Introduction: Reencountering Native America from the Habsburg Lands

Jonathan Singerton, Markéta Křížová, and Michael Burri

Encounters with Native America abound in the present day. Across Europe today, preconceptions of Native Americans as "Indians" emerge from sedimented images of the "American Indian" found in early depictions of Indigenous peoples from the initial period of contact between European explorers and settler colonists.[1] We have become all too familiar with such tropes as the noble savage, the nomadic Plains Indians, and the objects, customs, and dress that go along with these stereotypes. At the conclusion of the "Habsburg Encounters with Native America" symposium held at the University of Innsbruck in June 2023 that serves as the backdrop for this volume, participants were confronted by this very fact. As coffee arrived to mark the end of the event's proceedings at a communal dinner, the branded cups and sugar sachets were from Passalacqua, a contemporary Neapolitan coffee company whose founder, Samuele Passalacqua, used the image of a "little American Indian boy" licking his lips to evoke the taste and quality of the coffee. Founded in 1948, Passalacqua's coffee bar and company became an established import and export business in Italy with a global outreach today.[2] The image of a smiling black-haired "Indian" youth wearing two colorful eagle war feathers resembles a standard Western assembly of Native American imagery; skin tones, facial features, and animal props combine to propagate the extensive commercialization of Native Americans.[3] In

1 This work avoids terms such as "Indian" or "American Indian" that may be interpreted as historically loaded and repressive, preferring instead to utilize terms such as "Indigenous" or "Indigenous American" or "Native American" to denote those cultures and people native to the Americas.

2 Information on the Passalacqua brand can be found from the history section of their corporate website: https://www.passalacqua.com/our-history, accessed 12 March 2024.

3 Carter Jones Meyer and Diana Royer, eds., *Selling the Indian: Commercializing and Appropriating American Indian Cultures* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2001); Erika Marie Bsumek, *Navajo Culture in the Marketplace, 1868–1940* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press,

Singerton, Jonathan, Markéta Křížová, and Michael Burri, eds. *Habsburg Encounters with Native America: Familiar Strangers*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2025.
DOI: 10.5117/9789048571802_INTR

Figure 0.1 The coincidental Passalacqua "Indian" logo on a coffee cup at the Habsburg Encounters with Native America conference held at the University of Innsbruck

this case, the Passalacqua brand utilizes (according to their own website) these stereotypical elements to convey the "metaphysical dimension of beauty where rigor, loyalty, a sense of community [combine] in the work

2008), 76–113; Pauline Turner Strong, *American Indians and the American Imaginary: Cultural Representation Across the Centuries*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), 125–62.

and the pursuit of good coffee."[4] Conflating notions of Native aesthetic simplicity with ascribed ideals of Native resilience, community, harmony, and pride recall what Oneida activist Pamela Colorado has framed as the ongoing struggle over the power to define "Indianness" by Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups.[5]

This moment brings to life two aspects central to the core of this volume as it typifies many forms of encountering that still perpetuate stereotypes of the Native American "Indian" among Europeans. Firstly, the Passalacqua example is emblematic of the sustained conversation between European and Indigenous (whether actual or, in this case, contrived). In this sense, the phenomenon is certainly not restricted to places like a restaurant in present-day Innsbruck but abound throughout much of central Europe. When boarding a Condor flight from Canada to Germany, for example, the Diné (Navajo) academic Renae Watchman witnessed an inflight safety video that depicted characterized stand-ins of Karl May's Winnetou and Old Shatterhand. Writing about the incident in a volume of works by Indigenous scholars written in response to the European fetishization of Native Americans, the authors of that volume understood this encounter to be emblematic of the "problematic German infatuation with the Indigenous peoples and cultures of North America."[6] It is this infatuation that Hartmut Lutz has described with the neologism "German Indianthusiasm" (*deutsche Indianertümelei*) as a witty but serious attempt to capture the unusual level of cultural absorption, fascination, and obsession with Native Americans among German-speaking societies.[7]

Popular periodicals and magazines continue to cater to a public enthusiasm for *die ersten Amerikaner* that adorn art and history publications. Taking a stroll through Viennese bookstores, one is confronted by images of Honii-Wotoma (Wolf Robe) of the Heévâhetaneo'o (Southern Cheyenne) on *Der Spiegel*'s *Geschichte*, or Diné (Navajo) objects featured on the front of *Tribal Art* magazine, which markets itself to the international bourgeois craze of collecting non-European artworks. In Prague and Ostrava, the host

4 https://www.passalacqua.com/our-history, 12 March 2024.

5 Pamela Colorado as quoted in Ward Churchill, *Fantasies of the Master Race: Literature, Cinema, and the Colonization of American Indians*, ed. M. Annette Jaimes (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 1992), 191.

6 Harmut Lutz et al., eds., *Indianthusiasm: Indigenous Responses* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2020), 3. For Watchman's narration, see 207–13.

7 For a wider definition, see Hartmut Lutz, "German Indianthusiasm: A Socially Constructed German Nationalist Myth," in *Germans and Indians: Fantasies, Encounters, Projections*, eds. Colin G. Calloway et al. (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 167–84.

cities of the International Ice Hockey Federation's 2024 World Championship, Czech fans adorned themselves with large feathered headdresses painted in Czech colors that contrasted their Native-American-derived buckskin coats. In both cities, one can hear frequent performances of Antonín Dvořák's Ninth Symphony, nicknamed "From the New World" during the composers sojourn in the United States—a period when contemporaries observed the Czech master was obsessed with the legend of Ayenwatha (Hiawatha).[8] As a cultural phenomenon, there is no doubt that Indianthusiasm is still a product of European imagined and past encounters with Native America. In this volume we seek to historicize the deeper roots of Indianthusiasm as a process of continual (re)encountering and (re)imagination of Native Americans, their history, cultures, and identities within the central European context.

To be sure, Indianthusiasm can be interpreted as an equally central European phenomenon. The ubiquitous imagery of Native Americans and Indigenous tropes abounded in the historic lands belonging to the Habsburg monarchy. Among the aristocracy of the monarchy in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, Native Americana became a status symbol. Palaces featured allegories of the four continents where the Americas frequently appeared in Native form, adorned with colorful feathers, headdresses, and skirts, along with parrots and alligators.[9] In Prague, workshops emerged to produce painted feathers as an imitation of elite tastes that could be reproduced for mass consumption.[10] In the nineteenth century, mass consumption of Native American imagery became commonplace through printed paraphernalia, organized touring shows, and museums exhibiting exotic artifacts. Translations too played an important role. Long before he arrived in the United States, Dvořák first became familiar with the Ayenwatha legend through a translated version of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's famous epic poem which "appealed very strongly" to his imagination.[11] The present ubiquity represents part of a far longer tradition of encounters

8 Michael Beckerman, "Dvořák's "New World" Largo and "The Song of Hiawatha"," *19th-Century Music* 16, no. 1 (1992), 36–7.

9 Marion Romberg, *Die Welt im Dienst des Glaubens: Erdteilallegorien in Dorfkirchen auf dem Gebiet des Fürstbistums Augsburg im 18. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2017). For later parallels and the construction of an imaginary shared transatlantic aristocratic culture, see Harry Liebersohn, *Aristocratic Encounters: European Travellers and North American Indians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 3 and 134.

10 Stefan Hanß, "Making Featherwork in Early Modern Europe," in *Materialized Identities in Early Modern Europe, 1450–1750: Objects, Affects, Effects*, eds. Susanna Burghartz et al. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021), 148; Ulinka Rublack, "Befeathering the European: The Matter of Feathers in the Material Renaissance," *The American Historical Review* 126, no. 1 (2021): 19–53.

11 Beckerman, "Dvořák's "New World" Largo," 36.

such as these historical mediums between central European audiences and Native Americans.

Yet central European audiences engaged with Native America beyond a superficial level. Consumption also entailed debate and critique. Running alongside the simplified reduction of Native Americans to common Europeanized stereotypes was a continued rumination on Native American traditions, circumstances, and culture. From theological forays into the nature of Indigenous humanity to the linguistic and pseudo-anthropological studies of central European missionaries present among Indigenous communities, the process of (re)encountering the significance of Native American cultures occurred over centuries.

For the purposes of this volume, we attach special significance to the lands of the Habsburg monarchy as a polycentric, multinational, and composite region that together constructs a distinctly Habsburg Indianthusiasm as a space where particular understandings and fascinations for Native Americans emerged. Rather than merely reducing Native Americans to cheap advertising imagery or simplistic representation as logos, central Europeans under the Habsburg monarchy often encountered Native America on its own terms or within wider dynastic or (multi)nationalistic frameworks. These specific contexts added nuance and layered meaning to the idea of Native Americans. Early encounters often became framed within a dynastic context as Native Americans and their associated imagery served to support the sense of worldly power exhibited by the Habsburg family, both the Spanish and Austrian branches, which James Ring Adams and Alexander McCargar elucidate in subsequent chapters.

From claiming sovereignty over all peoples discovered in the New World for the House of Habsburg to the competitive inclusion of the peoples of Calicut (a fictive European metaphor for overseas people) in the triumphal processions of Holy Roman Emperors to the consumption of Amerindian products such as tobacco and colored feathers, the first encounters filtered through elite conceptualizations.[12] Later, encountering Native Americans could serve nationalistic or political means as a method of contrasting ideals and juxtaposing circumstances. Whether Native Americans formed a foil for viewing Roma inhabitants within the monarchy or as an impetus

12 Christian Feest, "Von Kalikut nach Amerika: Albrecht Dürer und die 'wunderliche künstliche ding' aus dem 'neuen gulden land,'" in *Dürer: Kunst, Künstler, Kontext*, ed. Jochen Sander (Munich: Prestel, 2013), 367–75; Christian Feest, "The People of Calicut: Objects, Texts, and Images in the Age of Proto-Ethnography," *Boletim do Museu Paraense Emilio Goeldi: Ciencias Humanas* 9, no. 2 (2014): 287–303.

for advancing a Christianizing mission across North America as part of the Catholic Habsburg duty—discussed in chapters by Julia Secklehner and Jonathan Singerton, respectively—the idea of Native Americans became a useful implement for specific purposes. The process of politicizing Native American concepts occurred through various media as Native Americans became stand-ins for marginalized or romanticized minorities within central European frames. They could even be projected onto the dominant nations within the Habsburg realm, who considered themselves to be marginalized and persecuted by the Habsburg rulers, as discussed in the chapter by Markéta Křížová. From this utility of the Native American within the Habsburg lands came a continued focus on Indigeneity and debates of authenticity and circumstances of Indigenous peoples in (mainly) North America.

Second, we seek not only to historicize the understandings of Native Americans from central European perspectives, but simultaneously to uncover the variety of the forms of encounters between central Europeans and Native Americans. Whereas disaggregating the construction of Native Americans from a wider European phenomenon can increase the pitfalls related to applying arbitrary national categories, the need to consider the narrower context of Habsburg Indianthusiasm arises due to the specific conditions of the Habsburg state as opposed to viewing it as part of a wider Germanic Indianthusiasm.[13] The Habsburg encounter with Native America receives a certain distinctiveness through the religious elements present within periods of sustained contact. As members of a predominantly Catholic polity, this religious lens shaped central European perceptions and influenced the varied degrees of connection in the process of power projection, asymmetric relations, and perpetuating Western-contrived visions of Native American existence. At the same time, the previously mentioned (multi)national instrumentalization of Native Americans also arose due to the specific nature of the composite Habsburg state and its multiethnic population that ascribed and utilized specific understandings of Indigeneity for their own causes in addition to their own preconceptions. From these contexts developed sophisticated (albeit sometimes misguided) discussions and unique understandings of Native America within central Europe.

At the same time, one impact envisioned by this volume addresses (mis)perceptions of central Europe as a historical site devoid of worldwide

13 For a warning against an overreliance on national categories, see Christian Feest, "Germany's Indians in a European Perspective," in *Germans and Indians: Fantasies, Encounters, Projections*, eds. Colin G. Calloway et al. (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 25–45.

connectivity. Admittedly, states such as the Habsburg monarchy do not frequently appear in the canon of Native American studies, and so the assembled essays here provide good reasoning for its inclusion. Connections between the Habsburg lands and various Indigenous nations persisted throughout the early modern and modern periods, from at least the sixteenth century to the twentieth century that are represented in proceeding chapters. This chronological breadth is matched by the nature of these continued encounters as both direct and indirect interactions. Native America was not absorbed secondhand in central Europe, but representations and understandings often resulted from direct personal encounters by Habsburg subjects in the Americas. Whether as part of a scientific expedition, religious mission, personal tour, or political engagement, these direct encounters reflect the wider interconnectedness of central Europe and the world, in this case the Indigenous world of (mainly) North America. In doing so, recognition of the one-sided nature of these encounters—as primarily central European incursions into Native settings and communities—must be acknowledged, even as this helps to expand the spatial dimensions of central European history.

We use the concept of these direct and indirect encounters as an analytical means to explore the continued engagement between these audiences in a way that goes beyond the perpetuation of stereotypes expressed in some examples of central European cultures today. Our work has also been energized by the increasingly forceful voice of Indigenous groups in North America and across the world more generally, whose dynamism is manifested not least by significant recent funding streams directed to tribal priorities, but also by new state partnerships around land and natural resource stewardship. In a recent volume, *(Un)Following in Winnetou's Footsteps*, contributors called for transcending the normative representations of Native American cultures within European dimensions as well as opening up the historic dialogue between Indigenous and central European communities as a way for Indigenous identity to be "negotiated, even reclaimed, from within the cross-cultural arena" and as a "window of opportunity for Europeans to reflect back on themselves by confronting their ethnocentric attitudes, practices, and imagination."[14] It is for this reason that this volume gives the first and last word to two Indigenous scholars, Robbie Richardson and Anton Treuer, the latter himself of mixed Native and Austrian heritage, as an effort

14 Sanja Runtić, "(Why) Is Europe Still Following in Winnetou's Footsteps?" in *(Un)Following in Winnetou's Footsteps: Representations of North American Indigeneity in Central Europe*, eds. Sanja Runtić et al. (Singapore: Springer Verlag, 2024), 18.

to recognize the primacy of Indigenous voices and in an effort to open up this transatlantic dialogue. As a further contribution to these aims, we hope that this current volume will offer a renewed prospect for enhancing the recognition and comprehension of Indigenous–central European history as an extensive relationship.

In contributing towards a central European understanding of Indigenous history, each chapter reveals the interactions among encounters, representations, and political discourses in Native American–central European relationships across five centuries. The present volume is arranged in a broad chronological sweep. Each chapter reflects the varied mediums of encounters between Native Americans and central Europeans. At the heart of all these chapters are the ways Indigenous cultures were constructed for these central European audiences. We open with two chapters that focus on the earliest encounters of the Habsburg monarchy with what has been often termed "Wonders of the New World."[15] James Ring Adams in his chapter "The Royal Fifth and the Rights of Indians: Charles V and his Display of Mexican Material Culture" traces the history of the items from Hernán Cortés's plunder of Mexico, sent to the royal court of Charles V. This work explores how the strange, unfamiliar, yet undoubtedly rare and precious items were put to use for dynastic representation in competitions between Charles V with Henry VIII of England and François I of France, and how they helped to shape popular opinion in Europe with regard to the newly conquered territories and their inhabitants. Following along this thread, the chapter by Alexander McCargar under the title "Plumes of Power: Depictions of the Native American in Viennese Festival Culture before 1700" advances research on the sources and the uses of Indigenous motifs in allegorical scenes that accompanied the theatrical and musical shows and processions taking place at the Habsburg court in Vienna. While based on secondhand sources, these lavish representations, authored by prominent artists of the time, made lasting impressions into the European imagery of Native Americans as "Indians."

Tracing the use of the early encounters forms the basis of Ildikó Sz. Kristóf's chapter "'People of the Devil'—'People of Achilles': The Representation of Native America in Religious Practice, Translations, and Collections in Hungary, 1670–1840s," which draws predominantly on sources authored by Catholic and Protestant missionaries as well as secondary commentators inspired by their reports to produce a comparative analysis of diabolical

15 Rachael Doggett, ed., *New World of Wonders: European Images of the Americas 1492–1700* (Seattle, WA and London: University of Washington Press, 1992).

imagery with the noble savage stereotypes contained within these missionary reports and scholarly texts. In doing so, Kristóf is able to accentuate the missing Indigenous voices in early modern and modern Hungarian textual and pictorial constructions of America. In a similar way, Markéta Křížová moves the analysis of Native American imagery towards the nineteenth century in her "Neither Red Enough, nor Fierce Enough: The Construction of Native Americans in Nineteenth-Century Czech Culture" which explores the specificities of construction and exploitation of Native American imagery within the frame of Czech and German nationalist competition in Bohemia and Moravia. Focusing especially on the phenomenon of ethnographic shows, she concludes that for the Czechs the North American as "Indian" was closely tied to the fantasies of colonial and imperial greatness, cultivated in explicit opposition to the Habsburg rule. Finally, on this recurrent theme, Florian Ambach and Maxmilian Gröber in their chapter "Staged Representation: The Perception of Native Americans, 'Ethnological Expositions,' and Wild West Shows in the German-Speaking Austro-Hungarian Press, 1870–1918" also explore the reflection of ethnographic shows through German-language media in Austria-Hungary. Following the development of this unique form of popular entertainment, they focus in particular on the famous Wild West shows of Buffalo Bill, demonstrating how, also for the German press, reporting on the shows reflected imperial discourses, but ones that focused on Austria-Hungary, its center and its (semi)peripheries, constructed via the imagery of the exotic Native American.

Another focal point assesses the multiple ways in which inhabitants of the Habsburg monarchy and the Native peoples of the Americas could enter into contact, as well as the interchange of experiences and creation of (mis) understandings during these encounters. The chapter by Bernd Hausberger "Jesuit Missionaries from Central European Territories in Northwestern New Spain, 1680–1767" returns us to the period of Spanish colonial expansion overseas. Through the overview of the activities of Jesuits from the German provinces (Austria, Bohemia, etc.) in the colony of New Spain (present-day Mexico), Hausberger reveals how these missionaries inserted themselves into the imperial ambitions of the Spanish Habsburgs (and later Bourbons), and how the reports returned to their original provinces and residences influenced the worldviews of those readers living in the Habsburg monarchy. Missionary activity is also the principal topic of "Myriad Missions: Native Americans and the Leopoldine Society" by Jonathan Singerton. Drawing upon the sources produced by the members of this Catholic society established in 1829, originally aiming for the enhancement of Catholicism of German immigrants to the United States, yet also dedicating its care to

the various Native populations, Singerton points out the varied responses of Native groups to the missionary activities, as well as the spectrum of the cultural and sociopolitical consequences that these produced.

In "Reencountering Trade Legacies, Indigenous Histories, and the Early Leopoldine Society Circle in the Vienna Weltmuseum," Michael Burri takes the North American collection of Indigenous cultural artefacts in the Weltmuseum Vienna as a point of departure for considering the exchange of objects between Indigenous peoples, the early Leopoldine Society circle, and others in the Great Lakes region. Habsburg leaders dispatched these missionaries in step with larger state initiatives to expand Austrian trade abroad. And yet, among the Indigenous groups of the upper Great Lakes middle ground, Leopoldine priests would encounter some of the most skilled practitioners of exchange on the planet. Pursuing the instances of direct encounters and materiality further, Marija Živković in her contribution "The Seljan Brothers, Native Americans, and the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb" traces the history of the founders of the collection of non-European cultures in one of the museum institutions that arose within the frame of the nationalist revival movements within the Habsburg monarchy. Beyond this story of the encounters of Croatian brothers Mirko and Stevo Seljan with Indigenous people in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, she poses important questions about the ways in which these encounters, and their material testimonies in the form of museum objects, should be dealt with at present, and what ought to be the exhibition strategy for museums that partook in such colonial and imperial fantasies and practices.

A final commonality brings out the political facet of the encounters between inhabitants of the Habsburg monarchy with the Indigenous nations in North America. Csaba Lévai's essay, entitled "'Poor Indians! Strangers in Your Own Land!' The Attitude of a Hungarian Traveler towards Native Americans in Jacksonian America" analyses a travelogue by the prominent Hungarian author Sándor Bölöni Farkas which received great popular acclaim. Through this text, Lévai reconstructs the attitudes in Hungary towards American Indigenous peoples, and how the information about their treatment by American settlers was reconciled with the generally positive image of the United States among progressive Hungarians. Michael P. Taylor's chapter "'Rothäute von Heute': Deskaheh's Petition for Recognized Indigenous Sovereignty at the End of the Austro-Hungarian Empire" puts to the fore the agency of Deskaheh (Levi General), a Cayuga hereditary chief and the designated speaker of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, who in 1923 travelled to Geneva to petition the League of Nations for international recognition

of Haudenosaunee sovereignty, and the responses to this initiative. Here, we discover how the encounter with Deskaheh was exploited by certain political groups in Austria, such as the suffragettes. Julia Secklehner in her text "Who are the 'Indians'? Hans Larwin and the Visualization of the Roma and Native Americans in Interwar Austrian Popular Art and Visual Culture" opens the important question of how representations of marginalized local communities of central Europe, the Roma, were entangled with those of non-European others—Native Americans—in the works of a popular Viennese artist Hans Larwin (1873–1938). The analysis reveals the central European fascination with the exotic, and the omnipresence of the colonial gaze even in situations when formal colonial dominance was not exercised. In the final chapter of the section, "Richard Erdoes, Red Power's Ally," György Tóth explores how the Austro-Hungarian visual artist and author Richard Erdoes (1912–2008) engaged in support of the Native American radical sovereignty movement from the 1970s through the 1990s. He demonstrates the strong agency of the Indigenous protagonists in shaping the image of themselves and their struggle through collaboration with Erdoes, but also shows how Erdoes's actions and attitudes were emerging out of a central European mindset.

This volume is the first collection of essays to examine the representation of Native Americans, actual personal encounters with Native Americans, and the place of Native Americans in political discourse in the central European Habsburg lands and their successor states from the sixteenth through the twenty-first centuries. Taken together, these contributions seek to reformulate the Germanic Indianthusiasm that was present throughout the Habsburg monarchy by considering the particularities of this Habsburg phenomenon and the distinctive level of direct encounters between Indigenous peoples and inhabitants of the Habsburg lands. Many of the chapters deepen our understanding of colonialism, the politics of representation, political discourse, and frameworks of encounter by connecting these scholarly fields with distinctly central European developments and themes. We focus upon how encounter, representation, and the political or cultural deployment of claims about Native people emerged and evolved over time in this region. Our volume is envisioned as a contribution to the continual and worthwhile process of (re)encountering, (re)imaging, and (re)historicizing the meaning of Native America. In bringing a historically, religiously, and politically central European Habsburg perspective to the foreground, it represents an effort—from an atypical perspective—to recover the wider history of our interconnected global spaces and to rethink present-day Indianthusiasm in central Europe.

About the Authors

Jonathan Singerton is Assistant Professor of Global Political History at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam in the Netherlands. His research focuses on the worldwide connections of the Habsburg lands in the early modern and modern eras. His first book, *The American Revolution and the Habsburg Monarchy*, appeared in 2022 and he currently serves as the chief editor of a forthcoming Oxford handbook focused on global Habsburg history.

Markéta Křížová is Professor of Ibero-American Studies at Charles University, Prague. Her research involves the history of overseas expansion, migrations, and cultural transfers. Among her publications can be mentioned M. Křížová and J. Malečková, eds., *Central Europe and the Non-European World in the Long 19th Century* (Frank & Timme, 2022).

Michael Burri teaches in German Studies at Haverford College, is editor of the Journal of Austrian-American History, and the former President of the Austrian Studies Association (2021–23). He has published on Austrian and Swiss film, and his articles have appeared in *German Studies Review*, *Austrian History Yearbook*, *Journal of Austrian Studies*, and *New German Critique*. His review essays and opinion pieces have appeared in leading Czech and American dailies, including Lidové noviny, Dnes, and *The Washington Post*. He is currently completing a book project on cultural diplomacy and the state in Austria.