



MUSEUM
DER KULTUREN BASEL

Newspaper for the exhibition
The Museum der Kulturen Presents Four of its Expeditions

EXPEDITIONS

The world in a suitcase

ANTHROPOLOGY AND EXPEDITIONS

THE FIVE SRI LANKA (CEYLON) EXPEDITIONS, 1883 – 1925 PAUL AND FRITZ SARASIN

Measuring, collecting, and doing research

THE VANUATU (NEW HEBRIDES) EXPEDITION, 1910 – 1912 FELIX SPEISER-MERIAN

'We salvaged what we could'

THE TIMOR, ROTE, AND FLORES (INDONESIA AND EAST TIMOR) EXPEDITION, 1935 | ALFRED BÜHLER

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Creating images

FURTHER EXPEDITIONS

From travelling the world to research in the field

THE MUSEUM IN CHANGE

New names and concepts

ANTHROPOLOGY AND EXPEDITIONS

Anna Schmid

James Cook’s famous voyages mark the end of one era and the beginning of a next. His three expeditions between 1768 and 1779/80 betoken the close of the Age of Discovery, after all the continents had been discovered, at least in broad outline. His voyages also signify the beginning of the systematic assemblage of ethnographic collections. However, it took almost the entire nineteenth century until anthropology became a fully fledged academic discipline. Trailblazers in this respect were geographical, ethnological, and anthro-

EXPEDITIONS AND KNOWLEDGE

The forerunners of today’s Museum der Kulturen also organized numerous expeditions and sent scholars and scientists from different backgrounds to all corners of the world for the purpose of promoting science in general, and their museum in particular. The exhibition ‘Expeditions. The World in Suitcase’ and the accompanying brochure tell of these Basel scholars and their travels. A closer inspection of these expeditions sheds light on what issues were of sig-

THESE ‘QUESTS’ IN THE NAME OF SCIENCE – AMONG OTHER AGENDAS – HAD THEIR HEYDAY FROM THE END OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY UP TO THE SECOND WORLD WAR.

pological societies, followed later by ethnographic museums, some of which had grown from such academic societies. The first Chairs of Anthropology were founded at the beginning of the twentieth century. In Basel anthropology experienced a similar development, albeit a little later.

BETWEEN RESEARCH AND ROBBERY

On the journey to becoming a fully fledged discipline, anthropological expeditions played an important role. These ‘quests’ in the name of science – among other agendas – had their heyday from the end of the nineteenth century up to the Second World War. One of the most famous early ventures was the Jesup North Pacific Expedition of 1897 to 1902 led by Franz Boas, the founder of American cultural anthropology. Its primary purpose was to investigate the relationship between the Asian and North American cultures on both sides of the Bering Straits. Equally famous was the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to the Torres Straits in 1898 under Alfred C. Haddon, which had the aim of exploring the cultures of the Torres Straits islands located between Australia and New Guinea. Both expeditions yielded large collections and large amounts of information and the subsequent publications had great impact on the development of anthropology as an academic discipline. Probably the most famous expedition towards the end of the boom years was the one carried out by the French anthropologist Marcel Griaule. Together with the writer and anthropologist Michel Leiris he crossed the African continent from Dakar in Senegal to Djibouti in Ethiopia. Along with a substantial collection, ethnographic notes, and scientific publications, Michel Leiris also published his expedition diary in which he not only disclosed their method of collecting – much to the displeasure of Marcel Griaule – but also criticized the anthropological practice in general: ‘Beside this, the looting of artefacts continues as does the ethnographic inquiry’ (Leiris, 1980[1934]:167). Elsewhere (ibid., 104) he recounts: ‘The small black purse containing the money – our pouch of delights – is opened and closed again and again. We haven’t yet bought the clothes off someone and left him (or her) standing naked in the street, but that’s probably just a matter of time.’

nificance at the time, how knowledge about ‘others’ was generated, and what conclusions and meanings were drawn from the results.

PAUL AND FRITZ SARASIN: FROM ZOOLOGICAL TO ANTHROPOLOGICAL RESEARCH

The museum’s first scientific expedition was mounted by the (second-degree) cousins Paul and Fritz Sarasin, both of them qualified zoologists, from 1883 to 1886 to Sri Lanka, then still Ceylon. ‘Initially the aim was to do zoological research, the interest in the Vedda [indigenous population] only grew in the course of time’ (Speiser, 1943: 223). After returning from their first expedition, the two men went to Berlin to work on their material and later publish their results. In Berlin they got to know, among others, the director of the Ethnological Museum, Adolf Bastian, and the co-founder of the Anthropological Society, the physician Rudolf Virchow. Speiser (ibid. 225f) suggests that the academic setting in Berlin proved advantageous to their work. They frequented the various zoological, geographical and anthropological societies where they held lectures and found inspiration: ‘They encountered ... a circle of friends to which they belonged not only as passive learners but, on the strength of their talents, as active contributors’ (Handschin, 1959:5f). How strong the mutual influence was is yet difficult to say but we may assume that the idea for their second expedition to Sri Lanka in 1890 had its roots in Berlin (Sarasin, 1941:18f). Undoubtedly the Sarasins belong to those pioneers who set off as natural scientists and came back as anthropologists. In his contribution Richard Kunz introduces us to the two explorers who left an indelible mark on the early Basel Museum of Ethnology.

FELIX SPEISER-MERIAN: A FIGURE OF TRANSITION

The chemist and anthropologist Felix Speiser-Merian, nephew of Paul Sarasin, undertook an expedition to Vanuatu from 1910 to 1912. Speiser’s work forms a bridge between the era of the Sarasins, who were still followers of nineteenth-century Evolutionism, and the representatives of later anthropological thought who turned attention to distinct fields such as religion, mythology, and art. In his early career, and also on his various expeditions, Speiser was still informed by the scientific debates of the nineteenth century. It was

Alfred Bühler and Willy Meyer with their truck loaded with expedition gear under way in Rote, Indonesia.
Photo: MKB (F) IIc 20324



only in his later work that he turned his mind to new problems and approaches in which he ventured to criticize, albeit only implicitly, his predecessors. The contribution shows that Speiser felt driven by a commitment to salvage cultures which he saw as standing on the verge of extinction. For one thing this becomes evident from his extensive collecting, for the other, in a catalogue of measures he drew up for the purpose of 'saving the natives'. One of his recommendations was to

Bühler declared systematization – the comprehensive study of material items such as textiles, from technologies to finished products – as his principal method of inquiry. The 1935 expedition to Indonesia and East Timor offers an early example of this approach. In his contribution Richard Kunz describes the significance of the expedition and the impact it had, not least on the development of the museum's famous textile collection.

**HOWEVER, IT IS NOT OUR INTENTION TO CELEBRATE
SPECIFIC BYGONE FIGURES, BUT TO SITUATE THEIR MOTIVES AND ACTIONS
IN A HISTORICAL SETTING.**

'... force the natives to return to their traditional way of life. This can only be achieved gradually by making it increasingly difficult for them ... to purchase European goods' (Speiser, 1923:54). For his objective of reconstructing the settlement history and population movements in Melanesia he was dependent on access to pristine, undefiled native cultures, which were becoming hard to find. This is certainly one of the reasons why he repeatedly deplores the relentless decline of culture. Speiser became director of the museum in 1942 after Fritz Sarasin died. The period up to his own death in 1949 was too short to realize his ideas of a modern anthropological museum, not least because the Second World War 'shattered all my hopes' (Speiser, 1948:7).

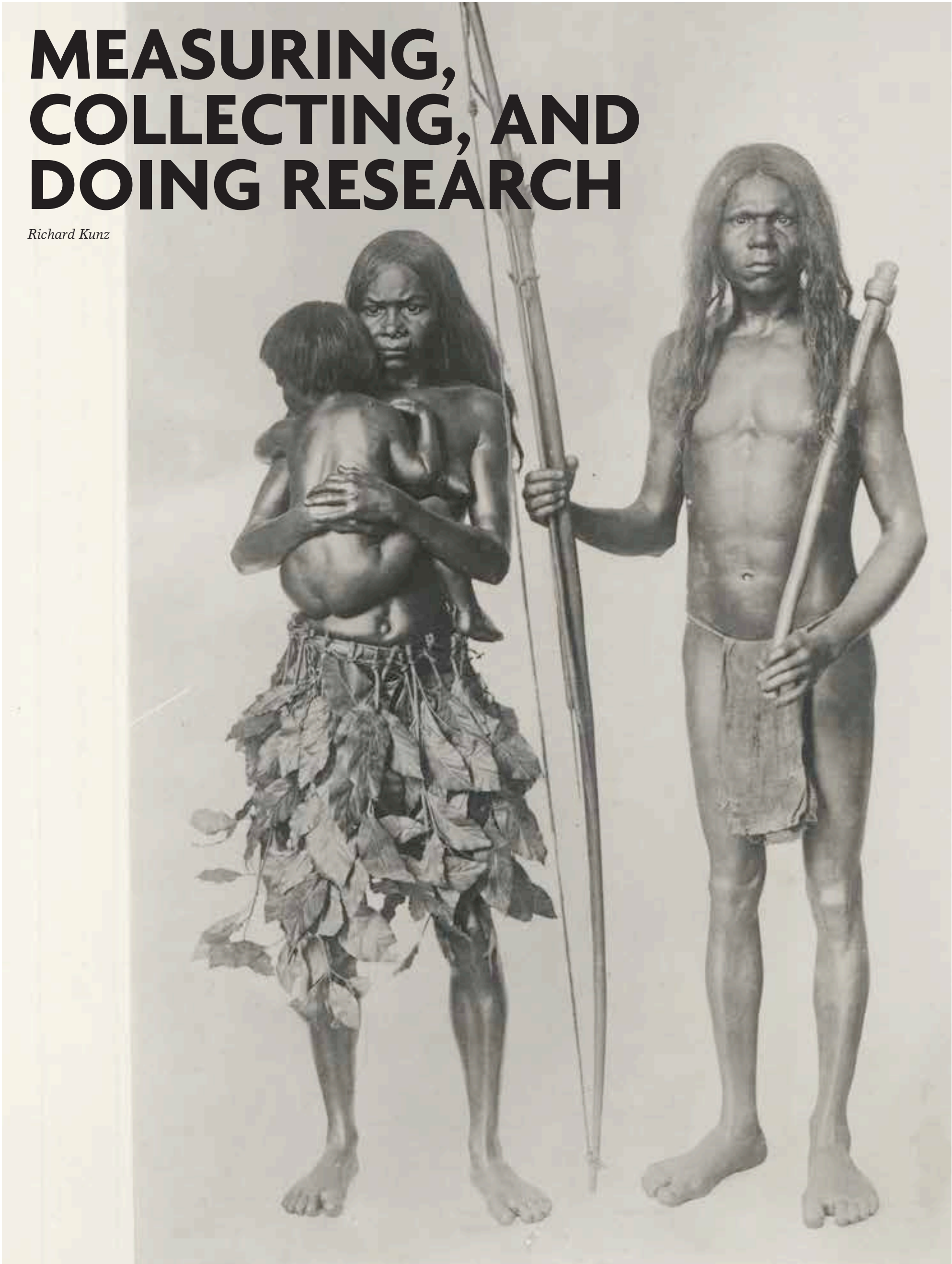
ALFRED BÜHLER: 'ON THE PURPOSE OF ETHNOGRAPHIC COLLECTIONS ...'
When he set off on his expedition to Indonesia and East Timor in 1935, Alfred Bühler carried with him clear instructions from the Museum Commission. The purpose of the venture was 'to collect all manifestations of material culture displayed by the local tribes. Research on the intellectual culture, for which knowledge of the language is required, is only of secondary significance.' Bühler followed these instructions. He focused on compiling an inventory of the material culture and comparing the data for the purpose of establishing evidence of cultural relations and migrations between South East Asia and Melanesia. In his habilitation lecture Bühler outlined his ideas with regard to the purpose of anthropological museums. He raised the question as 'to what extent the products of foreign peoples can help to explain the essence and the development of the cultures in question. ... it proves that the foremost task of anthropological research is to comprehend the development and essence of cultures ... especially those of primitive tribes' (Bühler, 1947:225). Bühler considered the matter very carefully. In his opinion the material inventory provides the most important and least adulterated form of evidence. However, the fact that it can never be compiled in its totality and that it is always linked to a people's 'intellectual culture' may provide a serious setback. Realizing that material culture alone does not provide a sufficient grounding for drawing conclusions on historical processes or for establishing 'cultural laws',

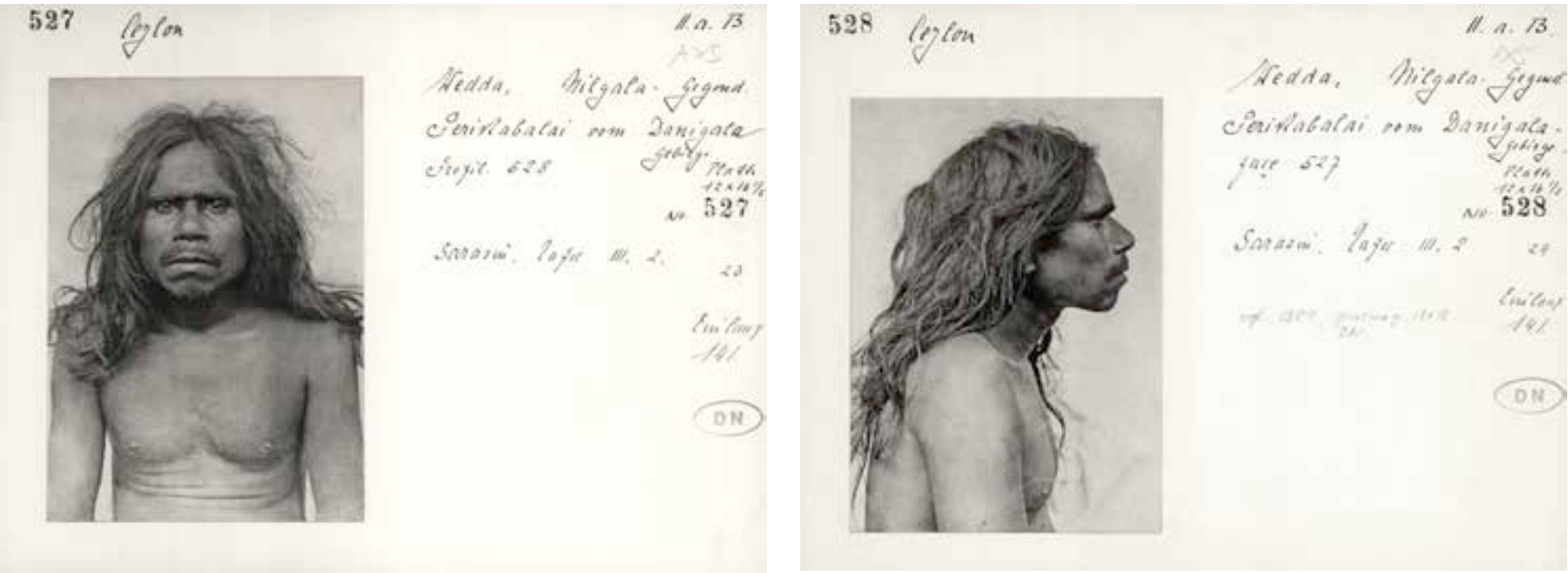
PAUL HINDERLING AND RENÉ GARDI: FROM EXPEDITION TO FIELDWORK
The expedition to northern Cameroon in 1953 carried out by the anthropologist Paul Hinderling and the travel writer and photographer René Gardi marked the turn from collecting journeys to stationary fieldwork in one location. The primary objective of the north Cameroon expedition was again to assemble a collection, but it shows that true ethnographic fieldwork had in the meantime gained more importance. Paul Hinderling, a student of Bühler and Speiser, not only gathered data on the artefacts he collected, his ethnographic inquiries now went distinctly further and deeper, an approach his companion Gardi rather disdainfully dismissed as 'very extensive and roundabout questioning'. The two men apparently not only differed in terms of approach but also with regard to interests: while Hinderling was intent on embedding the artefacts he collected in their cultural setting, René Gardi was more fixed on creating a pictorial world on the strength of the associative power of his images. In her contribution Gaby Fierz describes the travels and motives of these two unlike explorers.

TRAJECTORIES FOR THE FUTURE
Dealing with the topic of expeditions inevitably shifts into focus the question of how ethnographic collections were assembled and acquired, which, in turn, addresses a number of pertinent issues: what methodologies informed anthropology in those early days; under what financial and economic conditions were the expeditions launched; what did the political setting look like at the time, and who were the people that went on expeditions, what was their background? However, it is not our intention to celebrate specific bygone figures, but to situate their motives and actions in a historical setting, allowing us to trace the trajectories of a tradition that we are all part of and that still informs our bearings. This is a vital prerequisite 'for considering our past and reflecting on the future and our mutual connectedness characterized by uncertainty and discomfort' (Rabinow, 2012:7f). Staging the exhibition 'Expeditions. The World in Suitcase' is a first decisive step in this direction.

MEASURING, COLLECTING, AND DOING RESEARCH

Richard Kunz





LIFELIKE: A CEYLONESE COUPLE WITH CHILD
Paul and Fritz provided photographs and measurements of the Vedda of Ceylon from which the sculptor F. Meineke from Freiburg i. B. reconstructed a Vedda family in plaster in 1908 for the Sarasins. Their intention was to produce 'an exact portray of a true member of an aboriginal tribe prone to extinction' (Annual report, 1908:22). The man measures 155 centimetres, the woman is a little shorter. She is wearing a typical grass skirt as worn by both men and women. The man is equipped with the typical hunting weapons: bow, arrows, and axe.

Photos: MKB FX57/MKB [F] IIa 527; IIa 528

Four hundred forty-one artefacts and 542 photographs from five expeditions to Ceylon – the modern Sri Lanka: Paul Sarasin (1856–1929) and Fritz Sarasin (1859–1942), members of the Basel upper class, second-degree cousins and explorers, had originally set out to explore Ceylonese caecilians and elephant embryos and ended up studying the Vedda people, in their eyes an ancient, pristine tribe. They took measurements and prepared documentations with the intention of shedding light on the development of mankind and presenting to the people at home in Basel an accurate picture of a primitive, unspoilt tribe. Their first journey to Ceylon (1883–1886) was the first scientific expedition undertaken in the name of the institution that later became the Museum of Ethnology – notably, without any funding from the state.

**UPPER-CLASS EXPLORERS:
TRAVELLING AT THEIR OWN EXPENSE**
Paul Benedikt Sarasin, son of the alderman Karl Sarasin and Elisabeth Sarasin-Sauvain, was twenty-seven years old when he departed on his first expedition to Ceylon. He was accompanied by Karl Friedrich 'Fritz' Sarasin, son of Mayor Felix Sarasin and Rosalie Sarasin-Brunner, three years younger than Paul. Their fathers were cousins, but the two families did

not associate. Paul and Fritz got to know each other only at university; both men were members of the student association Zofingia and it is here that they discovered their common interest in natural science and travelling. Paul first studied medicine in Basel, then switched to zoology. Fritz commenced studying in Geneva under Carl Vogt and Henri de Saussure and came to Basel only later. The zoologist and paleontologist Ludwig Rütimeyer and the anatomist Julius Kollmann had a strong influence on the further career of the two friends. In 1881, the two young men moved to Würzburg where they prepared for their doctoral exam under the zoologist Karl Semper. In 1882, Paul Sarasin got his PhD degree with a thesis on the development of embryonic layers in the freshwater snail *Bithynia tentaculata*. Fritz received his degree a year later with a study on the development and cleavage of reptile embryos. It was during this period that they made plans for their first expedition to Ceylon. After finishing his studies Paul visited the museums in Paris and London to study the collections of the then known fauna of Ceylon. 'Preparations for the journey were time-consuming, ordering and packing the thousands of items an itinerant zoologist requires. This I took care of in Würzburg, my personal gear I ordered from London'

(Sarasin, 1941:7). In the end, the two men undertook five scientific expeditions, all of them funded by private means; the research they conducted for the museum was done on an honorary basis.

CAECILIANS AND ELEPHANT EMBRYOS
The first expedition (1883–1886) undertaken by Paul and Fritz Sarasin focused on zoological studies.

'The primary aim of our studies was to shed light on the as yet unknown development history of the Ceylon caecilian, *Ichthyophis glutinosus*. These snake-like, legless amphibians were brought to us by the score by the plantation coolies; many of them carried mature eggs but we were unable to locate any embryos. We often saw larvae equipped with gill slits in streams, which suggested that the eggs were deposited in water. It was only after a few months, when the rains set in, that we were able to solve the riddle. The mother digs a hole in the ground where she lays her eggs, strung like beads, after which she coils her body around them, providing parental care. The joy we felt when we discovered the first embryos with their tiny, blood-red gill feathers is something only a scientist can comprehend. This also immediately solved the question concerning the position of the *Gymnophiona*

**THEY ORDERED THE RESULTS OF THEIR RESEARCH ACCORDING TO THE LAWS
OF NATURAL SCIENCE IN AN ATTEMPT TO ASSIGN THE POPULATIONS THEY HAD STUDIED
THEIR APPROPRIATE POSITION ON THE TREE OF HUMAN EVOLUTION.
FOR THIS PURPOSE THEY RELIED CHIEFLY ON PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL METHODS, ABOVE ALL,
ON COMPLICATED ANTHROPOMETRIC AND CRANIOMETRIC MEASUREMENTS.**



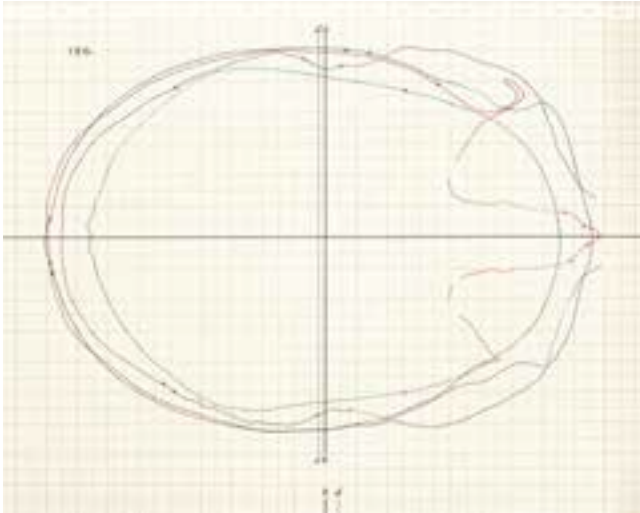
POTTERY AS A ‘HIGHER’ FORM OF CRAFT
In the foreground one sees three pots. Pottery, representing a ‘higher’ form of craft, did not quite fit into the picture of the ‘natural’ Vedda people with their simple material culture: “The “natural Veddass”, as yet untouched by any form of higher culture, do not produce pottery; this art is absolutely unknown to the authentic Veddass.” Paul Sarasin goes on to comment on the material achievements of the so-called ‘cultured’, that is, acculturated Vedda: ‘This, of course, is due to the influence of a higher culture and thus of no interest to us’ (Sarasin, 1892/93:455f). Their aim was to construct from a real, existing culture an unspoilt, primitive culture to serve as an example and illustration of the evolution of mankind.

Photo: MKB (F) IIa 885

SARASIN’S CRANIAL CURVES
In the field of craniometry Paul and Fritz Sarasin developed a novel method by combining elements from a variety of pre-existing methods, from which they produced new and conclusive findings. When publishing the results they paid special attention to the quality of the reproductions. Their ‘Ergebnisse naturwissenschaftlicher Forschungen auf Ceylon’ stands out for the superb quality of its sketches and photographs. Moreover, for the rendition of their cranial measurements they applied a graph system they had developed themselves, which in due course became widely used and accepted. However, their view of the evolution of Homo sapiens out of earlier hominids lost its validity in the course of the twentieth century. Sarasin, 1892/93:Fig. 126



A GIFT FOR BASEL
The elephant calf was captured by Paul and Fritz Sarasin on their first journey to Ceylon and later donated to the Basel zoo. ‘Miss Kumbuk’ quickly became famous in town. In 1891 she was moved into a building built in the Moorish style, which also housed the zebras. She lived at the zoo from 1896 to 1917. Miss Kumbuk’s skull is part of the collection of the Basel Museum of Natural History and on display in the exhibition.
Photo: Staatsarchiv: BSL 1001 G1.2.29.1



HUNTING DOWN PREGNANT ELEPHANT COWS ON PAUL SARASIN’S FIRST JOURNEY TO SRI LANKA HAD LEFT BEHIND A BITTER AFTERTASTE.

in the zoological system: they were members of the Urodela, that is, the salamanders, and, judging from their scales, a very old form of this order. We went on to establish, initially in Ceylon and then at home in Europe, the full anatomy and evolutionary history of this species, actually the first fruit of our journey to Ceylon’ (Sarasin, 1929:4). According to modern classification the caecilians are members of the Ichthyophiidae family of the order Gymnophiona within the class of Amphibia (sub-class Lissamphibia). The second aim of their first expedition concerned ‘the procurement of elephant embryos by means of which we hoped to gain information on the evolution of this species. We went on elephant hunts at least twenty times; we dissected two slain cows, not an easy task to perform in a forest clearing, but we did not find what we were looking for. The only pleasing incidence was the capture of the elephant calf called Kumbuk [...]’ (Sarasin, 1929:4).

MEMORIAL TO A TRIBE ON THE VERGE OF EXTINCTION
Paul and Fritz Sarasin also turned attention to the inhabitants of Ceylon. Especially the Vedda with their very simple way of life and culture – compared to the Tamil and Sinhalese – held great fascination for the two explorers. ‘Thus we followed the Veddass from camp to camp in the remote wild, fascinated by the astonishing frugality of these forest people, whose only possessions include bow and arrow, axe, digging stick, firewood, a few bags and pouches made of animal skin or fur, and a tortoise shell that serves as a bowl’ (Sarasin , 1929:7). On their second expedition, in 1890, they concerned themselves exclusively with the life of the Vedda. The results of their research were published as volume three of their ‘Ergebnisse naturwissenschaftlicher Forschungen auf Ceylon’ and conceived of as a ‘memorial to a tribe on the verge of extinction’ (Sarasin, 1929:7).

TREE OF HUMAN EVOLUTION
In the tradition of science at the end of the nineteenth century, Paul and Fritz Sarasin studied the Vedda on the basis of ‘somatic’ criteria – physique, skin colour, hair, cranial shape, etc. – and ergonomic features in the sense of ‘what do these people produce in physical as well as intellectual terms.’ Their aim was to establish a genealogical tree of human evolution. ‘One immediately discerns the evolutionary focus common to that era: scientists determine groups which are subsequently assigned to the different rungs on a stepladder, according to their stage of development; the possibility that groups of differing complexity or displaying different modes of organization could have evolved simultaneously is absolutely out of the question: there only exist ‘higher’ and ‘lower’ groups, with the higher ones always growing out of the lower ones’ (Speiser, 1943:239). Compared with other scientists of their time, the Sarasins were actually quite progressive. For exam-



PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN IN THE STUDIO WERE FAVOURED COLLECTOR'S ITEMS

'Elegant Singhalese woman' Photo: MKB (F) IIa 836

ple, instead of using the term 'race', they preferred to speak of 'variants of the human species'. Moreover, they did not regard the Vedda as less developed than other peoples, but merely spoke of them as displaying certain 'primitive features'.

DISCOVERING THE STONE AGE IN CEYLON

Paul and Fritz Sarasin were the first to identify tools found in caves and topsoil locations as being of stone age origin, thereby providing a basis and a strong impulse for following generations of archaeologists working on the prehistory of Sri Lanka.

'Even back in 1885 we occasionally turned attention to the caves we came across whilst ranging the lowland regions of Ceylon. The reason why we did not discover the stone age then was because, for one thing, we did not go about excavation work methodologically, and, for the other, because we lacked the necessary experience ... However, discovering evidence of the stone age in the Toala caves of Lamontjong in Celebes changed everything ... So we decided to reconsider this question and set off on a new expedition to Ceylon in January 1907 ... On 5 May 1907 we boarded ship in Colombo for home, highly satisfied that, contrary to our expectations and even though until then no stone instrument had ever been described in the literature, Ceylon had

turned out to be a wellspring of prehistoric stone implements, one of the richest in the world' (Sarasin, 1908:1/4/22).

Recent research suggests that Sri Lanka was settled as long as 300,000 years ago. The oldest, substantiated traces of settlement reach back roughly 125,000 years (Deraniyagala, 1992:686). However, many of the explanations and interpretations offered by the Sarasins concerning the country's prehistory have since then been discarded or revised.

HUMANS AS OBJECTS OF NATURE

In the eyes of Paul and Fritz Sarasin, both being natural scientists, the human being was an object of nature, a view they attempted to substantiate by taking physiological and somatic features into consideration, in addition to environmental factors. Their methods were those of the natural scientist, primarily going by the manifest form of the object under scrutiny, measuring, describing, and examining it and later ordering the results according to systematic categories. Their aim was to find answers to some of the paramount questions of their time, such as the source and paths of human migration in South East Asia and as far as Australia, and, more generally, the history of human evolution. Based on Darwin's and Haeckel's theories of evolution they

ordered the results of their research according to the laws of natural science in an attempt to assign the populations they had studied their appropriate position on the tree of human evolution. For this purpose they relied chiefly on physical anthropological methods, above all, on complicated anthropometric and craniometric measurements.

PHYSICAL AND INTELLECTUAL PRODUCTIVITY: A MATTER OF NATURAL SCIENCE

In terms of modern anthropology one could not say that Paul and Fritz Sarasin conducted ethnographic research on their expeditions in Ceylon. In their scientific understanding human beings were part of the natural order, and human way of life a subcategory thereof. For them the key term was 'ergonomics', which Paul Sarasin (1892/93:375) once defined as follows: 'The term ergonomics comprises all manifestations of life displayed by animal as well as plant beings ... that go beyond the field of pure physiology ...; hereby we are not only referring to such manifestations as nest-building among insects, birds, fishes, and mammals, and human abodes, and so forth, we also include state organization among insects and humans, in other words, all products of physical and intellectual work achieved by a living being.'

Accordingly, ethnography represented an aspect of ergonomics, which, in turn, constituted a category within zoology and the natural sciences, respectively.

COLLECTING AND DOCUMENTING:
GAPS AND FORTUITY

‘From the start we also paid attention to the ethnography of the Sinhalese. In Kandy one finds many vendors selling antiquities. Often they even came to the house where we were staying, offering their goods. It was an easy thing to purchase beautiful old knives with sculpted ivory hilts and silver-inlaid iron blades, old coins from the age of the kings, old swords, spears, bows and arrows, drums, lime boxes used for betel chewing, lamps of different shapes, carved ivory combs, and the like’ (Sarasin, 1939:22).

The Sarasins confined themselves to describing the lifestyle and intellectual achievements – the ergonomics – of the Vedda people, on account of the simplicity of this people’s way of life. However, descriptions based on own ethnographic fieldwork are few, instead

the Sarasins relied on meticulously compiling all relevant information from the existing literature. As far as the Sinhalese and Tamil peoples are concerned – ‘[peoples] which look back on a history thousands of years old, who have brought forth a rich philosophical and poetical literature, and who have earned distinction ... in almost all fields of art and industry’ – the Sarasins did not even consider conducting research (Sarasin, 1892/93:83). Accordingly, their Sinhala collection is rather unsystematic and fortuitous, with an emphasis on large and spectacular objects or artistically and technically valuable ‘show’ pieces.

SIGNIFICANT IMPULSES FOR THE MUSEUM –
AND FOR NATURAL CONSERVATION
Even though the Sarasins’ expeditions had a strong natural science bent, the role Paul and Fritz Sarasin played in the development of anthropology in Basel is considerable. Admittedly, their journey with Leopold Rütimeyer to Egypt in 1889 and Fritz Sarasin’s travels with Jean Roux to New Caledonia and the Admiralty Islands in 1911/1912 were definitely more

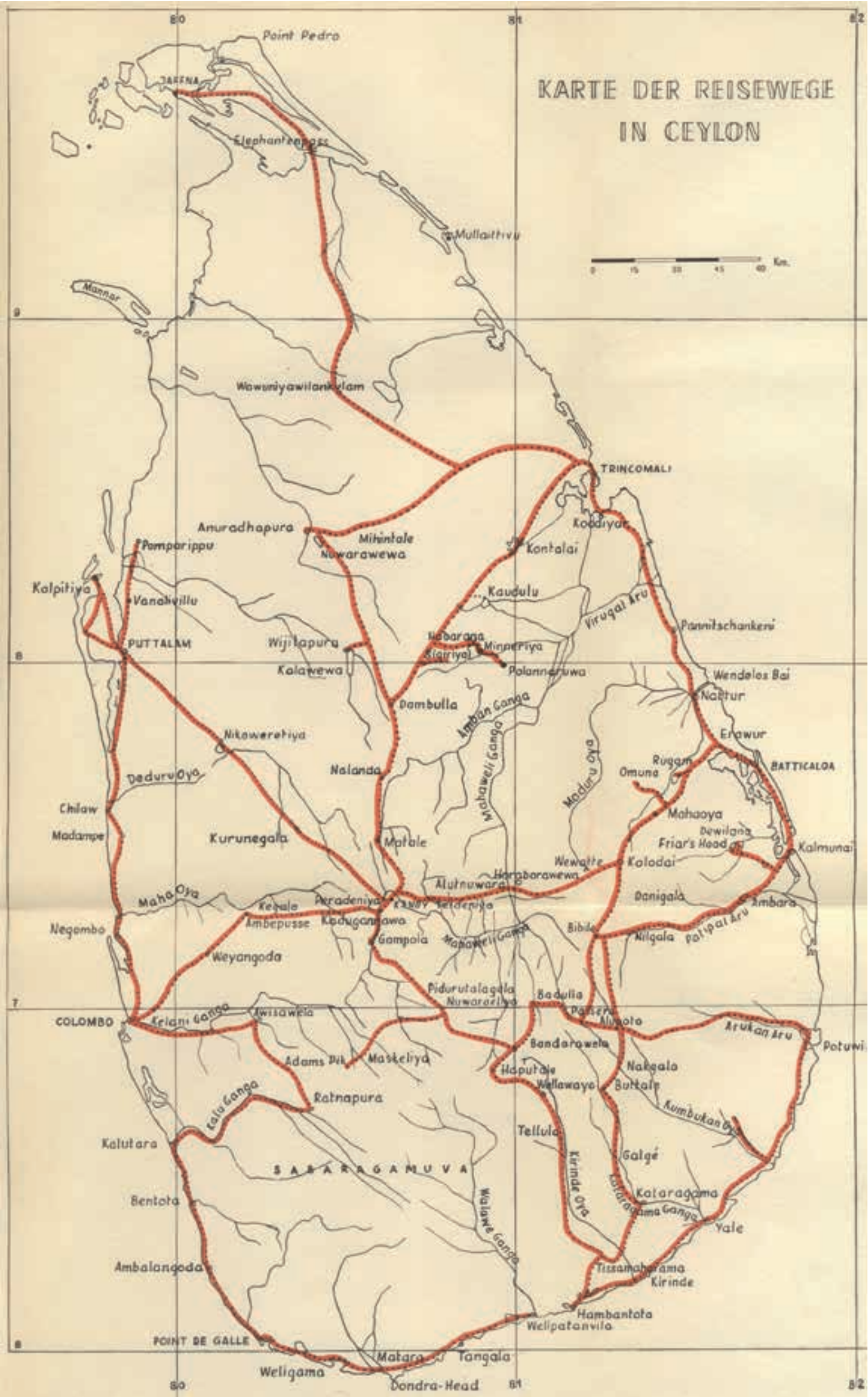
ethnographic in nature, as the collections from these regions go to show. The collections were assembled systematically and they gave the museum a significant impulse for its future development (Speiser, 1943:255ff).

Next to that, Paul Sarasin became a leading pioneer in the field of natural conservation. Hunting down pregnant elephant cows on his first journey to Sri Lanka had left behind a bitter aftertaste, so that after his return, and in his status as a recognized member of the scientific community, he undertook great efforts to curb big-game hunting. He helped to draw up the first international agreements on natural conservation and played a leading role in the founding of the Swiss National Park in 1914. He also supported the idea of establishing a world conservation union and succeeded in implementing protective measures for specific plants and animals in different regions of the world (www.library.ethz.ch/de/Resources/Digital-collections/Short-portraits/Paul-Sarasin-1856-1929, accessed 2.4.2012, and Handschin, 1959:5f).

THE VEDDA: FROM HUNTING AND GATHERING TO ECO-TOURISM

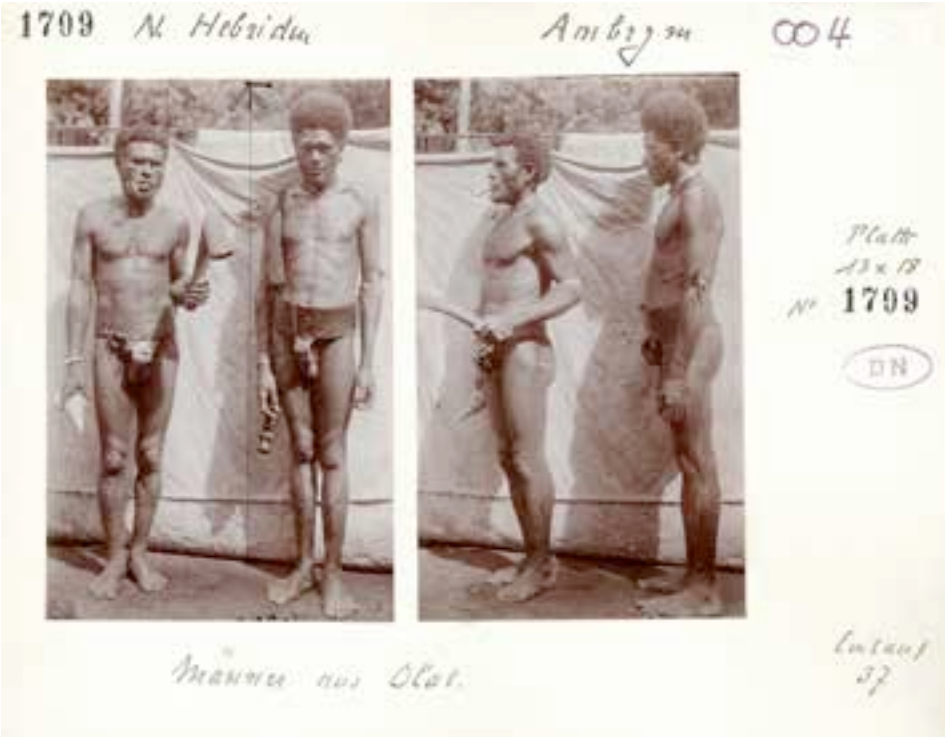
Along with the Sinhalese and Tamil, the Vedda (Wanniyala-Aetto, also spelt Veddah) rank among the oldest population groups in Sri Lanka. Recent genetic research on bone material has confirmed their ongoing presence on the island for 18,000 years (Deraniyagala, 1992:486ff). The origins of the old Vedda language are unknown; the modern version has developed since approximately the tenth century AD in contact with Sinhala, which is why it is classified as a Creole language (Van Driem, 2001:227ff). The last time the Vedda were listed as a separate population group was in the census of 1953, numbering then roughly 800 individuals. Their traditional settlement area comprised the eastern, wooded mountain slopes of the Central Massif in today’s provinces Uva and North Central, where they lived as hunters and gatherers. Century-long contact with neighbouring Sinhalese and Tamil groups, frequent intermarriage, and the efforts by different Sri Lanka governments over the past 150 years to settle or relocate the various nomadic groups have uprooted the traditional life of the Vedda people. Dambana village in Badulla District of Uva Province is looked upon today as the last refuge of traditional Vedda culture and language. In 2007 the settlement numbered approximately 1,000 inhabitants distributed over roughly 250 Vedda families, and has become famous for its eco-tourism projects.

(www.gamaneguma.lk/news_view.php?record_id=21, accessed 17.4.2012)



FIVE EXPEDITIONS, 441 ARTEFACTS, 542 PHOTOGRAPHS

- 1. journey: 1883–1886, chiefly zoological research
- 2. journey: 1890, anthropological research on the Vedda people
- 3. journey: 1902, short stay with Leopold Rütimeyer, visit to the Vedda
- 4. journey: 1907, archaeological research, 'discovery' of the stone age
- 5. journey: 1925, Fritz Sarasin only, check-up on prehistoric research data



In the tradition of Paul and Fritz Sarasin and his teachers in Berlin, Speiser conducted physical anthropological research. Photo: MKB Vb (F) 1709



Men's clubhouse with skull statues. Secret societies and rituals held great fascination for Felix Speiser. Unfortunately he understood little of what he saw, due to language difficulties. Photo: MKB (F) Vb 2362

‘WE SALVAGED WHAT WE COULD’

The Curators

From 4 May 1910 to 1 July 1912 the Basel anthropologist Felix Speiser-Merian (1880 – 1949) lived and worked on the various islands that make up Vanuatu, then the New Hebrides. The rich yield of his expedition comprises more than 3,000 objects, 1,500 glass-plate photographs, diaries, and numerous publications. He started his career as an anthropologist with studies on the history of mankind in the vein of Paul and Fritz Sarasin, with an emphasis on physical anthropology. But already during his first expedition to Vanuatu he extended the scope of his inquiry: no longer did he focus on the issue of linear human development, what interested him now was the ‘complex interweave above and next to each other’. This finally led him to his conception of the history of settlement in Oceania.

SALVAGING CULTURES BEFORE THEY DISAPPEAR

An issue that preoccupied him throughout his life was the fact that many cultures were on the verge of extinction. In his opinion they needed saving, just as Adolf Bastian had proposed with his idea of ‘last minute salvage’. At the same time Speiser was able to recognize and appreciate a cultural achievement when he saw one. In a guide to the Basel Museum of Ethnology (1929:36) he spoke of his ideas and convictions: ‘The significant influence of religion on art not only shows in this specific case [a bird representation from the Santa Cruz Islands] ... but is found in all primitive tribes; in the case of European art we also find that periods of prosperity went hand in hand with strong religious movements. This shows that what really churns and moves the human spirit always finds its expression in art.’ Evidently his attention had by then already turned away from evolution, to art, mythology, and religion.

FROM LINEAR TO COMPLEX THOUGHT
Speaking in anthropological terms, Felix Speiser was a transitional figure: in his early years his mind was still geared to the scientific theories of the nineteenth century, a tradition he also remained true to during his expeditions. But later, in his career at the museum and as an anthropological scholar, he opened up to new subject fields and questions. This personal development finds expression in the various stages of his career.

INSPIRATION: UNCLE PAUL SARASIN AND THE HOPI

Felix Speiser-Merian first studied chemistry in Basel, graduating with a PhD in 1904. In 1906, he joined the Swiss chemical company Messrs J. R. Geigy & Co. in New York. Obituaries written for Speiser after his death suggest that his choice of chemistry had not really been his own, but that he had yielded to family pressure. Consequently, he soon gave up his job in New York and turned to ‘what had always interested him’ (Meuli, 1950:2), in other words, Speiser decided to study anthropology. By the time Speiser quit his job at Geigy in 1906, his maternal uncle Paul Sarasin and Fritz Sarasin had already carried out their expeditions to Sri Lanka (Ceylon), Sulawesi (Celebes), and Egypt, and published extensively on their research. Speiser later acknowledged that his interest in ‘primitive cultures’ had been roused by his uncle: ‘Somehow I came into contact with ethnology. After all, my uncle Paul Sarasin worked in this field, and suddenly I realized that I had already made up my mind and was willing to forfeit my well-paid job and seemingly promising career and commence studying in ethnology’ (Speiser, 1948:3). His choice of university possibly also had something to do with his uncle: ‘So Speiser ... moved to Berlin to study anthro-

pology, at that time probably the major stronghold of anthropological research, and the place where the two Sarasins had finalized their Ceylon studies and got to know many colleagues’ (Meuli, 1950:2ff). From May 1908 to April 1909, Speiser studied anthropology and prehistory under Felix von Luschan, the director of the Africa and Oceania departments at the Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde (now Ethnological Museum) and professor of anthropology at the Friedrich-Wilhelms University. Next to Luschan, Speiser was strongly influenced by Adolf Bastian, the founding director of the Berlin Ethnological Museum, and Rudolf Virchow, a doctor and anthropologist and a friend of Bastian. Shortly before commencing his studies, Speiser had visited a Hopi reservation in Arizona and written an article on his travel experiences for the Sunday edition of the Basler Nachrichten. This journey certainly swayed his decision to study anthropology. For Karl Meuli (1950:1), the description of his journey to the Hopi was evidence of his stupendous power of observation; Kaufmann (2004:204) goes even a step further and claims that Speiser had by then already developed the methodological ground plan that would later guide his work in Melanesia.

THE FIRST MAJOR EXPEDITION: VANUATU (NEW HEBRIDES)

Following the advice of his teacher Felix von Luschan, Speiser chose Vanuatu (New Hebrides) as the destination of his first major expedition. Between 4 May 1910 and 1 July 1912, he visited many of the seventy populated islands of Vanuatu. The expedition yielded more than 3,000 objects, 1,500 glass-plate photographs, diary accounts, and numerous publications – most of them scientific in nature, but also a popular travelogue and a book for adolescents.



Port Vila – view from the garden of British Resident Photo: MKB (F) Vb 2621



Felix Speiser visiting the volcano on Ambrym Photo: MKB (F) Vb 2331



Felix Speiser with his carriers making rest at Dip Point, Ambrym Photo: MKB (F) Vb1821

“SOMEHOW I CAME INTO CONTACT WITH ETHNOLOGY. AFTER ALL, MY UNCLE PAUL SARASIN WORKED IN THIS FIELD, AND SUDDENLY I REALIZED THAT I HAD ALREADY MADE UP MY MIND AND WAS WILLING TO FORFEIT MY WELL-PAID JOB AND SEEMINGLY PROMISING CAREER AND COMMENCE STUDYING IN ETHNOLOGY.”

EVOLUTIONISM AND DIFFUSIONISM: AN INVENTORY HOLDS THE ANSWER
The main aim of Speiser’s expedition was to compile an inventory of the material culture of the various ethnic groups in the New Hebrides. By comparing the materials – pristine and not corrupted by outside influence, if possible – Speiser hoped to establish a basis for answering the question which of the two theoretical models – evolution or diffusion – held more conviction. The controversy between the two schools of thought continued well into the twentieth century. Later, his comparative material provided the foundation for his history of Melanesian settlement. Speiser would have liked to gather more ethnographic material but he often failed owing to the circumstances of his venture, among other things, his lacking command of the indigenous languages and the complicated political situation. Speiser interrupted his two-year stay in Vanuatu only once when he travelled to Nouméa (New Caledonia) to meet Fritz Sarasin and Jean Roux in order ‘to acquaint them with Melanesia’ (Kaufmann, 1996:88).

UNRELIABLE: WORKMEN AND COLONIAL AUTHORITIES
Vanuatu, situated northwest of Australia, comprises eighty-three islands of which roughly seventy are inhabited. The island state gained independence from

Britain and France in 1980 under whose colonial rule it had been since 1887, after 1906 under the status of condominium. From roughly 1840 onward, European settlers colonized the islands, establishing copra and cacao plantations for which they relied exclusively on native ‘indentured labourers’. Introduced diseases and the slave-like conditions on the plantations soon led to the decimation of the indigenous population. According to Speiser, the native population decreased by ninety per cent in the course of the nineteenth century. In his publications he frequently describes the deplorable conditions on the islands, not without mentioning how his own work suffered from the situation. His search for servants, informants, and interpreters on his travels usually ended in failure. The colonial officers, too, were of no great help in this respect: ‘Unfortunately the Resident [French colonial representative] did not realize that at the Canal du Second ... all able men were being forced to work for the planters so that even the national surveyors ... were unable to help me’ (Speiser, 1924:24).

AT THE MERCY OF CIRCUMSTANCES: BETWEEN RESTLESSNESS AND BOREDOM
In preparation for his expedition Speiser had consulted the entire available literature on the New Hebrides. Apart from the accounts by great explorers like Louis Antoine de Bougainville and James Cook, he studied

the classical and voluminous work ‘The Melanesians. Studies in their Anthropology and Folk-Lore’ (1891) by Robert Henry Codrington, an Anglican priest and anthropologist. Whereas Codrington focused heavily on ‘intellectual’ culture, Speiser’s intention was to concentrate on ‘the chief purpose of ethnography ... to collect material’ (Speiser, 1923:1). ‘My sources consisted primarily of the ethnographic material I collected on the spot and of my own observations, along with the ethnological material from the New Hebrides located in European museums and the information contained in the literature’ (Speiser, 1923:1).

During his two years in the New Hebrides, Speiser seems to have been on the move all the time – between islands, villages, and guesthouses – as his itinerary goes to show. He never stayed in the same place for more than three weeks. This allowed him to acquire a good overview of the topographic, ethnographic, and demographic conditions. Moreover, he was able to assemble an extensive collection of superb artefacts. However, according to Speiser’s own words, this had not really been his original intention. ‘Contrary to my plan of staying put in one place for the greater part of my stay, external circumstances forced me to be continually on the move. Admittedly, I was, as a result, able to visit almost all the islands, but I was seldom able to stay longer than a few weeks



In southern Malakula Photo: MKB Vb 2400



The picture shows people of the mission at Dip Point on Abrym practicing archery. Anglican, Presbyterian, and Catholic Mission Societies came to the New Hebrides during the last third of the nineteenth century. Photo: MKB (F) Vb 1809

in various places, and even where I was in a position to prolong my stay, the place was about as unsuitable for my purposes as it could be' (Speiser, 1923:2). He goes on to list the disadvantages of this mode of procedure. For one thing, staying for only a short while in one place made it impossible to gain the trust of informants, for the other, he never learned to speak even one of the many New Hebrides languages. Taken together, this even made him dispense with the idea of recording the indigenous terms of the objects he collected, not least because '... I had begun to realize that the natives were supplying me with every kind of nonsense and obscenity' (Speiser, 1923:3). In contradiction to the restlessness and continuous mobility described above, Speiser often speaks of having to wait for long hours, of having nothing to do, and of growing boredom: 'We have nothing to

against the green of the bushes; he seems part of the silent, luxuriant world around him, a being strange to us ... But a word breaks the spell, intelligence gleams in his face, and what, so far, has seemed a strange being, belonging rather to the lower animals than to humankind, shows himself a man, and becomes equal to ourselves' (Speiser, 1924:29–30).

ETHNOGRAPHIC WORK: INTEGRATING OWN OBSERVATIONS

Apart from the occasion of the first meeting with a 'genuine native', Speiser only becomes emphatic in his writings when describing nature and impressive natural occurrences. He seldom describes his collecting activities in detail, often making do with insinuations, such as when he talks about difficulties in transporting collected artefacts or how people were

in my memory' (Speiser, 1924:351). He donated the collection to the Museum of Ethnology, just as his predecessors Paul and Fritz Sarasin had done. Many of the ritual objects, masks, dance ornaments, and items of daily use found their way into the permanent exhibition.

ONLY FEW FINDINGS FROM BRAZIL

Speiser's second expedition took him to the Aparai Indians of Brazil in 1924. Unlike the early Basel ventures, which had been financed exclusively by private means, Speiser's Brazil expedition received funding from various business companies (Reubi 2011:383). This journey, too, had a Berlin connection, since it had been the German anthropologist and 'friend of the Indians', Theodor Koch-Grünberg, who had suggested the Aparai, based on the experi-

HIS SEARCH FOR SERVANTS, INFORMANTS, AND INTERPRETERS ON HIS TRAVELS USUALLY ENDED IN FAILURE.

do, sit around at the beach or in the boat and smoke' (Speiser, 1924:57). 'We had become tired of waiting at the beach and since the natives did not show up, we hoisted anchor and set sail for Aoba (ibid, 117).

THE 'GENUINE NATIVE': PURE NATURE VERSUS COLONIAL OFFICER

Speiser frequently called on representatives of the colonial administration, gathering information on the local conditions or asking for advice. Occasionally he also accepted invitations to stay or travel with them. Likewise, he visited mission stations when seeking information or hoping for a ride on a mission boat. 'Apart from my own observations and inquiries, I was able to obtain valuable material in the form of information from white people (missionaries, officials, colonists),' he remarked (Speiser, 1923:3). But then he immediately goes back on his words, saying that the missionaries had no ethnographic training, that the officials hardly had contact with the natives, and that the colonists did not have the intellectual ability to gather ethnographic information, or even recognize it. In the end, he could not rely on these sources for his work, which meant he was utterly dependent on his own observations and inquiries. Speiser's pervasive distrust seems like blown away when he meets his first 'really genuine native': 'No one with any taste for nature will fail to feel the solemnity of the moment when he stands face to face for the first time with primitive man ... His figure is but slightly relieved

shocked when he mentioned collecting human skulls and bones, or at least wanting to see them. This is rather surprising, given Speiser's emphasis on material culture and his idea of compiling a corresponding inventory for the purpose of gaining insight into the different worldviews. In his descriptions of social and cultural practices and material culture Speiser regularly compares his own observations with the findings in the literature. While he is extremely precise when it comes to describing aspects of material culture he is often forced to rely on Codrington's accounts when interpreting religious beliefs or matters of social organization: 'It lies in the nature of secret societies that they seldom come to the notice of the traveller and that only a very close acquaintance with the natives affords any insight into these organizations' (Speiser, 1923:375). In his major work Speiser devotes a full chapter to the visual arts in the shape of sculptures, statues, and masks. According to Kaufmann (1997:92) Speiser gained a better understanding of artistic expression as soon as he comprehended how it was linked to the ancestor cult and that human representations in the shape of masks and figures actually were the impersonations of ancestors.

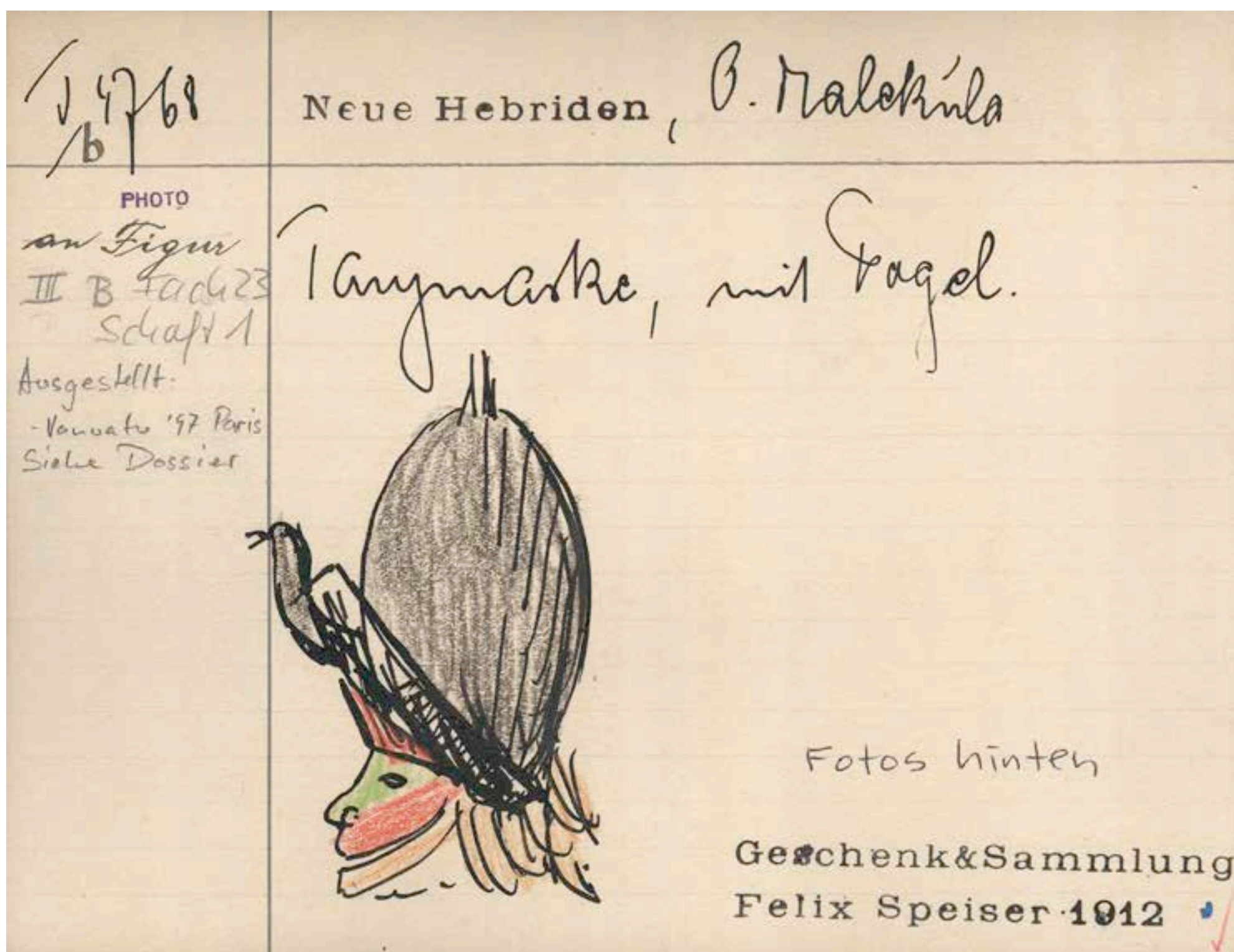
BACK TO BASEL AND THE MUSEUM

When his time in Vanuatu finally came to an end, Speiser felt a 'gentle sorrow': '...because I spent so many, inexpressibly rich hours there ... the unending toils I experienced have already begun to fade

ence of his own expeditions to lowland Brazil. However, the journey proved rather a disappointment: '...in scientific terms ... we learnt nothing but at least we acquired a decent collection although these natives own little, and little of beauty' (letter from Speiser to Fritz Sarasin, 19.11.1924).

ITINERANT VERSUS STATIONARY FIELDWORK

Speiser undertook his third extensive expedition in 1929–30 to Melanesia, together with the zoologist, ethnologist, animal psychologist, and founder of zoo biology, Heini Hediger. His destinations were the Solomon Islands, the Bismarck Archipelago, and New Guinea. He returned to Basel with a large number of photographs, 350 pages of notes, and 1,607 ethnographic artefacts. Similar to his travels in Vanuatu, Speiser again relied heavily on missionaries, colonial officials, and traders for assistance and information. He was constantly on the move from one place to the next, from one informant to the next, and the problems of gathering information also were the same: Speiser was pressed for time, had no knowledge of the local languages, and had no trust in what the people told him. Once again this raised the question whether it would not be better to do fieldwork in one place 'according to the standards of modern ethnology ... staying there for six months or even a full year and acquiring deeper knowledge of the natives' way of life, social organization, and psychology by means of intensive observation and inquiry' (Meuli, 1950:5).



Dance mask with bird, Inv. no. Vb 4768a

Feather ornament, Inv. no. Vb 4532

Comb, Inv. no. Vb 3156

Felix Speiser-Merian
Photo: Barbara Andres, Basel



**THE PROBLEMS OF GATHERING INFORMATION ALSO WERE THE SAME:
SPEISER WAS PRESSED FOR TIME, HAD NO KNOWLEDGE OF THE LOCAL LANGUAGES,
AND HAD NO TRUST IN WHAT THE PEOPLE TOLD HIM.**

Speiser is said to have rejected this idea ‘with outright conviction’, as Meuli went on to comment.

THE MUSEUM: INSTITUTIONAL CONNECTIONS AND PERSONAL CHALLENGE
After he returned from his Vanuatu expedition in 1912, Speiser was appointed to the Commission of the Museum of Ethnology. He sat down to work on his collection – on an honorary basis, of course – and became head of the China and Japan Department. Following the advice of his uncle Paul Sarasin he opted for an academic career and started teaching anthropology at the University of Basel. In 1918, he handed in his habilitation thesis and became extraordinary professor of cultural anthropology. When Fritz Sarasin died in 1942, Speiser became director of the Museum of Ethnology.

SELF-SCRUTINY AND CENSURE OF HIS FORMER SUPERIOR
In the foreword and introduction to his *Ethnology of Vanuatu* Speiser openly speaks about the shortcomings of his research. Again and again he questions the soundness of his methodological approach in the field, thus critically putting the results of his studies into perspective.

In terms of personal relationships he admired people with a dedicated attitude, but disliked dominant behaviour, a comportment that finds expression in his obituary for Fritz Sarasin. It seems the two men failed to agree on many issues, for example, as far as their views on the significance of collected artefacts and the way they were exhibited in the museum are concerned. For one thing, Speiser found Sarasin’s ethnological writings lacking in coherency, for the other, he believed ‘that all his works suggest that the subject field has not been sufficiently penetrated intellectually’ (Speiser, 1943a:259). With regard to the display of objects in the museum, Speiser had apparently different ideas concerning presentations which Sarasin did not seem to agree with, judging by his statement that ‘in Fritz’s lifetime there was no chance of discarding [this mode of display] so that in the course of the years, and in terms of museum standards, the situation became almost untenable owing to the congestion of the showcases and the far too schematic arrangement of the exhibition halls (Speiser, 1943a:258). In his ‘History of the Museum of Ethnology’, published a year after Fritz Sarasin’s death, he openly criticized the latter’s patriarchal demeanour: ‘the factual directors of the museum, the Messieurs Sarasin, [had] already taken

the decision on their own ...’, and, ‘... in view of the high renown of the Messieurs Sarasin, it seemed inadvisable to make opposition against them ...’ (Speiser, 1943b:278). Despite his criticism and the evidently difficult personal relationship, Speiser fully acknowledged what the ‘Messieurs Sarasin’ had achieved in and for the museum.

HIS LOVE OF THE MUSES AND BEAUTY
Next to his work as a scholar, Speiser loved to paint and write poetry, although he never really found sufficient time to indulge in his favourite pastimes. ‘Away and at home Speiser loved to paint as a means of recreation, and many of his hastily composed pictures actually succeed in creating atmosphere and emotion in quite a convincing manner’ (Meuli, 1950:9). Speiser also seems to have lived out his sense of beauty in the museum, at least the following statement is said to be from him: ‘It doesn’t really matter if the things are slightly overpaid; they are beautiful all the same.’



FELIX-SPEISER’S ITINERARY IN VANUATU, 1910 – 1912

26 April – 2 May 1910	Nouméa [New Caledonia]	19 March	Epi (Ringdove Bay) – Ambrym (Dip-Point – Port Vato)	23 November	Malo – Vanua Lava Island (place: Port Patteson, arrival 28 November)
4 May	arrival in Vanuatu, Efate Island (Port Vila)	16 April	excursion on Ambrym (Port Vato – Dip-Point – South-East Point)	9 – 15 December	Vanua Lava (Port Patteson) – Gaua Island
12 May – 6 July	Efate (Port Vila) – Tongoa Island – Epi Island – Malakula Island (place: Sandwich) – Vao Island – Canal du Segond – Tangoa Island, excursion to the west coast of Malakula (5 June 1910)	18 April	Ambrym (South-East Point) – Paama Island	11 – 14 January 1912	Vanua Lava (Port Patteson) – Ureparapara Island
6 July	Vao – Espiritu Santo Island (Port Olry), trips to the interior of Espiritu Santo	22 April	Paama – Ambrym (Dip-Point)	17 – 27 January	Vanua Lava (Port Patteson) – Gaua Island
8 – 17 September	Espiritu Santo – Maewo Island	27 April – 10 May	excursion on Ambrym (Dip-Point – Olal)	29 January	Vanua Lava (Port Patteson) – Efate (Port Vila, arrival 10 February) – Tanna Island (arrival 15 February) – Efate (Port Vila) – Lelepa Island
30 September	excursion to Tapapa in the eastern part of Maewo	15 May	Malakula (Aulua) – Maskelyne Islands	30 April – 28 June	Efate (Port Vila) – Santa-Cruz Islands (Nendo, arrival 10 May) – Efate (Port Vila)
5 – 14 October	excursion to the interior of Espiritu Santo	30 May	Maskelyne Islands – Malakula (Bushman’s Bay, stay 6 – 19 June 1911)	1 July	Efate (Port Vila) – Sydney (arrival 8 July)
25 – 28 October	excursion to Tawuds	23 June	Malo Island	18 July – 18 August	Sydney – Genoa
3 November	Espiritu Santo (place: Wora)	29 June	Malo – Ambrym (Dip-Point, arrival 6 July 1911)		
6 – 7 November	crossing of the northern part of Espiritu Santo, partly on foot	25 July	Ambrym (Dip-Point) – Pentecost Island		
15 November	Maewo (place: Talamacco)	27 – 29 July	excursion on the east coast of Pentecost, departure from Banmatmat		
3 December	Espiritu Santo (place: Tasmalum), excursion to Tasiriki	5 – 12 August	excursion on Pentecost (Banmatmat – Bwatnapne)		
2 – 5 January 1911	Malakula (place: Atchin)	15 August	Pentecost (Banmatmat) – Ambrym (Olal)		
6 – 12 January	Vao – Malakula (Bushman’s Bay) – Efate (Port Vila)	11 – 19 September	Ambrym (Olal) – Pentecost (Bwatnapne) – Ambae Island (Aoba)		
17 February	Efate (Port Vila) – Nouméa [New Caledonia]	26 September	Ambae (Aoba) – Malo Island, excursion to the south coast of Espiritu Santo		
11 March	Nouméa [New Caledonia] – Epi Island (Ringdove Bay)				

CULTURAL RELATIONS AND STYLE PROVINCES

Richard Kunz

Because he had proved himself as a researcher and collector for the Museum of Ethnology – he, for example, acquired the Malangan house from New Ireland, Papua New Guinea, in 1932 – the Museum Commission gave him a new assignment. In 1935, Alfred Bühler (1900–1981), teacher, geographer, and anthropologist, set out for Indonesia and East Timor with Willy Louis Meyer (1899–1982), a dentist from Basel and a friend of his from student days. Bühler’s task was to extend the museum’s Indonesian collection, a task he fully accomplished, returning to Basel with 3,663 artefacts. The Basel government had awarded Bühler a grant of 12,000 Swiss francs which he and Willy Meyer then complemented with approximately the same sum from private means. At the centre of Alfred Bühler’s research objectives lay the comparative study of local material culture – a method that museum anthropologists still make use of today – with the aim of learning more about the cultural relations, settlement waves, and migration routes in the region, and of determining specific artistic style provinces.

FAREWELL TO THE UNSALARIED SCHOLAR
Alfred Bühler, son of the engine driver Alfred Bühler and Ida Bühler-Hitz, came to Basel from Zug at the age of six and went to school here. He became a primary school teacher at the age of twenty and continued his teaching career for the next eighteen years, for the last eight as a teacher at the local commercial college, before taking on the job as curator at the Museum of Ethnology in 1938. Alongside teaching he studied geography and anthropology at the University of Basel under Hugo Hassinger and Felix Speiser, graduating with a PhD in geography on ‘Das Meiental im Kanton Uri’ in 1928 (Meuli, 1965:18). Bühler belonged to a new generation of scholars at the museum who worked for a salary and no longer on an honorary basis. He became director of the Museum of Ethnology and Swiss Museum of European Folklife Basel (1950–1964) and held the first Chair of Anthropology at the University of Basel from 1964 to 1970.

FROM THE MEIENTAL IN URI TO INDONESIA AND EAST TIMOR

Alfred Bühler set out on his expedition to Indonesia and East Timor in 1935 at the behest of the Commission of the Museum of Ethnology. He was accompanied by Wilhelm ‘Willy’ Louis Meyer, son of the merchant Hans Meyer and Fanny Meyer-Siegrist. Willy Meyer was a dentist with his own practice in the Heinrichsgasse in Basel. The two men got to know each other during their time as students. They were members of the student association ‘Schwyzerhüsli’, where Willy Meyer, being the senior, became Alfred Bühler’s ‘mentor’. It was probably during one of these meetings that the two men decided to travel to Indonesia and East Timor together. In a letter to Alfred Bühler, Willy’s father, Hans Meyer-Siegrist, complained bitterly that they had made their plan ‘behind his back’ (Meyer-Siegrist to Bühler, 21.6.1934), but to no avail. Against his father’s will, and at his own expense, Willy accompanied Alfred Bühler on his expedition to Timor, Rote, and Flores, which, considering the difficult economic and political situation in the 1930s and his loss of earnings as a dentist, was quite remarkable. At their departure from the train station in Basel father and son reconciled, as Bühler noted in a letter to his wife Gertrud (Bühler to his wife, 1.4.1935).

CLEAR INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE MUSEUM COMMISSION

Unlike Paul and Fritz Sarasin on their expedition to Ceylon 52 years before, Alfred Bühler travelled to Indonesia and East Timor at the behest of the Museum Commission – equipped with clear instructions:

‘The traveller’s primary task is to collect all manifestations of material culture displayed by the local tribes. Research on the intellectual culture, for which knowledge of the language is required, is of only secondary significance as against increasing the museum’s collections ... Dr Bühler has been assigned the task of touring Timor and the Lesser Sunda Islands. However, it would be preferable to explore only a few of the islands thoroughly than visit all of them

superficially. Equally, the museum places greater value on the possession of the full array of material culture from one or a few single islands than on acquiring a few single pieces from many provenances ... We should also like to make the point that the emphasis should not be exclusively on large and striking pieces, such as masks and statues, but also on the inconspicuous items of everyday use. Doublets are always welcome as items of exchange’ (Instructions from the Museum Commission, 1935).

The decision to send Alfred Bühler to Indonesia and East Timor was for a specific purpose: ‘Eastern Indonesia was chosen because this region is heavily populated by groups that stand, or once stood, in close relationship with peoples of New Guinea and Melanesia. Thus, for our museum, collecting in this area is of special interest considering that we already possess large collections from New Guinea and the South Seas’ (Bühler, 1936:I).

CULTURAL RELATIONS, SETTLEMENT WAVES, AND MIGRATION ROUTES
‘Indonesia and East Timor is of significance to us because it represents a link between the Malayan cultures to the west and the Papuan cultures of New Guinea’ (Commission of the Museum of Ethnography to Dr F. Hauser, member of the Governing Council of Basel-Stadt, 4.4.1934).

Questions concerning cultural relations, settlement waves, and migration routes, and the accurate reconstruction of the historical processes were of considerable importance considering Indonesia and East Timor’s status as a transitional region between Asia and Melanesia. Scientists and scholars from different disciplines are still working on these issues today. For museum anthropologists, comparative research on the material culture of this region was, and still is, of primary interest. As Bühler remarked: ‘It would be an appealing task to do research on the present cultural compound which appears to be an even greater potpourri than the population that carries it.’ He continues, ‘In the main the cultures of Rote

FOR ALFRED BÜHLER THE TEXTILES OF TIMOR WERE AN ARTISTIC HIGHLIGHT BECAUSE “IN TERMS OF THE COMPOSITION OF COLOURS AND PATTERNS THEY ARE SURPASSED BY NONE IN THE INDIAN ARCHIPELAGO”.



Flat tire: Alfred Bühler and Willy Meyer with their fully loaded car under way in East Timor.
Photo: MKB (F) Ilc 19772



Collecting and documenting various aspects of technology stood at the beginning of Basel's rise to fame as a centre of textile research. Mounting ikat skeins in Baun, Amarasi district, West Timor, Indonesia. Photo: MKB Ilc 1566



Alfred Bühler taking a break in East Timor Photo: MKB (F) Ilc 19636



Willy Meyer having lunch in East Timor Photo: MKB (F) Ilc 19743



Willy Meyer working on items of the collection. Nikiniki, Amanuban district, West Timor, Indonesia
Photo: MKB (F) Ilc 19252



Expedition equipment Photo: MKB (F)Ilc 18845



Raja of Amarasi and Kupang, West Timor, Indonesia Photo: MKB (F) IIc 1496



Racecourse in Kupang; Stand for europeans and members of the idigenious upper class. Kupang, West Timor, Indonesia Photo: MKB (F) IIc 18517

‘WE PAID VERY SPECIAL ATTENTION TO ACQUIRING PIECES OF EVIDENCE FOR EACH CRAFT AND EACH TECHNOLOGY. THESE TESTIMONIES INCLUDE RAW MATERIALS, SEMI-FINISHED GOODS, AND FINISHED PRODUCTS, WITH THE HELP OF WHICH WE HOPE TO EXPLAIN THE INDIVIDUAL STEPS IN MANUFACTURE.’

and Timor consist of two components: a first, older component with strong links to Papuan and Melanesian regions, and a second, younger one with strong ties to Southeast Asia, which probably reached the islands in more consecutive waves than did the former’ (Bühler, 1937:14).

SPOONS OF ALL KINDS:
IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Against this backdrop, Bühler was intent on collecting as many items as possible for the purpose of later comparing them with other collections, in order to find answers to at least some of the questions raised above. One artefact that appeared extremely useful for this purpose were the different kinds of ladles and spoons found across the entire region.

‘In terms of technology and artistic expression the large variety of ladles and cooking and eating spoons are a real highlight. Consequently our collection from ... the islands [Timor and Rote] comprises more than 300 pieces. The materials used include wood, coconut shell, tortoise shell, water buffalo horn, bone, triton, nautilus, and cowrie shell, bamboo, and, on Rote, even strips of leaves from toddy palms. Next to almost spatula-shaped tools, one comes across combinations of forks, toothpicks, and combs-cum-spoons; one finds items carved from one piece and others where the spoon and handle consist of different materials. These composite spoons are especially typi-

cal of Rote and East Timor, while the Atoni seem to prefer spoons carved from one piece. In terms of ornamentation, above all the people of the Amanuban district have attained artistic mastery. Their spoons made of notched horn or comprising handles carved in openwork designs belong to the collection’s masterpieces. Of interest, too, are the motifs (human figures, crocodile-lizards, and occasionally snakes). Hopefully the extensive range of objects will provide an opportunity to establish series that reveal tendencies of both development and degeneration, but possibly also provide evidence of ties to the cultures of northern Melanesia, especially the Admiralty Islands, which is also a centre of spoon production and which seems to have very much in common with Timor as far as technology and ornamentation are concerned’ (Bühler, 1937:17).

INDIVIDUAL STYLE PROVINCES:
ORNAMENTS AS EVIDENCE

Seeking evidence of cultural relations required accurate documenting and categorizing local differences with regard to artistic design and the artefacts’ decorative motifs.

‘The bulk of the ethnographic collection is from Timor. It comprises just about the full range of the island’s material culture and ritual paraphernalia. On the one hand, the collection provides evidence that the island has, more or less, an identical culture, on the other, one sees how in the course of artistic de-

velopment specific style provinces have evolved (decoration of horn spoons, colours and ornaments on textiles, bamboo receptacles, etc.)’ (Bühler, 1936:III).

Next to the spoons, above all the bamboo receptacles used for storing betel-chewing implements and the textiles display regional variation in terms of decoration. For Bühler, the variant ornamental forms not only indicated cultural ties with neighbouring regions, they also showed that in Timor discrete, clearly definable style provinces had evolved in the course of time.

‘Since the habit of sirih-pinang ... is so common and widespread, the implements required for the habit make up a large part of the collection. Some very beautiful specimens include the receptacles used for the lime powder and the sirih leaves ... The decorations, which they practically all feature, vary considerably in style ... In Rote and Amarassi you frequently find gorgeous twine and leaf patterns; this certainly implies west Indonesian influences. Next to that, especially in the case of the bone receptacles and in central Timor, we often have figurative ornaments similar to those found on horn spoons; this, in turn, implies links to the cultures of Papua and Melanesia. In central Timor most of these figurative ornaments are resolved into patterns consisting of circles. Here, too, we have tried to establish series of receptacles in the hope of showing how the



Dentist Meyer in Baun, District Amarasi, West Timor, Indonesia *Photo: MKB (F) Ilc 1611*



Market day, Baguia, East Timor *Photo: MKB Ilc 19477*

COLLECTING TEXTILES IN TIMOR (AND ROTE) AND ACCURATELY DOCUMENTING THE MANUFACTURING PROCESSES FROM START TO FINISH MARKED THE BEGINNING OF TEXTILE RESEARCH AT THE MUSEUM.

decorative motifs have developed over time. In East Timor the decoration consists of simple lines which, however, are rendered in combination to form intricate patterns. Tracing the origins and development of all these decorative variations, used for one and the same device, promises to be interesting' (Bühler, 1937:17/19).

ARTISTIC HIGHLIGHT: TEXTILES FROM TIMOR

For Alfred Bühler the textiles of Timor were an artistic highlight because 'in terms of the composition of colours and patterns they are surpassed by none in the Indian archipelago' (Bühler, 1936:VI). 'The collection comprises roughly 130 pieces, a good basis for comparative study (Bühler, 1937:20).

HARD TO PURCHASE: THE PEOPLE DON'T WANT TO SELL

On various occasions Bühler mentions that 'as far as material culture goes, the visited islands are modest in terms of artistic design, in comparison, for example, to some of the Melanesian tribes' (Bühler, 1936:VI). This was especially true with regard to architecture.

'The cultures of Timor and Rote are quite poor in terms of house decoration, which is why the collection features only few wood carvings taken from buildings: a few crude, highly stylized human figures

used as gable ornaments from East Timor, a few roof pinnacles from Atoni roundhouses, and some planks from Rote featuring very crudely worked figures and twine ornaments' (Bühler, 1937:23).

In the field of religion and ritual, statuary art also features less prominently than in other regions of Indonesia and Melanesia. Thus, the collection comprises only a few ancestral figures which in other areas, such as northern Sumatra, Nias, or Borneo, are quite common. Still, for Bühler they are significant 'because they lend expression to totemistic as well as ancestral beliefs which, in turn, suggest close ties to New Guinea and Melanesia'. Bühler goes on to say that in certain areas it was not easy to purchase ritual artefacts because the people were not prepared to sell: 'In Timor it was quite easy to acquire such objects. In the east we were able to purchase a few very old and beautiful ancestor figures. In Rote the situation was already a little more difficult and it was only during the last few days of our stay that we were able to buy a few interesting pieces. In Flores this was practically impossible. The natives here adhere strongly to their old beliefs and thus also to their ritual paraphernalia. In other areas, where this bearing was no longer so prominent, the people simply did not need the money because they had already paid their head taxes. Otherwise I am sure we would have been able to purchase a few more pieces which, however, are now missing in the collection' (Bühler, 1936:VI).

DOCUMENTING PRE-INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGIES

Apart from doing research on cultural relations and determining corresponding 'style provinces', the documentation of pre-industrial technologies was the second main objective of Bühler's expedition.

'We paid very special attention to acquiring pieces of evidence for each craft and each technology. These testimonies include raw materials, semi-finished goods, and finished products, with the help of which we hope to explain the individual steps in manufacture. Especially in the fields of spinning, dyeing and weaving we were able to gather extensive series. Furthermore we were able to document similar manufacturing steps in the fields of wickerwork, metal casting, pottery, woodturning, the making of horn combs, and the production of palm toddy' (Bühler, 1936:VI).

Alfred Bühler returned to Basel with a total of 547 objects documenting technology and work processes. 'A special form of woodworking is illustrated by a lathe from the [district] Fatumatabia [Fatu Mata Bia Mountains, Region Baguia, East Timor] including all the necessary equipment. This covers the crude blocks of wood, roughly hewn with an axe, as well as dishes in various stages of production, from just commenced, to semi-worked, to finished' (Bühler, 1937:29).

Bühler goes on to write: 'Cotton manufacture is richly documented in the collection with approx.



At the lathe: turning wooden dishes in Betulari, East Timor Photos: MKB (F) IIc 1312 und (F) IIc 1268

200 items ... The fact that we collected more than twenty drugs – woods and roots used for colouring, etc. – shows how complicated yarn dyeing and other chemical forms of treatment are. Apart from dyeing, these substances are used for cleansing, as mordant for pre-treating, and for dressing yarn. Of course we also purchased the required tools and implements' (Bühler, 1937:30–31).

ALFRED BÜHLER'S COLLECTION: RESEARCH BASIS AND INTERNATIONAL RENOWN

In his final report of January 1936 Alfred Bühler expresses his satisfaction with the outcome of the expedition: the museum's collection had grown by

3,663 objects and 2,759 photographs. He listed the artefacts according to categories, adding the comment: 'As the above-listed overview goes to show, the journey was a success at least as acquisitions are concerned. The museum's holdings have increased significantly, which also means we can now eliminate a large numbers of doublets, either by sale or by exchange, which always proves worthwhile' (Bühler, 1936:III).

Alfred Bühler and his work markedly influenced the development of the museum in the second half of the twentieth century, and anthropology in Basel in general, for that matter. Collecting textiles

in Timor (and Rote) and accurately documenting the manufacturing processes from start to finish marked the beginning of textile research at the museum. Numerous publications by Bühler and subsequent extensive studies and collecting work by later curators have made textiles one of the museum's main research areas, adding to the Museum of Ethnology's worldwide reputation.



LEGS OF THE JOURNEY

27 March 1935	Basel – Marseilles	1 – 9 September	Stay in Kupang
29 March – 18 April	Marseilles – Jakarta	10 September	Journey to Baa, Rote Island
18 – 27 April	Stay in Java (Jakarta, Bogor, Yogyakarta, Surabaya)	11 Sept. – 8 October	Stay in Rote based at Baa (north coast) and Tudamedia (western south coast)
27 April – 4 May	Travel from Surabaya to Kupang (Dutch Timor, West Timor) via Banyuwangi (Eastern Java), Buleleng (Bali), Ampenan (Lombok), Sumbawa Besar and Bima (Sumbawa), Waingapu (Sumba), Ende (Flores) and Sawu	8 – 9 October	Journey to Sawu and Ende (Flores)
4 – 12 May	Stay in Kupang	10 October	Stay in Ende and surroundings
12 – 24 May	Stay in Southwest Timor, Amarasi district	11 – 15 October	Journey to Larantuka and back via Kelimutu, Maumere, Larantuka, Wolowaru (Central and Eastern Flores)
24 May – 2 June	Stay in Kupang	16 – 20 October	Stay in Ende and surroundings
2 June – 9 July	Stay in Dutch Central Timor (districts Amanuban and Mollo)	21 – 22 October	Journey to Toda Belu and back (western central Flores)
9 – 23 July	Stay in Kupang	23 – 25 October	Stay in Ende
23 – 24 July	Journey to Dili, Portuguese Timor (East Timor)	26 – 30 October	Journey to Bali via Waingapu (Sumba), Bima, Sumbawa Besar and Taliwang (Sumbawa), Labuan Haji and Ampenan (Lombok) and Buleleng (Bali)
24 – 30 July	Stay in Dili	30 Oct. – 10 November	Bali (Buleleng, Singaraja, Denpasar, Klungkung, Kintamani, Gitgit)
31 July – 18 August	Stay in East Timor, based at Baguia	10 – 11 November	Journey to Surabaya
19 – 26 August	Stay in Dili	11 – 27 November	Java (Surabaya, Yogyakarta, Jakarta)
26 August – 1 September	Return to Kupang via Ermera, Umboi, Atapupu, Atambua, Kefamenanu, Nikiniki, Soe	27 Nov. – 17 December	Jakarta – Marseilles
		17 – 18 December	Marseilles – Basel

CREATING IMAGES

Gaby Fierz



Travelling with Madame Touteau to collect taxes
Photo: René Gardi, © Bernhard Gardi, Basel



'On tour' with Administrator Duc
Photo: Rene Gardi, © Bernhard Gardi, Basel



Having lunch with colonial officers 'in the bush'
Photo: René Gardi, © Bernhard Gardi, Basel

From 14 January to 2 April 1953, Paul Hinderling and René Gardi went on an expedition to the peoples of the Mandara Mountains in Northern Cameroon. Their primary interest lay in iron smelting and iron working.

Following the Treaty of Versailles of 1919, Cameroon officially became a mandated territory of the League of Nations (after the Second World War of the United Nations), jointly administered by Great Britain and France. During their visit to French Cameroons shortly before independence, Hinderling and Gardi stayed mainly among resident Europeans. Hinderling brought back with him 545 objects, 630 photographs, and 300 metres of film, along with notes and sketches; Gardi returned with more than 2,000 photographs, seven roles of film, more than 400 minutes of sound recordings, and a typed diary numbering 102 pages.

On 16 January, Hinderling and Gardi flew from Paris via Tripoli to Fort Lamy where they landed in the early morning of 18 January. Two days later they travelled on, arriving in Maroua after a short flight. There they were picked up by the missionary Hans Eichenberger who took them to Mokolo, their first stop on the expedition to the Mandara Mountains. At the time Eichenberger was busy building up a mission station in Souledé for the Swiss branch of the Mission Unie du Soudan.

In Mokolo the two men were welcomed by the French colonial officer, Monsieur Duc. After setting up house and hiring a cook called Lulu and a houseboy called Buba, Hinderling and Gardi commenced fieldwork. On the one hand, they documented the local people's way of life by means of photographs and film, on the other, they began collecting artefacts and objects for the Basel Museum of Ethnology.

The Museum Board had commissioned Hinderling to assemble a systematic collection during a leave granted to him by the Governing Body of the University of Basel. Thanks to preliminary funding the expedition got under way after only two months of preparation: 'My father, Director Hinderling in Bern, was kind enough to advance the costs of my travel, while the curator of the museum was gracious enough to take over the difficult task of applying for funds from private firms and the Fritz Sarasin Foundation,' Hinderling wrote in his expedition report to the Fritz Sarasin Foundation. In the same report, Hinderling also outlined the aims of the expedition to Northern Cameroon: 'Mr Gardi maintained good relations with the local French authorities; he also had at his disposal pictures and reports explaining that the population in these mountains is made up of 'heathen tribes' as they are referred to in the old German sources, or 'Kirdi' (meaning 'heathens') as they are referred to by the surrounding Mohammedan Fulbe and Mandara peoples, and that we were dealing with so-called 'old-Negritic' tribes, as yet almost untouched by European influence. Little is known about these tribes in the literature and none of the ethnographic museums in Europe has a collection of any significance referring to their material culture. Thus I hope to gain valuable insight into an as yet intact Negro 'culture' and acquire for the museum a good collection of admittedly not superb, but at least interesting ethnographic objects' (Report, 1953:1).

PART OF COLONIAL SOCIETY
Hinderling and Gardi joined the French colonial officials on their 'tournées' into the remote and almost inaccessible mountain valleys and helped them conduct censuses and collect taxes. In return the colonial officers supported the two scholars on their quest for useful information and in collecting and transporting the ethnographic artefacts they

had gathered. In this way, and thanks to the help of the director of IFAN (Institut français d'Afrique noire), the anthropologist Emile Méslié, Hinderling stumbled across Ldamsay, home of the blacksmith Truadak, who was prepared to light up his bloomery furnace for the European visitors and demonstrate the indigenous method of ironworking.

Hinderling and Gardi spent most of their leisure time in the company of the Europeans living in the area. For the second part of their visit they went to stay with the missionary Eichenberger and his wife Gertrud at their mission station in Souledé. Together with his first Christian convert, a man called Kiligay, and with the help of the cook Lulu and the houseboy Buba, Eichenberger was able to provide valuable ethnographic information and was a great aid in interpreting.

COLLECTING AND ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELDWORK

The anthropologist Hinderling and the travel-writer-cum-photographer Gardi developed a kind of division of labour, complementing each other in their work, even though, or possibly just because, they proceeded differently. Hinderling assembled collections for the museum, made sketches of homesteads, documented manufacturing and other technical processes, conducted interviews, and took notes of what he observed. He travelled less than his companion, who was on the go all the time. Gardi travelled south to Douala and, towards the end of their stay, he accompanied the Belgian geologist Lormont on a 'tourné', visited the leprosy village near Mokolo and Gertrud Eichenberger's school. Hinderling also went on tour with Monsieur Duc, and later with Eichenberger and the Touteau couple, but basically he focused on his ethnographic fieldwork in the area of Mokolo, and later also in Souledé. He actually spent more time 'in the field' than Gardi, for example, with the black-

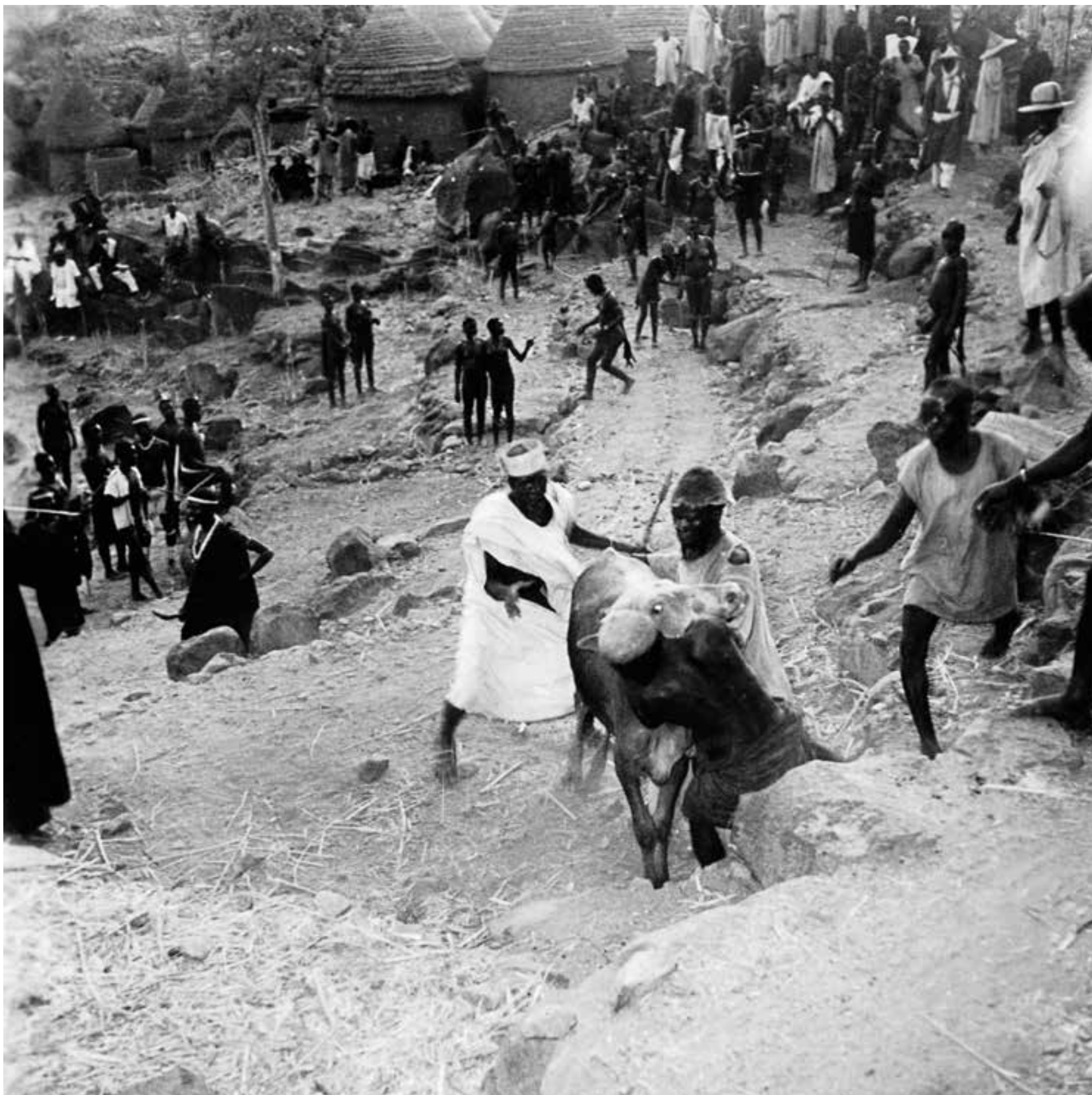
“MY FATHER, DIRECTOR HINDERLING IN BERN, WAS KIND ENOUGH TO ADVANCE THE COSTS OF MY TRAVEL, WHILE THE CURATOR OF THE MUSEUM WAS GRACIOUS ENOUGH TO TAKE OVER THE DIFFICULT TASK OF APPLYING FOR FUNDS FROM PRIVATE FIRMS AND THE FRITZ SARASIN FOUNDATION.”



Airstrip at Maroua
Photo: René Gardi, © Bernhard Gardi, Basel



At the school of missionary Hans Eichenberger.
The pupils are looking at the photographs
René Gardi took in Soulédé the year before.
Photo: René Gardi, © Bernhard Gardi, Basel



At the bull feast ('Maray feast')
Photo: Rene Gardi, © Bernhard Gardi, Basel



With the ironsmith Truadak in Ldamsay
Photo: René Gardi, © Bernhard Gardi, Basel

“THIS TRIBE IS STILL TOO ‘WILD’ AND UNPREPARED FOR THE WORK OF COLLECTING.”

smith Truadak at his homestead Ldamsay where he measured out the hamlet’s eleven houses as well as the fields and got things ready for filming and photographing. Gardi, who arrived a few days later, wrote in his diary: ‘The smith’s wives are potters, filmed each step. PH very busy measuring, collecting, and asking questions, very roundabout and extensive questioning’ (Gardi, Tagebuch 1953:14). As he had learnt from his teachers, Felix Speiser-Merian and Alfred Bühler, Hinderling systematically investigated all aspects of the material culture of the Mafa and their neighbours, collecting many items in the process. These he ordered according to specific categories, such as clothing and adornment, bags and baskets, household goods, fishing, agriculture, samples of ironwork, tools, weapons, toys, musical instruments, food and drink, religion and magic. He had learnt and practised systematic collecting during his training under Alfred Bühler, Hinderling mentioned (Fierz, interview: 16.8.2010).

‘Collecting among the Mofu, east of the Matakam, and among the smaller tribes up north was less productive. The small Mofu collection comprises mainly weapons (bows and arrows, quivers, spears, and sticks)’ (Hinderling, 1954:122). From Gardi we know that Hinderling acquired this small weapons collection from the French colonial officer Gonnet (Gardi, 1953c:193), since, if a man went to market carrying his arms, which was officially forbidden, the colonial authorities used to confiscate his bow and arrow, spear, and throwing knife. ‘The confiscated weapons are now in the Basel Museum of Ethnology, and thus the poor Mofu unwittingly made a contribution to scientific study’ (Gardi, 1953c:193).

IRRESOLVABLE DILEMMA

By virtue of the Versailles Treaty of 1919, Cameroon became a mandated territory under the League of Nations, administered jointly by France and Great Britain, leading to a partition between British Cameroons and French Cameroons. After the Second World War the mandate, still under British and French administration, came under the trusteeship of the United Nations whose aim it was to gradually lead the territory to self-governance. In the years leading up to 1957, the call for independence became ever louder, occasionally leading to violent clashes with the colonial powers. Among the resident Europeans the issue of independence and the benefits and handicaps of White civilization for the further development of the indigenous peoples were frequent topics of discussion, well documented in Gardi’s diary and recordings. The ensuing dilemma seemed irresolvable: of course Western civilization would bring benefits to the people in the form of medical care, education, and peace between the warring local groups. And naturally, to secure these benefits one required tax

revenue. This could only be generated if the natives were prepared to start growing and selling cash crops (cotton, peanuts). In his diary Gardi often describes how Monsieur Duc, the colonial official, tried to explain this to the people, with little success. At the same time Gardi expresses his regrets with regard to the passing of traditional culture in view of the relentless incursion of Western civilization. ‘Their being uncivilized does not mean that they have no culture. As long as they are left undisturbed and in peace, the laws of kinship and the strict rules of communal life provide effective guidelines. The problem is that civilization will destroy all this before something new has had time to grow’ (Gardi, 1953c:218).

How much Hinderling and Gardi were aware of their own entanglement in the colonial system is difficult to say, but much of the evidence suggests that they were not really conscious of this fact, for instance, when Hinderling mentions in a letter to Alfred Bühler that the natives were often unwilling to sell him their artefacts: ‘This tribe is still too “wild” and unprepared for the work of collecting. For example, for a shield, two spears, and warrior’s cap, plaited and set with goat’s hair, I offered 1,000 French francs (roughly 25 Swiss francs), but they were not willing to part with their gear. They need neither money nor European goods. One would have to stay here longer and be able to speak the language more fluently’ (letter, 15.3.1953).

FILMING AND PHOTOGRAPHING

Gardi visited the Mandara Mountains for the first time on his expedition to Lake Chad. This is when he discovered the amazing bloomery furnaces, which had him so fascinated that he decided to return and film the ironsmiths at work. ‘I hope that my description of iron smelting in chapter six not only interests the avid readers of travelogues, but also the experts and scholars; if there is something really novel about my book, it is the photographs showing the smiths at work at their “furnaces” because these represent a type which even specialists have never seen before’ (Gardi, 1953c:13). Recently the anthropologist and expert on iron smelting in West Africa, David Nicholas, acknowledged the significance of Gardi’s ‘discovery’ (Nicholas, 2010:36–47). Hinderling also had a 16 mm camera and together the two filmed the process of smelting and the work of the ironsmiths in two separate locations: once in Ldamsay with the ironsmith Truadak, and then in Soulédé with a smith called Rabah.

Hinderling and Gardi both write how grateful they were for the help they received from the cook Lulu, their houseboy Buba, Hans Eichenberger, and Kiligay, the first convert and employee at the mission station. Apart from interpreting they also took over the task

of explaining, negotiating, and mediating when the locals needed coaxing to repeat certain work steps for the sake of filming or to re-fire the furnace because certain sequences were still missing. Thus Gardi wrote in his diary: ‘We are delighted with our cook, the Matakam Lulu, who is of great help to me when filming. He used to work as a cook for the admin[istrator] where he saw and learnt what filming was all about’ (Gardi, 1953a:14).

Nevertheless, Hinderling also looked upon this dependency as rather annoying and, in the course of time, it became evident that he and Gardi differed considerably in terms of work: ‘I’m afraid we are very dependent on the missionary Eichenberger. At the beginning he was very interested in my work and helped me for hours doing translation work, and I owe him a lot. But recently it seems that he has tired, or maybe he is under too much pressure from Mr Gardi whose interests are not quite the same as mine. After all, he is quite a collector of curios and preferably wants to film dances and, now that his tape recorder is working, collect sounds. Unfortunately he has little patience and shows no interest in things like the details of Matakam agriculture. When I questioned our interpreter about Matakam marriage practices, it took me about two hours. Then Mr Gardi came, developed interest, and wanted to do some filming, and in the end it took us two full days during which I made little to no progress’ (letter, 15.3.1953).

Apart from his documentary on iron working, Gardi also made a film on marriage, in which he had a young couple, whom he gave the names Dschingei and Ganawa, playact the stages of courting, engagement, and marriage according to Mafa custom. The shots were later used for the motion picture ‘Mandara’ (1955).



ITINERARY

13. January 1953	Basel – Paris
18. January	Paris – Fort Lamy
20. January	Fort Lamy – Maroua
22. January	Maroua – Mokolo
22. January – 24. February	Residence in Mokolo – frequent work sessions with the family of the ironsmith Truadak in Ldamsay; in between: Journey to Meri to the Mofu
29. January	Journey to the nature reserve Waza
31. January	Visit to Tourou
05. February	‘On tour’ from Nduruk, via Gossi, R’hidoua to Koza with Administrator Duc
11. – 15. February	Excursion to Sougoulé
21. February	René Gardi travels to Douala
22. February – 02. March	Stay with Hans and Gertrud Eichenberger at the mission station in Soulédé; in between:
25. February – 17. March	Journey from Mora across the mountain plateau to Meri to visit the Podokwo, Baldama, Muktale, Zulgo, and Gemjek
11. – 15. March	Journey to Bourah
19. – 20. March	Stay in Mokolo
21. – 30. March	René Gardi ‘on tour’ with the geologist Lormont to the mountains Ziver and Upay
26. – 29. March	Return to Basel via Maroua, Fort Lamy, and Paris
01. April	

ENTANGLED RELATIONS

When reviewing the 2,303 photographs taken by René Gardi during his expedition to Northern Cameroon, it is striking that 809 pictures – something more than a third – show European people, Africans dressed in Western-style clothes, cars and airplanes, or European-style houses and other Western commodities, but that in his films and writings, which also contain descriptions of the life of colonial officials, missionaries, and members of the African elite, visual testimonies of modernity are markedly underrepresented. Omitting images of colonial life was intentional, as Gardi explained in his book ‘Mandara’: ‘I have done without images of the life of Europeans in Mokolo even though I would have liked to have shown pictures of my friends, administrators, missionaries, and technicians, and illustrated the expedition enterprise. But in my opinion it was more important to include as many pictures as possible depicting native life’ (Gardi, 1953b:231).

For Gardi it was evidently more important to take pictures showing indigenous people than foreground traces of European presence and other testimonies of a hybrid life-world. By blocking out visual evidence of the presence of Europeans Gardi created an image of Africa yet untouched by Western civilization and utterly different to Europe.

But, why did Gardi take photographs of Europeans all the same? His photographs include pictures of Monsieur Duc taking a shave in the morning, and Madame Touteau putting on makeup under a gnarled old tree during a field trip, as well as images of neatly covered tables, carriers hauling suitcases, tables, beds, and chairs across mountainous terrain, and colonial officers in the process of collecting taxes. What induced him to photograph such scenes? Was he trying to create of himself an image of ‘typical Swiss modesty’ in an attempt – always with his Swiss audience in mind – to put distance between himself and his French hosts? What was so fascinating about a French colonial officer’s morning shave? The picture (fig. 1) shows a man in his pyjamas going through an unspectacular morning routine: shaving. Nevertheless, what we also see is that the man is grooming himself out in the open, sitting at a

In his diary Gardi also tells of his laborious travels with Madame and Monsieur Touteau: ‘Touteau promised to take us by car the next day. The Chief is informed that we are coming, so is the Chief of the Tschide in Teleki, and that, by God, everything should be ready for the work of lost-wax casting. So far so good, departure is scheduled for eight o’clock the next morning, but then the silly old chap realizes that there isn’t even a road! This means we’ll have to go by foot! Not having maps, we couldn’t have known this, but he, the administrator, should have been aware of this! So, the first thing we had to do was round up a dozen or so reluctant fellows to do the carrying. And of course, as usual, the tables and chairs and all the lot had to come along too. Despite our protests, Madame insisted on serving up stewed meat, chicken, potatoes, dessert, and coffee for lunch, making the cooks sweat and toil, although the four of us hardly ate more than a few bites; it was much too hot, and after the long morning march we just wanted to quench our thirst [...] They are terribly complicated and behave stupidly; when the two of us are alone we have a light picnic at lunch and a full meal in the evening, usually around eight’ (Gardi, 1953a:92).

In his coverage for the newspaper ‘Der Bund’ Gardi again emphasizes how simple and unpretentious his and Hinderling’s lifestyle was in comparison to that of the French. This also made it much easier for them, so Gardi, to establish close and trusting relationships with the indigenous population: ‘Only we two, the cheerful chap from Basel and I, wander through the hills, climb steep mountain passes, sit down with the smiths and farmers, and ask inquisitive questions; my diary is gradually filling up and recently we celebrated the first thousand metres of colour film. We lead a simple, even primitive life, drink water from the bottle or weak tea when we are travelling, but we are doing fine’ (Gardi, Der Bund, 14.4.1953). The motif of the typical ‘modest and nature-loving’ Swiss versus the mannered Frenchman ‘living in exaggerated material luxury’ is a stereotype one comes across quite frequently in Gardi’s writings. It is his way of making it clear to his readers at home that he does not

FOR GARDI IT WAS EVIDENTLY MORE IMPORTANT TO TAKE PICTURES SHOWING INDIGENOUS PEOPLE THAN FOREGROUND TRACES OF EUROPEAN PRESENCE AND OTHER TESTIMONIES OF A HYBRID LIFE-WORLD.

folding table in front of a grass hut, which suggests that the man is on a journey ‘out in the bush’. At the same time we may ask: isn’t this taking things a bit too far? Did Gardi take the photograph with a twinkle in his eye and with the intention of taking a dig at what he, under the circumstances, believed to be an example of exaggerated adherence to European etiquette. Alternatively one could also read the picture as follows: by showing the French colonial officer busy grooming himself, the photographer creates a sense of proximity and intimacy which, in turn, exposes the French officer and makes him vulnerable, gently questioning his authority as an official representative of the French empire. In other words: could the picture be read as a subtle criticism of colonialism?

The second photograph (fig. 2) could be read in the same vein. It shows a young woman leaning against a tree, putting on makeup. Again it shows a representative of colonial society, elegantly dressed in European clothes, and again surrounded by nature.

Apart from photographs showing people grooming themselves, a frequently recurring motif in Gardi’s pictures concerns food and French colonial etiquette (fig. 3). At the same time, and by depicting the material and human input it required, he describes how, even under difficult circumstances, the French were intent on upholding their own cultural standards and practices (fig. 4). Does he do this because the spectacle challenges his innate sense of Swiss modesty?

approve of the colonial French lifestyle, which, however, does not mean that he is challenging the legitimacy of colonialism as such. This shows by the way Gardi and Hinderling, qua their status as white men, actually have the choice of living ‘primitively’ and that their decision to ‘adapt’ to the habits of the ‘natives’ is never doubted and clearly imbued with positive connotations. Gardi also refers to the dangers of ‘going native’ and the ‘depravation’ of the colonial officers living out in the bush, giving expression to his ambivalent attitude towards the practices of colonial society and culture, to his sense of belonging to the establishment in a way while, at the same time, distancing himself from it.

‘Imagine a colonial officer, travelling alone through the bush. Back in the comfort of my home I often think of my friends over there, that they are still out there somewhere in the bush, and that the life I shared with them, which I then found very romantic, probably becomes very dull and drab after a while. Imagine: for a full week, even two, they are out there, alone with their blacks, unable to lead a normal conversation, having to leave their home again and again and camp out in the desolate wilderness. That is not always easy, and now I understand why such things as a pretty tablecloth, a comfy chair, light, a chest full of books, good food and the occasional drink from the ‘house bar’ are so important for keeping up a certain cultural standard’ (Gardi, 1953b:33).

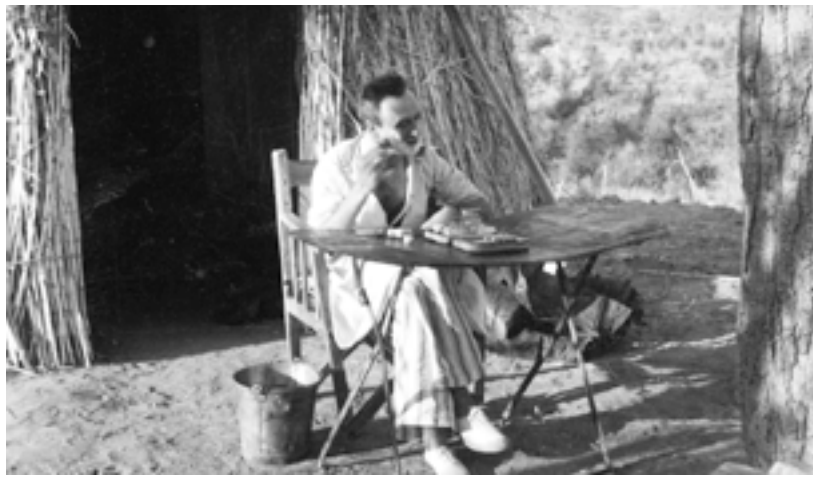


Fig. 1: Monsieur Duc shaving
Rene Gardi, © Bernhard Gardi, Basel

Fig. 2: Travelling with Madame Touteau to collect taxes
Rene Gardi, © Bernhard Gardi, Basel

Fig. 3: Paul Hinderling dining with a French colonial official, Meri, 29.1.1953
Rene Gardi, © Bernhard Gardi, Basel

Fig. 4: Weekend outing to the nature reserve of Ouaza, 31.1./1.2.1953
Rene Gardi, © Bernhard Gardi, Basel

Fig. 5: René Gardi making sound recordings in Souledé
with the ironsmith Rabah, 15.3.1953
Paul Hinderling, © Bernhard Gardi, Basel

SURE OF THE BACKING OF HIS READERS AT HOME, GARDI SEES HIMSELF IN THE ROLE OF THE ENLIGHTENER AND EMISSARY OF CIVILIZATION.

The danger of forfeiting civilization when isolated in the wild – a recurring theme in colonial discourse – has been researched by Johannes Fabian. Based on texts from travelogues written on expeditions to the Congo, Fabian brings out how important the adherence to European ideals and morals during such a venture was, as a means of (self-)discipline in the pursuit of the colonial quest. By upholding Western standards the enterprise was given structure, the emotions of the expedition members were kept under control, and the indigenous population kept at bay. At the same time, the spectacle enacted by the white intruders served as an unmistakable show of strength towards the Others (Fabian, 2001:15ff).

On the other hand, the reverse, that is, African people adopting a European lifestyle, was usually ridiculed and described as inappropriate, as many passages in Gardi's diary go to show, for example, when he writes, 'they imitate, but they don't understand' (Gardi, 1953a:94).

Although they gently criticized and distanced themselves from the overblown spectacle performed by the French, Gardi and Hinderling enacted their own kind of show (cf. fig. 5). Unlike the French 'commandant', who used tons of luggage to signify his authority, the two Swiss tried to impress the Africans with their modern technical equipment, such as their film and photo cameras and tape recorders. Gardi notes: 'Then we go through the familiar routine, have somebody speak into the recorder and then play the tape. It always amuses me to see their astonish-

ment when they hear their own voices coming from the recorder' (Gardi, sound recording 12.3.1953).

Sure of the backing of his readers at home, Gardi sees himself in the role of the enlightener and emissary of civilization, drawing on acknowledged and unquestioned dichotomies such as technology versus magic, modern versus primitive society, or science versus myth. As Patrick Harries has shown in a contribution on the image of the African propagated by mission anthropologists from Neuchâtel (Harries, 2010:203), the progress of civilization was the driving force behind the quest of the missions. In the eyes of the mission anthropologists, the simple, unimpaired way of life of African societies was innately superior to modern life in Europe, which had come undone under the impact of industrialization and change. Notwithstanding, 'primitive man' still needed to embrace the achievements of civilization in order to liberate himself from his tormentors and torments, above all his belief in witchcraft. According to this view, in Africa there was still time and hope to avoid the mistakes that had been made in Europe in the course of modernization. Thus the African continent became a surface onto which they projected a vision of society that founded on the myth of the 'simple Swiss mountain peasant' and on Christian morality.



Packing the collected
artefacts
René Gardi, © Bernhard Gardi, Basel

Like René Gardi,
Paul Hinderling also used
a 16 mm camera
Photo: René Gardi, © Bernhard Gardi, Basel

PAUL HINDERLING

*11 July 1924

‘Actually I wanted to travel to Oceania, like my professor, Felix Speiser, but then I had the opportunity to go to Northern Cameroon with René Gardi,’ Paul Hinderling, aged eighty-six, recounted in an interview recorded in Eschringen near Saarbrücken (Fierz 2010: sound recording 16.8.).

Paul Hinderling, born in Solothurn on 11 July 1924, visited the Humanistisches Gymnasium Basel from 1936 to 1943. He went on to study Anthropology at the University of Basel under Felix Speiser-Merian and Alfred Bühler, receiving a PhD degree in 1949 with a thesis on the cultural history of Oceania by the title of ‘Über steinzeitliche Beile in der Südsee’ (On stone-age axes in Oceania). Before focusing on anthropology, specializing on the fields of medicine and religion, Hinderling took courses in many other subject fields, including the Classics (Professors Karl Meuli, Felix Stähelin, and Bernhard Wyss), Linguistics and Literature (Friedrich Ranke and Walter Muschg), History (Edgar Bonjour and Jean Rudolf von Salis), Philosophy (Paul Häberlin and Heinrich Barth), Geography (Peter Jaeger, Paul Vosseler and Hans Annaheim), Experimental Physics (Eugen Baumgartner), Zoology (Adolf Portmann and Heini Hediger), Geology (Louis Vonderschmidt), and Botany (Max Geiger-Huber) (Hinderling, 1949:248). His primary interest, however, lay in anthropology. ‘There were no more than three or four of us in Speiser’s lectures, sometimes even only two,’ Hinderling commented on his time at university (Fierz 2010: sound recording 16.8). Felix Speiser, who followed Fritz Sarasin as director of the Museum of Ethnology in 1942 and remained there until he died in September 1949, appointed Hinderling as assistant curator to the museum. Alfred Bühler, who in turn took over from Speiser as director, had also been one of Hinderling’s teachers. ‘Bühler’, Hinderling recalled, ‘taught us a lot about scientific and systematic collecting’ (Fierz, 2010: sound recording 16.8.).

In 1950, Paul Hinderling had the opportunity of joining an expedition, his first, to Ghana and Togo in West Africa. His father, Fritz Hinderling, director of the Schweizerische Volksbank, knew a few people over there, business connections and friends, who were willing to help the young researcher. His main interest lay in the so-called ‘Togo-Remnant’ peoples (Togo-Restvölker) (Hinderling, 1952/53), a name invented by the German Africanist and linguist Diedrich Westermann. The term originally comprised all the groups in the old German colony of Togo who spoke neither one of the Gur languages found in the north nor Ewe, Akan, Yoruba, Ga, or Guang. At the time it was believed that the ‘Togo-Remnant’ peoples had once settled in the area together with other northern groups and the Guang, before being overrun by immigrant groups in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who had been forced to leave their homelands due to war.

Hinderling brought back to Basel an ethnographic collection numbering roughly three hundred objects, which the Museum of Ethnology purchased in 1951. It comprised carvings, old bead necklaces, agricultural tools, pots, and examples of products and tools used in crafts such as pottery, woodwork, and textile manufacture, and

seventy-three gold weights. The expedition to the Mandara Mountains described in the current exhibition, Hinderling undertook with René Gardi.

Hinderling curated the exhibition ‘Die Negerschmiede’ in 1954 in which he displayed objects collected on his first expedition, followed by a series of further special shows: ‘Basler Forscher bei fremden Völkern’ (1956); ‘Beduinen aus Nordostafrika: Burckhardt – Sammlung zur Erinnerung an Scheich Ibrahim’ (1957); ‘Mensch und Handwerk – Die Töpferei’ (1959); and ‘Geldformen und Zierperlen der Naturvölker’ (1961).

In 1962, after twelve years at the Museum of Ethnology he decided to leave Basel and take up a teaching position at Saarland University under the psychologist Ernst E. Boesch, the founder of the Socio-Psychological Research Centre for Development Planning. In the context of his academic studies and on behalf of the German Ministry of Development he travelled to the Mafa in Northern Cameroon a second time in 1964 where he conducted research on local nutrition, together with Hermann and Ingrid Schönmeier. He returned to the Mandara Mountains for a brief visit in 1971. In 1984, he published two volumes containing the results of his ethnographic fieldwork in Northern Cameroon (1953, 1964, and 1971) on social and religious structures of the Mafa, incorporating much of his original fieldwork data.

Henceforth Hinderling primarily focused on medical anthropology. He joined the freshly founded German Society for Medical Anthropology (AGEM) in 1970. On behalf of the Socio-Psychological Research Centre he conducted research on traditional healing practices in Thailand in 1971 and 1973 as part of a more comprehensive study project on doctor-patient communication in Thailand. The studies of Boesch and his colleagues had pioneering character. In 1981 Hinderling published ‘Kranksein in ‘primitiven’ und traditionellen Kulturen’, one of the key works in the development of medical anthropology in the German-speaking world.

After teaching for several years in Singapore, Hinderling returned home to Saarbrücken in 1977 where he continued to work at the Socio-Psychological Research Centre until he retired in 1989. Today he lives in Eschringen, a suburb of Saarbrücken.

René Gardi used the films he shot in northern Cameroon in 1953 as the basis for his later documentary 'Mandara'.
Paul Hinderling, © Bernhard Gardi, Basel

René Gardi recording at the furnace in Soulédé
Paul Hinderling, © Bernhard Gardi, Basel



RENÉ GARDI

1 March 1909 – 8 March 2000

René Gardi undertook his first journey, in 1936, at the age of twenty-seven – to Scandinavia – while still working as a teacher. On the side he was a successful writer of fiction stories for teenagers (e.g. 'Schwarzwasser' and 'Gericht im Lager'). He gave up his teaching job in 1945 and became a free-lance travel writer, photographer, and filmmaker. Gardi was 'on the road' for forty-years, living off the sale of his books, pictures, and articles. On his expedition to Lake Chad in 1952 he briefly visited the Mandara Mountains. Deeply impressed by what he saw, among other things, the ironsmiths working at their smelting furnaces, he planned to return – which he did in 1953, together with the anthropologist Paul Hinderling. In 1955, he revisited the area, and again in 1959 for the making of his documentary film 'Mandara', with further visits following. His last journey to the Mandara Mountains was in 1991.

Gardi stood in regular contact with the director of the Museum of Ethnology, Alfred Bühler, whom he accompanied on an expedition to the Sepik River in Papua New Guinea and for whom he assembled ethnographic collections on his journeys.

His two documentaries 'Mandara' (1959) and 'Die letzten Karawanen' (1967) were a great success. Books he wrote include 'Blaue Schleier – Rote Zelte' (1950), 'Mandara' (1953), 'Der schwarze Hepästus' (1954), 'Kirdi' (1955), 'Tambaran' (1956), 'Sepik' (1958), as well as the monographs 'Sahara' (1967), 'Unter afrikanischen Handwerkern' (1969), and 'Auch im Lehmhaus lässt sich's leben' (1973). Next to that he often lectured on his adventures, again with great success. He also received a number of awards such as the Youth Book Prize of the Swiss Teachers Association (1963), the title of Honorary Doctor in Anthropology from the University of Bern (1967), and a Life Award from the Canton Bern in 1979. Christine Geary, curator of African and Oceanic Art at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, was certainly not exaggerating when she wrote in the accompanying publication to the exhibition 'Momente des Alltags' (1994) shown at the Basel Museum of Ethnology: 'No writer or photographer working in Africa in the fifties, sixties, and seventies exerted greater influence on the development of the image of Africa in the German-speaking world than did René Gardi' (Gardi, 1994:36).

What was the source of this success? Gardi was never dependent on institutional funding. He worked neither for colonial authorities, nor for any mission, nor for the media or aid organizations. In this respect he was completely free, which, however, does not mean that institutions did not remain without influence on his work. His capital included his (exclusive) knowledge, his expertise on Africa, his communication skills, and last but not least his independence, which allowed him to determine his own interests and commitment.

Authority and credibility are two significant features attributed to experts. With regard to writers on foreign countries and cultures, the basis of their expertise founds on the circumstance of 'having been there personally' (Fabian, 2001:11). This 'presence' is substantiated by photographs, objects, and personal accounts, lending travel writers and anthropologists the status of true authorities, and their writings the quality of factuality: eyewitness reports signify authenticity.

Gardi travelled to Africa very often, which is one of the reasons why he ranked as a true expert. However, authenticity is not merely a given, it is also generative. Irrespective of the medium in and through which authenticity is created and mediated – be it photography, film, or text – the reality portrayed therein always remains a subjectively chosen arrangement, a construction.

Gardi left behind a substantial oeuvre which, as yet, has hardly been edited and only recently drawn the interest of historians. This lacuna on the part of historians and anthropologists also has to do with the restricted access to Gardi's source material. It appears that, with the exception of his family, nobody had access to his personal archives. In a newspaper article published in the context of the exhibition 'Momente des Alltags. René Gardi' in Bern, it was said that Gardi had shielded off his archive room – which also served as his study and 'sanctuary' – from prying eyes, well aware of the place's 'singularity and significance' (Der Bund, 23.3.1996).

FROM TRAVELLING THE WORLD TO RESEARCH IN THE FIELD

Alexander Brust, Gaby Fierz, Alice Stirnimann

The anthropologists presented in the exhibition undertook a number of further travels and expeditions, bringing back to Basel additional collections. A look at how, where, and what they collected reveals a development and a changing understanding of ethnography and anthropology, respectively: from travels to all four corners of the world to long-term, in-depth fieldwork in one location.



This cabinet (*heml*) is the symbol of the barbers' guild. The picture shows a procession from the mosque to the house of the boy about to be circumcised. The barbers' servant carrying the *heml* on his head heads the procession. (from Lane, Edward William, German translation, Zenker, Julius Theodor, 'Sitten und Gebräuche der heutigen Ägypter', Vol.1 1852:48)

1889 Expedition to Egypt
Paul and Fritz Sarasin with Leopold Rütimeyer

COLLECTING AS A MEANS OF ILLUSTRATING EVERYDAY LIFE

Together with their friend Leopold Rütimeyer, Paul and Fritz Sarasin travelled to Egypt from January to March 1889. They stayed in Cairo for roughly six weeks where they assembled the bulk of their collection. Their aim was to collect items of everyday life yet untouched by European influence. For this purpose they consulted the standard work on Egyptian culture by Edward William Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*. The three men understood their collection work as a means of illustrating Lane's study. Leopold Rütimeyer proudly noted that the collection offered an 'overview of modern Egyptian ergonomics that even the great German museums cannot provide' (Rütimeyer, 2.5.1912).

EGYPTIAN EVERYDAY LIFE

The three Swiss explorers purchased items of furniture from dwelling houses, men's and women's clothes, women's toiletries, jewelry, ritual objects, and writing utensils along with other items that reflected domestic life. They were also interested in documenting manufacturing steps, which is why they purchased a complete loom and other tools used in weaving and other forms of cotton and wool processing.



Carriers on the Sarasins' expedition
Photo: MKB (F) IIc 2159

1893 – 1896; 1902 – 1903 Expeditions to Sulawesi (Celebes), Indonesia
Paul and Fritz Sarasin

REKINDLED INTEREST IN MAN

During the follow-up work to their two journeys to Ceylon, Paul and Fritz Sarasin decided to go on a new expedition, this time to Sulawesi, the former Celebes, an island in Indonesia located exactly in the transition zone between the faunas of Asia and Australia. Since 1669 the Dutch East India Company had been in control of trade in the region, so that Sulawesi was factually under Dutch rule. Before departing in 1893, the Sarasins studied all the books they could find on the island's fauna, peoples, and tribes as well as works on geology, geography, mineralogy, botany, and meteorology.

BIO-GEOGRAPHICAL BOUNDARIES

On the expedition Paul and Fritz Sarasin followed up questions that had once occupied people such as Salomon Müller and Alfred Russell Wallace in the early nineteenth century, namely, was Sulawesi part of the Asian continent or did it belong to Australia? Where was the bio-geographical boundary? In search of answers to this question, the Sarasins also studied the geology and climate of islands neighbouring Sulawesi. Their encounter with the Toala people, whom they identified as the island's aboriginal population, rekindled their interest in anthropological issues. On a second expedition from 1 March 1902 to 8 April 1903 they focused their research on this group.

WELCOME COLLABORATION

The presence of the two Swiss explorers did not exactly please the indigenous people, as they saw in the foreigners a threat to their independence. The Dutch, however, protected and supported the two explorers, not least because they needed the knowledge the Sarasins acquired in order to better understand and govern the island. But it was only in 1905, two years after the Sarasins had returned to Switzerland, that the Dutch succeeded in bringing all parts of the island under their rule. As a sign of gratitude Paul and Fritz Sarasin were appointed honorary members of various Dutch scientific societies and made officers of the Order of Orange-Nassau.



Fritz Sarasin and Jean Roux in New Caledonia
 Photo: MKB (F) Vb 35218

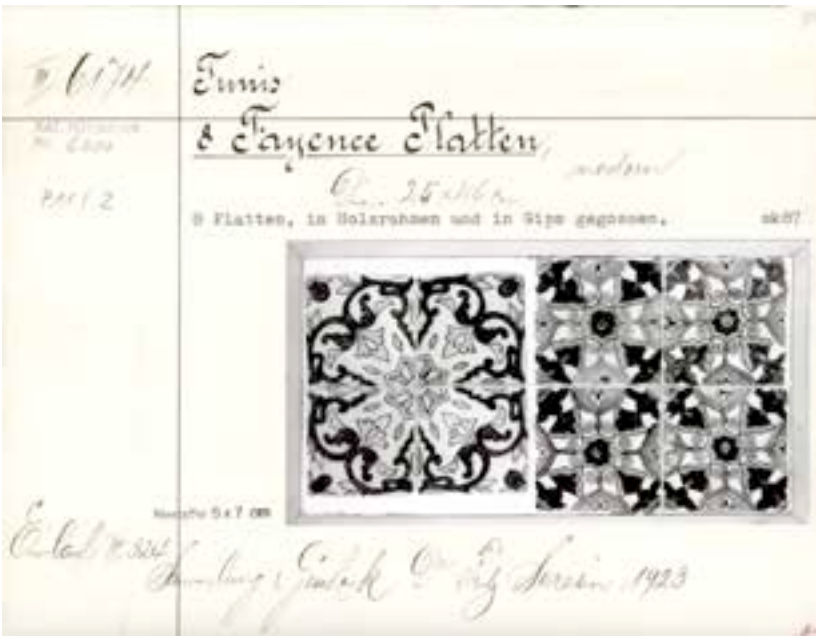
1911 – 1912 New Caledonia expedition
 Fritz Sarasin and Jean Roux

SCIENTIFIC SALVAGE WORK

Fritz Sarasin and Jean Roux, curator of the zoological collection at the Basel Museum of Natural History, travelled to New Caledonia in 1911 – 1912. In Nouméa Felix Speiser, who had by then already been in the New Hebrides (Vanuatu) for a year, welcomed them and introduced them to Melanesian culture. During their extended travels across New Caledonia, Sarasin and Roux stayed with Engler, a fellow countryman in charge of the local topographical services, and at mission stations. In Canala, where they spent the rainy season from October 1911 to March 1912, they had a house for themselves (Kaufmann, 1994:88).

AN INVENTORY FOR POSTERITY

By compiling research data from various subject fields (physical anthropology, ethnography, botany, and zoology) Sarasin and Roux’s aim was to document New Caledonia’s current stage of cultural development. Based on the theory of evolution, their main method consisted of systematic, scientific collecting and compiling an inventory of New Caledonia. They returned to Basel with a large collection of glass-plate photographs, especially portrait photos, as well as ethnographic artefacts and zoological and botanical specimens. Sarasin published the results in an ethnographic atlas of New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands in 1917 which included an illustrated description of his fieldwork. In 1929 he published a comprehensive, systematic ethnography of New Caledonia (Kaufmann, 1994:87).



FAIENCE PLATES

The term faience denotes glazed earthenware materials. The origin of this technology lies in Egypt and Mesopotamia and goes back to the second half of the fourth millennium BC. The term faience has been commonly used since the sixteenth century and is derived from the name of the north Italian town of Faenza, a famous pottery centre. All the faience plates Fritz Sarasin collected during his stay in Tunisia are from Nabeul. These plates were used in noble houses to decorate the courtyard walls. Inv. no. III 6174, Nabeul, Tunis, Tunisia; 25 cm, 46 cm

1923 Journey to Tunis
 Fritz Sarasin

THE ART OF POTTERY AND EVERYDAY LIFE

On his journey to Tunisia Fritz Sarasin chiefly purchased items from Nabeul, a town well known for its pottery industry. Here, too, he focused on items of everyday life. After his return to Basel he donated the pieces to the museum.

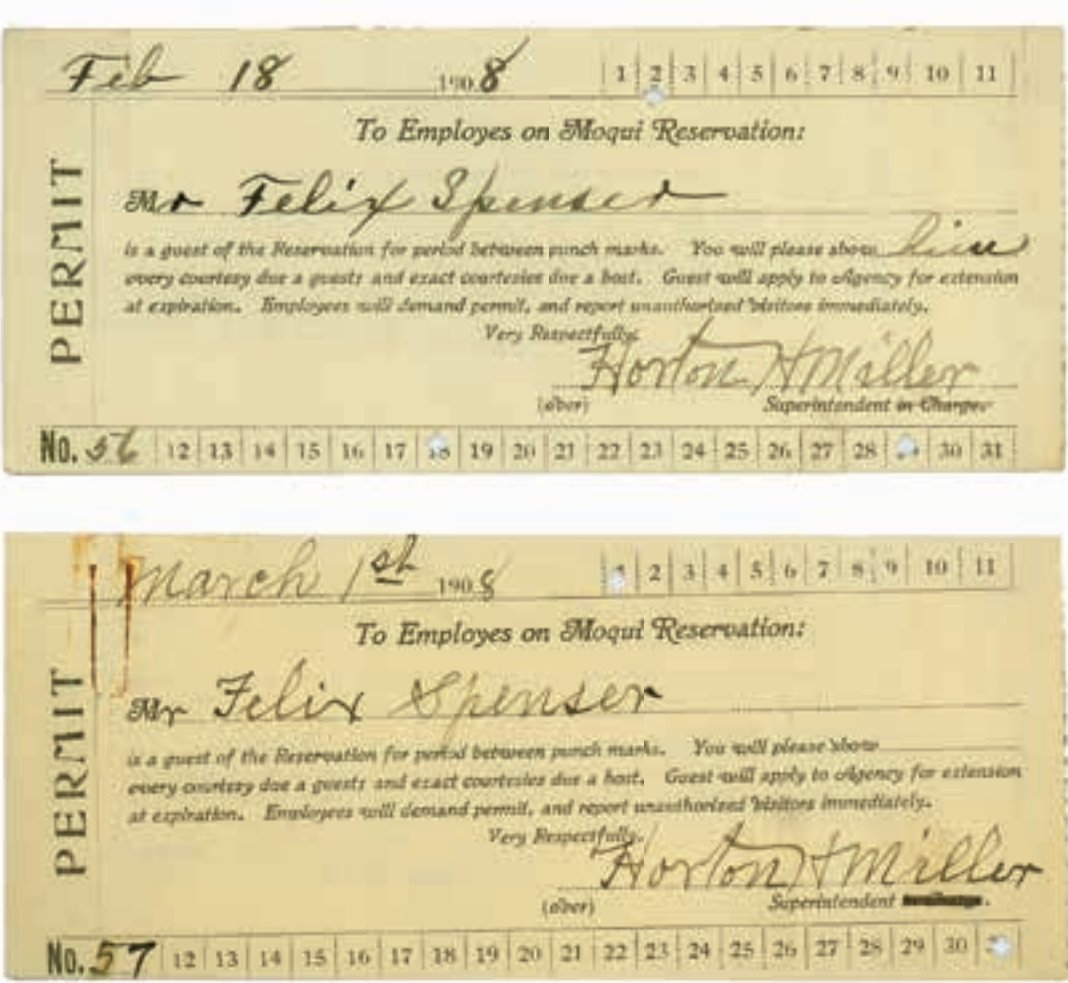


DANCING CROWNS
These dancing crowns were worn by regal male and female figures in the classical Thai dance theatre.
Inv. nos. IIb 514 and IIb 515, Bangkok, Thailand; wood, leather, metal, mirror-glass, H 42 cm, before 1932

1931 – 1932 Collecting expedition to Thailand, Laos and Cambodia (Angkor), Fritz Sarasin and Rudolf Iselin

GIFTS AND PURCHASES

In the winter of 1931/32, Fritz Sarasin and his nephew Rudolf Iselin (1882 – 1962) travelled to what was then still known as Siam to assemble a collection for the museum in the northern (now Laos) as well as the southern regions (now Thailand). At that time, Iselin was working as a freelancer in the museum’s photo archives. From 1938 to 1956, he was a member of the museum commission and responsible for the European department and the photo collection. Rudolf Bär, a Swiss living in Siam, introduced the two men to a high priest at the crumbling temple Wat Prasing in Chiangmai (northern Thailand), who gave them a temple door as a gift. They went on to collect further ritual objects and artefacts from the fields of dance, shadow play, and puppet theatre. In order to document the common lacquer technique, they collected a series of items from different production stages, ranging from raw materials to finished products. They also procured items of everyday use made of silver and clay as testimonies of the local life world.



Visit and research permit issued by the US Indian Service for the Moqui Reservation as the Hopi were referred to by the US authorities.

1908 Felix Speiser-Merian’s expedition to the Hopi, United States

FIRST ETHNOGRAPHIC ACCOUNTS

Felix Speiser-Merian visited the Hopi Indians from February to March 1908 to study their culture. He received permission from the US Indian Service to visit the Hopi Reservation and conduct research in a place called Oraibi. It was there that the graduated chemist decided to take up anthropology, commencing his studies in Berlin in May 1908. Speiser brought back with him from the Hopi thirteen objects, among them a variety of baskets and single artefacts such as dance costumes, ritual objects, and items of everyday use. In addition, the museum holds 170 photographic prints of his journey.



Travelling on the river Parú
Photo: MKB (F) IVc 126.01

1924 Felix Speiser-Merian's expedition to the Aparai in Brazil

EARLY SWISS ETHNOGRAPHIC FILM PROJECT

On 10 June 1924 Felix Speiser and Dr Arnold Deuber boarded the steamship 'Aidan' bound for Belem in the Amazon region of Brazil. Speiser had chosen Brazil for his expedition, following the advice of his friend, the German anthropologist Theodor Koch-Grünberg, and because Brazil was easier to reach than the South Seas. His aim was to produce an ethnographic film on 'disappearing primitive tribes' and he was concerned about exposing his film material to the tropical climate for too long a period. Other items of equipment, such as his typewriter, Speiser received from Swiss firms.

Among the passengers on board the 'Aidan' was Theodor Koch-Grünberg who introduced Speiser to the German expert on Indians, Curt Unckel Niumendajú, who suggested studying the Aparai tribe whom he had visited in 1913. Unckel Niumendajú lent the two Basel scholars his support when they arrived in Belem but they could also rely on help from the resident Swiss consul, Albert Sutter, and local Brazilian politicians, among them Senator José Julio de Andrade whom they got to know there. De Andrade owned large estates in the research area on the Parú River. He also invited eight Aparai Indians to come to stay in Belem and later accompany Speiser to their village.

FORTY KILOS OF BEADS AND KNIVES FOR THE APARAI

In Belem social unrest prevented them from departing to the Parú River for two months. Speiser took the opportunity to visit the Museum Goeldi in Belem, named after its Swiss founder Emil Goeldi, together with his eight Aparai companions. There he explained to them his intention of assembling a collection and later exhibiting the pieces in Europe, similar to the way it was done in Belem.

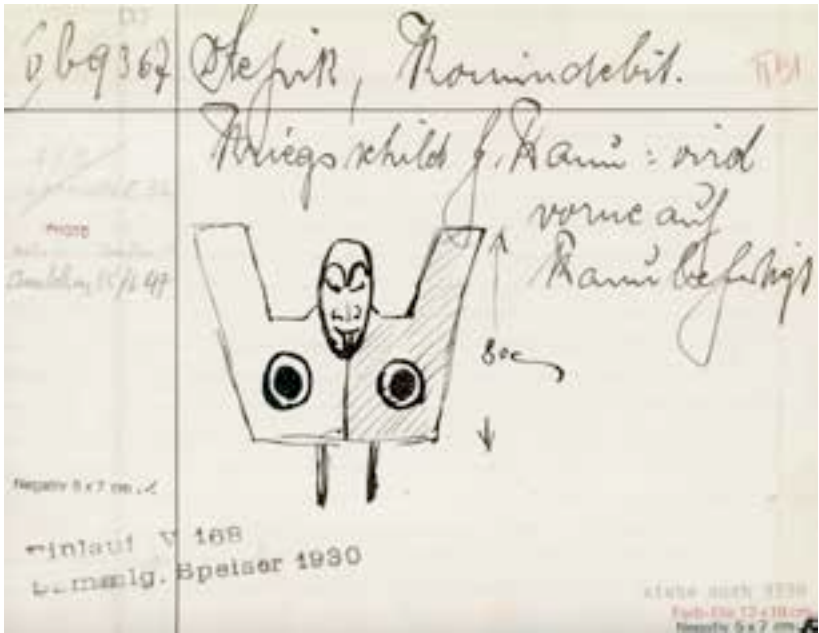
He also purchased numerous knives and other items, in addition to the forty kilos of beads he had brought from Europe, which he intended to use as trade items in his dealings with the Aparai. A third of the goods was reserved for trading in artefacts, a third for paying the carriers, and a third as a reserve.

In the end, the journey to the Aparai in Tucano took twenty-five days; the two explorers stayed there from October to November, busy doing research and collecting.

TROUBLE, TIME PRESSURE, AND FASCINATION

In Speiser's opinion the Aparai were already 'strongly influenced by Western civilization', after having been in too close a contact with white Brazilians and Europeans. This had changed their traditional way of life, resulting in, for example, the habit of begging. In Tucano Speiser faced many upsets and misunderstandings, for example,

with regard to a feast he wanted to document. Given the expedition's limited time frame, this put him under considerable pressure. All in all he drew a dismal picture of the situation of the Aparai, which also found expression in the title of his book, 'In the Gloom of the Brazilian Jungle' (1926), a view expressed by neither earlier nor later scholars. Despite all difficulties, Speiser and Deubner assembled a collection that pays reference to their fascination for Indian cultures. It comprises 219 objects, among them weapons, ceramics, adornment, feather decorations, household goods, musical instruments, as well as items of clothing. The collection is supplemented by 231 photographs and twenty-six stills from the film 'Yopi: Chez les Indiens du Brésil'. His shoots rank as the first Swiss ethnographic film project. The film, however, was only released in 1945; since 1966 it has been kept in the Cinématèque Suisse in Lausanne.



CANOE SHIELD SAVU WITH MASK

The canoe shield bearing a mask was attached to the prow of a war canoe when going on a headhunting raid. It depicted ancestors of the canoe owner's clan who joined the raid to protect their men.
Iatmul, Kamanabit, Sepik River, Papua New Guinea; plant fibre, wood, natural pigments, W 80 cm, before 1929
Inv. no. Vb 9367

1929 – 1930 Expedition to the Western Solomon Islands, New Britain, and New Guinea (Papua New Guinea)
Felix Speiser-Merian and Heini Hediger

GAINING AN OVERVIEW AND COMPLEMENTING EXISTING COLLECTIONS

As the historian Serge Reubi (2012:433) notes, Felix Speiser-Merian's expedition to Melanesia was part of a clear strategy drawn up by Fritz Sarasin and the Museum Commission, aimed at complementing the Oceanic collection with pieces from parts of Oceania as yet underrepresented. A special grant offered by the government of Basel-Stadt in 1927 brought Sarasin a step closer to his goal. It had a ten-year term and was intended for undertaking expeditions and acquiring ethnographic artefacts in the field. Following Eugen Paravicini, who had travelled to the Eastern Solomon Islands in 1928, Felix Speiser was the second researcher to receive government funding in the height of 10,000 Swiss francs. His journey in 1929 – 1930 took him to the Western Solomon Islands, New Britain, and New Guinea.

Speiser was accompanied by the twenty-two year old zoology and anthropology student Heini Hediger who in due course became director of the zoos in Bern, Basel, and Zurich. His chief interest lay in animal behaviour and psychology, but for his work he was dependent on 'native help' – a bit too much, as he later confessed in his doctoral thesis (Hediger, 1934:443).

Speiser brought back to Basel 1607 ritual objects and artefacts of daily use, among them very rare objects such as the canoe prow and the fishing kite. Along with many objects relating to seafaring and fishing the collection also included pieces of male and female adornment, weapons, musical instruments, and carvings. It also comprised comparative collections for the purpose of research on materials and styles.



Alfred Bühler with his assistants
Photo: MKB (F) Vb 1440

1931 – 1932 Expedition to New Ireland and the Admiralty Islands (Manus)
Alfred Bühler

COLLECTING FOR THE MUSEUM

In 1931 the Museum Commission under their president, Fritz Sarasin, commissioned the young anthropologist Alfred Bühler, then still a teacher at a commercial college, to conduct research and assemble a collection in the Bismarck Archipelago, chiefly in New Ireland and the Admiralty Islands. These regions were still underrepresented in the museum's ethnographic collection and Bühler's task was to fill these gaps, similar to Paravicini (1928) and Speiser (1929 – 30) before him. Again the expedition was funded by a 'research grant' (Ohnemus, 1996:17; Reubi, 2012:397). Bühler travelled through the islands of the Bismarck Archipelago from March 1931 to August 1932, spending a half a year on Manus and assembling systematic collections. He returned to Basel with a total of 1,752 objects including a comprehensive collection of Manus material culture.



The members of the expedition
 Photo: MKB IIc 6882-6884

1949 Expeditions to Sumba, Indonesia
 Alfred Bühler and Ernst Sutter

FILLING GAPS

In order to fill the gaps in the museum's Indonesian collections, Alfred Bühler decided to go on a further expedition to eastern Indonesia, to Sumba. Due to the Second World War he had to postpone his plans for a while. Preparations were extensive; the expedition was funded by the state and several private foundations and sponsors. Bühler's intention was to assemble a collection of material culture that not only reflected the ethnography but also the reigning technology and the current economic conditions. In addition he was assigned the task of collecting physical anthropological data. The ornithologist Ernst Sutter, curator at the Basel Museum of Natural History, joined the expedition to cover the zoological aspects.

After eight months of research Alfred Bühler was highly satisfied with his acquisitions. In November 1949 he travelled from Sumba to Bali, accompanied by Theo Meier, to assemble a next collection for the Basel museum. From there he continued his journey to Java. The artefacts collected on this journey complemented the collection he had assembled on his previous expedition to Timor, Flores, and Rote. On Sumba he collected 3,824 objects, 983 on Bali, 86 on Flores, and 18 on other islands.

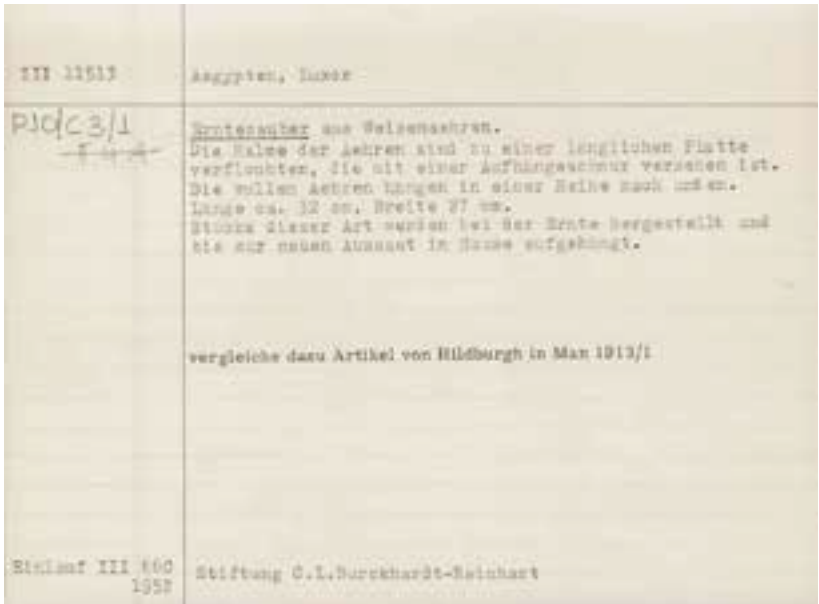


Alfred Bühler in their house in Washkuk, Sepik
 Photo: MKB (F) Vb 13371

1955 – 1956 Expedition to the Sepik, Papua New Guinea
 Alfred Bühler and René Gardi

SPOONS, COMBS, AND FLUTES – COLLECTING FOR COMPARATIVE PURPOSES

In 1955 – 1956, Alfred Bühler travelled to the Sepik River in northern Papua New Guinea with René Gardi, where Bühler assembled a collection of 1,910 objects, among them a selection of magnificent ceremonial pieces. For the task of comparison he also collected series of spoons, combs, and flutes. This allowed him to carry out style studies. Gardi did a lot of photographing and filming and later published his much-noticed book 'Sepik. Im Land der sterbenden Geister'.



Harvest charm made of ears of wheat
Inv. no. II 11513, Egypt, Luxor

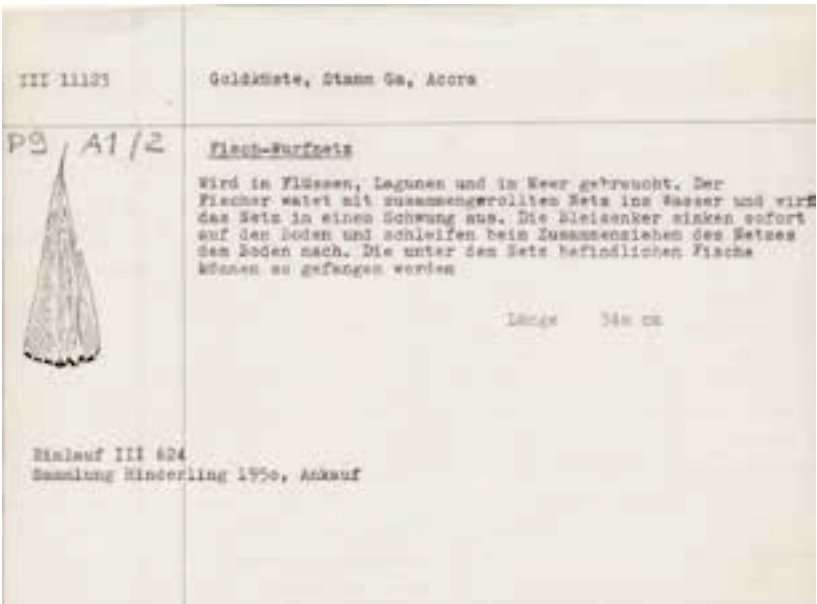
1952 Research and collecting expedition to Egypt
Alfred and Kristin Bühler

COTTON MERCHANT AND PATRON:
A LIFE DEVOTED TO TEXTILES

In the spring of 1952, Alfred Bühler and his wife Kristin, born Openheim, were invited to a six-week study tour of Egypt by the couple Carl Leonhard and Marianne Burckhardt-Reinhart. The purpose of their journey was to collect pieces in order to complement the museum’s famous textile collection, which they accomplished thanks to the financial support of the Burckhardt-Reinharts.

BASEL TEXTILE RESEARCH: BY COURTESY
OF LEONHARD BURCKHARDT

The great patron of textile research in Basel, Carl Leonhard Burckhardt, was born in Basel in 1902 as the son of a silk ribbon manufacturer. In 1928 he married Marianne Reinhart, daughter of the cotton merchant Alfred Reinhart (1873–1935) who was based in Alexandria. Towards the end of the 1920s the couple moved to Egypt where they took care of her father’s textile trading company after his death in 1935, together with Carl Leonhard Burckhardt’s cousin, Paul Reinhart. Next to his philanthropic work Carl Leonhard Burckhardt was especially interested in valuable old books and textiles. He donated his extensive textile collection – parts of it even during his lifetime – to the Basel Museum of Ethnology. The collection includes Coptic textiles dating back to the fourth to seventh century AD as well as numerous ritual objects and items of daily use from Upper Egypt. These objects were collected by Professor Keimer of Cairo, again with the financial support of the Burckhardt-Reinharts.



Fishing net with lead weight
Inv. no. III 11123, Accra, Ghana

1950 Expedition to Ghana and Togo
Paul Hinderling

AN ASSISTANT WITH INTEREST AND LINKS

In 1950, Paul Hinderling, then a young assistant at the Basel Museum of Ethnology, went on his first expedition, to Ghana in West Africa. His father Fritz Hinderling, director of the Schweizerische Volksbank, had business connections and friends over there who were willing to support the young man. Hinderling’s primary interest focused on the so-called ‘Togo-Remnant’ peoples and the tribe of the Guang. On his journey he collected items of daily use as well as samples of pottery, woodworking, and textile manufacture. Hinderling’s collection from Ghana and Togo numbers 396 inventoried objects.



Adornment, dance ornament, and boy's amulet,
Inv. no. III 16817, Mokolo, Cameroon

1964 and 1971 Research stays in Northern Cameroon
Paul Hinderling

DEEPENING RESEARCH: RE-STUDIES AND SPECIFIC TOPICS

In 1962, after twelve years at the Museum of Ethnology, Hinderling decided to leave Basel and take up a teaching position at Saarland University under the psychologist Ernst E. Boesch, the founder of the Socio-Psychological Research Centre for Development Planning. In the context of his academic studies and on behalf of the German Ministry of Development he travelled to the Mafa in Northern Cameroon a second time in 1964 where he conducted research on local nutrition, together with Hermann and Ingrid Schönmeier. He returned to the Mandara Mountains for a brief visit in 1971. In 1984, he published two volumes containing the results of his ethnographic fieldwork in Northern Cameroon (1953, 1964, and 1971) on social and religious structures of the Mafa. From these research expeditions the museum holds 217 objects – the other part of the collection he sold to the Völkerkundemuseum Hamburg. They reflect his main interests, the anthropology of religion and, later, medical anthropology.

THE MUSEUM IN CHANGE: NEW NAMES AND CONCEPTS

Gaby Fierz

THE FOUNDATION OF THE ETHNOGRAPHIC COMMISSION 1893

After Paul and Fritz Sarasin had returned from their expeditions to Sri Lanka (Ceylon), 1883–86 and 1890, and Sulawesi (Celebes), 1893–96, attempts were made to establish an independent commission for the ethnographic section of the Basel museum, hitherto merely a department of the Historical-Antiquarian Collection. One of the founding members was the Basel physician Leopold Rüttimeyer, a friend of Paul and Fritz Sarasin. Rüttimeyer acted as the commission's vice-chairman, from the day of its foundation in 1893 to his death in 1932; he ranks among the most influential historical figures of today's Museum der Kulturen (see Kollreuter and Schürch, 2011:77–91). He appointed the anatomist Julius Kollmann to the Commission as chairman. During the three years of his pres-

changed on the personnel side. Fritz Sarasin died in 1942 and Felix Speiser-Merian became chairman of the Museum Commission.

When Felix Speiser died in 1949, the curator Alfred Bühler was appointed first director of the museum (its full name then was: Museum of Ethnology and Swiss Museum of European Folklife Basel). This also had structural ramifications in the sense that the Museum Commission now no longer exercised operative functions except in the field of acquisitions.

Alfred Bühler also made changes to the museum's exhibition practice. At the beginning of the 1950s, the Museum of Ethnology held a total of 140,000 objects, all of which were on show in the permanent exhibition. Bühler realized that this practice was no longer feasible. So he developed a new concept in which special exhibitions played a prominent role. The idea was not completely new – the Museum

IN 1927 THE GOVERNMENT OF CANTON BASEL-STADT FOR THE FIRST TIME AWARDED A SPECIAL GRANT INTENDED FOR CARRYING OUT RESEARCH AND ASSEMBLING ETHNOGRAPHIC COLLECTIONS IN THE FIELD.

idency he pushed ahead with the professionalization of the museum and the work on the collections. For one thing, he introduced systematic cataloguing to the collections modelled on the system developed by the Berlin Ethnological Museum, one of the leading houses at the time. The collection, which then was still quite small (approximately 2,500 objects), was arranged according to geographic provenance and divided into five regional categories: Europe, Asia, Africa, America, Australia and Oceania. In addition, there were three sections titled photographs, doublets, and 'incerta'.

THE BASEL MUSEUM OF ETHNOLOGY

When the Sarasins returned from Ceylon in 1896, their friend Leopold Rüttimeyer assigned them jobs at the museum, in leading positions. Fritz became chairman of the Ethnographic Commission, Paul a plain member. In 1904 the European Department was established and the section European Folklife became part of the ethnographic collection. With the completion of the new museum building, funded largely by private donors, the Ethnographic Collection became renamed: it was now called the Basel Museum of Ethnology.

GOVERNMENT RESEARCH GRANTS

Just as Paul and Fritz Sarasin had done before him, Felix Speiser-Merian funded his expedition to Vanuatu (New Hebrides) in 1910–1912 by own means. Under its chairman, Fritz Sarasin, the Museum Commission was finally able to convince Fritz Hauser, member of the city's governing council, what significance research and collecting in Melanesia and Indonesia had for the city of Basel, so that in 1927 the government of Canton Basel-Stadt for the first time awarded a special grant intended for carrying out research and assembling ethnographic collections in the field. In the years to come, four expeditions were financed by means of this special research grant: Eugen Paravicini, the museum's first salaried curator, travelled to the Eastern Solomon Islands in 1928, followed by Felix Speiser and Heini Hediger in 1929–1930 to the Western Solomon Islands, New Britain, and New Guinea. The two other grants went to the young anthropologist Alfred Bühler for his travels to New Ireland and Manus (Papua New Guinea) in 1931 and to Eastern Indonesia in 1935.

STRUCTURAL CHANGES: ALFRED BÜHLER TAKES OVER

The economic crisis of the 1930s and the Second World War left their mark on the museum and its research activities. Things also

of Industrial Arts, where the Museum of Ethnology occasionally exhibited parts of its collection, already featured special shows – but now Bühler planned to put on special exhibitions at the museum itself for the purpose of displaying, at least temporally, parts of the ever-growing museum holdings. The first special exhibition, titled 'The Island of Sumba in Indonesia', opened on 27 September 1952 and showed the collection Bühler had assembled there in 1949. The intention was to portray the island in its totality, according to Bühler, for the purpose of 'developing appreciation for the way of life and the economic and technical achievements of a primitive tribe'. In 1953 the Swiss Museum of European Folklife moved into their new premises at Augustinergasse 6–8, in a building designed by Paul Artaria.

THE MUSEUM DER KULTUREN AS A PLACE OF ENCOUNTER

Owing to the many research and collecting expeditions from the 1950s through the 1970s the museum now holds more than 300,000 objects. Bühler's concept of having special shows in addition to a permanent exhibition continued to be effective for many years. However, from the late 1970s onwards, the museum began developing new models of mediation, transforming the house into a venue of cultural exchange. The festival Musik der Welt in Basel brought closer to a large audience the ethnomusicological work at the museum that had been going on for years in collaboration with the Institute of Musicology of the University of Basel and the Music Academy Basel, creating an innovative forum for world music. Parallel to the development in the field of world music and following a new understanding of the museum as a place of 'active cultural dialogue' the museum opened the doors to premises which the public as yet had had no access to, staging a variety of new events comprising, next to concerts, workshops and food festivals within the museum grounds. Conversely, the museum also 'opened up' by utilizing the various adjacent courtyards and even the Minster Square itself for events such as Musik der Welt in Basel and Markt der Kulturen.

By having the new entrance to the museum directly on the Minster Square and making the formerly closed-off courtyards in the museum complex accessible to the general public, the museum has definitely become an open, a more public, cultural space. In the twenty-first century the ethnographic museum is facing new challenges, reflecting on its own history, and looking for new ways of dealing with 'others' and alterity.



The old South-East Asian gallery with the Vedda couple, 1930
 Photo: MKB (F) X 49



The Museum der Kulturen Basel after extension and renovation, 2011
 Photo: © Museum der Kulturen Basel; Photographer Derek Li Wan Po

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IMPRINT

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Research work
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English Translation
Nigel Stephenson

French Translation
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Design
Tatin Design Studio Basel

Photographs
Photo archive Museum der Kulturen Basel
Derek Li Wan Po, Museum der Kulturen Basel
René Gardi, © Bernhard Gardi, Basel

Copyediting
Schwabe AG

This newspaper was published for the exhibition ‘Expeditions. The World in a Suitcase’ at the Museum der Kulturen, as from 29 June 2012

For further information on the exhibition, events, and offers for schools see www.mkb.ch

Spirit vessels, vray, Cameroon, III 12513 - III 12520
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Open Tue – Sun 10.00 a.m. – 5.00 p.m.
First Wednesday of each month
10.00 a.m. – 8.00 p.m.