

Vermeulen, Han F.: Before Boas. The Genesis of Ethnography and Ethnology in the German Enlightenment. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. ISBN 978-0-8032-5542-5. Price: \$ 75.00

The book of Han Vermeulen is a vast study compiling evidence about the origin of different terms and approaches in the academic field in Europe and the U.S. that led to the institutionalization of today's ethnology and anthropology in the course of the 18th and 19th centuries. Although the author had gathered and analyzed important parts of the book previously in the last twenty years in different articles (e.g., *Origins and Institutionalization of Ethnography and Ethnology in Europe and the USA, 1771–1845*. In: H. Vermeulen and A. Alvarez Roldán [eds.], *Fieldwork and Footnotes. Studies in the History of European Anthropology*; pp. 39–59. London 1995; *The German Invention of Völkerkunde. Ethnological Discourse in Europe and Asia, 1740–1798*. In: S. Eigen and M. Larrimore [eds.], *The German Invention of Race*; pp. 123–145. Albany 2006; and: *Von der Empirie zur Theorie. Deutschsprachige Ethnographie und Ethnologie von Gerhard Friedrich Müller bis Adolf Bastian [1740–1881]*. *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 134.2009: 253–266), this is the first time he presents his thesis about the origin and the use of the terms *Völkerkunde*, *Ethnographie* and *Ethnologie* (ethnology and ethnography) and *Volkskunde* (folklore) in Germany, the Netherlands, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States compared to anthropology and in particular to the perception in the last cited country before and with Franz Boas, who became the most distinguished founder of American anthropology with its four fields of archaeology, linguistics, physical, and cultural anthropology today.

Thus, for him Boas is not only a German immigrant who formed American anthropology, it is with Boas that ethnology, which was invented in the course of the Enlightenment in German-speaking countries in Central Europe and became a strong German ethnological tradition as well – so his full thesis – ended up particularly in American anthropology (436). Hence the title “Before Boas” is a time marker that separates different phases in the process of institutionalization of ethnology and anthropology. Today it also separates Europe from the United States' ethnological discipline and the Enlightenment from the early 20th century. In this sense, his story of the Western development of ethnology and anthropology attempts to correct the most popular theory of the American “invention” of cultural anthropology or, not less often promoted in the history of anthropology, the assumption of the beginning of cultural anthropology, e.g., ethnology, not before the end of 19th century in different perspectives depending on the viewpoint of national traditions (e.g., Anglo-American: Tylor > Boas > Malinowski; French: Durkheim > Maus). So his book is an attempt to add an additional view to the canonical histories of anthropology (or ethnology, depending on the tradition) by turning to the German Enlightenment and its German-speaking scholars like Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (chap. 2), Daniel Gottlieb Messerschmidt (chap. 3), Gerhard Friedrich Müller (chap. 4), Carsten Niebuhr (chap. 5), and August

Ludwig Schlözer, Johann Christoph Gatterer as well as Adam František Kollár (chap. 6) among other scholars associated with these or with the development of ethnology in Europe in each chapter. Finally, Vermeulen recalls what he had emphasized earlier as well (cf. 2006: 124), that to consider ethnology as subordinated to anthropology is a historical mismatch because the history of ethnography has not been well analyzed compared to the history of anthropology. Hence, his book “Before Boas” is an attempt to foster the history of ethnology and to correct the aforementioned mismatch not without showing how both, ethnology and anthropology, overlap in their approaches and objects of studies (people, nations, language, customs, laws), on the one hand, and differ in other aspects (with respect to physiognomy, race, mankind), on the other hand.

The book is divided into eight chapters, chap. 1 being the introduction, and chap. 8 some sort of epilogue that outlines the reception of the German ethnographic tradition in Germany itself (up to the time of Adolf Bastian), in Great Britain (James C. Prichard, Richard King, Edward Burnett Tylor), in France (Joseph-Marie Degérando, Charles de Brosses, Comte de Volney), in Russia (Johan Sjögren/Shegren), in the Netherlands (Pieter Boddaert, Johannes le Francq van Berkhey), and in the United States (among others Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Albert Gallatin, Lewis Henry Morgan, Franz Boas). It ends with a concluding section in which his main arguments and stages in the conceptualization of ethnology as an academic discipline throughout Europe are resumed. Together with chap. 1 (Introduction) and chap. 6 – that discusses the origin of the most important terms like *Völkerkunde*, *Volkskunde*, *Ethnographie* and *Ethnologie* –, these three sections allow a quick understanding of the author's thesis and main arguments. This can be especially helpful as the book comprises 718 pages of which 458 pages cover the eight chapters. Additionally, the volume offers a vast bibliographical section of 173 pages which is also a treasure chest for readers who would like to enter more deeply into the history of ethnology and anthropology. Along with archival sources, publications in different languages from Europe (including Russia) and the United States can be found. Sometimes, for unknown reasons, the author also cites translated publications of an original published contribution (e.g., J. Stagl, *A History of Curiosity. The Theory of Travel 1550–1800*. Chur 1995. German ed.: *Eine Geschichte der Neugier. Die Kunst des Reisens 1550–1800*. Köln 2002). Besides this vast bibliographical section there is an almost sixty pages long endnote register. This section might be especially of interest to those readers who wish to know the original (mostly German) text the author cites in the main chapters convincingly translated into English. Several tables in the book contain the author's evidence and help to explain the chronological or conceptual argumentation. Last but not least, there is a thirty-page index to the most cited names of scholars, terms, and concepts in the book.

As the reverse of the front cover page remarks, several chapters of the book, mainly chaps. 4, 5, and 6 were published formerly and are reused differently. These chapters

are the main part of Vermeulen's book and underline his thesis that Germany in the course of the Enlightenment was the center of developing a new academic discipline: *Völkerkunde* or *Ethnologie* (in the sense of "the knowledge of people") as well as *Volkskunde* (in the sense of "the knowledge of the people") (313; 2006: 129). Thus from this point of view his book might be more interesting to those readers who are unaware of his earlier analysis or who wish to find his former ideas rearranged into a full story that draws from the origin of the academic field of ethnology in Germany and other European countries up to Boas and the American anthropology. Besides this story line, additional information can be found in chaps. 2 to 4 that show how ethnology became important in Europe, in particular to Russia and Germany in the first half of the 18th century due to Russian colonial expansion into Asia and Siberia, and German scientific achievement.

Vermeulen argues that German-speaking scholars from modern Germany and Austria, in particular (mainly Müller, Schröder, Gatterer and Kollár), were the driving forces in establishing a new discipline: ethnology or social anthropology. This happened alongside the already existing interest in anthropology since the 16th century as a means of studying mankind as such from a religious and philosophical perspective and to which the Enlightenment added the interest in physical aspects among scholars from different parts of Europe (Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, Carolus Linnaeus, Georges-Louis Leclerc de Buffon, Georg Forster, Samuel Thomas von Soemmering, among others).

In particular in chap. 6, Vermeulen centers on four "ethno-concepts" termed as such by the Austrian ethnologist and sociologist Justin Stagl (1995/2002): *Völker-Beschreibung* (description of people), *Ethnographie* or *ethnographisch* (ethnographical), *Ethnologie* and *Völkerkunde* (the proper German term for neo-Greek "ethnology"). Although there is no evolutionist perspective in his arguments, he shows how Müller's concept *Völker-Beschreibung* from the 1740s used to describe the people in his Siberian expedition together with Leibniz's comparative linguistic method based mainly on Russian and Asian languages became popularized through Schröder and Gatterer during the 1770s as ethnography and *Völkerkunde* (in the sense of "knowledge of people"), whereas Kollár in the 1780s formulated *Völkerkunde* as ethnology (as the neo-Greek term *ethnologia*) and extended the concept to people and nations (296, 316). Thus, for Vermeulen Schröder's term ethnography (or *Ethnographie* in German) was comparable to Kollár's term ethnology (or *ethnologia*), as both had the historical description of people in mind, whereas the Swiss scholar Alexander-César Chavannes, long held to be the first to use the term ethnology (or *Ethnologie*) some years after Kollár's *ethnologia*, had in mind more mankind by his laws and progressive steps towards civilization; hence, according to Vermeulen, anthropology and not ethnology (314). From this for Vermeulen follows that ethnography – in the sense of Schröder, Gatterer, and Kollár based on the tradition established by Müller's Siberian fieldwork – was the empirical description of the people whereas ethnology, as defined by

Chavannes, was more the study of people in general. So Vermeulen argues, that ethnology (here in the sense of cultural anthropology) followed ethnography as an academic discipline (319) or, seen from another perspective, "ethnology" has different origins and objectives not only formulated by Schröder and Kollár, on the one hand, and Chavannes on the other one, but also by Johann Gottlieb Herder and some other European scholars like Van Berkhey constituting a third one: folklore (*Volkslieder* and *Volkskunde* in German) in the widest sense. Hence, Vermeulen not only analyzes the aforementioned ethno-concepts in their etymological and historical dimension and deepens the view of other scholars like Stagl but also shows how these concepts open different paths and became separated from other disciplines like the aforementioned folklore, geography, or as analyzed in more detail in his chap. 7, anthropology. As Vermeulen concludes, ethnology arises out of scholars of history during the German Enlightenment and not of anthropology (360, 365).

His book enriches the history of ethnology (or anthropology) due to its multidisciplinarity and supraregional approach including Russia and Russian colonialism in Siberia, into European attempts at describing people, languages, customs and institutions from other parts of the world like the Americas, Africa, and Asia. Thus, ethnology emerged out of colonialism (but Russian/Asian and not American/African) and as a discipline to gain knowledge of people, to control and explore people and their resources. As Vermeulen remarks in support of Talal Asad's claim that anthropology was trivial for imperial domination in India and Africa, it was also relatively unimportant for Russian colonialism (214f.). Nonetheless, colonialism opened the path to empirical studies and fieldwork (observing, describing, interviewing, collecting, comparing) in contrast to armchair or academic anthropology (generalizing, ordering, theorizing). From the beginning on, first with Messerschmidt and with the historian Müller in Siberia next, the German Enlightenment brought history into the field of ethnography and ethnology. Schröder and Gatterer as historians institutionalized this view in Göttingen. In logic with this origin German *Völkerkunde* or ethnology as it is called today overwhelmingly has ever since turned more to ethnohistory than to social anthropology as the Anglo-American or French anthropology does. Vermeulen also analyzes or evaluates in the light of his theory other works on the history of anthropology or ethnology. In particular, he refers besides Stagl to Wilhelm Mühlmann, Günter Mühlfordt, George Stocking, and Werner Petermann among others. In this context it may be of interest to remark, that Vermeulen expands Stagl's view of the origin of ethnology as he turns to the German fieldwork in Siberia as a "forerunner" of what happened next in Germany, especially in Göttingen, and the perception later in Europe and in the United States of America. With respect to Petermann (Die Geschichte der Ethnologie. Wuppertal 2004), Vermeulen recognizes that Petermann already refers to Müller's scientific achievements in Siberia (partly because he cites Vermeulen himself). In contrast to Petermann's voluminous history of ethnology, Vermeulen, however, considers the origin of

the idea of ethnology as an achievement of German Enlightenment, whereas Petermann only explains the origin and differences of the three terms *Anthropologie*, *Völkerkunde*, and *Ethnologie* (2004: Kap. 2).

As Vermeulen traces the origin of the different ethno-concepts and related terms back to their first appearance in European dictionaries or publications, some of them of German origin or use like *Anthropologie*, *Statistik*, and *Volkskunde*, he gives the impression of highlighting even more the German Enlightenment and its ethnological approach too much. Albeit not intentionally, he arouses suspicion as he argues for a centripetal diffusion of ethnology from Germany or German-speaking countries as his main point of his history of ethnology.

The different terms involved in explaining the history of ethnology make it sometimes complicated to follow the author's argument. Although he italicized foreign words in his English script like *Völkerkunde* or *Ethnographie* or *ethnographia*, without knowledge of the German language it is sometimes confusing, as he often translates them within brackets. This complicates not only the reading flow but also the understanding, as there are two German words referring to the idea of ethnology (*Völkerkunde*, *Ethnologie*) but two similar worlds *Völkerkunde* and *Volkskunde* referring to different ideas which he describes as "the knowledge of people" and "the knowledge of the people," respectively. For the reader it would have been more helpful if a glossary had been provided to explain these terms and give English translations, so no additional reference or bracket would have been necessary in the text. There are within each chapter's main argumentation many subsections giving additional arguments which sometimes overload the text and disturb the flow of reading. There are also some inconsistencies especially concerning the introduction of the names of scholars for the first time, as he refers to them either by giving their full name and their biographic data or only by citing their name while the full name and the biographic data appear later or not at all (e.g., Messerschmidt, pages 88, 115; Linnaeus, pages 220, 230). Another inconsistency is the use of different designations for the same person (Tabbert and Strahlenberg for Philipp Johann Tabbert von Strahlenberg; 110f.). Finally, there are some repetitive arguments within the main sections of the book (introduction, conclusions, and chaps. 6, 7, and 8).

Daniel Grana-Behrens

Volper, Julien (ed.): *Giant Masks from the Congo. A Belgian Jesuit Ethnographic Heritage*. Tervuren: Royal Museum for Central Africa, 2015. 152 pp. ISBN 978-94922-4415-4. Price: € 19.50

The famous Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren, near Brussels, undergoing a major renovation, is closed to the public for the next couple of years. In the meantime, parts of its innumerable treasures can be enjoyed in temporary exhibitions large and small, some of which travel worldwide while others are shown in Belgian museums. One such exhibition, on view at the BELvue Museum in Brussels through part of 2015, was dedicated

to, "Giant Masks from the Congo. A Belgian Jesuit Ethnographic Heritage." Its pocket-sized catalogue features the masks and other artworks on display in the exhibition that reflected the ethnographic collecting and research conducted by Jesuit missionaries among neighbouring peoples of the Kwango-Kwelu region in the southwestern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The catalogue, written by three authors, is divided into four chapters of unequal length. The first one (12–57) is authored by Wauthier de Mahieu, an anthropologist and Jesuit priest known for his publications about the Komo peoples of northeastern DRC. Titled "Missionaries, Researchers, Collectors," it is an important addition to an underexplored topic. From the early 1920s, curators of what was then called the Museum of the Belgian Congo in Tervuren, encouraged Jesuit missionaries to collect art and artefacts, and information on ethnic origin and local use. De Mahieu includes excerpt after excerpt of letters to successive directors in which curators ask for subsidies to compensate the priests for their acquisitions. One of the missionaries, incidentally, took pains to point out that, in acquiring the pieces, "I never conduct raids. ... We bring them gifts in exchange" (27).

Covering around four decades until the country's independence in 1960, this first chapter considers five Jesuits in particular, most of whom contributed major ethnographic and linguistic monographs about the peoples they lived with. De Mahieu shows the differences in the style of collecting and documenting among these missionaries. The first ones were autodidacts: "Bit by bit we are learning the ethnographic approach, of which I knew little upon my arrival here, alas, as I was originally meant to teach at the seminary", wrote one of them to the head of Tervuren's ethnography section (13). Léon de Sousberghe, the last one under consideration, studied ethnological research methods at the University College London before starting as a researcher at the Institut de Recherche Scientifique en Afrique Centrale, focusing on Pende art and social structures. While the Tervuren Museum wanted him to collect "objects made by the natives and used by them for their usual needs," he was sophisticated enough to recognize that changes had taken place. There were no more traditional sculpture workshops and Pende artists produced increasingly for the tourist market. In his wry reply to the curator, de Sousberghe wrote, "I see from your letter that you are, I believe, harbouring illusions on the level of primitiveness of the [Pende peoples]" (49 f.).

Fascinating is the fact that some changes in art production in the Kwango-Kwelu region were triggered by the missionaries themselves. This consequence of the Jesuits' interest in local material culture is touched upon in the fourth and final chapter (88–145), "The Scarlet Giant *Kakuungu*. Functions and Ancestry of a Celebrated Mask from Bandundu (DRC)". Written by Julien Volper, assistant curator of the section of ethnography at the Museum of Tervuren and the editor of the catalogue, the chapter opens with a quote from a letter of 1938 by Father De Beir to the Museum. In it, the missionary explains how difficult it is to acquire the giant masks from their Yaka and Suku owners, "as getting rid of one is tantamount to