. See Janet C. Berlo & Ruth B. Phillips, *Native North American Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 1998, 4.

9 Margaret M. Bruchac, ‘Broken Chains of Custody: Possessing, Dispossessing, and Repossessing Lost Wampum Belts’, 162:1 (2018) 59–60, n. 7; Ruth B. Phillips, ‘Shell Suits’, *Apollo*, 66 (2021), 69.

10 Colin F. Taylor, *Native American Weapons* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 12–35.

11 Taylor, *Native American Weapons*, 14–18.

12 Staffan Brunius, ‘In the Light of the New Sweden Colony. Notes on Swedish Pre-1800 Ethnographic Collections from Northeastern North America’, *Native American Studies*, 21:2 (2007), 36.

13 Taylor, *Native American Weapons*, 9, 18–20.

Yet another possibility is that the helve originally constituted a striking weapon in its own right, with no ball or blade. If so, this example would not conform to the more frequent, better-known types of weapons, but admittedly there was a wide variety of striking weapons among Native North Americans.¹⁴

A close inspection of the tomahawk thus raises as many questions as it answers. The exact historical circumstances of the shaping of the helve and the attaching of the blade will probably remain shrouded in mystery. A few things can be stated, though. First, the shape and materials point to the tomahawk having originated on the eastern coast of North America. Second, certain elements, such as the green glass beads and the iron blade, are clear indications of contact with European traders and colonizers. Third, the wampum inlay that originally covered most of the helve suggests that the tomahawk had a high social, symbolic, and aesthetic value. Wampum was produced on the east coast and frequently used in the eastern parts of North America long before the encounter with Europeans in the sixteenth century. It was used for decoration and ornamentation, often as a manifestation of the wearer's social status. It was also used on key ritual occasions such as gift-giving, diplomatic interaction, healing practices, and burial ceremonies. In the seventeenth century, wampum came to play an important role as a currency in the long-distance trade between indigenous communities and between Native Americans and European colonizers.¹⁵

To sum things up, the tomahawk seems to have begun its social life somewhere on the North American east coast. Deeply rooted in an indigenous tradition of artistic artisanship, it was also inscribed in a world of cultural contact and transfer from the very beginning, as manifested by the green glass beads on its helve. Against that background, it is reasonable to date the object to the period of early contact, roughly the late sixteenth century or the first decades of the seventeenth century. At an early stage in its social life, the tomahawk became more deeply involved in colonial encounters, as manifested by its iron blade. But what kind of object was it before it became colonized? What kinds of practices did it form part of? On what occasions was it used? Given its abundant wampum inlay, it was probably an object valued for its symbolic and aesthetic significance at least as much as for its practical use. Or, to follow Janet C. Berlo and Ruth B. Phillips, the tomahawk might have been useful precisely *because* of its elaborate crafting and precious materials, lending it

14 Martin Schultz suggests this possibility (Personal communication about the tomahawk, 25 September 2019).

15 Wampum or *wampumpeag*, introduced into the English language in the seventeenth century, derived from the Algonquian language group. For the meaning and value of wampum, see Bruchac, 'Broken Chains of Custody'; Paul Otto, 'Wampum, Tawagonshi, and the Two Row Belt', *Journal of Early American History*, 3:1 (2013), 110–125; Gunlög Fur, *Colonialism in the Margins: Cultural Encounters in New Sweden and Lapland*, (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 161–164.

a capacity to attract the eye and focus attention, and to enhance the efficacy of a ritual occasion.¹⁶ Imagined as part of a burial—a ceremonial occasion that could have involved an object like the tomahawk and precious material like wampum—it would have been a visually and materially efficacious manifestation of the power and courage of a dead warrior leader.¹⁷ The richly decorated tomahawk would then have played a role similar to many European artworks of the same period, as a meaningful and meaning-making object actuated in a social and ritual context.

Should the tomahawk be approached as a work of art? In their survey of *Native North American Art*, Berlo and Phillips point out the ethnocentrism implied in the concept of ‘art’ as it ‘imposes a Western dichotomy [art versus non-art] on things made by people who do not make the same categorical distinction and whose own criteria for evaluating objects have often differed considerably’.¹⁸ Yet they go ahead and use ‘art’ nevertheless, tentatively defining it as ‘an object whose form is elaborated to provide visual and tactile pleasure and to enhance its rhetorical power as a visual representation’.¹⁹ Whether or not the tomahawk should be understood as a work of art remains an open question, but if nothing else it matches Berlo and Phillips’ definition.²⁰

Before continuing with the tomahawk’s itinerary, an alternative beginning should be noted. It cannot be excluded that it was produced for a European market from the very beginning. Ruth B. Phillips has shown that the specialized production of souvenirs was an established practice among indigenous people in the north-east of America by the early eighteenth century.²¹ The outfit adorned with wampum commissioned by Johan Printz, governor of the Swedish colony, and produced by indigenous craftspersons or artists around 1650 was an even earlier example of that practice.²² If that was also the case with the tomahawk, it would make it a colonial object at the time of its inception and production. The borders should not be too strictly drawn, however. It is perhaps enough to state that the tomahawk began its social life in a colonial contact zone, even if it might have been an object with specific ritual meaning and aesthetic value in a specific indigenous context. And even if it were an example of the early souvenir trade in north-eastern America,

16 Berlo & Phillips, *Native North American Art*, 7, with further reference to Warren d’Azevedo, ‘A Structural Approach to Esthetics: Toward a Definition of Art in Anthropology’, *American Anthropologist*, New Series, 60:4 (1958), 702–714.

17 It was a common practice to bury a tomahawk with its late owner, which in this case might account for the loss of wampum on the helve.

18 Berlo & Phillips, *Native North American Art*, 7–8.

19 Berlo & Phillips, *Native North American Art*, 7.

20 For the question of ‘art’ in relation to colonial objects, see below, p. 169–181.

21 Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities: The Souvenir in Native North American Art from the Northeast, 1700–1900* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998).

22 See above, p. 42–43.

its shape and materials still relate it to indigenous social and ritual practices and systems of value.

On 12 March 1686, the tomahawk was mentioned in an inventory of objects in 'Hans Kongl. mayt:s Lilla RustCammare' (His Royal Majesty's small armoury) at Tre Kronor, the royal palace in Stockholm.²³ There it was, among firearms, rapiers, armour, saddles, coaches, tournament paraphernalia, royal clothing, bearskins, antlers, and diverse diplomatic gifts from near and far: '1 Indiansk hacka, skafftet inlagdt medh blå och hwijta steenar, hwar av een stor Deel uthfallne' (One Indian hatchet, the helve inlaid with blue and white stones, many of which have fallen out). How did the tomahawk end up in the royal armoury in Stockholm, over 6,000 kilometres from its probable place of origin? The fast answer would be to refer to the increasing desire for faraway objects among European elites, which owed much to Europe's global colonial expansion.²⁴ In the seventeenth century, there was a well-developed market for non-European artefacts and natural objects in Europe. A Swedish royal collector could well have purchased an artefact of American origin, or it could have been presented to the Swedish court as a gift.

Given its unique design and material character, however, it seems less likely that the tomahawk was part of the flow of mainstream exotica circulating among European trading centres and eager collectors. Even if over thirty years had elapsed between Sweden's loss of its North American colony in 1655 and the first mention of the tomahawk in Stockholm in 1686, there are indications of a direct link. Johan Printz, governor of Nova Suecia (1643–1653), showed an interest in Native American material culture, and his letters home often referred to objects he had acquired or objects he wanted to present as gifts to his Swedish patrons.²⁵ After Printz's death in 1663, his heirs presented some of his property to his key patron, Per Brahe the Younger. Among these gifts was 'en yxa med indianiske penningar skaftet inlagt' (an axe, its helve inlaid with Indian money—meaning wampum), which was

23 Slottsarkivet (Royal Palace Archives), Stockholm, Inventarium Livrustkammaren, 1683: 2–5, 'Inventarium på än vidare inkombne Saker I RustCammaren, af Häffintendenten Sahl: H: Zachris Renberg underskrifvit d. 12 Martij 1686', 266. The inventory is an addendum to the main inventory of 1683, registering objects that had been added to the armoury between 1683 and 1686.

24 See above, p. 31–32, 35–36. See also Elke Bujok, *Neue Welten in europäischen Sammlungen: Africana und Americana in Kunstkammern bis 1670* (Berlin: Reimer, 2004); Dominik Collet, *Die Welt in der Stube: Außereuropa in Kunstkammern der Frühen Neuzeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007); Anne Gerritsen & Giorgio Riello, *The Global Lives of Things: The Material Culture of Connections in the Early Modern World* (London: Routledge, 2016); Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

25 Johan Printz's letters to his patron Per Brahe the Younger are in Riksarkivet (the Swedish National Archives), Skoklostersamlingen II, E 8160. English translations of many of the letters are published in Amandus Johnson, *The Instruction for Johan Printz, Governor of New Sweden* (Philadelphia: The Swedish Colonial Society, 1930). For Printz, see above, p. 39–44.

signed for by Brahe's castellan Lars Jonsson Lagerberg in March 1664 and placed in the armoury at Visingsborg, Brahe's residence in southern Sweden.²⁶ It is more than likely from the description, which is relatively detailed, that this referred to the tomahawk. Johan Printz would have acquired it during his ten years' in residence at the mouth of the Delaware River. The indigenous communities with which he and other Swedish colonizers had close contact were the Lenape and the Susquehannock, and hence it is reasonable to look for the origins of the tomahawk among them. The question remains if the blade was a secondary addition by an indigenous owner or user, before Printz acquired the tomahawk, or if the attachment of the blade formed part of the colonization of the object. It is known that two blacksmiths lived in the Swedish colony in Printz's time.²⁷ Either way, the blade must have been attached by March 1664 or Lagerberg would not have described it as 'en yxa' (an axe).

The tomahawk again appeared in an inventory of the Visingsborg armoury in 1667, this time with the terse description 'Indianisk hammar' (Indian hammer). The inventory also listed other objects of American origin, such as a 'wästindisk Sänge täke af fieder medh andre westindiska saker' (West Indian quilt made of feathers with other West Indian things), or an 'Indianisk Fisk' (Indian fish), alongside objects from other distant parts of the world, such as a 'Tijger hudh' (tiger skin) and a 'Japponisk kniv' (Japanese knife).²⁸ Objects like these could be expected in the collections of an aristocrat in Sweden in the second half of the seventeenth century. There is reason to believe that Per Brahe took a particular interest in faraway places, though, not least America. His letters to Printz indicate his involvement in the Swedish colony.²⁹ Further, in 1666, he founded a printing works close to his residence, with Johann Kankel from Swedish Pomerania as the printer. Among its fifty or so known publications are Nils Matsson Kiöping's description of a journey to Africa and Asia, published in 1667, and *Kort berättelse om Wäst Indien eller America*, a description of 'West India or America', translated into Swedish and published in 1675.³⁰

26 Lars Jonsson Lagerberg's letters to Per Brahe are published in Ingrid Larsson Haglund & Lars Jonsson Lagerberg, *Högvälborne greve, nådigaste herre: En studie av Lars Jonsson Lagerbergs brev till Per Brahe den yngre åren 1643-1675* (Visingsö: Ateljé Lovisa, 2010). For the letter referred to here, see p. 90.

27 Brunius, 'In the Light of the New Sweden Colony', 36, referring to Amandus Johnson, *The Swedish Settlements on the Delaware: Their History and Relation to the Indians, Dutch and English 1638-64* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1911).

28 Livrustkammarens arkiv (Archives of the Royal Armoury), Stockholm, F 5AFB: 4, Vapensamlingar övriga gods och egendommar.

29 See above, p. 39-41.

30 Nils Matsson Kiöping, *Een kort beskriffning uppå trenne reesor och peregrinationer, samt konungariket Japan* (Wijsingsborgh, 1667); *Kort berättelse om Wäst Indien eller America, som elliest kallas Nya Werlden*, Ambrosius Svenonis Nidelberg (transl.) (Visingsborg: Johan Kankel, 1675).

Nothing is known about the tomahawk's transfer from Per Brahe's armoury at Visingsborg in southern Sweden to the royal armoury in Stockholm. As already noted, gift-giving was central to the client–patron system which characterized seventeenth-century Swedish society, involving the continual circulation of rare and precious objects between *Kunstammern* and other spaces for collecting and display. One can easily imagine that the tomahawk was presented to the Swedish king by Per Brahe after 1667, or by his heirs after his death in 1680. Once in the royal armoury it became part of a collection that dated back to the early sixteenth century.³¹ Originally a store of arms and armour for the king and his troops, the armoury had gradually been transformed into a museum of royal history. A decisive step in that direction was taken in the 1630s, when clothes worn by Gustav II Adolf on the battlefields of Europe were put on display in the armoury, 'to eternal remembrance'.³² Rather than storing it for potential future use, the bloodstained clothing became objects to display, dedicated to the memory of the king's martial prowess and his glorious death at the Battle of Lützen in 1632. In the last decades of the seventeenth century, Swedish colonial and imperial ambitions were evident in the armoury. The tomahawk came to share space with objects such as a hatchet from South America, with a wooden helve and a stone blade, and the assemblage of artefacts and natural objects related to Sámi culture discussed in Chapter 3.³³ Originating from separate parts of the world, arriving in the royal collections with different itineraries, these objects formed a new assemblage that called attention to the wide reach of Swedish royal power, and its supposed knowledge and control of the most distant parts of the world.

In that way, the tomahawk and other objects from far away, and the wealth of colonial images and texts, had an active part in the formation of a colonialist, imperialist worldview in late seventeenth-century Sweden. A text of particular interest in this context is the travel account by Per Lindheström, a Swedish officer who served in the kingdom's North American colony in its final years before it was lost to the Dutch Republic in 1655. Much later, in 1691, Lindheström presented a fair copy of his travel notes to the heir to the Swedish throne, the future Charles XII, illustrated with his own drawings.³⁴ Proximity was established between the

31 For the history of the royal armoury, see Rudolf Cederström & Gösta Malmberg, *Den äldre livrustkammaren 1654* (Stockholm: Nordiska bokhandeln, 1930).

32 Council minutes of 13 November 1633, quoted in Cederström & Malmberg, *Den äldre livrustkammaren*, xiii: 'Kläderna beläggande uti vilka Sal: Kungl. Maj:t blev skuten i Preussen, de skole efter Sal. Kungl. Maj:ts egen befallning här uti Rustkammaren till en evig åminnelse förvarade bliva'.

33 The South American hatchet, Etnografiska museet, inv. no. 9000.01.1061. The Sámi assemblage is still in the armoury, Livrustkammaren inv. numbers 20629–20635 (27:201); 21449–21451 (27:201); 29572–29574 (27:201); 33396 (27:201). For the Sámi assemblage, see p. 64–67.

34 Per Lindheström, 'Geographia Americae eller Indiae Occidentalis Beskrifffningh' (1691). The manuscript in Riksarkivet (the Swedish National Archives), Stockholm, is published in Per Lindeström, *Resa till nya Sverige* (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, [1691] 1962); and in an English translation in Per Lindeström,

tomahawk and the text, as both were located in Tre Kronor, the symbolic and actual centre of Swedish royal power.

In his dedication to the crown prince, Lindheström emphasized the importance of geography, or knowledge of the world, and its ability to shed light on the hidden secrets of the Holy Scriptures. Geography, in Lindheström's understanding, was not only about topography and landscape, but also about the riches of the world such as animals, plants, minerals 'och andre nyttige och onyttige ting' (and other useful and unuseful things), and people's customs and practices.³⁵ And, Lindheström continued, this knowledge of the world was directly connected to the colonial enterprise. It was Sweden's establishment of an American colony that had brought it new knowledge of that distant land and its hard-won natural resources and people.³⁶ Lindheström thus voiced an inseparable relation between Christianity, knowledge, and colonialism. Further, he established a strong connection between knowledge and objects. His enumeration of the minerals, plants, animals, and other objects can be read as a textual parallel to the *Kunstkammer*. An object like the tomahawk would for Lindheström be a proof of God's Creation, the evidence of a foreign culture, and a manifestation of Swedish colonial power.

Lindheström's account begins with his journey from Sweden and the defence of the Swedish colony against repeated attacks by the Dutch, followed by a detailed description of the indigenous people, discussing their social order, customs, and religious beliefs. One chapter is devoted to their art and craft:

They cannot write or read, nor do any other work like the Christians, such as spin, weave, sew or carve. But their work consists in neatly working [objects] by drawing, painting, and glazes. [...] They also make very neat tobacco pipes, the pipe bowls decorated with all kinds of birds and animals, beautifully painted and glazed. There are also beautiful colours of all kinds, which one can experience in their neat and artistically painted work of bird feathers, tobacco pipes, and more.³⁷

Geographia Americae: With an Account of the Delaware Indians Based on Surveys and Notes Made in 1654-1656, transl. Amandus Johnson (Philadelphia: The Swedish Colonial Society, 1925). Note the inconsistent spelling of Lindheström's surname. In the twentieth-century editions of his travel accounts it is spelled Lindeström.

35 Lindeström, *Resa till Nya Sverige*, 14.

36 Lindeström, *Resa till Nya Sverige*; 15.

37 Lindeström, *Resa till Nya Sverige*, 127: Skriva eller läsa kunna de intet, ej heller något annat arbete att göra som de kristne såsom spinna, väva, sy et tälja. Utan deres arbete går ut på nått bearbetande med ritande, målände och glaserande. [...] Tobakspipor göra de ock mycket nåtte med allehanda slags fåglar och djur i pipehuvuden, mycket skönt målände och glaserade. Där finnes ock sköne coleurer av allehanda slag, som man kan erfara av deres nåtte och konstige målände arbete med fågelfjädrar, tobakspipor och mera sådant.

That Lindheström spent a third of his account describing the indigenous Americans suggests a keen interest in the topic, on his part and his potential readers—royalty among them. His description is marked by ambivalence, constantly shifting from depreciation (they cannot master Christian European techniques) to appreciation (they have superb decorative skills and colours). The text is grounded in rhetorical contrasts: Native Americans are described as idolatrous and brown, Europeans as pious and white. In a very concrete way Lindheström's text thus joined in the constructing of distinction and otherness. Sweden was then part of a Europe about to fashion its own identity not merely as a geographical territory, but also as a culture held together by shared cultural and religious values. And this process, in turn, was closely related to the exploration and colonization of the Americas. The Old World needed a New World in order to be clearly distinguishable. Europe shaped itself as the centre, relative to the periphery of its overseas colonies. Part of the process of European self-fashioning, the tomahawk on display in the royal armoury was a metonym, evoking the image of the heathen, brown American, while, by extension, calling up the image of the Christian, white European as its diametric opposite. By displaying the tomahawk with objects from other continents, the Swedish king claimed his place right at the centre, with the right—and obligation—to organize and systematize the world, and to collect and display other people's objects. The very act of displaying the tomahawk could thus be understood as a metonym for the act of ordering and taking control of the world.

This line of argument should not be taken too far, however, because the rhetorical structure of the royal collections seems to have differed from the rhetorical structure of Lindheström's text. Where the latter was built on contrasts and binaries, the former was instead characterized by open juxtapositions and fluid borders between different objects. Natural objects were juxtaposed with cultural artefacts; arms and armour for serious warfare were mixed with tournament props and masquerade costumes; European objects were displayed next to objects from the farthest corners of the world. And that suggests the meaning of the tomahawk did not really reside in fixed dichotomies such as centre–periphery or self–other. No doubt the tomahawk and other similar objects in the royal armoury were part of the performance of identities, which saw one or many selves tried out in contrast to a variety of others; and the seventeenth century saw the emergence in Europe of a sense of superiority and of its centrality relative to various peripheries. But still, the exuberant and labyrinthine displays of Swedish and European armouries and *Kunstkammer* evoke a conception of a world more enigmatic, unfixed, and fluid than in the centuries to come.

The eighteenth century was a quiet phase. The tomahawk was still in the royal armoury collections, but its power of attraction seems to have decreased, and its web of relations to other objects and humans was waning. There is no sign in the archives

of it having been transferred, or handled or used, and there are no visible traces on the object itself after the iron blade was added, presumably before March 1664. The next stage of the tomahawk's itinerary began in 1888 when it was deposited at the Museum of Natural History (Naturhistoriska riksmuseet) in Stockholm. It was probably at this point it was labelled 'LIVRUSTKAMMAREN 3932.131' on the helve and blade, stating its continued formal belonging to the royal armoury. It should be noted that the transfer of the tomahawk coincided with the 250th anniversary of the founding of Nova Suecia, which was celebrated in both Sweden and America.³⁸ A connection between the celebration of Swedish colonial history and the renewed activity of the tomahawk cannot be excluded.

The Museum of Natural History, founded in 1819, was based on the collections of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences (Kungl. Vetenskapsakademien), which dated to the first half of the eighteenth century and comprised natural history specimens from near and far, but also artefacts from non-European cultures.³⁹ This was typical of natural history museums in the nineteenth century, suggesting that non-European artefacts were classified as objects of nature rather than constituting a category of their own. Still today, many Western museums of natural history display ethnographic objects next to natural history specimens; one example is the American Museum of Natural History in New York, where the visitor crosses the 'Sanford Hall of North American Birds' and the 'Hall of Primates' gallery to reach the 'Eastern Woodlands Indians' exhibit.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, 'ethnography' took clearer shape as a scholarly field and as a category of museum objects. The idea of an ethnographic museum in Stockholm was launched in the 1860s, but it took until 1900 for the ethnographic department to be founded at the Museum of Natural History.⁴⁰ In 1930, the ethnographic collections were installed in an existing building in Norra Djurgården, the old royal hunting grounds east of the city. Five years later, in 1935, the National Museum of Ethnography (Statens etnografiska museum) was founded as an independent institution, and in 1980 the present museum opened on the same site in Norra Djurgården.⁴¹ Today, the tomahawk forms part of the

38 For anniversaries and celebrations of the Swedish colony, see Adam Hjorthén, *Cross-Border Commemorations: Celebrating Swedish Settlement in America* (Amherst & Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2018). Hjorthén focuses on twentieth-century celebrations.

39 See Gunnar Broberg, 'The Swedish Museum of Natural History', in Tore Frängsmyr (ed.), *Science in Sweden: The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences 1739-1989* (Canton, MA: Science History Publications, U.S.A., 1989); Jenny Beckman, *Naturens palats: Nybyggnad, vetenskap och utställning vid Naturhistoriska riksmuseet 1866-1924* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 1999).

40 Beckman, *Naturens palats*, 142.

41 The name of the museum has changed over the years. From 1966, it was Etnografiska museet (the Museum of Ethnography). In 1988, it was renamed Folkens Museum Etnografiska (the Peoples' Museum of Ethnography). As of 2001, it is again Etnografiska museet.

museum's collection of 220,000 objects, most from outside Europe. A few other objects have a similarly long history in Swedish collections, such as the South American hatchet mentioned above and a knife of African origin that once formed part of Hedwig Eleonora's collection (see above, Fig. 4).⁴² Most of them, however, have a much shorter history as colonial objects, having been bought, received as gifts or in exchange, or simply taken by Swedish scholars, explorers, traders, and missionaries in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth—that is, the heyday of colonial collecting in Europe.

Gathered in the display spaces and stores of the Museum of Ethnography, all these diverse things are institutionally defined as ethnographic objects. Throughout the twentieth century, that meant that they were regarded and displayed as material traces of spatially and/or temporally distant cultures.⁴³ As an ethnographic object, the tomahawk had value by dint of informing museum visitors and scholars about a long-lost indigenous culture on the North American east coast. This is how it was still displayed in the early twenty-first century, with other objects of Native North American origin, and with wall texts and maps explaining where they were typically produced and how they were used. Any historical dimension was downplayed, the tomahawk and the other objects belonging to an indefinite past tense.

The years around 2000 saw sweeping changes in museum systems in Sweden and across the Western world. As of 1999, the Museum of Ethnography is one of the National Museums of World Culture (Statens museer för världskultur), a government agency under the Swedish Ministry of Culture, with a mission to 'showcase and bring to life the cultures of the world, particularly those originating outside of Sweden', and to 'document and illuminate the conditions and forms of expressions of other cultures and interaction between cultures and cultural variation'.⁴⁴ The words 'interaction' and 'variation' deserve particular attention as

42 The knife, inventory number LRK 24177, is listed in the inventories of the Royal Armoury in 1696 as a gift from Hedwig Eleonora. See Wilhelm Östberg (ed.), *Med världen i kappsäcken: Samlingarnas väg till Etnografiska museet* (Stockholm: Etnografiska museet, 2002), 22. See above, p. 56–57 and Fig. 4.

43 For a short period in the mid-twentieth century, the term primitive art (primitiv konst) was launched as an alternative to ethnography, highlighting the formal and artistic aspects of the objects. See Sigvald Linné & Gösta Montell (eds.), *Primitiv konst: Konst och konsthantverk hos primitiva folk* (Stockholm: Aktiebolaget Bokverk, 1947), an ambitious collaboration by ethnographic museums in Stockholm and Gothenburg; Hans Eklund, *Primitiv konst* (Stockholm: Riksförbundet för bildande konst & Statens etnografiska museum, 1953), a catalogue for a travelling exhibition. Both these publications paid little attention to Native North American objects compared to objects from Central America, West Africa, and South East Asia. The tomahawk is not mentioned in any of them.

44 See Sveriges Riksdag (Swedish Parliament), 'Förordning (2007:1185) med instruktion för Statens museer för världskultur', https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/forordning-20071185-med-instruktion-for_sfs-2007-1185 (visited 1 December 2020). Besides the Museum of Ethnography, the new government agency consists of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities (Östasiatiska

they suggest a new direction, away from the established practice at ethnographic museums of displaying non-Western cultures as static and largely untouched by cultural influences from outside. At much the same time a self-critical mode gained momentum, as Western museums revisited their own roles in the narratives told by their exhibitions.⁴⁵ An example was *Med världen i kappsäcken/With the World in a Backpack*, a large, high-profile exhibition at the Museum of Ethnography that opened in 2002 to show ‘what some Swedish travellers and explorers brought back from their journeys and how their findings were communicated to the people back home’.⁴⁶ The museum trained a spotlight on the questions of acquisition and provenance—issues that have become increasingly pressing in recent years. The tomahawk and other objects of Native North American origin that formed part of the new exhibition, were torn between two distinct, partly contradictory, narratives: the traditional twentieth-century narrative of non-Western cultures as pure and static, surrounded by fixed borders; and a new, self-reflective narrative, taking the objects and the ways they were acquired as a point of departure for an ethical discussion of the Western history of collecting. In the former narrative, the museum is an invisible conveyor of supposedly neutral facts about foreign cultures; in the latter, the museum takes centre stage as an important agent in the shaping of conceptions of the world. As for the tomahawk, its connection to the second narrative was rather tenuous because so little is known about the first stages of its social life, and was limited to a wall text explaining its early acquisition and display in the royal armoury in Stockholm.

Yet the tomahawk seemed to float beyond the reach of both these narratives. Displayed in splendid isolation in a showcase lined with green fabric, beautifully arranged and strikingly lit, and with wall texts and labels discreetly placed far away from the object, it stood out as a singular instance of artistic creativity. The aesthetic

museet), the Museum of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Antiquities (Medelhavsmuseet), and the Museum of World Culture (Världskulturmuseet).

45 Generally speaking, the self-critical mode or turn can be related to what Simon Sheikh has proposed calling the third wave of institutional critique in the art world. While the first and second waves, in the 1960s and the 1980s, were pursued by artists and directed against institutions, the third wave, in the 1990s, was staged by the art institutions themselves, and their directors and curators, and institutional critique was internalized by the institutions. See Gerald Raunig & Gene Ray (eds.), *Art and Contemporary Critical Practice: Reinventing Institutional Critique* (London: MayFly, 2009), in particular the contribution by Sheikh, ‘Notes on Institutional Critique’, p. 29–32. Fred Wilson’s exhibition *Mining the Museum* at the Maryland Historical Society in 1992 was a decisive moment in the self-critical turn, but also a case that blurred the borders between the three waves defined by Sheikh. Wilson personified the artist criticizing the institution, yet acted at the invitation of the institution. See Fred Wilson, *Mining the Museum: An Installation* (Baltimore: Contemporary, 1994); Fred Wilson, *Fred Wilson: A Critical Reader* (London: Ridinghouse, 2011).

46 Museum of Ethnography, <https://www.etnografiskamuseet.se/en/exhibitions/with-the-world-in-a-backpack/> (visited 1 December 2020).



Fig. 19. Tomahawk, displayed 2002–2008 in the exhibition *Med världen i kappsäcken*, Etnografiska museet, Stockholm. ↵

mode was further emphasized in the photograph in the book that accompanied the exhibition of 2002, by means of the drastic foreshortening of the helve, and the studied carelessness with which the tomahawk's blade is cropped by the edge of the photograph (Fig. 19). Obviously, the photograph's agenda was not to account for the visual and material characteristics of the object, but to underline its artistic power of attraction.

In 2008, the tomahawk was moved upstairs in the museum, and incorporated into the new permanent exhibition *Nordamerika/Native Americans*, where it is still on display.⁴⁷ Compared to the previous display, the object's aesthetic dimension is downplayed, and so is the self-reflexive mode. On the other hand, the historical context is pronounced, and the exhibition evokes a sense of time and change, from the pre-Columbian era, through the centuries of colonization, until our own time. The tomahawk is in a showcase dedicated to the encounter between Swedish colonizers and Native North Americans in the seventeenth century, and part of an assemblage of diverse objects, such as weapons, fishing tackle, dress details and ornaments of Native American origin; a model of a ship that brought the Swedish colonizers to

47 In February 2022.

America in the 1630s; and copies of portraits of the two Lenape chiefs Lapowinse and Tishcohan, painted in 1735 by the Swedish-born painter Gustaf Hesselius (see above, Fig. 17).⁴⁸ This juxtaposition of Native American objects with objects of Swedish origin, and of original objects with modern copies and reconstructions, is designed to convey a narrative rather than bringing out the material and visual particularities of each object. The tomahawk, so emphasized by display devices in the preceding exhibition, is easily overlooked at a low level on a simple wooden board.

On a plinth beneath the tomahawk and the other objects, a wealth of texts and images describe the Swedish colonial enterprise in North America, in a tone characteristic of a public museum: simultaneously uncommitted and authoritative, without an evident author, as if the facts speak for themselves. The enterprise is framed as a cultural exchange rather than an instance of colonial violence, a tendency evident in the description of the anniversaries of the founding of *Nova Suecia*: 'The New Sweden Jubilees in 1888, 1938 and 1988 involved the royal family and the business world, museums and researchers. The cultural diplomatic contacts between the USA and Sweden have indeed increased during the jubilee years'.⁴⁹ Although many ethnographic museums in recent years have spoken more frankly about their colonial legacy, as part of the self-reflexive turn, this way of downplaying, even concealing, colonial violence and oppression is still prevalent. Next to the label about the anniversaries is a photograph of three smiling women standing close together, captioned 'Crown Princess Victoria of Sweden with members of the Lenape tribe in 2003 during the 365th jubilee of the founding of the New Sweden Colony' (Fig. 20). One of the women in the photograph thus has a name, a title, and a social position, while the other two are nameless representatives of an ethnic group. This is another common trait in ethnographic display. No matter if the colonizer-explorer is framed as a hero, as in the typical early twentieth-century display, or exposed to criticism, as is more common in recent years: it is still the colonizer who takes centre stage. In a similar manner, the tomahawk has been reduced to an example of Swedish colonial collecting. The wall text about the object presents the names and dates of no fewer than three royal Swedish collectors, and one German, before mentioning that it might have been acquired from the 'Lenape or Susquehannock'. In that way, the tomahawk is given little chance to speak for itself, or to say anything about its possible origin and originators.

These might seem marginal oversights, easily corrected by updating the museum labels and rearranging objects. However, they should rather be understood as symptoms of a more fundamental issue: the entanglement of ethnographic museums in the European colonial project, so complete as to remain invisible. To narrate

48 The originals are in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania collections.

49 This and the following wall text were transcribed 25 September 2019.

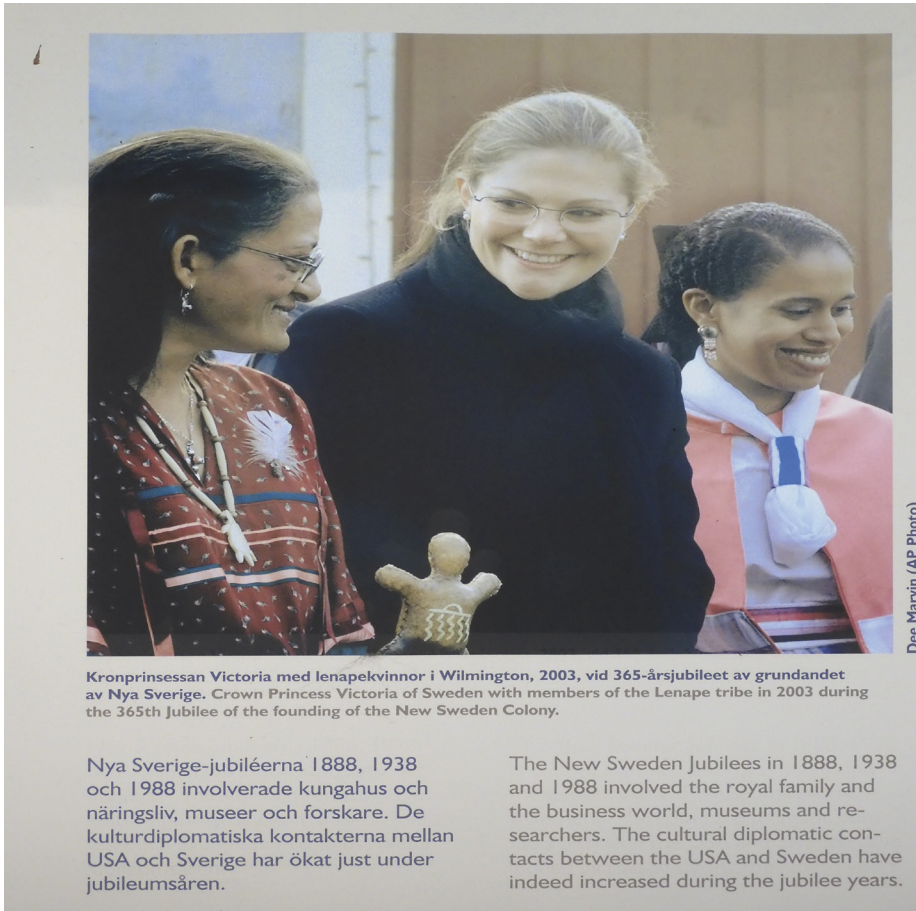


Fig. 20. Photograph and text next to the tomahawk in *Nordamerika*, Etnografiska museet, Stockholm. ↵

the history of colonialism, as in *Nordamerika*, is not automatically to acknowledge or problematize one's own part in that history. As long as Western museums do not get to the bottom of their colonial past and present, they will not be able to contribute to the questioning and destabilizing of a colonial hierarchy of objects. And the tomahawk will continue to be reduced to either a remnant of a long-lost culture or an example of colonial collecting.

In essence, a tomahawk as we know it, with wooden helve and iron blade, was from the outset a creole object, an instance of the crossing of Native American aesthetics, ritual, and warfare with the European technique of forging metal. And the particular tomahawk in Stockholm seems involved in an even more complex narrative of colonial encounters and clashes. How did the green glass beads become part of the wampum mosaic? When and how was most of the wampum lost? What

about the connection between helve and blade? And what is the relation between the tomahawk and its Copenhagen counterpart in terms of colonization and provenance? These questions are still unanswered, some probably unanswerable. But the tomahawk has a great deal to say. A wooden helve, designed and carved by Native American artists or craftspersons in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century, decorated with beads of North American *and* European origin, somehow or other joined to an iron blade forged by European, possibly Swedish, smiths, incorporated into the collections of a king on the other side of the ocean, and now on display in a public museum in Stockholm: that is an intriguing manifestation of transcultural encounters and clashes, creative adaptations, the desire of the Western world to collect and control, and the power of the singular object to wriggle free of accepted categorizations.



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7. From Northern Sápmi to Nordiska Museet: A *Goavddis*

Abstract

This chapter follows the itinerary of a *goavddis*, or a drum from Northern Sápmi, via the *Kunstkammern* of Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie in Stockholm and Johannes Schefferus in Uppsala, to its present location in Nordiska museet in Stockholm. The chapter traces the recontextualization of the *goavddis* from a ritual musical instrument central to Sámi culture to an object of knowledge and a museum specimen. As it is currently displayed at Nordiska museet, the *goavddis* is situated in a field of attraction, fascination, exploitation, and a struggle over the right to define. Yet it has also maintained some of its thing-power and material independence.

Keywords: *goavddis*, *noaidi*, assemblage, Nordiska museet, Ernst Manker

On the top floor of Nordiska museet in Stockholm, in a gallery facing the large central hall, the exhibition *Sápmi* has been on permanent display since October 2007.¹ It is the third long-term exhibition about Sámi culture in the museum, preceded by *Lapparna* (the Lapps) which opened in 1947, and *Samer* (Sámi) which opened in 1981. Right at the centre of the exhibition space, a *goavddis*, a ceremonial Sámi drum, is displayed in a glass case (Fig. 21). A transparent support raises the object from its comparatively low plinth, creating the effect of floating towards the visitor, encouraging a closer look. A mild, yellowish light from four small spotlights above the case produces a warm glow that seems to emanate from the object itself, further enhancing its power of attraction. There are no wall texts immediately apparent, no images or complementary objects to distract the visitor: this is a self-contained object to be contemplated and admired for its visual and material qualities.

The *goavddis* is strikingly well preserved. Its drumhead is almost free from scratches, smudges, or other traces of age and wear, and provides an even, light surface for the figures drawn with coarse lines in a warm brown colour (Fig. 22).

¹ Nordiska museet, founded 1873, is a national museum dedicated to Swedish cultural history. In January 2022, the museum decided to close the *Sápmi* exhibition.



Fig. 21. Goavddis, or Sámi drum, in its present display in the exhibition *Sápmi*, Nordiska museet, Stockholm.



Fig. 22. Drumhead of *Goavddis*, or Sámi drum, reindeer skin, 40 × 27 cm. Nordiska museet, Stockholm. ↵

The distinct structure and clear distribution of figures contribute to a sense of calm and clarity. Representations of humans, or human-like figures, are placed more or less symmetrically on horizontal lines or along the edges of the drumhead while animals (reindeer and other mammals, birds) and abstract signs are distributed freely over the surface. There is an overall impression of order and balance, of everything being in place, with one disturbing exception: a human-like figure in the lower part of the drumhead, turned upside down, as if falling headlong down into

what seems to be a schematic representation of a pit. The drumhead is stretched over the edge of the *goavddis* and fastened with wooden pegs. On the lower right, close to one peg, a number, '228846', is written in red ink in a hand suggestive of twentieth century, which turns out to be the present inventory number.² By crouching down and craning round, the viewer may glimpse the bowl-shaped body of the *goavddis*, elaborately carved with small, geometrically shaped holes, symmetrically distributed, and framed by incisions (Fig. 23). At the centre, barely visible in the present display, two larger holes form a grip for its user.

From the sources, it can be concluded this particular *goavddis* was made before July 1672.³ Its shape and stylistic features point to an origin in the Julevu (Luleå) Sámi area, stretching from the town of Julevu (Luleå) on the north-western shore of the Gulf of Bothnia to the Atlantic coast far away to the north-west.⁴ Nothing is known of its makers besides what can be concluded from the object itself, its design, and how its materials have been combined and worked. Obviously, they possessed thorough knowledge and understanding of their physical surroundings, enabling them to select materials that would serve their purpose and withstand the ravages of time: the bowl-shaped body is carved from a pine burl, generally caused by a genetic variation in the tree giving rise to a piece of hard, durable wood. The reindeer skin of the drumhead is thicker than usual, and comparatively soft and pliable, which might explain why it has withstood the constant strain for 350 years or more—on most of the preserved seventeenth-century *goavdát* and *gievrje* the drumheads are cracked and damaged.⁵ Another advantage of the soft skin is its capacity to absorb the pigments applied on it, probably a factor behind the markedly clear and well-preserved drawings. The pegs with which the drumhead is fastened to the body are made of birch, a resilient hardwood available in the northernmost parts of Scandinavia, just like the pine of the body.

With these carefully selected materials at hand, the originators mobilized their technical skills, aesthetic judgement, and sense of tradition to create a usable, lasting, and visually appealing ritual and musical instrument. The way they worked the hard,

2 It actually looks like '298846'. It is hard to tell if this was a slip of the pen or if the lower part of the second '2' has been worn away.

3 A receipt dated 16 July 1672 stated that Schefferus received the *goavddis*, together with two other Sámi drums, on loan from Magnus Gabriel De La Gardie. See Johannes Schefferus, *Lappland*, Nordiska museet, Acta Lapponica, VIII (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1956), n. on p. 425.

4 Ernst Manker, *Die Lappische Zaubertrommel. Eine ethnologische Monografie, Vol. 1: Die Trommel als Denkmal materieller Kultur*, Acta Lapponica (Stockholm: Thule, 1938), 788. The Swedish 'Lule Lappmark' was a colonial administrative unit dating back to the sixteenth century, and largely coinciding with the area where Julevu (Luleå) Sámi is spoken.

5 Of the 71 *goavdát* and *gievrje* catalogued and illustrated in Manker, *Die Lappische Zaubertrommel, Vol. 1*, no fewer than 54 have clearly visible cracks, damages, or repairs to the drumhead, of which about 20 are severely damaged.



Fig. 23. Bowl of *Goavddis*, or Sámi drum, pine burl, 40 × 27 × 10 cm, Nordiska museet, Stockholm. ↵

intractable wood suggest a sense of balance and rhythm, a capacity to create symmetry and variation using a few geometrical figures: rhomb, circle, square, triangle. With incised lines, they have established visual stability, dividing the domed, oval surface into smaller and larger rectangles and circular sectors. Having finished the carving, the originators worked the surface, polishing it and treating it with grease or oil so it accentuates the haptic qualities of the object: its warm brown, smooth, and silky surface appeals to the touch as much as the gaze. The handle, which is in the centre

of the body, partly overlaps with what seems to have been a natural cavity in the burl, indicating a capacity on the part of the originators to adapt to given circumstances and collaborate with the materials and their idiosyncrasies. Five leather braids with remains of green and red fabric at their ends, fastened in symmetrically bored holes at the edges of the body, suggest an inclination for colour and playfulness. One may imagine the effect of life and motion produced by the swinging braids when the drum was beaten. Possibly also sound: braids with small objects of metal or antler, producing rattling sounds while shaken, are frequent on frame drums, but not unthinkable on a bowl-shaped drum like this one.⁶ Carefulness and a sense of order characterize how the drumhead is attached to the body with the twenty birch pegs with uniformly shaped square heads, evenly distributed all the way round the edge. The drawings on the drumhead, pigmented with ground alder bark, have been made with a blunt stick, creating coarse, distinct lines. Clarity and intelligibility seem to have been guiding principles for the artists, rather than liveliness and a wealth of details; the figures appear as signs placed on a neutral surface. To clarify the character of the drawings, they may be compared with the drawings on, for example, drums number 43 and 53 in Ernst Manker's comprehensive catalogue.⁷ The latter are characterized by a greater sense of motion and vivacity, with pairs or groups of animals and human-like figures establishing relations to each other, transforming the surface of the drumhead into a pictorial space with an imaginary spatial depth.

Some conclusions may be drawn from the material characteristics of the *goavddis*. First, the carefully selected and prepared materials, with the ways they are joined, indicate that it was made to last, to endure use and wear. Second, the practically usable grip, and the way the object is worked on all sides, implies that it was made for handling, carrying, and turning, rather than for static display. Third, the painstakingly planned and elaborately executed making of the *goavddis* suggests that it was ascribed a value that went beyond its most basic function—to make a sound when beaten. A lot of the work on the object was not primarily aimed at its function but rather at its visual and material appearance and attraction. In the present display, its visual qualities are emphasized by staging and lighting, and by the strong focus on the surface of the drumhead. At the same time, however, the display downplays the object's material appeal, its capacity to speak to other senses than sight: touch and hearing—it is a drum after all—but possibly also the scent of wood and skin.

Even if the *goavddis* has left no archival traces of the first phase of its social life, faint marks on the drumhead and wear on the handle indicate that it has been held and played. And hence that it has formed part of Sámi religious and cultural practices

6 Rolf Christofferson, *Med tre röster och tusende bilder. Om den samiska trumman*, PhD Dissertation (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2010), 105.

7 Manker, *Die Lappische Zaubertrommel*, Vol. 1, no. 43, 684–691, and no. 53, 737–742.

before it became colonized. So, what objects and humans may the *goavddis* have related to in the period between its production and colonization? Whose hands grasped its handle? Who beat the drumhead with a hammer made of antler, producing sound waves amplified by the body of the drum? First, a *goavddis* or *gievrie* was normally an object connected to one person, unlike, for example a *sieidi*, which instead was a communal object, belonging to a landscape and the people there, but at the same time the *goavddis* or *gievrie* seems to have been a social object, activated in the interplay of groups of women and men. Samuel Rheen, a Swedish clergyman in Sápmi in the 1660s and 1670s, describes how a Sámi, beating the drum and chanting in a manner called *yoik*, was being followed by ‘all assembled Sámi men and women, chanting in parts, the men in a higher voice, the women in a lower’.⁸ The quotation suggests a tight group of women and men, joined in a coordinated performance, guided by the rhythm of the drum. In the literature, *goavdát* and *gievrie* have been strongly associated with shamanistic practices, involving levitation, ecstasy, and trance.⁹ The *goavddis* under consideration here might well have belonged to a *noaidi*.¹⁰ However, a careful reading of seventeenth-century sources shows that drums interacted not only with *noaidit*, but also with other Sámi men—and at least one source points out a woman who knew how to handle *goavdát* or *gievrie*.¹¹ In the hands of a reindeer herder or a hunter and fisherman, a *goavddis* or *gievrie* often seem to have been involved in more practical, everyday actions: to find good fishing or hunting; to ease a woman’s labour pains; to cure reindeer or protect them from predators; to get in touch with distant relatives.¹²

In most research on Sámi culture, *goavdát* or *gievrie* are treated as ritual tools and not as musical instruments. One exception is Rolf Christoffersson, who questions the recurrent distinction between rite and music. Christoffersson refers to Rheen and other early writers on Sámi culture who described occasions when the beat of the drum interacted with chant, sometimes in parts. Eyewitness reports such as Rheen’s, Christoffersson argues, match most definitions of music.¹³ He also

8 Samuel Rheen, *En kortt relation om Lapparnes lefwerne och sedher, wijdskieppellsser, sampt i monga stycken grofwe wildfarellsser*, 1671 (Stockholm, 1897), 33: ‘I medler tijdh siunger lappen med een högh Röst och stämma, huilket the kalla *Joiijke*, der till medh siunga alle Lapparna och Lappqwinfolcken som tå ähro tillstädes, Manfolcken medh een högre och quinfolcken med een lägre stämma’.

9 Håkan Rydving, *The End of Drum-Time: Religious Change among the Lule Saami, 1670s-1740s*, PhD Dissertation, Uppsala, 2. ed. (Stockholm: Norstedt (1993), 1995), 4; Christoffersson, *Med tre röster och tusende bilder*, 97 n. 2.

10 For the term *noaidi*, see above, p. 80, n. 37.

11 Put on trial for using his drum, Poala-Ánde in north-eastern Norway stated that he had learnt the art of the drum from his mother. See Rune Hagen, ‘Harmløs dissenter eller djevelsk trollmann? Trolldomsprosessen mot samene Anders Poulsen i 1692’, *Historisk tidsskrift*, 81:2–3 (2002), 328.

12 Hagen, ‘Harmløs dissenter eller djevelsk trollmann?’ 338–339.

13 Christoffersson, *Med tre röster och tusende bilder*, 125–151.

seeks support from ethnomusicologists, among them Gilbert Rouget who regards shamanistic and musical practices as inseparable.¹⁴ Christoffersson has put his finger on a common ethnocentric stereotype: a tendency from the part of Western scholars and museum curators to understand cultural objects and practices of non-Western or non-Christian cultures in terms of 'rite' or 'magic', while reserving the notions of 'music' or 'art' for European or Western cultural objects and practices. That distinction, coinciding with the categorization of art and ethnography as manifested in the modern museum and display system, not only conceals aesthetic aspects of non-Western objects; it also involves a tendency to overlook the close connections between art and rite in Western, Christian cultural practices. Music and art in early modern Europe were largely produced and practised in a ritual context. The vibrant colours of paintings; the expressive gestures of sculptures; the harmonic or dramatic sounds of a choir or an organ: all this filled the space of the Christian church, enhancing the effect of the rite and mediating between human and divine. All their differences notwithstanding, there are important parallels between a *goavddis* or *gievrie* as an object and practice, and a Bach chorale, or an altarpiece by Raphael. In all these instances, rite and art appear inseparable.

The first undisputable archival evidence of the *goavddis* in question is a receipt dated 16 July 1672, which stated that Johannes Schefferus had received three drums, with other Sámi objects, on loan from Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie.¹⁵ The loan was directly related to Schefferus' work on *Lapponia*, published in 1673 at De la Gardie's behest.¹⁶ Hence, in 1672, the particular *goavddis* in question had become colonized and incorporated into the collections of De la Gardie, one of the most influential aristocrats and high officials in Sweden. It has been suggested that he acquired it from Samuel Rheen, who worked as a clergyman in Jåhkåmåhkke (Jokkmokk) in the Julevu (Luleå) Sámi area.¹⁷ This is an educated guess, but the early 1670s was certainly the time when Swedish clergy and colonial officials in Sápmi began to systematically seize objects related to Sámi religious practices, in particular *goavdát* and *gievrie*. It was also the time when the drums emerged as highly desirable collectibles among European aristocrats. Taken out of the ritual and musical environment for which it was once shaped, the *goavddis* now faced a new situation. It is not known where it was placed by De la Gardie, who had several residences across the Swedish Empire, but circumstances point to Makalös, a magnificent Renaissance palace in the heart of Stockholm, built by his father

14 Christoffersson, *Med tre röster och tusende bilder*, 131–133, 143–147. See also Gilbert Rouget, *Music and Trance: A Theory of the Relations between Music and Possession* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), 125–127.

15 See Schefferus, *Lapland*, n. on p. 425.

16 Schefferus, *Lapland*, 29.

17 Manker, *Die Lappische Zaubertrommel*, Vol. 1, 785–788.



Fig. 24. *Makalös*, Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie's palace in Stockholm, engraving by Jean Marot after a drawing by Erik Dahlbergh, 25 × 38 cm, 1670, *Suecia Antiqua et Hodierna*. ↵

Jakob De la Gardie in the 1630s (Fig. 24).¹⁸ In Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie's time, *Makalös* housed one of the most grandiose *Kunstkammer* collections in Sweden, with one of the largest libraries.¹⁹ An inventory drawn up after De la Gardie's death in 1686 includes 'Een Lappetrumma med 2:ne beenhamrar' (A Sámi drum with two hammers made of bone) which plausibly refers to this *goavddis*.²⁰

Imagined in the *Kunstkammer* of *Makalös*, the *goavddis* entered into a new assemblage, establishing new webs of relations. The intimate space of a *goathi*, a Sámi tent, and the vast, mountainous landscape of the Julevu (Luleå) Sámi area were exchanged for the grand Renaissance interiors of the count's palace and its

18 I am grateful to Mattias Ekman for sharing his insights into Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie as a collector.

19 For *Makalös*, see Göran Axel-Nilsson, *Makalös: Fältherren greve Jakob De la Gardies hus i Stockholm* (Stockholm: Monografier utgivna av Stockholms kommun, 1984).

20 For a transcription of the inventory, see Axel-Nilsson, *Makalös*, 253–275 (Sámi drum at 258). It is not known where in the palace Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie's *Kunstkammer* was. In his father's time, it was on the ground floor of the north-eastern tower. That room, however, was labelled 'bibliotecet' [the library] in an inventory from 1656.

surrounding cityscape, with the royal palace nearby as its most prominent element. In that milieu, the *goavddis* shared space with luxurious pieces of furniture; rugs, tablecloth, tapestries and other textiles from far and near; portraits and other paintings—among them three paintings with the curious designation ‘Lappe-Schilderier’ (lit. Lapp paintings or portraits); elaborate craft objects, and mechanical wonders such as a black cupboard with dancing dolls, organ pipes, and a clockwork.²¹ It is not known how the objects were spatially organized, but in the inventory the *goavddis* was grouped with artefacts and natural objects including ‘a box with Indian shell [wampum]’, ‘the head of a swine with two teeth and two horns’, ‘the plumage of a bird of paradise’, ‘a Chinese book with wooden leaves’, ‘2 ostrich eggs’, ‘the head of John the Baptist on a plate’, ‘a microscope’, ‘a turkey made of mussels’, and ‘a unicorn horn’.²² If the *goavddis* in an earlier phase of its social life had been involved in religious and musical practices, establishing bonds between the human and the divine, it now formed part of an assemblage of curious and wondrous objects, calling forth the image of a world marked by permeable borders between nature and culture, reality and imagination, science and magic. The Sámi playing the drum, possibly surrounded by chanting fellows, was substituted by the aristocratic collector, possibly surrounded by peers observing and discussing the *goavddis* and its heathen origins.

At the most general level, the *goavddis* in De la Gardie’s *Kunstkammer* performed the part of a material evidence of a manifold, enigmatic world, and a sign of its new possessor’s status as a refined and educated aristocrat, knowledgeable of European elite manners including the collecting and display of rare objects. In the collections of a leading statesman, it might also have taken on the role of a colonial trophy, materializing the reach of the Swedish empire—in that role establishing bonds to surrounding objects, like the wampum box that pointed towards the Swedish Empire’s short-lived American extension. In its new place, the *goavddis* also seem to have taken on a more specific role, as an object of knowledge about Sámi cultural and religious practice. As the founder of the College of Antiquities (*Collegium Antiquitatis* or *Antikvitetskollegiet*) and Chancellor of Uppsala University, De la Gardie had an overt professional interest in Swedish history and its material remains. As Sápmi had become subjected to the Swedish imperial power, Sámi material culture was within the scope of that interest. The role of this *goavddis* as an object of knowledge became manifest when De la Gardie lent it to Schefferus as material source for the latter’s scholarly study of Sápmi and the Sámi.

In July 1672, the *goavddis* arrived in Schefferus’ museum in central Uppsala, where it joined five other *goavdát* or *gievrie*, three belonging to Schefferus and another two on loan from De la Gardie. Reports from visitors suggest that *goavdát*

21 Axel-Nilsson, *Makalös*, 254–257, quote 257.

22 Axel-Nilsson, *Makalös*, 258.

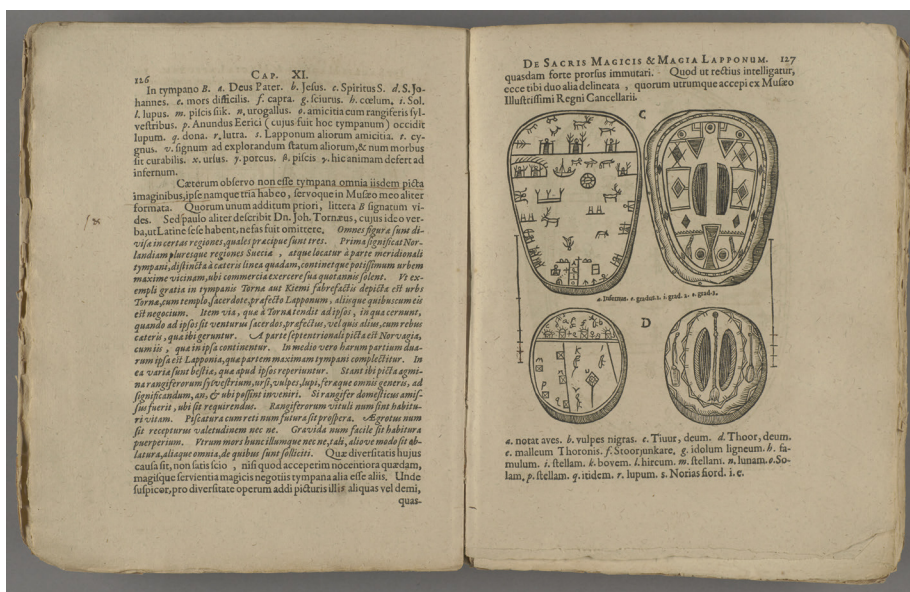


Fig. 25. Two Sámi drums, woodcut, 21.5 × 17 cm (page), in Johannes Schefferus, *Lapponia*, 1673, p. 127. ↵

or *gievrie* were among the most curious and absorbing objects in the collection. They were taken down and examined, and they seem to have affected the people who handled them. Schefferus also interacted with them in his research.²³ For him, each was an object of knowledge, an object that could complement, or even correct the textual sources. The *goavddis* was represented in *Lapponia*, in a woodcut made from his drawing (Fig. 25).²⁴ The image is flat and schematic, with rudimentary shading along the edges as the only suggestion of the object's three-dimensionality. It is worth noting, however, that it consists of two parts, one of which depicts the drumhead and the other the body of the drum. Juxtaposing these two aspects of the *goavddis*, the woodcut performs the action of turning the object, emphasizing its objecthood and how it encourages its user to handle it.

The figures drawn on the drumhead were carefully rendered in the *Lapponia* woodcut (although one animal-like figure in the lower right-hand part is missing). Particular attention was paid to the depiction in the lower part of the image of a human-like figure apparently falling headlong into a pit.²⁵ Schefferus has added letters referring to an explanation in the text, according to which the figure

23 See above, p. 84–86.

24 Schefferus, *Lapland*, 158.

25 A person falling headlong is found in early Sámi iconography as a representation of the *noaidi* on his way to the realm of the dead.

represented a man falling into Hell ('Infernus' in the Latin original) consisting of circles ('gradus' in the Latin original).²⁶ The words chosen by Schefferus are general, but they imply that he conceived of the figures in Christian terms. In his interpretations of other *goavdát* or *gievrie* to which he had access, the Christian connection was more explicit. Supported by the reports from Rheen and other clergy, Schefferus interpreted figures as representations of God, Christ, the Apostles, the Holy Ghost, and others as depictions of specific Christian church buildings in Sápmi.²⁷ Before dismissing this as an ethnocentric misreading, or an inability to grasp the symbols of an unfamiliar religion, it should be remembered that Sámi cultural and religious practices had not developed in isolation. When it became the object of systematic colonization in the seventeenth century, Sápmi and its inhabitants had experienced centuries of encounter and exchange with practitioners of Roman Catholicism and later Lutheranism. And when the *goavddis* caught the interest of De la Gardie and Schefferus in the early 1670s, there had been systematic missionary activity in Sápmi for almost a century. It could thus be said that even the shaping and original use of the *goavddis* took place in a colonial contact zone, with all that implied for commercial, cultural, and religious exchange. This, however, did not necessarily mean the originators or users of the *goavddis* passively adapted to the religion of the colonizers. The presence of Christian symbols on *goavdát* or *gievrie* could rather be regarded as an instance of the dynamics and exchange that characterize cultural and religious practices. Syncretism, or creolization, is not an exception but an important feature of culture and religion, with strong and useful elements from one set of cultural or religious practices being appropriated by another.²⁸ Later interpreters have often downplayed syncretism; a prominent example was Ernst Manker who, in his magisterial study of Sámi drums, tended to interpret their signs and symbols as evidence of a pure, untouched Sámi religion.²⁹ Even today, the framing of religious

26 Schefferus, *Lappland*, 161.

27 Schefferus, *Lappland*, 159–164.

28 For this understanding of Sámi religion, see Siv Rasmussen, *Samisk integrering i norsk og svensk kirke i tidlig nytid: en komparasjon mellom Finnmark og Torne lappmark*, PhD Dissertation (Tromsø: UiT Norges arktiske universitet, 2016), 24–26; Rognald Heisedal Bergesen, 'Lapponia and the Drum: Instruments of Integration and Othering during the Age of Confessionalisation in Northern Sweden', in Sigrun Høgetveit, Rognald Heisedal Bergesen & Roald E. Kristiansen (eds.), *The Protracted Reformation in Northern Norway, Vol. 2: Towards a Protestant North* (Hannover: Wehrhahn Verlag, 2016); Hagen, 'Harmløs dissenter eller djevelsk trollmann?'; Håkan Rydving, 'The Saami Shaman Drums and the Religious Encounter in the 17th and 18th Centuries', in Tore Ahlbäck & Jan Bergman (eds.), *The Saami Shaman Drum*, Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis, XIV (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1991), 35–42. I am grateful to Monica Grini for sharing her views on the presence of Christian symbols on Sámi drums in her unpublished paper on 'Translations of Poala-Ánde's drum', 2018.

29 Ernst Manker, *Die Lappische Zaubertrommel: Eine ethnologische Monografie, Vol. 2: Die Trommel als Urkunde geistigen Lebens*, Acta Lapponica (Stockholm: Thule, 1950).

objects in ethnographic museums often emphasizes a supposed authenticity and overlooks evidence of creolization. However, the conception of Sámi religious practices as pure and static is problematic. Sámi worship, Siv Rasmussen states, was characterized by openness to integrating elements from other religions, not least Christianity.³⁰ Signs and symbols on the drumheads of *goavdát* or *gievrie* are suggestive of a world of cultural and religious encounter, exchange, and transfer.

After the death of De la Gardie in 1686, the *goavddis* entered the collections of the College of Antiquities founded by De la Gardie in 1666 with Schefferus as one of its original deputies. Around 1690, the College and its collections were transferred from Uppsala to Stockholm, where a few years later they were merged with the Royal Library and the National Archives. From a catalogue drawn up by the College of Antiquities' secretary, Johan Hadorph, in 1690, it can be concluded that the collections mainly consisted of books and manuscripts, seemingly adequate for an institution dedicated to the study of the glorious history of the Swedish kingdom.³¹ The comparatively small group of non-textual objects was gathered in one room.³² Among them were rune staffs and other instruments for measuring time; Catholic relics and other religious objects that had lost their sacred status after the Reformation; and seals and coins, mainly Swedish, but also Arabic coins found in archaeological excavations. Finally, there was a group of objects 'collected' from the Sámi, among them a stone *sieidi*, wooden idols, and a *geres* or Sámi sledge.³³ The *goavddis* belonged to this group with four or five other *goavdát* or *gievrie*, objects that according to the catalogue bore evidence of 'Sámi idolatry'.³⁴ It can be traced in the inventories drawn up after the death of Johan Hadorph in 1693, and after the death of his successor Johan Peringskiöld in 1720.³⁵ A few typical *Kunstkammer* objects were added to the collections, such as a unicorn horn and ivory objects. In an inventory from 1725, a large number of *goavdát* or *gievrie* were added, most likely the 26 drums confiscated that year by Bishop Peter Asp in the village of Sjeltie (Åsele) in southern Sápmi.³⁶ These additions notwithstanding, the collection's character as a library and archive remained, with the non-textual objects forming an appendix.

30 Rasmussen, *Samisk integrering i norsk og svensk kirke i tidlig nytid*, 25.

31 Johan Hadorph, *Catalogus Librorum Qui in Historia & Antiquitatibus Patriae sub Imperio Clementissimi Regis Nostri DN. Caroli XI publicati sunt* (Stockholm: Johan Georg Ederdt, 1690). For the aim of the College, see Sten Lindroth, *Svensk lärdomshistoria, II, Stormaktstiden* (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1975), 322.

32 Hadorph, *Catalogus Librorum*, 23.

33 Hadorph, *Catalogus Librorum*, 23: 'åthskillige Ting ifrån Lapparne insamlade'.

34 Hadorph, *Catalogus Librorum*, 3: 'Lapparnes Afguderij'.

35 The inventories, in manuscript, are in Kungliga bibliotket (the National Library of Sweden), KB U 90:1 and KB U 90:2.

36 Kungliga biblioteket (National Library of Sweden), KB U 90:7, fol. 5r.

In the collections of the College of Antiquities, the role of the *goavddis* as an object of knowledge was emphasized and institutionalized, at the cost of its other potential roles as a religious object, a musical instrument, an aesthetic object, or an object of wonder. It became a document, comparable to the surrounding books, manuscripts, and other sources for the history of the Swedish kingdom. This also marked the end of an initial active phase of its social life. It was mentioned in increasingly brief terms in the inventories. From 1720 onwards, it fell under the heading 'några andra Antiquiteter' (some other antiquities), with a miscellaneous group of objects that seem to have been left over when the other non-textual objects were ranged in categories such as 'Swedish coins', 'gold', or 'silver'.³⁷ This marginalization of the *goavddis* bears witness to a gradual but thorough transformation of the system of collecting and display, as the multifaceted, non-dichotomous and border-blurring character of the *Kunstkammer* slowly gave way to a system built on categorization and hierarchization, and on clear-cut distinctions between nature and culture, science and art, near and far.³⁸ In the course of the eighteenth century, activity at the College of Antiquities slowed until it was formally dissolved in 1780 and its work and collections were taken over by the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities (Kungl. Vitterhetsakademien). Eventually, the collections, to which the *goavddis* belonged, formed the core of the Swedish History Museum (Historiska museet) in Stockholm.

In the 1940s, after over two centuries of relative silence, the *goavddis* resurfaced as the object of attentive, knowledgeable gazes. In fact, it appeared right in the middle of a photograph taken in 1945, which survives in Nordiska museet's archives (Fig. 26).³⁹ In the photograph, the *goavddis* is surrounded by a group of seven men and one woman, standing round a table covered by *goavdát* or *gievrie* of different shapes and sizes, with a couple of smaller boxes that probably contained drum hammers and other appurtenances. The *goavddis* and the other drums seem to hold the attention of those present: they are the reason for the gathering, and some have already been lifted by careful hands. In that way, drums and humans form an assemblage connected by a tight web of tactility, gaze, and gesture. The rough table, made of boards placed on trestles, and the messy character of the room suggest a store rather than a public museum gallery. That this was a place for serious, sometimes manual, work is further underlined by one man at the centre, dressed in a white lab coat. The man is Ernst Manker, ethnographer, Nordiska museet curator, and a leading advocate of research on Sámi material culture in Sweden. Manker is surrounded by members of a Sámi delegation to the Swedish government: from left to

37 Kungliga biblioteket (National Library of Sweden), KB U 90:2, fol. 3r–3v; KB U 90:7, fol. 4r–5r.

38 See below, p. 167–170, for a discussion of the transformation of the museum and display system.

39 Nordiska museets arkiv (Archives of Nordiska museet), Photography collection, NMA.0077271.



Fig. 26. Sámi delegation studying drums at Nordiska museet together with Ernst Manker, 1945. ↵

right, Mattias Kuoljok, John Utsi, Anna Gustafsson, Gustav Park, Petrus Gustafsson, Isak Parffa, and Nils Erik Kuoljok. They are wearing traditional Sámi dress, except Gustav Park, vicar of Gierkiesovvene (Stensele) in southern Sápmi and an influential Sámi politician, who wears a dark wool coat, white shirt, and tie—his appearance suggests he knew how to behave in the corridors of power. It is Park who carefully holds the *goavddis* with both hands, observing it with concentration and turning it slightly for Petrus Gustafsson next to him to see the drumhead. By the turning of the *goavddis*, he also invites the viewer of the photograph to look closely at it.

The reappearance of the *goavddis* was preceded by a period of intensified colonial oppression of the Sámi community by the Swedish government, including compulsory relocations, intensified exploitation of natural resources, and humiliating physical examinations of Sámi women, men, and children in the name of science.

At the same time, it was a period of growing scholarly interest in Sámi material culture, indicated by Manker's appointment in 1939 as the first curator of the Sámi department at Nordiska museet.⁴⁰ With the arrival in 1943 of the *goavddis* and several other Sámi objects from the Swedish History Museum, Manker's dream of a central museum for Sámi culture in a way was realized within the walls of Nordiska museet. With some 5,500 objects, Nordiska museet held by far the largest collection of Sámi material culture in the world. The transfer of Sámi objects to Nordiska museet was part of a far-reaching reorganization of the collections at the large public museums in Stockholm to demarcate their collections and fields of expertise. As a result, Sámi material culture was defined as part of the cultural history, or folklore, narrated and displayed at Nordiska museet, rather than as material manifestations of the history of the Swedish kingdom, displayed at the Swedish History Museum.

Oppression and appreciation, or discipline and desire: the ambivalent attitude towards Sámi culture by Swedish institutions and authorities in the early and mid-twentieth century was not without parallels to the time of Charles XI, De la Gardie, and Schefferus. With one important difference, though: this time the Sámi community successfully claimed a place at the table—literally so in the 1945 photograph. Gustav Park and the others were there because Manker realized they had something to say about the objects. Their particular knowledge and experience could contribute to the understanding of the *goavddis* and its historical significance. The same kind of knowledge transfer formed part of Manker's preparations for a permanent exhibition of Sámi culture, *Lapparna* (The Lapps), which opened in 1947 on the ground floor of Nordiska museet. A photograph from the preparations for the exhibition shows Mattias Kuoljok, one of the people in photograph of 1945, and his wife Sigga Kuoljok, contributing hands-on knowledge of the placing and securing of packing pouches on the back of a reindeer, it all supervised by Manker.⁴¹

Nordiska museet had been founded in 1873 in response to the fears of a group of urban intellectuals that traditional culture in the Swedish countryside was about to give way to the pressures of modernization and urbanization.⁴² It was high time to collect material traces of a disappearing culture to preserve and display them in a new museum at the centre of modern, urban society. Sámi material culture

40 For Ernst Manker and his work at Nordiska museet, see Eva Silvé, *Friktion: Ernst Manker, Nordiska museet och det samiska kulturarvet* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2021); Eva Silvé, 'Sociomaterial Intertwinements in Sami Research: The Nordic Museum in Stockholm and the Legacy of Ernst Manker', *Nordisk Museologi/The Journal of Nordic Museology* (2019:3), 96–117. Silvé's thorough research on the Sámi collections at Nordiska museet has proven invaluable for the last section of this chapter.

41 The photograph is reproduced and discussed in Eva Silvé, 'Constructing a Sami Cultural Heritage: Essentialism and Emancipation', *Ethnologia Scandinavica: A Journal for Nordic Ethnology*, 44 (2014), 60.

42 As suggested by its name, the museum was founded to have a Nordic scope, but its collecting and display policies were soon set by Sweden's national borders.

formed part of the project from the start, which implies that it was considered part of a national vernacular culture. The Sámi exhibition, curated by Manker, was conceived as tableaux about reindeer herding, male handicrafts, female handicrafts, and the spiritual world.⁴³ The tableaux were supplemented by explanatory texts and, sometimes, typological series of objects. There was a liberal use of large-size images, adding to the visual impression made by the exhibition: enlargements of photographs taken by Manker during fieldwork in Sápmi, of the detail of certain objects, and artworks commissioned for the exhibition. A large mural by Folke Ricklund is still in place in what is now the museum's library and archive. Originally, its representation of a mountainous landscape populated by reindeer, Sámi, and their *goathi* continued out into the exhibition space with the display of a real, three-dimensional *goathi*, creating a diorama effect.⁴⁴

The *goavddis* was placed with other *goavdát* and *gievrie* in the section on the spiritual world. The drums were placed in a show case, in two rows on a gently curved screen: an upper row with seven 'Drums of southern type, frame drums', and a lower row with four 'Drums of northern type, box [*sic*] drums' (Fig. 27).⁴⁵ A label explained their function, in past tense, as 'an instrument of exaltation as well as divination'. The use of drums, the label stated, had been officially banned since the conversion of the Sámi, but well into the nineteenth century they were used secretly. Besides drums and the labels, there were also drum hammers and other smaller objects displayed on the screen, enlargements of figures from the drumheads, and an enlargement of a woodcut in Schefferus' *Lapponia*, representing 'A "nåjd", or Lapp shaman, beating his drum'. Right below, the same scene was repeated in three dimensions, in the shape of a full-size mannequin in traditional Sámi dress, kneeling, and beating a *gievrie* from the collections.⁴⁶ The floor was covered with something suggestive of ground cover, giving a vague impression of an outdoor scene.

In its new place, as second from the left on the lower row, the *goavddis* was fixed in a tripartite order of scenographic imagination (the tableau), scholarly authority (the typological sequence of the drums), and didactics (the texts and images)—an order typical of museum displays of the period, and still found in many museums of ethnography and history in Sweden and the Western world. Rather than being held

43 The 1947 exhibition has been treated by Eva Silvén in a number of publications, especially 'Lapps and Sami—Narrative and Display at the Nordiska Museet', in Kajsa Andersson (ed.), *L'Image du Sápmi. Études comparées* (Örebro: Humanistic Studies at Örebro University, 2009), 75–91.

44 The effect is suggested by a photograph in Nordiska museets arkiv (the Archives of Nordiska museet): 'Nordiska museet och dess gårdar. Nordiska museet, Vol. 16: Uppställningar L-R', photography 1956, 529.O.af.

45 Nordiska museets arkiv (Archives of Nordiska museet), 'Nordiska museet och dess gårdar. Nordiska museet, Vol. 16: Uppställningar L-R', photography 1947, 382.C.x.

46 The drum held by the mannequin is Nordiska museet, inv. no. 228846. Manker, *Die Lappische Zaubertrommel*, Vol. 1, no. 11.



Fig. 27. Display case dedicated to 'The spiritual world' in the exhibition *Lapparna* at Nordiska museet, Stockholm, 1947. ↵

up as a visually and materially appealing object in its own right, it was presented as a specimen, an example of a type, in an assemblage dedicated to conveying objective knowledge of a past culture. At a general level, the exhibition—and the *goavddis*—should be understood in relation to the *folkbildning*, or adult education, which was a cornerstone of public policy in mid-twentieth-century Sweden. The object of public institutions, museums among them, was to educate the masses. The ideal typically combined an authoritative, neutral, voice speaking in the name of the institution and an attempt to appeal to everyone.⁴⁷

Parallel to its appearance in the exhibition of 1947, the *goavddis* was also inscribed in another context which came to define its place in ethnographic scholarship, and which still constitutes an indispensable starting point for every scholarly study: *Die Lappische Zaubertrommel*, Ernst Manker's magisterial two-volume work on Sámi drums. The first volume, *Die Trommel als Denkmal Materieller Kultur* ('The drum as monument to material culture'), was published in 1938. Its central

47 For shifting ideals at Nordiska museet in the twentieth century, see Hans Medelius, 'Utställningarna', in Hans Medelius, Bengt Nyström & Elisabeth Stavenow-Hidemark (eds.), *Nordiska museet under 125 år*, (Stockholm: Nordiska museet, 1998), 273–311.

part is a catalogue raisonné of the 71 drums that Manker judged to be authentic, followed by 6 drums he considered false, and 4 lacking a drumhead. The *goavddis* in question here appears as number 64, under the heading ‘Schalentrommeln’ (lit. bowl drums).⁴⁸ The catalogue entry begins with its provenance and a bibliography, followed by a meticulous description of its materials, construction, and present state, with three large-format photographs of its front, back, and side. The second volume, *Die Trommel als Urkunde geistigen Lebens* (‘The drum as a record of spiritual life’), appeared in 1950, and offered elaborate iconographic interpretations of the drawings on the drumheads, accompanied by precise tracings of the drumheads and of individual signs. The drumhead of the *goavddis* is represented by a full-page tracing and interpretations of 42 key signs.⁴⁹ The significance of Manker’s work cannot be overestimated. It defined a corpus that holds valid to this day, even with a few additions.⁵⁰ Its categorization of the drums by shape and construction, and its way of connecting certain shapes and construction methods to certain geographical origins are broadly unchallenged. The tracings in the second volume have set the tone for how the drawings on the drumheads are approached and appreciated. Their clearly defined black lines against the whiteness of the pages of the book stress their character as abstract, semiotic signs rather than concrete elements in a visual, material interplay with the reindeer skin on which they are drawn.

The 1947 exhibition was in place for over thirty years, though not without some changes. A photograph from the 1970s shows that some of the drum hammers and other small objects on the screen had been removed, and others reorganized.⁵¹ More curiously, the *goavddis* which is the focus here had been taken down and placed in the lap of the *noaidi* mannequin. It is worthwhile reflecting on the effects on the *goavddis* of the move between two distinct display paradigms, from a specimen in a typological series to a prop in an imaginative tableau. Whatever the reasons might have been, it strengthens the sense that the material object was regarded exchangeable and subordinated to the educative narrative of the display. In 1980, shortly after the photograph, the exhibition was taken down, to be replaced by an updated display of Sámi culture. In the new exhibition, *Samer* (‘The Sámi’), which opened 1981, a hint of modernity was added to the traditional representation of Sámi as a people belonging to a timeless past.⁵² In one showcase, a snowmobile was

48 Manker, *Die Lappische Zaubertrommel*, Vol. 1, 785–790.

49 Manker, *Die Lappische Zaubertrommel*, Vol. 2, 413–416.

50 In addition to the drums catalogued by Manker, Gunilla Edbom has identified a few drums in Russian collections and one in Spain. See Gunilla Edbom, *Samiskt kulturarv i samlingar: rapport från ett projekt om återföringsfrågor gällande samiska föremål*, Arkeologisk rapport 2005:1, 2. ed. (Jokkmokk: Åjtte, 2005), 32.

51 Nordiska museets arkiv (Archives of Nordiska museet), photography 617. Ek.ak.

52 The 1981 exhibition has been treated by Eva Silvén in a number of publications, especially Silvén, ‘Lapps and Sami’. Nordiska museets arkiv (The archives of Nordiska museet) holds extensive records of the



Fig. 28. Display case dedicated to 'the *Noaidi's* drum' in the exhibition *Samer* at Nordiska museet, Stockholm, 1981. ↗

placed next to the mandatory stuffed reindeer and *geres*, indicating that modern technology had become part of Sámi life and work.⁵³ The *goavddis* now appeared in a spectacular setting. Suspended by barely visible threads, it floated in the air at the centre of a showcase dedicated to 'Nåjdens trumma' (the *noaidi's* drum) (Fig. 28).⁵⁴ Below it, two other drums were placed on a reindeer skin. The subdued lighting, with spotlights illuminating each object individually, contributed to the dramatic effect.

exhibition, including notes from the planning, plans, and wall texts, correspondence, and photographs. See three folders marked 'SAMER' 1, 2, and 3.

53 Nordiska museets arkiv (Archives of Nordiska museet), 'SAMER 3', 'Färdig utställning genomfotografering 1981', photography: Anders Friberg 1981, 620 G.aö.

54 Nordiska museets arkiv (Archives of Nordiska museet), 'SAMER 3', 'Färdig utställning genomfotografering 1981', photography: Anders Friberg 1981, 620 H.q.

If the setting framed the *goavddis* as an enigmatic, mysterious object, the labels on the dark back wall of the showcase were more matter-of-fact. One label explained the role of the *noaidit* in traditional Sámi culture as mediators between humans and Gods, and the drums as their principal tools. Its final paragraph called attention to the persecution of *noaidit* and the destruction of their drums in certain historical periods. Another label presented an iconographic interpretation of the drawings on one drum in the showcase, directly quoting from Manker and illustrated with a tracing from his work.⁵⁵

By the time the new permanent exhibition opened, the political and cultural climate had changed in the wake of global decolonization and new postcolonial critiques.⁵⁶ Indigenous groups all over the world were mobilizing, claiming self-determination and the right to their land, their history, and their cultural heritage. Traditional ethnographic research, collecting, and display could no longer go uncriticized, as indigenous people claimed their right to take an active part in constructing the narratives about them presented in Western museums. At a late stage of the work on the new exhibition at Nordiska museet, the National Association of Swedish Sámi (Svenska Samernas Riksförbund), founded in 1950, was invited to collaborate, as was the Stockholm Sámi Association (Sameföreningen i Stockholm); however, discussions broke down and the exhibition was postponed for almost a year. When it opened in 1981, the exhibition was the object of explicit criticism from Sámi spokespeople, and throughout the decade relations between the museum and Sámi interest groups were strained.⁵⁷ In 1989, a new museum for Sámi culture opened: Ájtte—Swedish Mountain and Sámi Museum (Ájtte—Svenskt fjäll- och samemuseum). Its location in Jåhkåmåhkke (Jokkmokk), a centre for Sámi culture and education in the north of Sweden, offered new possibilities to act as an integrated part of Sámi society, and since its opening many of its employees identify as members of the Sámi community. Many objects were transferred from other museums, making Ájtte the largest collection of Sámi material culture in Sweden. Most of the *goavdat* or *gievrie* that were in Nordiska museet are now in

55 The exhibition texts are to be found in Nordiska museets arkiv (the Archives of Nordiska museet), 'SAMER 3', 11, 'Religion'. The texts were in Swedish and English. The English version on the *Noaidi* reads: 'They were called *nájdjer* (shamans) and were an intermediating link between man and the world of the gods. The most important instrument of the shaman was the drum'. The text on persecution: 'During periods all expressions of Lapp religion were intensively combatted. Drums were burned and *nájdjer* were persecuted and even executed'. The iconographic interpretation of a drum is quoted from Manker, *Die Lappische Zaubertrommel Vol. 2*, 217–224.

56 Frantz Fanon's influential texts had circulated since the 1950s and 1960s; Edward Said's seminal *Orientalism* appeared in 1978.

57 The conflict is documented in Nordiska museets arkiv (the Archives of Nordiska museet), 'SAMER 2', 'Diskussioner NM-SSR 1980-1988'. See also Silvén, 'Lapps and Sami', 83–85; Silvén, 'Constructing a Sami Cultural Heritage', 107–108.

Ájtte, many of them in the permanent exhibition *Gáriid áigi—Trumtid/Drum Time*.⁵⁸ After centuries in public institutions in the Swedish capital, these objects of central importance for Sámi religious and cultural history are in Sápmi once again. In their new place, closer to the landscapes where they were originally created and used, the *goavdát* and *gievrie* are more accessible to Sámi communities.

The *goavddis* at the centre of this chapter, however, remained in the capital, as of 2007 as a centrepiece of *Sápmi*, the current permanent exhibition of Sámi culture at Nordiska museet (Fig. 21). *Sápmi* forms part of a self-critical turn that gained momentum in the 1990s, when museums in the Western world dissected their own roles in the narratives told in their exhibitions.⁵⁹ ‘One way to be Sámi is to be represented in the collections of the Nordiska museet’, the introduction to the exhibition catalogue announced.⁶⁰ In line with many other recent exhibitions in museums of ethnography or history, *Sápmi* is arranged thematically by a number of critical questions posted on the walls: ‘Whose history?’ ‘Whose voice?’ ‘Whose things?’ A reference group, made up of representatives of Sámi cultural and political institutions, participated in the preparatory work. Compared to the previous exhibitions, Sámi participation has had a definite effect on the display and the exhibition catalogue. In a video installation and texts, members of the reference group and other contemporary Sámi voices reflect on their long history of colonial oppression, on emancipation, and on specific objects in the exhibition. There are notable examples of contemporary Sámi arts and crafts too, suggesting a lively and fruitful conversation between tradition and the future, and problematizing the diehard Western conception of indigenous people as belonging to an undefined past. The *goavddis* forms part of a section on ‘Objects with history’, including objects chosen and commented on by the reference group. The question of where these and other museum pieces rightfully belong is raised in an introductory text to the section: ‘During the 19th and 20th centuries, objects and human remains were brought to the western world as trophies. Collectors travelled through Sápmi,

58 Anna Westman Kuhmunen & John Erling Utsi, *Gáriid áigi: sámiiid dološ gáriid ja oskku birra – Trumtid: om samernas trummor och religion* (Jokkmokk: Ájtte, 1998).

59 For the self-critical turn, see above, p. 115, n. 45.

60 Eva Silvé, Mats Landin & Christina Westergren, *Sápmi – om att vara same i Sverige*, exhibition catalogue, with parallel texts in Sámi and English (Stockholm: Nordiska museets förlag, 2007), 5. An extensive archival documentation of the exhibition is to be found in the archives of Nordiska museet, three folders marked ‘SÁPMI’, 1, 2, and 3. See also Eva Silvé, ‘Samiska scener och scenerier’, in Christina Westergren & Eva Silvé (eds.), *För Sápmi i tiden*, Nordiska museets och Skansens årsbok (Stockholm: Nordiska museets förlag, 2008), 121–137; Silvé, ‘Lapps and Sami’, 86–88. A critical perspective is given by Carine Ayélé Durand, ‘Urfolk, internationella nätverk och museer’, in Westergren & Silvé, *För Sápmi i tiden*, 158–170.

too. Today, there are demands that objects and remains should be taken back to their places of origin'.⁶¹

Displayed in solitary splendour, the *goavddis* appears as an object for aesthetic contemplation. A visitor who wants any written information must move to the back where a couple of texts are discreetly placed on a low plinth. The main text reads:

Many have tried to understand what the symbols and pictures on the Sámi drum mean. 'Are they gods, people, animals, symbols, maps, life stories, relatives—or just pretty decoration?' Victoria Harnesk asks. 'Things that contrast with the West's usual images and assumptions are considered deviant and inspire curiosity,' Ingmar Åhren thinks. 'This is what inspired the idea that the drum was associated with sorcery, but that's not the case.' Sonia Larsson has another experience. 'The drum is magical to me. Being able to travel to different worlds with it appeals to me,' she says and tells about a drum journey that she took part in under the guidance of a present-day *nåejtie* (medicine man or shaman), 'a traveller in the two worlds', who can place himself and others in a trance.⁶²

In contrast to the objective, explanatory voice of the previous exhibitions, the visitor now encounters a collage of contemporary voices belonging to members of the Sámi reference group. They do not explain the *goavddis*, but their questions, thoughts, and experiences frame it as an object with the power to attract, and to connect the past to the present. The collage of voices is juxtaposed with another text, a quotation from a letter by the founder of the museum, Artur Hazelius, to one of his collaborators who was travelling in Sápmi in 1891.

Among the most important things to ask about is everything relating to the Sámi cult or religion, superstition and the like. Most desirable, then, are Lappish drums and their accessories, *sieidi* (cult images, of which you should take with you as many as you can find, as well as agree on their transportation). Make precise notes of all traditions connected with them.⁶³

Hazelius here appears as the paradigmatic collector–colonizer, and Nordiska museet in Stockholm as the obvious place for collecting and ordering *goavdát* and *gievrie* and other Sámi cult objects. At the same time, his letter is a prime example of the

61 Exhibition text transcribed 11 September 2019. A more detailed version of the text is published in the exhibition catalogue, Silvén, Landin & Westergren, *Sápmi*, 47.

62 Exhibition text transcribed 11 September 2019. A more detailed version of the text is published in the exhibition catalogue, Silvén, Landin & Westergren, *Sápmi*, 55.

63 Exhibition text transcribed 11 September 2019.

goavddis's power of attraction, including the colonizers. Together, the two texts situate the *goavddis* in a field of attraction, fascination, exploitation, and struggle over the right to define. None of them, however, addresses the particular object in the showcase, its visual and material characteristics, or its specific history. There is a dislocation between the display of the object, emphasizing its singularity, and the labels, which hold it up as an example of a category.

The *goavddis* also forms part of an assemblage of objects in the museum gallery. Among them is a wooden *sieidi*, an expressively shaped piece of wood, partly unworked and partly carved with signs and anthropomorphic features; a *náhppi* or milking ladle, appropriately carved from a birch burl in the nineteenth century, and not without its formal similarities to the bowl of the *goavddis*; an elaborate silver collar of a type used at weddings and on other ceremonial occasions; and a bag created by the contemporary *duojár* Anna-Stina Svakko, combining traditional materials such as fish skin and reindeer skin with Plexiglas details.⁶⁴ Entering into a visual and material dialogue with these objects, the *goavddis* appears an example of continuous Sámi creativity, enacted at the intersection of tradition and innovation, rooted in a specific landscape and the material conditions offered by it, and strongly related to social and cultural events and practices. It also stands out as a material example of a history of colonial exploitation and indigenous emancipation, of a continual struggle for the right to possess and define. At the centre of a permanent exhibition in a major museum in the Swedish capital, the *goavddis* is at the heart of the unresolved tension between lingering colonial structures and decolonial processes. Over the centuries, colonizers and collectors have used it, or tried to use it, to serve their own purposes. However, despite all attempts to objectify it, the *goavddis* has maintained some of its thing-power and material independence. Enclosed in its glass case, far away from the landscape and the cultural whole to which it once belonged, it still exerts its power to arouse wordless attraction and fascination.

64 For the term *duojár*, see p. 79, n. 36.

Part III

The Fate of Colonial Objects:
Pasts, Presents, and Futures



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8. Learning from the *Kunstkammer*? Colonial Objects and Decolonial Options

Abstract

The last chapter considers colonial objects not as traces of a historical past, but as tangible presences in today's museums. As contemporary museum pieces, they raise urgent questions about belonging, possession, and representation; about lingering colonial structures and the prospects of decolonization. Building on postcolonial and decolonial critiques, as framed by Édouard Glissant, James Clifford, and Walter D. Mignolo, the chapter concludes by proposing that colonial objects, with their long-standing involvement in the entangled histories of museums and colonialism, could play an important role in the re-envisioning and decolonization of museums in the Western world.

Keywords: decolonization, display, exhibition, belonging, art and concepts of art, powerful object

Where do these objects belong?
I have been suggesting that they 'belong' nowhere.
James Clifford, 1985

Dans la diversité consentie, les différents ne renoncent pas
à se définir ailleurs, en tant que différents à soi, mais ne
craignant pas non plus d'entreprendre ici, de manière
inopinée ou neuve, en tant qu'identifiables à l'autre.
Édouard Glissant, 2009¹

¹ 'When one agrees about the diversity, the differents may define themselves elsewhere, as different in themselves, without therefore hesitating about acting here in an unexpected or new way, as identifiable for others'. I owe a debt of thanks to Christina Kullberg for her invaluable help with my translations of Glissant from the French in this chapter (see also below, n. 39 and 40).

It is time to step back and take a more general view. The study of colonial objects in early modern Sweden offers clear examples of how the history of European colonialism is inseparably intertwined with the history of the museum as a typically European institution. While colonial trade and the global circulation of objects and commodities helped drive the formation of early museums, the desire for rare collectibles was behind the launch and funding of colonial enterprises. As James Clifford said in a different context, the museum and colonialism are two sides of ‘the restless desire and power of the modern West to collect the world’.² In more specific terms, I have found Sweden’s part in these entangled histories to be greater than is usually acknowledged. The presence of non-Western objects in early Swedish collections not only attests to European colonialism in a general sense, but many objects on display in the *Kunstkammern* of Sweden’s royalty, aristocrats, and scholars can be directly connected to the country’s colonial ventures. Ever since they first appeared in Swedish collections three or four centuries ago, objects such as the tomahawk considered in this book have been viewed, understood, and ascribed meaning within the frame of a colonial worldview, with all that meant in terms of universalizing claims, a supposedly neutral, objective viewpoint, and a self-assumed right—and duty—to collect and order the world and to write the histories of others.

Until recently, this manner of collecting, displaying, viewing, and interpreting non-Western objects in Western museums through the lens of colonialism was not thought a problem—not by the colonizers, that is. For centuries, a colonial mindset was an essential element in European self-understanding. It became a naturalized, self-explanatory part of what it meant to be European, and of the very idea of Europe. The act of acquiring and displaying colonial objects could be regarded a logical and consistent material aspect of a colonial outlook. However, rapid decolonization after the Second World War, with the closely related postcolonial turn in the humanities and social sciences, finally brought new conditions. Even if socioeconomic inequalities still largely follow the old colonial borders, and even if the world is essentially neocolonial rather than decolonial, it has become increasingly problematic to espouse a colonial worldview, or to just play innocent, not least for a public institution like a museum. I would argue this is a shift in the situation (in its double sense of ‘placing’ and ‘predicament’) of colonial objects in Western museums far more fundamental than the eighteenth-century transition from *Spiel* to *Nutzen*—from the playful relationship between nature, art, and technology to the sharp distinction between art and utility—identified by Bredekamp.³ The shift

2 James Clifford, *The Predicament of Cultures: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), 196.

3 Horst Bredekamp, *Antikensehnsucht und Maschinenglauben: Die Geschichte der Kunstkammer und die Zukunft der Kunstgeschichte* (Berlin: Wagenbach, 1993), 77–80 (English transl: Horst Bredekamp, *The Lure of Antiquity and the Cult of the Machine: The Kunstkammer and the Evolution of Nature, Art and*

from *Spiel* to *Nutzen*, that led to the eventual disintegration of the *Kunstkammer*, meant that the status of what I refer to here as colonial objects became unclear, until the objects eventually—over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—were incorporated into the new category of ethnographic objects and subject to new display strategies.⁴ And yet, throughout that transformation, a colonial gaze survived intact. European collectors, curators and museum-goers alike continued to approach non-European objects with a self-appointed right to order, display, and interpret. In the wake of decolonization and the postcolonial turn, though, none of this can be taken for granted any longer. Colonial objects in Western museums have become a problem and an embarrassment. They are *Das Unbehagen im Museum*, to quote the title of an Austrian anthology on postcolonial museology.⁵

And yet the objects are still there, carefully preserved in the display cases and storerooms of Western museums. Some have stood in the same spaces since the seventeenth century, such as the objects from distant continents in the armoury in Skokloster Castle. Others have been transferred to new institutions and display contexts, such as the tomahawk in the Museum of Ethnography or the *goavddis* in Nordiska museet. How are we to approach these objects today? How best to deal productively with the unease they provoke? Are there ethically defensible ways to maintain the display of colonial objects in Western museums? What might we do with the objects? What might they do to us? I do not pretend to have the answers to these urgent and delicate questions—after all, they are issues that haunt museum directors and curators all over the Western world—however, in the concluding part of the book I will address the problems and suggest possible approaches.

My focus here is no longer the individual objects in specific displays, but the current state of the Western museum and display system, and the places ascribed to colonial objects within it. What implicit rules and borders circumscribe colonial objects? Are there ways that colonial and other objects might migrate more freely within the system, whether spatially, conceptually, or epistemologically? What might the effect be on the objects, and our understanding and appreciation of them, and what might that do to the system? In this, my premises are twofold. First, that it would be productive to discuss the present situation in the light of a nuanced understanding of early modern display practices—in other words, that

Technology (Princeton: Wiener, 1995), 81–86); I will return to Bredekamp on *Spiel* and *Nutzen* later in this chapter.

4 Dominik Collet, *Die Welt in der Stube: Außereuropa in Kunstkammern der Frühen Neuzeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 20; Elke Bujok, 'Ethnographica in Early Modern *Kunstkammern* and their Perception', *Journal of the History of Collections*, 21:1 (2009), 26–28.

5 Belinda Kazeem, Charlotte Martinz-Turek & Nora Sternfeld, *Das Unbehagen im Museum: Postkoloniale Museologien* (Vienna: Turia + Kant, 2009).

we might actually learn something from the *Kunstkammer*. And, second, that colonial objects deserve to take centre stage in the discussions about museum shortcomings and prospects in a globalized world, as they have the potential to make visible—and upset—the hierarchies and dichotomies that govern the museum and display system. In order to set my sights on that system, and the negotiations and transformations taking place there, I will begin with one of its most prestigious locations: the Venice Biennale.

A *Kunstkammer* for Our Time?

The last half-century has brought a sweeping transformation to the Western museum and display system. Issues of representation have become increasingly pressing. Feminist and postcolonial critiques have led to renegotiations of established canons, boundaries, and hierarchies.⁶ Globalization constantly redraws the map as new commercial and cultural centres and trade routes challenge the superiority of Western metropolises.⁷ However, the system has proved remarkably resilient.⁸ Hierarchies and dichotomies inherent in the Western museum still frame visitors' encounters, whether with works of art, ethnographical objects, or historical artefacts. *Il Palazzo Enciclopedico*, the main exhibition at the 55th Venice Biennale in 2013, curated by Massimiliano Gioni, could be understood as both an expression of this ambiguous state of change and persistence and a critical reflection on it. As such, it serves as a thought-provoking start for a discussion about the museum and display system in our time, the places, and roles ascribed to colonial objects within that system, and the opportunities to rethink them.⁹

For *Il Palazzo Enciclopedico*, the old interior of the Venetian Arsenal—an immense shipyard complex that dates back to the fourteenth century—was refashioned into a contemporary exhibition space by the architect Annabelle Selldorf. The first hall

6 For a recent overview and critical discussion, see Ruth E. Iskin, *Re-Envisioning the Contemporary Art Canon: Perspectives in a Global World* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017). See also Peter Weibel, Andrea Buddensieg & Rasheed Araeen (eds.), *Contemporary Art and the Museum: A Global Perspective* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2007); Hans Belting, Andrea Buddensieg & Peter Weibel (eds.), *The Global Contemporary and the Rise of New Art Worlds* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2013).

7 The concept of trade routes was connected to a contemporary art discourse by Okwui Enwezor, who used it as the title for the second Johannesburg Biennale in 1997, see Okwui Enwezor (ed. and artistic director), *Trade Routes: History and Geography: 2nd Johannesburg Biennale 1997*, exhibition catalogue (Johannesburg: Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council, 1997).

8 Iskin, *Re-Envisioning the Contemporary Art Canon*, 1–2.

9 See the comprehensive exhibition catalogue: Massimiliano Gioni (ed. and artistic director), *Il palazzo enciclopedico/The Encyclopedic Palace: 55th International Art Exhibition: La Biennale di Venezia*, exhibition catalogue, 2 Vols. (Venice: Marsilio, 2013).



Fig. 29. 55th Venice Biennale 2013, Arsenale, first hall, with Maurino Auriti, *Il Palazzo Enciclopedico*, 1950s; and J.D. 'Okhai Ojeikere, photographs from the *Hairstyles* project, 1968-1985. ↵

was given a circular shape with rounded white screens, their smooth surfaces and perfect geometry offset against the old roughcast ceiling and worn brick columns, incorporating the latter into the staging of contemporaneity. At the centre of the circle, surrounded by four columns, towered the object that gave its name to the whole exhibition: *Il Palazzo Enciclopedico*, a 3-metre-high wooden architectural model, created in the 1950s by the retired car mechanic and self-taught architect Marino Auriti, an Italian immigrant living in Pennsylvania (Fig. 29). According to his plans, the circular Art Deco skyscraper would rise 660 metres above the Mall in central Washington, DC, its 136 storeys housing 'all the works of man in whatever field, discoveries made and those which may follow'.¹⁰ *Il Palazzo Enciclopedico* was thus meant to constitute a museum of all human knowledge and skill, scientific and technical and artistic; a *Kunstkammer* blown up to inconceivable dimensions. The

10 Marino Auriti, cited in Katherine Jentleson & Valérie Rousseau, 'From Auto Mechanic to Biennale Star: Who Was Marino Auriti?', *Self-Taught Genius: Treasures from the American Folk Art Museum 2013*: <http://selftaughtgenius.org/reads/from-auto-mechanic-to-biennale-star-who-was-marino-auriti> (visited 20 May 2021).

association with the *Kunstkammer* was further strengthened by 136 bronze statues of 'writers, scientists, and artists past, present and future', which were to stand in the colonnades surrounding the tower, emphasizing the connection between science and the arts, and the wide historical scope of the display.¹¹ Domed pavilions at the four corners of the colonnade would house laboratories, evoking Francis Bacon's programme for the learned prince while underscoring the museum's function not as a static collection of objects, but rather as a site of experimentation and the production of knowledge.¹² This was emphatically an ethnocentric project, founded in a European tradition of encyclopaedism and universalism traceable back to the *Kunstkammer*, and meant to be placed at the very centre of twentieth-century Western imperial power. And yet I would suggest that it also had the potential for openness and inclusivity. Whatever the originator's intentions, his words '*all* the works of man in *whatever* field' can be read as an expression of global ambitions and a non-hierarchical approach to different genres of objects and their creators.

On the white screens defining the circular space of the hall, forty-four black-and-white photographs were hung in a row, symmetrically, twenty-two on each side of the main axis through the hall. The photographs were all square, of identical size (some 40 × 40 cm) and mounted in white passe-partouts and simple black frames. Depicting Nigerian women's hairstyles, they were the work of J. D. 'Okhai Ojeikere, a self-taught Nigerian photographer. Ojeikere's expressive mode is austere and consistent. The photographs shown at the Biennale have neutral backgrounds, shifting from light grey to almost black, and free of almost any sense of space, which contributes to the absolute focus on the motif, the hairstyles, which are centred and close-up (Fig. 30). A smooth light accentuates the minutest details of the elaborate plaits that are the basis of most coiffures. In the majority of photographs the heads are seen from the back or in profile, from an angle that seems to have been chosen to convey as much visual information as possible about the hair, while in the few examples that are *en face* the sitters glance away or appear turned in on themselves. Even though the photographs depict individuals, they can hardly be said to be portraits in any established sense.

Unlike Auriti's architectural model in the centre of the hall, Ojeikere's photographs signal 'art' in the modern Western sense. Classic gelatin silver printing, masterfully handled, lends his images a soft but distinct greyscale that is a hallmark of Western art photography of the early and mid-twentieth century. The high definition and careful handling of details, with the earnest serenity of the sitters, give the works a plastic, sculptural quality. They are not so much about captured

11 Jentleson & Rousseau, 'From Auto Mechanic to Biennale Star': <http://selftaughtgenius.org/reads/from-auto-mechanic-to-biennale-star-who-was-marino-auriti> (visited 20 May 2021).

12 Bacon, 'Orations at Graies Inne Revells (1594-95)', in Alan Stewart & Harriet Knight (eds.), *The Oxford Francis Bacon, I: Early Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 595-606. See also above, p. 33-35.



Fig. 30. J.D. 'Okhai Ojeikere, *Untitled (Onile Gogoro Or Akaba)*, photograph, gelatin silver print on paper, from the *Hairstyles* project, 1975, 30 × 30 cm, Tate, London. ◀

moments as about shapes and textures, appealing to the viewer's sense of touch as well as the eye. At the same time, there is a fine but distinct granularity that calls attention to the surface, and thus to the material qualities of the images themselves. While invited to become visually and haptically absorbed in the meticulously rendered and endlessly diverse formations of braids and plaits, it is brought home to the viewer that they are looking at an image, a work of art. By design, the relation between viewer and photograph oscillates between absorption and theatricality.¹³

13 C.f. Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980); Michael Fried, 'Art and Objecthood', *Artforum*, 5:10 (1967), 12–23.

The artistic character of the photographs is connected with the artist's biography. In 1967, after a long career as a portraitist and press photographer, Ojeikere was invited to become a member of the Nigerian Art Council and contribute to its annual exhibitions.¹⁴ The following year he initiated the *Hairstyles* project, which was to continue for many years and eventually resulted in almost a thousand photographs. The project, which made Ojeikere's name as an artist, also formed part of a larger movement of national cultural affirmation that engaged artists, authors, and intellectuals in Nigeria after decolonization in 1960, a movement in which the Nigerian Art Council played an important role. The elaborate hairstyles belonged to a cultural heritage suppressed by the British colonizers, and which now became a sign of national and cultural independence.¹⁵ With his visual references to ancient Nok and Ife sculpture, Ojeikere's photographs anchored that heritage in an aesthetically and technologically sophisticated culture, stretching thousands of years into the past. While consolidating his own status as an artist, Ojeikere's project also pointed to hairstyling as a nationally significant art form. As a result, his photographs are deeply involved in a discourse of colonialism and decolonization. They are articulated as works of art in a context of colonial oppression and deliberation, and as visual elements in the shaping of postcolonial Nigerian self-esteem.

Beside the images' pronounced artistic qualities, inviting an aesthetic gaze, the *Hairstyles* series can also be considered an ethnographic project. The artist was concerned that the hairstyles, as a nationally specific art form with deep historical roots, were threatened by the rapid Westernization of Nigerian culture—an example of the complex processes of colonial liberation and the elusive workings of neocolonialism. With his photographs, Ojeikere wanted to preserve a visual memory of a cultural heritage he feared would disappear.¹⁶ The long sequence of images, with their uniform format and neutral background, calls to mind a scientific archive—further emphasized by the way the artist has named the photographs, giving each a unique number combined with the year it was taken. The first photograph in the series was thus filed as 'HD 1/68' (for hairdo number 1, photographed in 1968) and the last as 'HD 932/85'.¹⁷ Presented in this way, the series gives the impression of a morphology, a scientific documentation of a variety of particular forms within one fixed class. The delicate braids evoke organic shapes, such as plants or corals, and like natural specimens the hairstyles (or the photographs depicting them) can be ordered according to shape, colour, and size. They constitute a series. In this

14 J. D. Ojeikere with André Magnin (ed.), *J. D. 'Okhai Ojeikere: Photographs* (Zurich: Scalo, 2000), 49.

15 Chika Okeke-Agulu, 'J. D. Ojeikere's Nigerian Hairstyles', in Okwui Enwezor (ed.), *Contemporary African Photography from the Walther Collection: Events of the Self: Portraiture and Social Identity* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2010), 134.

16 Okeke-Agulu, 'J. D. Ojeikere's Nigerian Hairstyles', 134.

17 Ojeikere with Magnin, *J. D. 'Okhai Ojeikere: Photographs*, 51.

manner, Ojeikere's *Hairstyles* continually blurs the established boundaries between art and knowledge, playing with the idea of art and science, and encouraging both an aesthetic approach and a scholarly gaze. The series is at the same time a work of art, an ethnographic archive, and a morphologic documentation. This is the way it resonates with the open aesthetics and epistemological plurality of the *Kunstkammer* and with the archival and exploratory currents in contemporary art, suggesting a connection between contemporary and early modern aesthetics.¹⁸

The main exhibition of the 55th Biennale thus opened with two works created about half a century ago and both by autodidacts, one of whom was never acknowledged as an artist, and the other active in a place far from the hallowed metropolises of contemporary art. Already these simple biographical facts seem to contain a critique of predominant conceptions of centre and periphery in the world of contemporary art and display, to which I will soon return. Besides the biographical parallels, the connections between the two works may seem less than obvious, until we pause for a moment to reflect on the exhibition architecture. What at first glance might seem an unthinking repetition of hackneyed modernist gestures—smooth white screens pointing up the supposed autonomy of individual artworks by way of the negation of any context—in actual fact establishes several spatial and conceptual relationships between the two works, and between the works and the viewer. First, the perfect circle of white screens underlines the completeness of the series of photographs. Even if, strictly speaking, they constitute a fraction of the nearly thousand photographs of the *Hairstyles* project, they *appear* to be a complete series because they occupy the entire circle. They form a whole. Second, the circular shape of the screens accentuates the central position of the architectural model. In strict geometric terms, the tower was placed at the absolute centre of the space, while the photographs were hung along the periphery. An all too familiar binary relationship seems to crystallize between the Western centre (the encyclopaedic museum meant to be sited in the capital of the Western superpower) and the non-Western periphery (photographs by an artist from the African continent). Yet it is immediately undermined by the peripheral position of the originator of the encyclopaedic museum. Throughout his life, Auriti was regarded as an eccentric—literally 'outside the centre'—in contrast to Ojeikere, who was eventually elevated to the status of contemporary artist, his works exhibited in prestigious galleries and museums in the West.¹⁹ Finally, the circular screens echo

18 For the archival currents in contemporary art, see Sara Callahan, *The Archive Art Phenomenon: History and Critique at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century*, PhD Dissertation (Stockholm: Stockholm University, 2018).

19 Ojeikere has had solo exhibitions at the Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain, Paris (2000); the Blaffer Art Museum, University of Houston, Texas (2005); L. Parker Stephenson Photographs, New York (2009); Kiasma, Helsinki (2011); and the Royal Festival Hall, London (2014).

the circular shape of the tower, so the physical space in which the architectural model of the encyclopaedic palace was exhibited also became one floor *inside* the palace. The result of this spatial somersault was to deposit the viewer not only outside *Il Palazzo Enciclopedico*, looking at its exterior, but also inside on one of its floors, viewing what was exhibited there. And this particular floor proved to be the one dedicated to the hairstyles of Nigerian women, a subset of the totality of ‘all the works of man in whatever field’; or, if so desired, the floor dedicated to the works of Ojeikere, an artist–scholar perfectly in line with Auriti’s manifesto for *Il Palazzo Enciclopedico*.

From the initial juxtaposition of Auriti’s *Il Palazzo Enciclopedico* and Ojeikere’s *Hairstyles*, the main exhibition of the 55th Venice Biennale unfolded in a rich and intriguing dialogue with early modern display practices in general and the *Kunstkammer* in particular. Many of its recurrent features resonated with the *Kunstkammern* of Christina or Schefferus: a spatial organization of objects that encouraged associative and combinatory modes of thinking; unexpected and non-hierarchical juxtapositions of artworks and objects rarely defined as art; works of art and other objects with encyclopaedic ambitions, or playing with an encyclopaedic mode; works reflecting, and reflecting on, global relations and material connections between faraway places. The analogies with the *Kunstkammer* also resonate throughout the exhibition catalogue, beginning with the introduction in which Gioni not only singled out the *Kunstkammer* (or *Wunderkammer*, the term he uses) as the model for the exhibition, but also underlines the affinities between past and present:

the show is organized as a progression from natural to artificial forms, following the typical layout of *Wunderkammern*, or cabinets of curiosities, popular in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In these baroque protomuseums, which were not unlike the Palace dreamed up by Auriti, curiosities and marvels intermingled to compose new images of the world through elective affinities and magical sympathies. This combinatory science—based on the organization of heterogeneous objects and images—is also not unlike the contemporary culture of hyper-connectivity.²⁰

With his concluding reference to ‘hyper-connectivity’, today’s multiple and interconnected channels of communication, he seemed to claim the topicality of the *Kunstkammer* by suggesting an understanding of it as a dynamic, complex, and non-centred network of communication and connections between humans and objects. Other references to early modern practices of collecting and display

20 Gioni, *Il palazzo enciclopedico*, I, 27.

abound in the catalogue, and does the conjuring up of worlds in the borderlands between memory, myth, knowledge, and imagination. Thus Lina Bolzoni discusses Giulio Camillo's early sixteenth-century *Theatre of Memory*, a mnemonic theory and technique materialized in a wooden theatrical structure in which a great variety of objects were displayed; Anthony Grafton concentrates on Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis*, in which the philosopher elaborated on his belief that a comprehensive collection of objects was a necessary basis for the scientific exploration of the world; and Alexander Nagel introduces the curious *Musaeum Clausum*, a museum of 'remarkable books, antiquities, pictures and rarities' imagined by Thomas Brown in the 1670s.²¹

Within the topography of the modern museum and display system, the biennale format holds an important yet ambivalent position. It is associated with the commercialization and commodification of art in a globalized, neoliberal society, and is pivotal in the cycle of international art fairs and the global tourist industry and event culture. Yet compared to the more static, rigid institution of a museum, a biennale is fleet of foot and responsive, and at its best can function as a workshop for experiments and a laboratory where new approaches can be tested. Since the 1990s, new biennales have been launched on all continents, challenging the established Western centres of art. Often taking a critical stance on the art world's stubborn ethnocentrism, these new biennales offer new viewpoints, new historiographies, and alternative sites for contemporary art. Unlike the nationalist, ethnocentric bias of the traditional Western museum, the new biennales suggest alternative regional connections and call into question the established conceptions of centre and periphery.²²

The main exhibition of the 55th Venice Biennale can thus be approached as an example of the generic biennale's new role as a site for reconsidering the museum and display system, and for trying out alternative practices and strategies—it is interesting to note that the *Ur*-biennale, initiated over a century ago in a fit of blatantly nationalist ethnocentrism, lately seems to be following the critical, searching lead of the new biennales in its erstwhile peripheries. Of particular interest for this book is how the 55th Biennale framed its critical stance by establishing connections to early

21 Lina Bolzoni, 'Giulio Camillo and the Theatre of Knowledge', in Gioni, *Il palazzo enciclopedico*, I, 55; Anthony Grafton, 'The Deceptions of Utopia', in Gioni, *Il palazzo enciclopedico*, I, 67; Alexander Nagel, 'Imagining the Museum', in Gioni, *Il palazzo enciclopedico*, I, 83.

22 Tim Griffin, 'Worlds Apart: Contemporary Art, Globalization, and the Rise of Biennials', in Alexander Dumbadze & Suzanne Hudson (eds.), *Contemporary Art: 1989 to the Present*, (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 7–16; Massimiliano Gioni, 'In Defense of Biennials' in Dumbadze & Hudson, *Contemporary Art*, 171–177; Iskin, *Re-Envisioning the Contemporary Art Canon*, 11; Hans Belting, 'Contemporary Art and the Museum in the Global Age', in Weibel, Buddensieg & Araeen, *The Global Contemporary*, 31. The binary opposition of museum and biennale is a simplification, but serves to clarify the dynamics of the museum and display system and possible positions within it.

modern practices of display. By referring to the early modern *Kunstkammer*—via Auriti's *Palazzo Enciclopedico*—the exhibition suggested an alternative historiography of the museum and display system. Whereas the standard historiography emphasizes a gradual distinction between different objects, the separation of art as an autonomous category, and the formation of a hierarchical system of institutions, objects, and knowledge, the alternative rather stresses the playful and associative juxtapositions of objects, a blurring of boundaries, dichotomies, and hierarchies, and the formation of connections and relations. In this alternative historiography, art is never self-contained, never detached from other facets of material, cultural, or social life. The boundaries between art and craft, art and science, art and ethnography, are always provisional and permeable. I would suggest that we should regard these two historiographies not as mutually exclusive, but rather as two parallel currents, or as ways of highlighting two facets of the museum and display system. Even if distinction, separation, and hierarchization have been central to collecting and display over the last couple of centuries, counter-examples can be found throughout history. Recently, those counter-examples seem to have gained momentum.

What is made visible by the superposition of three such historically distinct modes of display as the Biennale of 2013, *Il Palazzo Enciclopedico* envisioned in the 1950s, and the *Kunstkammer*, the predominant display mode of the seventeenth century? If we look at the Biennale, the *Palazzo*, and the *Kunstkammer* through one another, what do we see? I would suggest three points with particular bearing on this book. First, their superposition contributes to the blurring of the boundaries and distinctions that are an essential part of the modern museum and display system. The line between what is art and what is not—a *sine qua non* for the institution of the art museum and for the academic discipline of art history—is destabilized by Auriti's model in Venice. If a half-century-old architectural model, created by an eccentric autodidact who was never part of the art world, can take centre stage at what is possibly the world's most prestigious show of contemporary art, what else might not follow? On site, Auriti's model also helped bridge the contemporary biennale to the *Kunstkammer*. In this concrete, material way, the biennale was seen to invoke practices and strategies of display that had been in use *before* modern conceptions of art, and before the distinction was drawn between art and non-art that followed from these conceptions. The *Kunstkammer* recognized no borders separating what later became defined as art from other kinds of artefacts or specimens. On the contrary, it affirmed and cherished objects which roamed the borderlands of art and science, play and utility, nature and culture.²³

23 Bredekamp, *Antikensehnsucht und Maschinenglauben*, 22–23, 65–66, 73, 80 (English transl: Bredekamp, *The Lure of Antiquity*, 18, 65–67, 77, 86). See also Lisbeth Tarp, *Naturlig kunst—kunstig natur: Om hybriditet og kunsthåndværk fra 1550–1650 i Europa*, PhD Dissertation (Aarhus: Aarhus Universitet, 2014).

The border between art and non-art could be subdivided into several more specific intersections, some of which were also challenged in the first hall of the Biennale. What happened to the border between art and craft when Auriti's architectural model was placed at the heart of the show? What about the boundary between art and ethnography in Ojeikere's photographs? While I would not argue that the Venice Biennale 2013 broke new ground—crossing the boundaries between art and craft, or art and ethnography, is the stuff of mainstream contemporary art and display—it still serves as a prime example of its kind, elucidating and ultimately denaturalizing key aspects of the museum and display system. Of particular interest here is how it thematized and elaborated on the connections between contemporary display practices and their early modern equivalents.

My second concern here is centre and periphery. The choice to open the 55th Biennale with two older works, created by autodidacts far from the centre of things, can be understood as a critique of prevailing notions of centre and periphery in the museum and display system. The critical stance was borne out by the exhibition architecture and the spatial organization of the objects. What at first glance might be thought a straightforward spatial reproduction of the established relationship between a Western centre (Auriti's model) and non-Western peripheries (Ojeikere's photographs) proved a quagmire of tensions, ambiguities, and inherent contradictions. The resulting destabilization of the centre–periphery relationship resonates with the decentred, non-hierarchic juxtaposition of European and non-European artefacts and specimens so characteristic of the *Kunstkammer*.

The superposition of three historically distinct display modes thus sets out, and denaturalizes, the dichotomies which have been embedded in the Western museum and display system since the late eighteenth century: art versus non-art, art versus craft, art versus ethnography, centre versus periphery, West versus non-West. It also hints at the possibility of less exclusionary and more permeable conceptions of art. The premodern notion of *ars* comes to mind, not only referring to art in the modern Western sense, but also craft, skill, method, and knowledge. Gioni, writing in the introduction to the 55th Biennale exhibition catalogue, says as much:

The Encyclopaedic Palace blurs the line between professional artists and amateurs, insiders and outsiders, revisiting artworks with other forms of figurative expression—both to release art from the prison of its supposed autonomy, and to remind us of its capacity to express a vision of the world.²⁴

With his use of a truly baroque paradox—the prison of autonomy—Gioni underlines the limiting and reductive aspects of modern Western conceptions of art. He also

24 Gioni, *Il palazzo enciclopedico*, I, 23.

suggests that the modern idea of art's autonomy is imaginary. What we talk of as art is always, and has always been, entangled in a web of capital, power, religious beliefs, social status, political and ideological claims, and personal interests and desires.

However, and this is my third and last point, even though they blur boundaries and upset established dichotomies, and so suggest alternatives to the predominant Western museum and display system, the Biennale, the *Palazzo*, and the *Kunstkammer* are all pronouncedly and unmistakably ethnocentric. The *Kunstkammer* was a European project through and through; Europeans arranged, displayed, viewed, and made meaning out of the objects they gathered from far and near. *Il Palazzo Enciclopedico*, as envisaged by Auriti, was to rise from the Mall in central Washington, DC, an over-explicit manifestation of the new imperial heartland after the Second World War. And the Venice Biennale, founded in Europe in the heyday of colonialism and in one of the first European centres of global trade, continues to claim it is the beating heart of the art world. It is crucial to bear these ambiguities and apparent contradictions in mind. This is not a question of either–or, but rather both–and. The *Kunstkammer* was both a materialization of a ruthless colonial worldview *and* a suggestion of an unbiased, non-hierarchic approach to the world. *Il Palazzo Enciclopedico* was both a megalomaniac manifestation of the centre of Empire *and* a potentially boundless invitation to 'all the works of man in whatever field'. The Biennale may be described as part of a global capitalist event culture *and* a laboratory for critical aesthetical experiments; a manifestation of the art world's focal point *and* a suggestion of more pluralistic and decentred art worlds.

The Western museum and display system is inseparably interwoven with colonial history and a neocolonial world order. Every curatorial choice is made against that background, whether we like it or not. There is no way to undo it; no position outside colonial history; no way to shed all our colonial baggage and start afresh. Perhaps that is the key lesson to be learnt from the *Kunstkammer* and its recent revitalizations in the 55th Biennale and other exhibitions of (contemporary) art: it is only by acknowledging our colonial legacy of collecting and display we can hope to find a productive way forward. Every attempt to widen our approach and challenge the dichotomies and hierarchies governing the museum and display system must begin by recognizing its colonial legacy and our hand in it. Not that every future exhibition, whether in an art museum, an ethnographic museum, or elsewhere must necessarily thematize its own colonial guilt—that would be just another way of reducing objects, colonial or otherwise, to the status of illustrations or props in the staging of Western selves. Nevertheless, I would argue that we need to remember the ambivalences, the both–and's of the Western history of collecting and display, from the *Kunstkammer* to the contemporary museum, Kunsthalle, or Biennale. We must be able to appreciate the playful, open, and non-hierarchic qualities of the *Kunstkammer* in all its iterations without concealing its colonial

legacy. We must be able to see, and to show others, the traces of colonial exploitation and violence inscribed in present-day museums (and not only ethnographic museums, but also art museums, history museums, and natural history museums) without it preventing us from appreciating the beauty and import of the colonial objects on display.

A Poetics of Diversity

Of the two premises with which I began this chapter, I have concentrated on the assumption it would be productive to discuss the present state of the modern museum and display system in the light of a nuanced understanding of early modern practices of display—we can learn something from the *Kunstkammer*. I would argue that the resonances between the *Kunstkammer* and contemporary display, here exemplified by the 55th Venice Biennale, can contribute by laying bare, and thus denaturalizing, the dichotomies that still govern the displaying, viewing, and interpreting of objects in museums and other cultural institutions; dichotomies such as art and non-art, centre and periphery, and West and non-West. Further, I propose that the *Kunstkammer* and its revitalization could help us recognize the legacy of colonialism as a crucial aspect of the museum and display system. To do so is a prerequisite if we want the museum to remain a relevant institution. I will now turn to my second premise, that colonial objects deserve a central place in the discourse of museums and display, and that their itineraries have the potential to unsettle governing hierarchies and dichotomies.

I have set out examples of the important, multifaceted roles played by colonial objects in Sweden's early modern collections. European—and Swedish—encounters with previously unknown lands and cultures, and their subsequent exploitation of them, called for a sweeping re-envisioning of the world, and Europe's—and Sweden's—possible roles in it.²⁵ Colonial objects could serve as trophies and materializations of European control and supremacy, but they were also approached as objects of knowledge, curiosity, and wonder, and even admiration. Even if colonial objects in a stricter sense of the term did not make up a great percentage of the objects in Swedish and European *Kunstkammern*, they assuredly played a crucial role in the worldmaking that took place there.²⁶ In later eighteenth century, as the

25 Jared Hickman, *Black Prometheus: Race and Radicalism in the Age of Atlantic Slavery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 33–34.

26 The concept of worldmaking was coined by Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1978). For a fruitful example of its use in relation to the early modern period, see Ayesha Ramachandran, *The Worldmakers: Global Imagining in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

Kunstkammer gradually dissolved, their objects recategorized and divided between new display spaces, the role of colonial objects became more ambivalent. In the Linnaean era of systematization and categorization, they remained essentially uncategorized until eventually, in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, they were incorporated into the new category of ethnography, as exemplified by the tomahawk and other colonial objects from the royal Swedish collections, now displayed in the Museum of Ethnography in Stockholm. In the latter half of the twentieth century, the presence of colonial objects in Swedish museums was further obscured by a disinclination to acknowledge and discuss the country's colonial history, because it did not fit its self-image as a progressive, peaceful welfare state and self-proclaimed conscience of the world. More recently, however, Swedish colonialism has been the subject of increasing interest, evident in several scholarly publications and in self-critical, self-reflexive exhibitions not limited to ethnographical museums.²⁷ The time is ripe for a more nuanced discussion of the objects at the intersection of museums and colonialism, and their potential to expose the concealed aspects of colonial history and lingering colonial structures and modes of thought.

As defined in this study, the concept of colonial objects not only refers to the circumstances of their acquisition, transfer, and incorporation; it also suggests that the meanings, values, and uses of these objects unfolded within a colonial framework, and, more generally, that colonialism and objects are closely connected.²⁸ Non-Western objects in Swedish *Kunstkammern* have been caught up in the encounters and exchanges, and sometimes the violent clashes, between the colonizer and the colonized. Rarely if ever are they authentic traces of an untouched culture, a romantic view formed in the earliest days of colonialism and still rehearsed on labels and wall texts in ethnographic museums. For the same reasons, it is problematic to talk of their acquisition by colonizers in terms of 'decontextualization', as is often the case in studies of similar kinds of objects in different parts of Europe.²⁹ As creoles, or material articulations of border experiences, many of these objects formed part of a colonial context from the very beginning. The wampum-covered wooden helve of the tomahawk, its shape and materials characteristic of Native

27 See, for example, Magdalena Naum & Jonas M. Nordin (eds.), *Scandinavian Colonialism and the Rise of Modernity: Small Time Agents in a Global Arena* (New York: Springer, 2013); Jonas M. Nordin, *The Scandinavian Early Modern World: A Global Historical Archaeology* (New York: Routledge, 2020). Some examples of exhibitions are *Fetish Modernity* at the Museum of Ethnography, Stockholm (2013–2014); *History Unfolds* at the Swedish History Museum, Stockholm (2016–2017); and the curatorial project *Afrika pågår/Ongoing Africa* at the Museum of Ethnography, Stockholm 2017–2021.

28 For a similar argument, see W. J. T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 155.

29 See, for example, Collet, *Die Welt in der Stube*, 207.

North American material culture, is joined to a blade forged from European, and possibly Swedish, iron, so materializing a colonial encounter. A *goavddis* or *gievrie* created by Sámi artists or craftspersons using reindeer skin and other locally available and culturally distinctive materials, often carry Christian imagery and symbols along with the images of Sámi gods and sacred places, suggesting a long period of cultural and religious exchange and translation. From their very inception these objects were entangled in tight weaves of colonial encounters and relationships. Sometimes, colonial exchange caused their coming into being, as with the suit of clothes commissioned from Native American craftsmen by Johan Printz, governor of Nova Suecia; or the assemblage of a stuffed reindeer and *geres* commissioned by the governor of Västerbotten as a gift to Charles XI.³⁰ These were objects that did not exist before the colonial encounter.

The meaning and value of these objects cannot be separated from their creole status, their betweenness. Transfer and transformation are not occasional, casual moments in their histories, but fundamental and formative parts of their social life. Their meanings and values are not only related to their places of origin—if it is possible to pinpoint such places—but at least as much to their migrations and alterations. James Clifford has stressed ‘the unsettled, nomadic existence’ of non-Western objects in Western museums, with objects subject to constant recontextualization and reconceptualization within the ‘ethnographic/artistic object system’.³¹ ‘Where do these objects belong?’ he asks, and answers, ‘I have been suggesting they “belong” nowhere, having been torn from their social contexts of production and reception, given value in systems of meaning whose primary function is to confirm the knowledge and taste of a possessive Western subjectivity’.³²

‘They belong nowhere’. Clifford puts his finger on the continual reclassifications of these objects as rarities, exotica, souvenirs, ethnographic artefacts, or art, and their endless migrations between colonizers, dealers, private collectors, public museums, and other institutions. Despite his insightful observations, however, Clifford still seems to take it as read there was a distinct *before* and *after*. At the moment of their acquisition, the objects were ‘torn from their social contexts of

30 The commissioning of the suit of clothes is described in Per Lindeström, *Resa till nya Sverige* (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, [1691] 1962), 128 (in English translation as Per Lindeström, *Geographia Americae: With an Account of the Delaware Indians Based on Surveys and Notes Made in 1654-1656*, transl. Amandus Johnson (Philadelphia: The Swedish Colonial Society, 1925), 222). See also above, p. 42–43. For the Sámi assemblage, see p. 64–67; and Jonas Nordin & Carl-Gösta Ojala, ‘Collecting, Connecting, Constructing: Early Modern Commodification and Globalization of Sámi Material Culture’, *Journal of Material Culture*, 23:1, 58–82.

31 Clifford, ‘Objects and Selves: An Afterword’, in George W. Stocking Jr (ed.), *Objects and Others: Essays on Museums and Material Culture* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 243 (republished in Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, 216–229).

32 Clifford, ‘Objects and Selves’, 244.

production and reception' and incorporated into the project of Western identity formation. Here, it should be observed that Clifford, like many other scholars, talks of the objects as non-Western rather than colonial. While the former concept seems to imply a firm distinction between non-West and West and, by extension, an original state of non-Western objects untouched by the West, the latter on the contrary stresses complex involvedness and entanglement.

The close examination of objects undertaken in this study demonstrates that the boundaries between non-West and West, and between before and after, are much less distinct than Clifford suggests. From the moment of their production and first reception, the tomahawk and the other objects seem to have existed in a colonial contact zone.³³ They were not simply transferred from one definable sociocultural context to another. In the seventeenth century, European colonialism developed into a force with a global reach, a factor in the production of objects worldwide. This is not to diminish the agency of indigenous artists or craftspersons, though. Quite the opposite. For it is only when we acknowledge that they operated within the framework of colonialism, just as much as the colonizers who commissioned, purchased, or stole the material results of their skill, that we can appreciate their creative approach to combining traditional and previously little-known materials (the tomahawk), or making new meaning out of combinations of figures and symbols derived from different cultural and religious frameworks (the *goavddis*). Nor does it reduce colonial objects to simple reflections of a colonial world order. Rather, the objects were material instances of colonial encounters, exploitation, and resistance. In the colonial objects colonialism and colonial resistance took material shape.

To 'belong nowhere', as Clifford has it, seems to have an even more profound meaning than he anticipated. It implies a state of rootlessness, of being exposed, insecure, outcast—words that are alarmingly topical in our world, scarred by forced migration, rigorous border controls, and increasing xenophobia. This precarious state finds an extraordinary visual expression in Isaac Julien's video work *Western Union: Small Boats* (2007), an harrowing yet strangely beautiful enactment of flight and death on the Mediterranean—beautiful not in the sense it is oblivious to the horror and pain, but rather that it insists on the dignity of the victims.³⁴ To belong nowhere is to run fatal risks, and centuries of European colonialism

33 As coined by Marie Louise Pratt, 'Arts of the Contact Zone', *Profession* (1991), 34, contact zones refer to 'social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today'. Clifford has applied Pratt's concept to ethnographic and anthropological museums, see James Clifford, 'Museums as Contact Zones', in James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), 188–219.

34 <https://www.isaacjulien.com/projects/western-union-small-boats/> (visited 21 May 2021).

have destroyed the webs of belonging, forcing humans and objects into exile. There are, however, other sides to it. While the comfort of *belonging* may entail a shade of narrow-mindedness and a lack of capacity to view things differently, the precariousness of *belonging nowhere* often involves an ability to translate between different cultural experiences, to navigate obscure borderlands, and to view things from an oblique angle. Those who belong nowhere may notice what those who belong take for granted, and thus expose and defamiliarize ingrained practices and ways of ordering and relating to the world.

In *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha explores the literary potential of these borderlands. In a dialogue with Goethe, who once coined the concept of *Weltliteratur*, Bhabha suggests that the possible terrain for a contemporary, urgent world literature will not be found in the sovereignty of national cultures, circumscribed by contingent boundaries, nor in the presumed universalism of human culture, but rather in the ‘transnational histories of migrants, the colonized, or political refugees’, that is, of people in ‘border and frontier conditions’.³⁵ In these histories, told from the borderlands, ambivalent and multilayered experiences of a colonial and neocolonial world unfold. Édouard Glissant approaches the issue in a related, yet distinct way in *Philosophie de la relation*. Against the empty abstractions of universality and the lurking fascism and racism of the nation-state, he proposes a ‘poetics of diversity’ (*une poétique du divers*), an affirmation of the particularities that form archipelagic webs of relations.³⁶

Bhabha’s and Glissant’s thoughts on literature offer fruitful approaches to the objects at the centre of this study. Colonial objects could be conceived of as carriers of ‘transnational histories’ and witnesses of ‘border and frontier conditions’. Their meanings are not derivable from a single, clearly circumscribed place of origin, but rather from their continual migrations and border crossings, geopolitically, conceptually, aesthetically, and epistemologically. Their values will be found neither in the universal nor in the national, but in their cross-boundary particularities. Travellers in space and time, colonial objects are not only marked by the double experience of colonized and colonizer, but also of past and present. If we contemplate them closely, giving them time to unfold new layers of their materiality and visuality, these objects may enrich our understanding of past and present borderlands, while, from their oblique angles, they establish the contingency of the borders that govern the collecting and display of objects in Western museums. An attentive approach to colonial objects might also point to other ways of understanding the

35 Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 12. See also Araba Evelyn Johnston-Arthur, “...um die Leiche des verstorbenen M[.]en Soliman...”: Strategien der Entherzigung, Dekolonisation und Dekonstruktion österreichischer Neutralitäten’, in Kazeem, Martinz-Turek & Sternfeld, *Das Unbehagen im Museum*, particularly p. 15.

36 Édouard Glissant, *Philosophie de la relation: Poésie en étendue* (Paris: Gallimard, 2009), 36.

nature of belonging, starting from the metaphor of *routes* as opposed to *roots*.³⁷ In this sense, belonging is provisional and preliminary. It is based on transcultural and archipelagic routes and connections rather than a nationalist conception of rootedness. These are urgent political and ethical questions of our day. By closing their borders and tightening immigration and asylum laws, the Western nations ring-fence a limited and limiting conception of belonging, while refusing much of the world's population their rights to belong.

In proposing that the elementary particles of culture are *les différents*, the different, Glissant offers an alternative to a nationalist conception of culture as homogenous and rooted, but also to the self–other dichotomy so often used to define the cultural encounter in the postcolonial discourse. Neither uniform nor binary, culture in Glissant's understanding is a weave of differences or particularities, constantly embarking on new relationships with one another.³⁸ A culture that only embraces itself will be sterile and unable to flourish. This leads Glissant to argue that even colonialism can be a productive factor in culture, without for a second forgetting its destructiveness, the sheer brutality of the way it makes things fall apart. Colonial enterprises are acts of violence. Through these violent acts, however, new 'contact zones' are created, in which particularities can enter into new relationships and where meaning, even beauty, may arise. This is the paradox of colonialism: while striving for uniformity, control, and clear-cut borders, it produces unforeseeable variety, creolization, and permeable borders. 'The very measure of what one calls a civilization gives way to the entanglement of these cultures of mankind [that are at once] adjacent to and implied in one another'.³⁹

Glissant's line of thought offers an alternative understanding and appreciation of colonial objects; objects we have seen are marked from the first by the relationships between disparate *différents*. With their physical shape and materiality, and the diverse and sometimes conflicting narratives inscribed on their surfaces, the tomahawk and the *goavddis* are best understood as instances of a poetics of diversity. The acquisitions and transfers of these objects were acts of colonial violence, but acts of creation. The *Kunstammern* in which the objects were housed were materializations of colonial exploitation, but equally were places where *les différents* enter into new relationships and where beauty can arise. In a typically elliptical turn of phrase, Glissant suggests the ability to act in new relationships at other places, while also demanding the readiness of the viewer to accept the diversity and encounter the unexpected: 'When one agrees about the diversity,

37 Clifford uses this wordplay in the title of one of his collections of essays, *Routes*.

38 Glissant, *Philosophie de la relation*, 29–30.

39 Glissant, *Philosophie de la relation*, 28, my translation, the original reads: 'la mesure même de cela qu'on appelle une civilisation cède à l'emmèlement de ces cultures des humanités, avoisinantes et impliquées'.

the different may define themselves elsewhere, as different in themselves, without therefore hesitating about acting here in an unexpected or new way, as identifiable for others'.⁴⁰

Object Hierarches and Conceptions of Art

Returning to Horst Bredekamp and his ingenious essay on the *Kunstammer*, he defines a shift in the late seventeenth century onwards from *Spiel* (play) to *Nutzen* (utility) as the primary ground for collecting and display.⁴¹ Quoting several late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century theorists who emphasized the benefit to the nation and questioned the usefulness of the fine arts, he shows how the encyclopaedic, all-embracing scope of the *Kunstammer* gave way to a distinction between science and technology on the one hand and art on the other; and how its non-hierarchical manner of display was replaced by a hierarchy of artefacts defined by their utility. This led to the eventual disintegration of the *Kunstammer* during the eighteenth century, and its replacement by the modern system of museum and display, based on distinction, systematization, and hierarchization. From a broader perspective, this shift marks an increasing belief in progress, and a conviction that modern Europe had finally surpassed ancient patterns and ideals. Ultimately, the shift from playfulness to utility, and from the *Kunstammer* to the specialized museum, formed part of what is often stamped with the unwieldy label of modernity.

Bredekamp's essay can be read as the reverse of the better-known story, often told in triumphant terms, of how art gained its (rightful) freedom and autonomy in the eighteenth century thanks to key texts by Baumgarten, via d'Alembert to Kant.⁴² Bredekamp's alternative reading implies that art instead was pushed aside because of its supposed lack of utility or national benefit. With a jab at the teleological tendencies in historiography, Bredekamp continues that something might actually have been lost in the divorce of science from art, and the disintegration of the *Kunstammer*—a loss that may well still affect us today. These two alternative histories seem to agree on one point: that both art and science, from the eighteenth century onwards, were largely defined in terms of the other, and the value and distinctive character of each came from being what the other was

40 Glissant, *Philosophie de la relation*, 30–31, my translation, the original reads: 'Dans la diversité consentie, les différents ne renoncent pas à se définir ailleurs, en tant que différents à soi, mais ne craignent pas non plus d'entreprendre ici, de manière inopinée ou neuve, en tant qu'identifiables à l'autre'.

41 Bredekamp, *Antikensehnsucht und Maschinenglauben*, 77–80 (English transl: Bredekamp, *The Lure of Antiquity*, 81–86).

42 The classic instance is of that story is Paul Oskar Kristeller, 'The Modern System of the Arts: A Study in the History of Aesthetics', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 12:4 (1951), 496–527 & 13:1 (1952), 17–46.

not. Art could go on being playful and purposeless, in contrast to the usefulness of science and technology. It also meant that certain groups of objects could be smoothly transferred from the disintegrating *Kunstkammer* to the modern museum and display system that took its place. Renaissance paintings and ancient sculptures matched the new criteria for art, and were put on display in art museums, while minerals, fossils, and stuffed animals were defined as scientific specimens and put in natural history museums. Other groups of *Kunstkammer* items, colonial objects among them, were in a more precarious position, however. Displaced from the outset, colonial objects became doubly displaced when the *Kunstkammer* was dismantled. In many cases, they became peripheral parts of natural history collections, until they were eventually allotted a place in the new category of ethnographic objects. However, a century's worth of incessant churn, recategorizing the colonial objects and shuffling them around between natural history museums, ethnographic museums, art museums, or, most recently, museums of world culture, suggests that they are still scarred by their history of twofold displacement, or, in Clifford's words, of belonging nowhere.⁴³

As Bredekamp's narrative implies, and of particular interest here, the establishment of modern conceptions of *art* (or *Kunst*) was closely connected to the disintegration of the *Kunstkammer*. This suggests that the transition identified by Bredekamp could also be approached linguistically and etymologically as a shift in meaning of 'art' from premodern to modern times. In the early modern period, art (or its Latin form *ars*, which was frequently used in English and other European languages) had a wide meaning, referring to skill, craft, knowledge, science, and method, but also to devices and tricks, and so embracing not only artistic but also scientific, professional, and everyday practices, skills, and knowledge—as well as the material results of these practices and skills. In that sense, art or *ars* corresponded to the German *Kunst*, as in *Kunstkammer*—a site that housed a wide variety of objects and practices, whether scholarly, aesthetic, or social. Linguistically it also related to one of the two main *Kunstkammer* categories, as structured in inventories and printed catalogues: *artificialia*, or man-made things, as distinct from *naturalia*, or things of God's Creation. It is important to remember, however,

43 The Swedish Världskulturmuseet (Museum of World Culture), which opened in Gothenburg in 2004, houses hundreds of thousands of ethnographic objects. Its website www.varldskulturmuseerna.se/en/varldskulturmuseet/about-the-museum/ (visited 21 May 2021) downplays the collections, presenting the museum as 'a platform for dialogues and reflections, where many different voices can be heard and controversial and contentious topics discussed'. Other examples are the Weltkulturen Museum in Frankfurt, and Museu de Cultures del Món in Barcelona. In Vienna, the Museum für Völkerkunde reopened in October 2017 as the Weltmuseum Wien. In New York, meanwhile, magnificent collections of colonial objects still share a space with stuffed primates and dinosaur skeletons in the American Museum of Natural History.

that usually these two categories were not separated in the physical space of the *Kunstkammer*. Artefacts and natural specimens were juxtaposed on its shelves and walls, for material or formal likeness often governed the arrangement, and there seems to have been a particular interest in objects that crossed the boundaries between the artificial and the natural. Artefacts also formed part of God's marvellous Creation.

During the eighteenth century, art took on a narrower and more exclusive significance—primarily in the writings of German and French philosophers and critics—referring to the fine arts of painting, sculpture, architecture, music, and poetry, and restricted to post-medieval Europe and its alleged origins in Greek and Roman antiquity.⁴⁴ In this new understanding, art was conceptually marked off not only from science and technology—‘the benefit of the nation’—but also from other areas of human skill, craft, and knowledge. Geographically, art was defined in contrast to the world beyond Europe, thus connecting to colonial ideology and its increasingly important notions of racial distinction and the superiority and universality of European culture. ‘The very notion of art as a distinctive category of objects [...] is forged in the colonial encounter’, as Mitchell has it.⁴⁵ True, contemporary conceptions of art are neither homogenous nor uncontested, and new artistic media (photography, video, the Internet) and practices (performance, conceptualism, relational art) have repeatedly challenged and redrawn the boundaries.⁴⁶ Decolonization and the postcolonial turn have led to the questioning of the West's privileged position, and efforts have been made to establish more inclusive conceptions of art, such as ‘global art’ or ‘world art’.⁴⁷ However, conceptions of art still exercise tremendous power over the ways objects and phenomena are categorized, valued, and displayed, and over museum-goers' expectations and preunderstandings. ‘Art’ directs and frames aesthetic experience.

Thus the modern conceptions of art as framed in the eighteenth century, and refined during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, is about setting boundaries, excluding many of the cultural practices and objects covered by the

44 Kristeller, ‘The Modern System of the Arts’. It should be noted that, parallel to modern narrower definitions, ‘art’ is still used in the premodern sense in everyday language, as in ‘the martial arts’, ‘the art of cooking’, etc.

45 Mitchell, *What do Pictures Want?*, 147.

46 In practice, art has never been as monolithic and self-contained as it appeared in theoretical texts of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries. The autonomous concept of art is in the first instance a theoretical construct of limited practical applicability.

47 See, for example, James Elkins (ed.), *Is Art History Global?* (New York: Routledge, 2007); Kitty Zijlmans & Wilfried Van Damme (eds.), *World Art Studies: Exploring Concepts and Approaches* (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2008); Belting, Buddensieg & Weibel, *The Global Contemporary and the Rise of New Art Worlds.*; Belting, ‘Contemporary Art and the Museum in the Global Age’, 32–36; Parul Dave Mukherji, ‘Whither Art History in a Globalizing World’, *The Art Bulletin*, 96:2 (June 2014), 151–155.

premodern *ars*. Paradoxically, these narrower, more exclusive conceptions made universalizing claims from the first. Part of the colonial worldview and ideology, modern conceptions of art were themselves a colonizing force both temporally and geographically, claiming the right to define objects created and used outside the West, and Western objects created before the eighteenth century.⁴⁸ It was by means of ‘art’ that hierarchies were established, inclusions and exclusions were effected. Colonial objects were discounted as art and thus devaluated, or they were included in that category, whereupon they were deprived of all potential meaning and significance that did not correspond to the concept of art. Throughout their histories, colonial objects have been exposed to violence: sometimes physical violence, as when a *goavddis* or *gievrie* shows marks of cutting or burning; or epistemic violence, when objects were forced into the colonizers’ epistemic frameworks and institutions; or conceptual violence by the practices of defining, categorizing, and labelling objects created by the colonized, with concepts invented by the colonizers. Modern conceptions of art have played a crucial part in these acts of conceptual violence directed at colonial objects.

Since the early twentieth century, there has been a significant migration of colonial objects within what Clifford terms the ‘ethnographic/artistic object system’.⁴⁹ A paradigmatic, mythic moment was Picasso’s encounter with African and Oceanian masks and sculptures in the Musée d’ethnographie in Paris one day in June 1907.⁵⁰ ‘At that moment I realized this was what painting was all about’, he later said according to one of many retellings of the episode, at a sweep elevating the masks and sculptures to the category of high art.⁵¹ This transformational encounter between Western artist and non-Western objects, its repercussions for modernist art in general, and in particular *Les Femmes d’Alger*, formed the dramaturgic centre of the renowned yet criticized exhibition ‘Primitivism’ in 20th Century Art,

48 Walter Mignolo & Rolando Vázquez (eds.), ‘Decolonial AestheSis’, theme issue of *Social Text: Periscope* (2013), n.p: https://socialtextjournal.org/periscope_article/decolonial-aestheSis-colonial-woundsdecolonial-healings/ (visited 15 November 2018), temporarily available at: https://web.archive.org/web/20131001205938/http://socialtextjournal.org/periscope_topic/decolonial_aestheSis/ (visited 27 November 2021). See in particular Walter Mignolo & Rolando Vázquez, ‘Decolonial AestheSis: Colonial Wounds/Decolonial Healings’, n.p: https://socialtextjournal.org/periscope_article/decolonial-aestheSis-colonial-woundsdecolonial-healings/ (visited 15 November 2018), temporarily available at: https://web.archive.org/web/20131001205902/http://socialtextjournal.org/periscope_article/decolonial-aestheSis-colonial-woundsdecolonial-healings/ (visited 27 November 2021); Belting ‘Contemporary Art and the Museum in the Global Age’, 21.

49 Clifford, ‘Objects and Selves’, 243.

50 This moment is discussed in detail in William Rubin, ‘Picasso’, in William Rubin (ed.), *Primitivism’ in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, Vol. 1 (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1984) 254–255.

51 Rubin, ‘Picasso’, 242 n. 8.

at MoMA in New York in 1984–1985.⁵² The exhibition was ambitious and well researched, and its curators not unreasonably claimed it to be ‘the first exhibition to juxtapose tribal and modern objects in the light of informed art history’.⁵³ The massive, two-volume catalogue, a richly illustrated anthology of scholarly essays that accompanied the exhibition, charts how non-Western objects arrived in the West, and how some, thanks to the interest of a group of European artists in the first decades of the twentieth century, became incorporated into the discourse of modern art. The walls, pedestals, and display cases of the museum had non-Western works paired or grouped with works of Western modernism, encouraging the visitor to make comparisons and look for the ‘affinity of the tribal and the modern’, as the subtitle of the exhibition ran. The elevation of non-Western objects to the status of high art, once enacted by Picasso and his avant-garde colleagues, was re-enacted and given the imprimatur of the most prestigious institution of Western modernist art.

The curators showed a certain awareness of the politically charged nature of their project, undertaken when postcolonial critique was gaining momentum in the wake of global decolonization. In the catalogue introduction, William Rubin discusses at some length the potentially pejorative and ethnocentric connotations of the terms ‘primitive’ and ‘tribal’.⁵⁴ In the end, however, he sticks to them, drawing support from Picasso, who is said to have talked of ‘primitive sculpture’ in an entirely admiring sense.⁵⁵ Two other terms central to the exhibition, ‘modern’ and ‘modernism’, did not attract similar scrutiny. They were treated as universals, although strictly limited in application: as confirmed by the selection of works shown, and even the name of the exhibition, the capacity to be modern was reserved for Western art and artists.

In the end the exhibition raised more questions than it answered. Its omissions, concealments, and exclusions were as insistent as the things actually on display. What about the global circulation of aesthetic ideals, expressive means, and artistic materials and media brought about by five centuries of European colonialism? The exhibition and catalogue carefully concealed any possible feature of creolization in the non-Western works on display. What of modernist movements outside the Western world? An exploration of the diverse ways modernisms on various continents mediated between local traditions and global contemporariness might have complicated and enriched the narrative of the exhibition. Why were the modernist pieces chosen for exhibition almost exclusively the work of white male

52 Two central instances of critique are James Clifford, ‘Histories of the Tribal and the Modern’, *Art in America* (1985), 164–177 (republished in Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, 189–214); Hal Foster, ‘The “Primitive” Unconscious of Modern Art’, *October*, 34 (1985), 45–70.

53 Quoted in Foster, ‘The “Primitive” Unconscious of Modern Art’, 46 n. 5.

54 Rubin, *Primitivism in 20th Century Art*, 2–7.

55 Rubin, *Primitivism in 20th Century Art*, 5.

artists? Going through the catalogue's illustrations, I estimate that fewer than 4 per cent of the modernist works were produced by women.⁵⁶ And what about omitting the African American art scene, including artists exploring abstraction and conceptualism alongside various forms of figurative art?⁵⁷ Some were deep in dialogue with traditional African art, formally and aesthetically, as a strategy to visualize and shape a cultural identity not merely a copy of dominant white American models. Betye Saar, active since the early 1960s, works with found objects, assemblage, and bricolage in works that expose the racial stereotypes of her homeland, while alluding to the ritual and spiritual aspects of traditional African art. Despite being committed to the exploration of the 'affinity of the tribal and the modern', this important female, non-white modernist was not represented in the show. Why?

The answer to these questions lies in the curators' need to conceal any complexities, ambivalences, or creole features that might threaten their construct of two pure and clearly circumscribed entities: the white male Western genius versus the culturally pure, primitive non-Western object, whose *raison d'être* was to be discovered and appropriated by the Western genius, and thus elevated to the status of universal art while being rendered harmless. This was how the exhibition produced its dual projection of Picasso, discovering the artistic greatness of non-Western masks and sculptures, and the European colonizer, unearthing the riches of unmapped lands. The roles were fluid: the artist was also a colonizer, discovering and appropriating the unknown. The dual projection was repeated and confirmed in the catalogue: 'We owe to the voyagers, colonials, and ethnologists the arrival of these objects in the West. But we owe primarily to the convictions of the pioneer modern artists their promotion from the rank of curiosities and artifacts to that of major art, indeed, to the status of art at all'.⁵⁸ The whole history of colonial violence, oppression, and theft, including the modern expropriation and appropriation of others' cultural objects, is twisted into a homage to white, male, Western modernism. Despite the generous gesture of selecting a group of foreigners to join the ranks of the chosen by granting them residence permits, the colonial and patriarchal hierarchy of objects remained intact. MoMA could continue its apotheosis of Western modernist art unobstructed, and the image of

56 Not all the works depicted in the catalogue were part of the exhibition, but it seems reasonable to assume that the proportions of different categories were similar. Where works are reproduced in full I have not included additional illustrations of details, nor have I included photographs of artists or artists' studios. The numbers are c.450 works by men and 17 by women. There are 72 reproductions of Picasso's works alone, four times as many as all the female artists put together.

57 Zoe Whitley, *Soul of a Nation—Art in the Age of Black Power* (London: Tate Publishing, 2017); Darby English, *1971: A Year in the Life of Color* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

58 Rubin, *Primitivism in 20th Century Art*, 7.

Picasso gazing at the masks in Musée d'ethnographie stayed sharp, untroubled by needling questions, complexities, or ambiguities.

Around twenty years later, the strategies of decontextualization and concealment were taken one step further at Musée du quai Branly–Jacques Chirac in Paris, a museum which proclaims itself to be 'dedicated to the study, preservation, and promotion of non-European arts and civilizations'.⁵⁹ The opening of the museum in 2006 had been preceded by a prolonged, vicious power struggle between anthropologists, who argued for the necessity of contextualization, and connoisseurs, who asserted 'the purity and authenticity of the objects'.⁶⁰ The victory of the latter is apparent in the museum's permanent exhibition of objects from Africa, Asia, Oceania, and the Americas. Wall texts and labels are discretely placed and kept to a minimum. Historical situatedness and context are carefully avoided; colonial history is barely touched on. Going through the exhibit with a toothcomb in 2016, I did not once come across the word *colonialisme*.⁶¹ I found my experience increasingly coloured by this determined concealment, the entire museum space reverberating to the repressed colonial subconscious.

The objects on permanent display at quai Branly are emphatically *not* framed as ethnographic objects, nor yet as material evidence of historical and cultural processes and practices. However, neither are they displayed as works of art. In stark contrast to the serene, neutrally coloured, and evenly lit space that still dominates art museum design, a visitor to quai Branly enters an organic, cave-like space, designed by Jean Nouvel, coloured in earthy, reddish tones, and with no clear distinction between the rooms or between walls and ceiling. This is architecture playing nature. Given the overall obscurity of the space, the objects appear dramatically lit, glittering like treasures. The result is often suggestive and sensuously attractive, but also mystifying and exoticizing. Rather than bringing out 'the purity and authenticity of the objects', the architecture reduces them to props in a dramatic setting, emphasizing their strangeness.⁶²

59 www.quaibrantly.fr/en/collections/all-collections/history-of-the-collections/ (visited 21 May 2021).

60 Stéphane Martine, director of the museum, quoted in Peter Naumann, 'Making a Museum: "It is Making Theater, Not Writing Theory": An Interview with Stéphane Martin, Président-directeur général, Musée du quai Branly', *Museum Anthropology*, 29:2 (2006), 122. For the conflict itself, see Sally Price, *Paris Primitive: Jacques Chirac's Museum on the Quai Branly* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 48–58.

61 Compare James Clifford, 'Quai Branly in Process', *October*, 120 (2007), 15, who remarks on one small section, 'which one walks by in a few seconds', concerning the colonial history of the objects.

62 To be fair, the lack of historical, political, and cultural contextualization in the permanent exhibition is partly offset by the museum's ambitious programme of temporary exhibitions, concerts, films, lectures, debates, workshops, and other public and scholarly events. In the spring of 2021, the exhibition *Ex Africa: Présences africaines dans l'art d'aujourd'hui* explored 'relations between today's art and old African arts', largely in response to a fresh evaluation of the *Primitivism*' exhibition at MoMA, its use of the term 'primitivism', and its way of reducing African art to a matter of form and style. See <https://www.quaibrantly.fr/en/exhibitions-and-events/at-the-museum/exhibitions/event-details/e/ex-africa-38922/> (visited 11 May 2021).

Powerful Objects

Art/Artifact, an exhibition at the Center for African Art in New York in 1988, could be read as a critical response to the naively ethnocentric agenda of the 'Primitivism' exhibition at MoMA, or many other displays of non-Western works in Western museums and galleries. The curator, Susan Vogel, encouraged this reading, and said the exhibition was not about African art, but 'about the ways Western outsiders have regarded African art and material culture over the past century', and in particular 'our classification of certain objects of African material culture as art and others as artifacts'.⁶³ In her catalogue introduction, Vogel reflected on the large-scale reclassification of African objects in the ethnographic–artistic object system, beginning with Picasso's mythologized museum visit in 1907. This redefinition of objects from artefacts to art has generally been led by Western artists, whose involvement in African objects inspired them to create art that in certain ways resembled African works. This in turn meant that African works could be recognized as art by a Western audience. Vogel showed how new areas of African artefacts had constantly been claimed by Western artists in this manner throughout the twentieth century, most recently (that is, at the time of the exhibition) by performance artists working with found objects and evoking a sense of imaginary ritual.⁶⁴ The limits of this transfer were put to the test in the exhibition by its display of purely functional African objects, installed as if they were contemporary artworks. One example was a bundled hunting net from Zaire, which, lying on the gallery floor, could easily be approached and appreciated as an informal sculpture in the expanded field.⁶⁵ The exhibition set out to strip bare the inevitably arbitrary, biased, and incomplete character of Western museum displays of non-Western artefacts: 'We exhibit them for our own purposes in institutions deeply embedded in our own culture'.⁶⁶

Vogel set the Western framing of African objects, locked in museum display cases and accessible only to the visitor's gaze, against their original function, which was often as part of a performance involving music and movement. They were worn, or carried around, swathed in cloth, or covered with offerings. Things were done to and with the objects. In stark contrast to the primacy of the visual sense in Western culture Vogel noted that 'African objects were made to belong to a broader realm of experience'.⁶⁷ To remove them from that setting was to render

63 Susan Vogel (ed.), *Art/Artifact: African Art in Anthropology Collections* (Munich: Prestel, 1988), 11.

64 Vogel, *Art/Artifact*, 14.

65 The hunting net is discussed by Vogel, *Art/Artifact*, 16–17; and by Danto, 'Artifact and Art', in Vogel, *Art/Artifact*, 20. It is depicted in Vogel, *Art/Artifact*, 175.

66 Vogel, *Art/Artifact*, 16.

67 Vogel, *Art/Artifact*, 11. Here, Vogel refers to Danto, 'Artifact and Art', in the same book.

them ‘unrecognizable and meaningless to the cultures they came from’.⁶⁸ These remarks are striking, all the more so considering that they were made in the 1980s, just a few years after *Primitivism*. However, Vogel simplifies the picture by constructing an essential difference between a Western detached gaze and African sensuous engagement. Such a dichotomy seems to miss out that much European art also was meant for performative interaction with emotionally and sensuously engaged audiences. This is particularly true for art produced and used before developing modern conceptions of art a couple of hundred years ago. Similar to the African objects Vogel talks about, premodern European sculptures, paintings, and other precious objects were integral to ritual events: they were carried in procession, kissed, touched, adorned, and surrounded by music and human voices reciting speeches or poems; they became meaningful and meaning-making on certain intensified religious occasions or at particular political or social sites.⁶⁹ My point here is not that African cultural artefacts and practices correspond to an earlier phase of Western culture, or that they are ‘living fossils’.⁷⁰ It is rather that Vogel’s understanding of African art (if such a generalization is at all meaningful) can shed light on the contingent and parenthetical character of modern, Western conceptions of art. Where Vogel is intent on problematizing African art and material culture in the Western gaze, I would propose extending similar arguments to Western art.

To take the direction indicated by the above, I propose that we, strategically, leave the concepts of art aside for a moment and tentatively consider aesthetic objects from distant times and places without projecting modern, Western conceptions onto them. The tomahawk and the *goavddis* considered in the present study then may be counted among a certain kind of objects found in most human cultures, past and present. Often visually expressive and haptically appealing, elaborately crafted in choice materials, these objects are united by their being not primarily instrumental or designed to fulfil practical needs. They rather invite a wide spectrum of sensory, spiritual, and symbolic responses, like aesthetic contemplation, the invocation of the gods, theoretical reflection, a search for knowledge, the manifestation of social standing, the formation of identities, or desire. Even if they thus may serve religious, social, epistemic, or other purposes, the values attached to them transcend their usefulness. Other examples of such objects would be a Renaissance altarpiece from central Italy, originally a visual and material part of the religious practices in an abbey church, interacting with the sounds of music and prayer, the scent of

68 Vogel, *Art/Artifact*, 11.

69 See, for example Peter Gillgren & Mårten Snickare, *Performativity and Performance in Baroque Rome* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012).

70 Vogel, *Art/Artifact*, 13.

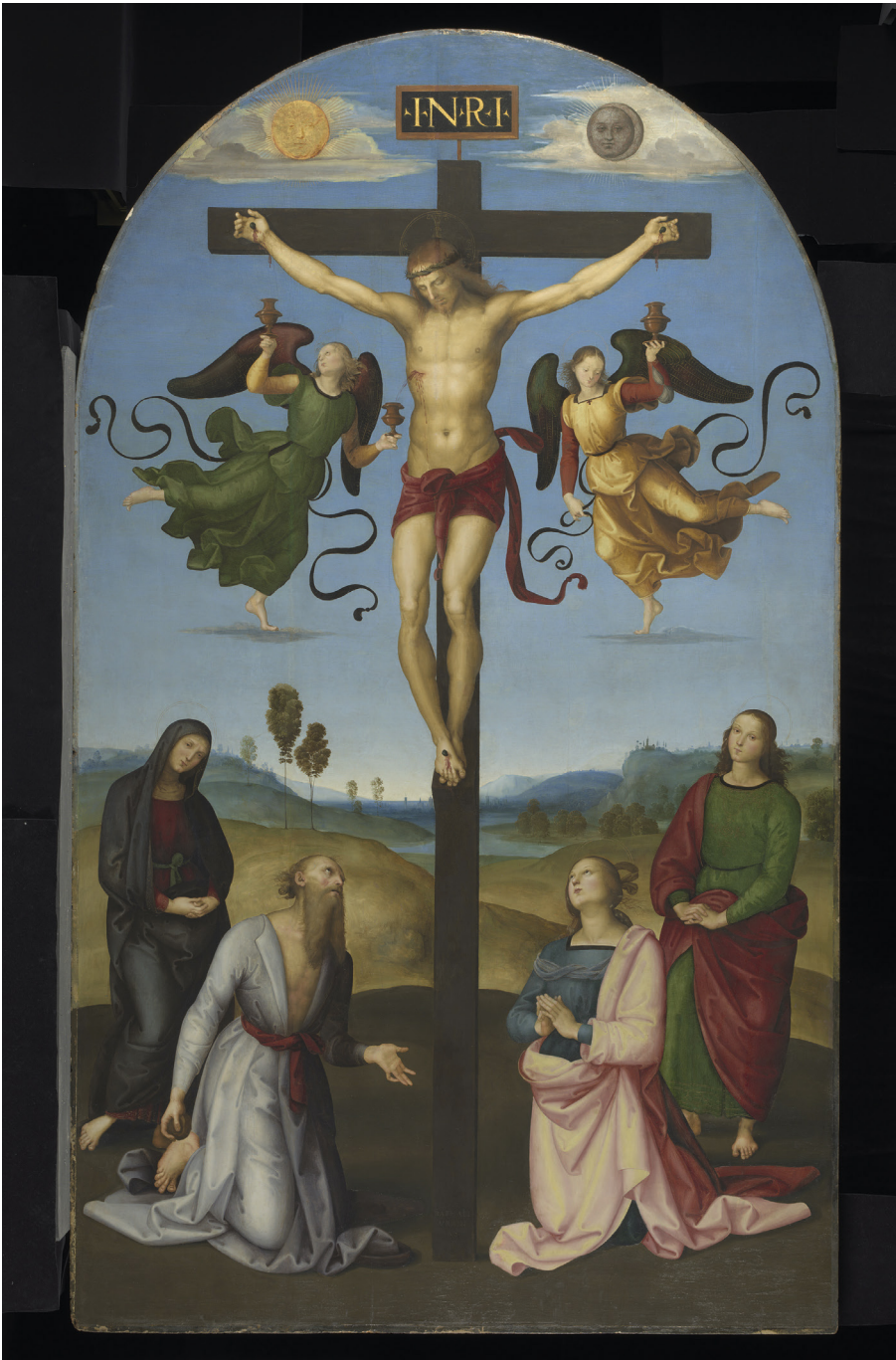


Fig. 31. Raphael, *The Crucified Christ with the Virgin Mary, Saints and Angels*, Oil on poplar, 283 × 167 cm, 1502–1503, National Gallery, London. ↩



Fig. 32. Mukuyi Mask, kapok wood and kaolin, 28 × 16 cm, Shira-Punu, Gabon, undated, Paris, Musée national Picasso. ↵

incense, and the motions of the monks (Fig. 31); a nineteenth- or early twentieth-century mask from the Shira–Punu culture in what is now Gabon, which with its inferences of death and the afterlife was worn at ritual dances at funerals and initiation rites (Fig. 32); or a late medieval *Schreinmadonna*, carved and painted in Northern Europe, which could be opened on special feast days to show the enthroned

God hidden inside the body of the Virgin (Fig. 33).⁷¹ These objects all match the premodern signification of *ars* or art, but to avoid the modern connotations of those concepts, I suggest we put them aside for now and talk of them instead as *powerful objects*.⁷² My tentative definition of a powerful object is one that is not reducible to a representation, or to an instrument for certain interests and intentions—it is an object with the ability to affect the viewer, arouse emotions and desires, and trigger new, sometimes unexpected actions. The qualities of a powerful object thus come close to what Jane Bennett talks of as ‘thing-power’, being ‘the strange ability’ of a thing to exceed its status as an object and to ‘manifest traces of independence or aliveness, constituting the outside of our own experience’.⁷³

At a certain point in history—in Europe in the decades round 1800—it appeared relevant and meaningful to isolate a limited range of the responses that powerful objects might evoke, namely aesthetic contemplation and theoretical reflection, and to earmark the concept of art for the objects that most clearly answered to precisely those criteria.⁷⁴ With this distinction, not only the modern concept of art was established, but also an interconnected narrative—art history—and an institution—the art museum—that together highlighted a select group of objects, and certain aspects of those objects. The combination of concept, narrative, and institution has proved immensely productive. Not only has it framed the reception and interpretation of objects, from romanticism through modernism to contemporary art, it has also stimulated the production of objects particularly suited for aesthetic and theoretical contemplation. Works by, say, Caspar David Friedrich, Pablo Picasso, or Louise Bourgeois all respond to the triad of art, art history, and art museum, investing it with substance and meaning.

However, the same combination of art, art history, and art museum has marginalized large numbers of powerful objects that did not meet the criteria for the called-for responses or uses. The tomahawk and the *goavddis* were excluded, being

71 Gudrun Radler, *Die Schreinmadonna ‘Vierge Ouvrante’: Von den bernhardinischen Anfängen bis zur Frauenmystik im Deutschordensland*, Frankfurter Fundament der Kunstgeschichte, 6 (Frankfurt am Main: Kunstgeschichtliches Institut der Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität, 1990), kat. 42, 116–118.

72 To my knowledge, ‘powerful object’ has not been used as a theoretical premise. My use of it is inspired by Mitchell, *What do Pictures Want?*; and Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 2010). Note, however, that none of these authors use the concept of ‘powerful object’.

73 Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, xvi. See also above, p. 96–97.

74 This distinction is closely linked to the split between *Spiel* and *Nutzen* and the disintegration of the *Kunstammer*, as addressed by Bredekamp, *Antikensehnsucht und Maschinenglauben*, 77–80 (English transl: Bredekamp, *The Lure of Antiquity*, 81–86). At a more fundamental level, the distinction must be understood in the context of the broad sweep of the Enlightenment and secularization, colonialism and imperialism, the Industrial Revolution and capitalism, but an exploration of these connections falls outside the scope of the present study.



Fig. 33. *Schreinmadonna*, hardwood, 55 cm, 1400–1450, Övertorneå church, Sweden. 𐀀

eventually classified as ethnographic objects, and relegated to other, less prestigious sites in the institutional and conceptual hierarchy of objects: the tomahawk in the Museum of Ethnography and the *goavddis* in Nordiska museet. The Renaissance altarpiece was included, but only at the cost of its sacred and ritual significance and value. On the walls of the National Gallery in London, or the pages of a book

of art history, it is elevated to the status of masterpiece, a paradigmatic instance of the concept of art, but simultaneously it is reduced to an object whose primary function is to confirm the concept and give it substance—it exists as an object suited for aesthetic contemplation and theoretical reflection. The Shira–Punu mask, produced and used in a ritual and choreographic context, probably arrived in Europe as a piece of exotica, far down the hierarchy of objects. In the early twentieth century it was singled out by Picasso and elevated to the status of high art: in a photograph of the artist's studio from 1910 it can be seen hanging on the wall, and today it is in the Musée Picasso collection in Paris.⁷⁵ Its status as a work of art, however, is conditional, dependent on its proximity to this one famous Western Artist. The *Schreinmadonna*, carved in the fifteenth century by an anonymous woodcarver, has spent over four centuries in the church of Övertorneå in the far north of Sweden; it survived a spring flood that demolished an earlier chapel in 1617, and then pillaging Cossacks a century later.⁷⁶ Originally a sacred, ritual object, today it has a more ambivalent role, for while it remains in the church space, it is in a glass case that draws attention to its value as a work of art while distancing it from religious practice and emotion. The meaningful and meaning-making event of opening and closing the object is denied us. Cut off from that 'broader realm of experiences' referred to by Vogel, the *Schreinmadonna* has been reduced to the immobile object of our gaze.

These are just a few examples of the countless negotiations of the conceptual and institutional boundaries between art and non-art in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; negotiations which in the end consolidated that dichotomy. While powerful objects such as the Shira–Punu mask or the *Schreinmadonna* showed their ability to migrate between categories, the categories and boundaries themselves remained unthreatened. In the *longue durée globale*, the modern concept of art can be described as a parenthesis or momentary sidetrack, a label in use for a couple of centuries, defining a limited category of objects and phenomena in a corner of the Eurasian continent. In recent decades, the concept has been questioned, and is no longer as homogenous as it once was.⁷⁷ Together with its companions, art history and the art museum, the concept is still potent, though. Even if we cannot now talk of a homogenous concept of art in the singular ('the concept of art') there is still a plurality of strong notions of art ('conceptions of art'). These conceptions continue to determine when, where, how, and with what expectations we approach a powerful object on display. They act by excluding and including, restricting and

75 Rubin, 'Picasso', 300.

76 Lennart Karlsson, *Bilden av Maria* (Lund: Historiska Media, 2009), 286.

77 See, for example, Iskin, *Re-Envisioning the Contemporary Art Canon*; Belting, Buddensieg & Weibel, *The Global Contemporary and the Rise of New Art Worlds*, 2013.

limiting, and they are often accepted and naturalized to such a degree we do not notice their power over our minds.⁷⁸

I do not propose that we replace ‘art’ with ‘powerful object’, or any other concept. Probably it is not even possible—‘art’ is too deeply embedded in the way we think about things, not only in Europe but globally. But I think that we need to reflect more on what the concept does to our thinking about objects and our interaction with them. When we frame, say, Raphael’s altarpiece as art, but not so the *goavddis*, we are actively creating different frames of expectation, experience, and interpretation. We prescribe different gazes, and different kinds of behaviour before the two objects. Putting them in different categories and, by extension, in different patterns of circulation between institutions, we also obstruct a potentially fruitful encounter between two powerful objects that might have had something to say to each other. The altarpiece and the drum both originated in the early modern period; both result from highly specialized craftsmanship, from creative processes at the intersection of tradition and innovation; both were originally involved in ritual actions designed to reach out to a divine, otherworldly dimension; and both have, at a certain point of their social life, been excised from their ritual setting and eventually inserted into the context of the modern Western museum and display system.

Tentative juxtapositions or encounters between apparently distant objects—such as the altarpiece and the *goavddis*—may be one way to mess with the concepts and loosen up their boundaries. Rather than grandiose gestures, such as building prestigious new museums in Western metropolises, a tentative path forward might be through a myriad of small interventions, experiments, questionings, gradual alterations of ingrained practices, and the loosening of rooted patterns of thought.⁷⁹ This would involve small-scale collaborations among groups with different knowledge, interests, and emotional relationships with the objects. The emerging field of decolonial aesthetics—or ‘Decolonial AestheSis’—encourages this low-key, dialogic operation, combining a transcultural exchange of ideas

78 Similar points have recently been made by Iskin, *Re-Envisioning the Contemporary Art Canon*, 1–31, although with a focus on ‘the contemporary art canon’ rather than ‘conceptions of art’.

79 An example of this kind of large-scale gesture is the Musée du Quai Branly that opened in 2006. A more recent large-scale project is the Humboldt Forum in the reconstructed Berlin Palace that opened in 2021 and houses the ethnographic collections of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. It was originally said to represent ‘an approach that brings together diverse cultures and perspectives and seeks new insights into topical issues such as migration, religion and globalization’, with displays that adhere to ‘The Kunstammer Principle’. <https://www.humboldtforum.com/en/pages/humboldt-forum/> (visited 13 November 2017). In 2021, it presents itself instead as ‘a unique place of inquiry and encounters. A place with a significant past. A place for the arts and sciences, for exchange, diversity and a multiplicity of voices. A place where differences come together’. <https://www.humboldtforum.org/en/about/> (visited 15 May 2021).

with locally based practical work and activism.⁸⁰ Walter Mignolo and Rolando Vázquez, two leading theorists in the field, propose a tangible method of critical, etymological exploration of concepts such as ‘art’ and ‘aesthetics’, mapping their origins and how they have become ‘Eurocentred’ and colonized, to find strategies with which to decolonize them.⁸¹ The aim is not to launch a new canon, or to replace one hierarchy with another, ‘but rather to allow for the recognition of the plurality of ways to relate to the world of the sensible that have been silenced’.⁸² Colonial objects can play an important role in the gradual re-envisioning, or decolonization, of the museum and display system. Used to migration and with experiences of unstable, precarious border conditions, the objects could shed an oblique light on the structures and hierarchies inherent in the system.

An exhibition at the Bode-Museum in Berlin may be taken as an example. In October 2017, African sculptures from the Ethnologisches Museum in Berlin entered the halls of the early twentieth-century museum and took place among the medieval and early modern European sculptures in the museum’s permanent display.⁸³ At first sight there seemed to be parallels to ‘Primitivism’ at MoMA in the way Western and non-Western objects were paired or grouped in the display spaces, encouraging the viewer to make comparisons (there are even a few objects that appeared in both exhibitions). However, the parallels end there. Where the MoMA exhibition looked for ‘affinity’, the title of the exhibition at the Bode-Museum was *Unvergleichlich/Beyond Compare*, playing with the double meaning of the word. And where the MoMA exhibition avoided contextualization and historical specificity to focus on the ‘purely visual’ and ‘the unpredictable potential of human creativity wherever found’, at the Bode-Museum the stress was on the historical

80 Mignolo & Vázquez, ‘Decolonial AestheSis’: https://socialtextjournal.org/periscope_topic/decolonial_aestheSis/ (visited 15 November 2018), temporarily available at: https://web.archive.org/web/20131001205938/http://socialtextjournal.org/periscope_topic/decolonial_aestheSis/ (visited 27 November 2021); Walter Mignolo, ‘AestheSis Decolonial. Artículo de reflexión’, *Calle14*, 4:4 (2010), 13–25; Zulma Palermo (ed.), *Arte y estética en la encrucijada decolonial* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones del Signo, 2009); María Eugenia Borsani & María José Melendo, *Ejercicios decolonizantes*, II: *Arte y experiencias estéticas desobedientes* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones del Signo, 2016); Miriam Barrera & Rolando Vázquez, ‘AestheSis decolonial y los tiempos relacionales: Entrevista a Rolando Vázquez’, *Calle14*, 11:18 (2016), 79–92.

81 Mignolo & Vázquez, ‘Decolonial AestheSis: Colonial Wounds/Decolonial Healings’, section iii, n.p.: https://socialtextjournal.org/periscope_article/decolonial-aestheSis-colonial-woundsdecolonial-healings/ (visited 15 November 2018), temporarily available at: https://web.archive.org/web/20131001205938/http://socialtextjournal.org/periscope_topic/decolonial_aestheSis/ (visited 27 November 2021).

82 Mignolo & Vázquez, ‘Decolonial AestheSis: Colonial Wounds/Decolonial Healings’, section iv, n.p.

83 Julien Chapuis, Jonathan Fine & Paula Ivanov (eds.), *Unvergleichlich: Kunst aus Afrika im Bode-Museum* (Berlin: Edition Braus, 2017) (English transl: Julien Chapuis, Jonathan Fine & Paula Ivanov (eds.), *Beyond Compare: Art from Africa in the Bode Museum* (Berlin: Edition Braus, 2017)). The exhibition at the Bode-Museum was one phase in the large-scale relocation of objects from the Ethnologisches Museum to the Humboldt Forum.

circumstances in which the African and European works were originally produced and used, and likewise their itineraries to the museums where they are kept.⁸⁴ Compared to *'Primitivism'* and other exhibitions that have juxtaposed West and non-West, *Unvergleichlich* staged the encounters on relatively equal terms. One reason might be that both parties to the encounters had a healthy distance to modern Western conceptions of art and the hierarchies they imply. The medieval and early modern European sculptures derived from a time *before* the modern conceptions, while the African sculptures had their origins in places *outside* the original scope of the same conceptions.

A rich and complex history of creativity, colonial encounters, and cultural creolization unfolded in the Bode-Museum. Not all the pairings and groupings were equally convincing, but sometimes there was a distinct resonance between the African and European works. In a small room, an altar group of Oba Akenzua I of Benin, cast in copper alloy in the 1730s, was paired with a copy of a monument to Friedrich Wilhelm, Elector of Brandenburg, cast in bronze a few decades earlier.⁸⁵ Wall texts pointed out that both rulers benefited from the transatlantic enslavement trade. Both monuments articulate the power of the rulers in scenes of violence and oppression (beheaded enemies lie at the feet of Oba Akenzua while Friedrich Wilhelm is surrounded by defeated enemies in chains); and in both cases, the artists have underscored the brutal power of the rulers by giving them massive cylindrical bodies—power is configured as a personal and markedly physical, even muscular, attribute.

In another room, a nineteenth-century wooden sculpture of a Chokwe woman of rank from what is now Angola was paired with a fifteenth-century Virgin and Child from Strasbourg, also carved in wood (Fig. 34 and Fig. 35).⁸⁶ Besides the material, little seemed to unite the two sculptures, until one noticed the importance of hair to them both. Real human hair (possibly from the sitter herself) crowns the head of the Chokwe sculpture, enhancing its presence and liveliness. Sculpted curls fall down the Virgin's back and left side, establishing a visual link to the Child whose head is covered with similar golden-brown curls. The wall text informed visitors that the sculpture was a reliquary from Strasbourg Cathedral, probably holding a lock of the Virgin's hair. Hair thus transcended the boundary between representation and presence in both of the sculptures. The spatial juxtaposition of two apparently remote objects, accompanied by short but carefully phrased texts,

84 Kirk Varnedoe, 'Preface', in William Rubin (ed.), *'Primitivism' in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, Vol. 1 (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1984), x.

85 Chapuis, Fine & Ivanov, *Unvergleichlich*, 176–179 (English transl: Chapuis, Fine & Ivanov, *Beyond Compare*, 176–179).

86 Chapuis, Fine & Ivanov, *Unvergleichlich*, 180–183 (English transl: Chapuis, Fine & Ivanov, *Beyond Compare*, 180–183).



Fig. 35. Virgin with child (Dangolsheimer Madonna), walnut, 102 × 37 × 33 cm, Nikolaus Gerhaert von Leyden, Strasbourg, 1460–1465, in the exhibition *Unvergleichlich*, Bode-Museum, Berlin, 2017. ↗



Fig. 34. Sculpture of a woman of rank, wood, human hair, 35 × 14 × 12 cm, Chokwe (present Angola), nineteenth century, in the exhibition *Unvergleichlich*, Bode-Museum, Berlin, 2017. ↵

brought to my attention material and circumstantial aspects that might otherwise have been missed, with it enriched my aesthetic appreciation of both sculptures.

Unvergleichlich at the Bode-Museum could be read as a suggestion of how to open up a dialogue between European and non-European objects, between colonizers and colonized. The strategy of anthropologizing the European sculptures rather than aestheticizing the African temporarily loosened the hold of some hierarchies and distinctions standard in the Western museum and display system. However, the dialogue was still caught in a colonial asymmetry because the encounters between sculptures from different cultural contexts were not matched with encounters between scholars and curators with different backgrounds and experiences. In that way, colonial hierarchies were maintained, Western scholars and curators continuing to explain the non-Western objects on display and constructing the narrative framework in which to insert them. If Western museums want to have their say in the cultural, political discourse, they need to loosen their grip on the interpretive prerogative, opening up for collaboration and shared authority, involving new forms of curating and the interaction of different knowledge systems and modes of representation.⁸⁷ This is a matter of justice: Western scholars and curators can no longer claim the privilege to decide where and how to display objects that originate from former colonies. But it is also about enabling a more profound, nuanced understanding of the objects on display. Knowledge and appreciation are not limited by national borders. A Nigerian art historian or an Angolan curator are not necessarily closer to the Benin and Chokwe sculptures than their European colleagues are, but they could bring their historically and geographically situated knowledge and experience to the table. From their positions on the other side of the colonial divide they might also get sight of, and shed light on, implicit colonial legacies of the exhibiting institution. A beautiful early example is Chinua Achebe's foreword to the exhibition catalogue *Igbo Arts: Community and Cosmos* (1984).⁸⁸ In his short text, Achebe draws from his knowledge and experiences to bring out the social, processual, and kinetic character of Igbo art, in contrast to modern Western ideas of collecting, possessing, and conserving, not only reframing the art on display but also highlighting the Western museum as a colonial institution. In 2017, the

87 The last decade has seen important studies of shared authority and indigenous presence in Western museums. See, for example, Michelle Horwood, *Sharing Authority in the Museum: Distributed Objects, Reassembled Relationships* (London: Routledge, 2019); Bryony Onciul, *Museums, Heritage and Indigenous Voice: Decolonizing Engagement* (New York: Taylor & Francis Ltd, 2015); Carine Ayélé Durand, *Anthropology in a Glass Case: Indigeneity, Collaboration, and Artistic Practice in Museums* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2010).

88 Chinua Achebe, 'Foreword: The Igbo World and its Art', in Herbert M. Cole & Chike Cyril Aniakor (eds.), *Igbo Arts: Community and Cosmos* (Los Angeles: Museum of Cultural History, University of California, 1984), ix–xii.

same year as *Unvergleichlich* opened in Berlin, the Museum of Ethnography in Stockholm initiated *Afrika pågår/Ongoing Africa*, an open-ended project ‘with the aim of highlighting new perspectives on the African continent with and by Swedes of African origin’.⁸⁹ The project involves workshops, lectures, exhibitions, artistic practices, and other forms of exploration of the museum’s African collections, undertaken by members of the Afro-Swedish community in collaboration with the museum staff. The aim is to produce new kinds of knowledge about the African objects, but also to establish new relations and make the objects relevant to a new public. By extension, the project aims at developing new, dialogical working methods and new modes of display.⁹⁰

Another point against *Unvergleichlich* is that it downplayed the colonial violence that marked many of the African objects on display, and that was often the reason for their being in a museum in the German capital. With the altar group of Oba Akenzua I, the wall text mentioned in passing it was part of the loot taken by the British troops that captured and sacked Benin City in February 1897—in the large exhibition catalogue it is not even mentioned.⁹¹ Being one of the most violent and well-documented outrages in the history of European colonialism, the sack of 1897 continues to cast a shadow over the hundreds of Benin sculptures and other artefacts still on display in European museums, the Museum of Ethnography in Stockholm among them.⁹² As shown by this book, the history of Western collecting and display is forever entwined with the history of colonialism as a destructive and productive force. In dealing with the Benin sculptures and other colonial objects in Western museums, there is no way to position oneself outside colonial history. Every curatorial choice is made against the background of the colonial legacy and the neocolonial world order, whether we know it or not. The colonial history of an object is not its only history, but it continues to form part of its meaning and value. To acknowledge this is a necessary first step towards decolonizing the object.

The Benin sculptures on display in *Unvergleichlich* also point straight at the most topical and hotly debated issues in the discourse of Western museums—ownership and restitution. Change has been coming for a while now. A Swedish example that has attracted international attention is the 89 textiles created in the Paracas

89 <https://www.varldskulturmuseerna.se/en/projects/afrika-pagar/> (visited 5 October 2020).

90 Personal communication with Michael Barrett, curator of the African collections at the Museum of Ethnography, 25 September 2019.

91 Chapuis, Fine & Ivanov, *Unvergleichlich*, 176–179 (English transl: Chapuis, Fine & Ivanov, *Beyond Compare*, 176–179).

92 The most important contribution to the discussion on the Benin sculptures in European museums is Dan Hicks, *The Brutish Museums: The Benin Bronzes, Colonial Violence and Cultural Restitution* (London: Pluto Press, 2020). See also Staffan Lundén, *Displaying Loot: The Benin Objects and the British Museum*, PhD Dissertation (Gothenburg: Gothenburg University, GOTARC Series B, 69, 2016).

Peninsula more than 2,000 years ago, and illegally brought to Gothenburg in the 1930's. An official claim from the Republic of Peru in 2009 led to negotiations, and now the return of the objects from the Museum of World Culture (Världskulturmuseet) in Gothenburg is underway.⁹³ However, many museums still resist the increasingly strong claims from indigenous and former colonized peoples. *Rapport sur la restitution du patrimoine culturel africain: Vers une nouvelle éthique relationnelle*, written by Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy for the president of France, was a game changer when it appeared in November 2018, and after that the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020 further intensified the debate about the rightful ownership of colonial objects in Western museums.⁹⁴ Things are moving fast now. In March 2021, Humboldt Forum, the grandiose museum project in central Berlin which planned to house thousands of prestigious art objects from across the world—among them the *Altar Group of Oba Akenzua I*—in a sudden turnabout announced it will not show the Benin sculptures.⁹⁵ One month later, the German culture minister Monika Grütters announced plans to begin their return to Nigeria in 2022.⁹⁶ This sudden decision will increase the pressure on other European museums.

With the objects at the centre of this book, the situation is slightly different. Colonized over three centuries ago, it is difficult, if not to say impossible, to discover exactly where, how, and from whom they were taken. Still, there are ways to return objects to the regions where they were once shaped, used, and given meaning. An example is the transfer of a large number of *goavdát* and *gievrie* from the museums in Stockholm to Ájtte—Swedish Mountain and Sámi Museum in Jåhkâmáhkke (Jokkmokk), a cultural centre in the Swedish part of Sápmi.⁹⁷ Taking that as a model, I would suggest that negotiations be initiated between Ájtte and the Royal Society of Sciences at Uppsala for the return of the *sieidi* which is still in Schefferus' museum building in Uppsala.⁹⁸ Its precise point of origin will most likely never be established,

93 Björn Sandmark & Ann-Marie Ljungberg, *Paracastextilierna i Göteborg: Vem äger det globala kulturarvet?* (Göteborg: Bokförlaget Korpen, 2019); Stefan Jonsson, 'Tingen vi delar: Historien om Paracastextilierna i Göteborg 1933-2010', Unpublished report (Göteborg: Statens museer för världskultur, 2010). An example of international media coverage is Ralph Blumenthal, 'Sweden Returns Ancient Andean Textiles to Peru', *The New York Times* (5 June 2014).

94 Felwine Sarr & Bénédicte Savoy, *Rapport sur la restitution du patrimoine culturel africain: Vers une nouvelle éthique relationnelle* (Novembre 2018), (English translation: *The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage: Toward a new Relational Ethics*): <http://restitutionreport2018.com> (visited 15 May 2021).

95 Alex Greenberger, 'Berlin Museum Won't Show Benin Bronzes, Begins to Pursue Return of Artifacts', *ARTnews* (March 22, 2021): <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/humboldt-forum-benin-bronzes-return-process-1234587480/> (visited 15 May 2021).

96 Kate Brown, 'In a "Historic Milestone", Germany Will Begin to Return Benin Bronzes from its Public Collections to Nigeria', *artnet news* (29 April 2021): <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/nigeria-germany-benin-bronzes-1963143> (visited 15 May 2021).

97 See above, p. 141–142.

98 See above, p. 77.

but at Ájtte it could take its place in a more familiar landscape, surrounded by familiar objects and accessible to meaningful and meaning-making encounters with a public.

To end where I began, I would argue we must learn from the *Kunstkammern*, taking museums for what they originally were: dynamic laboratories of aesthetic and cognitive experiences, not static displays of things. No display is definitive. Every contextualization and juxtaposition highlight certain facets of an object, while concealing others. Allowing myself to temporarily disregard the practical obstacles of museum work, I would like to see the objects move around, to find new contexts and relationships, and to blur the boundaries between the aesthetic and the cognitive. Ever since his breakthrough with *Mining the Museum* in 1992, Fred Wilson has deployed the strategy of moving and regrouping museum objects, unmuting the silenced histories of colonial oppression, and firing a decolonial critique straight at the heart of the colonial institution of the museum.⁹⁹ The transfer of *goavdát* and *gievrie* to Ájtte some twenty years ago illustrates how museum objects can come to life *and* enliven their surroundings. In addition to the strong symbolic significance of returning the drums to the cultural and geographical area in which they were originally crafted, used, and given meaning, their presence has also proved to be important for local practices of craft and art. Anna Westman Kuhmunen, a curator at Ájtte, told me that students of *duodji* at the Sámi Education Centre (Samij áhpadusguovdásj) next door to the museum draw inspiration from the drums' shapes, materials, techniques, and figurative expressions in their own work.¹⁰⁰ The *goavdát* and *gievrie* are not passive objects of the museum-goers' gaze, but active interlocutors in the cognitive and creative dialogue between present and past.

The aim of this book has been to establish a fuller historical understanding of colonial objects in Swedish museums, and to use it to gauge the relevance and potential of these objects today. Once the objects of colonization, how might they best be part of decolonial processes, leading to a greater appreciation of the objects themselves, but also to a long-overdue re-envisioning of museums and display? The museums in Western capitals flourish, attracting increasing numbers of visitors from all over the world and reaching out globally with overseas branches. And yet the institution of the museum is in the throes of a deep crisis. How to argue

99 Fred Wilson, *Mining the Museum: An Installation* (Baltimore: Contemporary, 1994); Fred Wilson, *Fred Wilson: A Critical Reader* (London: Ridinghouse, 2011). The literature on *Mining the Museum* is vast. My understanding of it is close to Jennifer A. Gonzales, *Subject to Display: Reframing Race in Contemporary Installation Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 2008); and Walter D. Mignolo, 'Museums in the Colonial Horizon of Modernity: Fred Wilson's *Mining the Museum* (1992)', in Jonathan Harris (ed.), *Globalization and Contemporary Art* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 71–85. For a more critical response to Wilson's work, see Darby English, *How to See a Work of Art in Total Darkness* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 2007), 137–199.

100 Personal communication with Anna Westman Kuhmunen, curator at Ájtte, 23 January 2018.

for the relevance of an institution so deeply entangled in the history of European colonialism? How to shape a role, not just as part of an international tourist industry and event culture, but as a meaningful and meaning-making voice in a global dialogue about histories, presences, and possible futures? With their long-standing involvement in the entangled histories of museums and colonialism, the tomahawk, the *goavddis*, and other colonial objects have an important part to play in the re-envisioning of the Western museum.

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