

## 1. BEITRÄGE

### **Ethnography from Vienna in World War I Prisoner-of-War Camps:**

**premises, implications, and consequences for socio-cultural  
anthropology in German**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

This analysis investigates the kind of ethnography pursued by Austro-Hungarian and German anthropologists during World War I among prisoners of war. In contrast to ethnography as dialogical fieldwork with participant observation *in-situ* at its core, the ethnography carried out in the camps was focused on staged performances that were carried out *ex-situ* upon demand for the researchers' machines of documentation. This methodological format built on peace-time experiences in various settings overseas, but was now central to large-scale war-time enterprises in domestic military contexts. At the same time, this observational procedure of standardized data procurement was tailored for being combined with simultaneous measurement procedures. In this combination, *ex-situ performances* staged represented the last phase of an era when the measurements of anthropology had to be tied to the observations of ethnography within one and the same academic discipline, offering its services in large-scale projects to the military authorities of the time. To an extent, the results and consequences were re-activated for different goals and contexts under the Nazi regime.

Diese Analyse untersucht die Art von Ethnographie, welche österreichisch-ungarische und deutsche Anthropologen im Ersten Weltkrieg unter Kriegsgefangenen durchführten. Im Unterschied zu Ethnographie als dialogischer Feldforschung mit teilnehmender Beobachtung *in situ* als Kernstück war die Ethnographie in den Gefangenenlagern ausgerichtet auf die Aufführung von Darbietungen auf Bestellung, *ex situ* für die Dokumentationsmaschinerien

der Forscher. Dieses methodologische Format baute auf den diversen Übersee-Erfahrungen zu Friedenszeiten auf, wurde nun aber zentral für die breit angelegten Kriegserhebungen daheim. Gleichzeitig war dieses auf Beobachtung ausgerichtete Verfahren der Datenbeschaffung so gestaltet, dass es mit Vermessungsverfahren kombinierbar blieb. In dieser Verbindung repräsentierten die Ex-situ-Darbietungen auf Bestellung die letzte Phase einer Ära, in der die Vermessungen der Anthropologie und die Beobachtungen der Ethnographie innerhalb ein und desselben wissenschaftlichen Fachs miteinander verknüpft werden mussten. Dieses bot seine Dienste in breitem Maßstab den Militärs der Zeit an. In einem bestimmten Ausmaß wurden die Ergebnisse und Folgewirkungen später für die unterschiedlichen Kontexte und Zwecke der NS-Herrschaft neu aktiviert.

#### KEYWORDS

Ethnography, anthropology, fieldwork, POW camps, contextualization, comparative analysis

Ethnographie, Anthropologie, Feldforschung, Kriegsgefangenenlager, Kontextualisierung, vergleichende Analyse

What kind of ethnography was carried out by anthropologists and ethnographers among prisoners of war during World War I (WWI)? This question—along with the centennial commemoration of the end of WWI and a related 2018 publication of edited music and song documents from the time of the conflict—stimulated and provides the context for the present chapter. That new publication (Lechleitner, Liebl & Remmer 2018) represents one important step—together with several others (e.g., Lange 2013)—within the overall processes of assessing elements of ethnographic and anthropological investigations carried out by German and Austro-Hungarian researchers during WWI in camps where prisoners of war (POWs) were kept interned under military administration. The Austrian WWI POW camp investigations took place primarily under the institutional and financial umbrella of the Imperial Academy of Sciences. As today's Austrian Academy of Sciences, the direct successor to the Imperial Academy of Sciences in Vienna, continues to document and edit these WWI materials, they provide a good case study for observing ethical standards in the humanities and social sciences—and for assuming historical responsibility. Documenting, editing, and reflecting critically upon the

materials are essential preconditions for wider research processes that will contribute to the history of academic research in general, and in particular to the history of anthropology in German-speaking countries. The successive critical analysis of major bodies of WWI documentation opens up, or at least increasingly facilitates, improved research practices along three major dimensions that I will discuss here.

First, these edited source materials offer better opportunities for “source-immanent” analyses and discussions. This concerns the actual musical, regional, linguistic or poetic contents, characteristics and respective background of these documents. Interdisciplinary cooperation—primarily between philologists, musicologists, linguists, and socio-cultural anthropologists, and in line with their respective research questions—will enrich and complicate regional cultural histories derived from these source-immanent interpretations.

Second, these materials and their emerging source-immanent interpretations also facilitate an improved “contextualization of sources”. This meets not only the criteria of military history, but also criteria specific to the history of academia and the sciences. In turn, this improved contextualization may contribute to further differentiation of insights in the relevant subfields.

Third, initial advances in these two realms of source-immanent analyses, as much as in the contextualization of these sources, open up opportunities for comparative analysis in both realms: source-immanent insights by comparison to others addressing the same topic (genre, language, region); and other source contexts of comparable dimensions, such as military camp research elsewhere in the same or at other times.

The goal of the present text is primarily to elaborate certain aspects of the second and third dimensions outlined above. Based on some of my previous contributions in this area, I seek here to understand what kind of “ethnography”—as a set of methods—was actually being pursued by the Academy’s researchers in WWI POW camps. This exploration will be undertaken by focusing on the POW camp investigations’ premises, their practical implications, and the short- and medium-term consequences for anthropology in German after WWI.

## PREMISES

Three sets of premises—institutional, biographical, and financial—can be identified as fundamental for understanding the conceptual and practical dynamics of the Vienna Imperial Academy’s engagement in POW camp research during WWI. In an *institutional* sense, the plan to conduct these inquiries was

adopted and approved by the Academy to be carried out by key representatives of the field then known as “anthropology and ethnography”. This plan came about in response to energetic requests and lobbying efforts by Rudolf Pöch, the University of Vienna’s leading professor (then still an *extra-Ordinarius*) in this field. The Academy thereby entrusted the task to the primary representative of a field that had been institutionalized as anthropology and ethnography since the 1870s at the Natural History Museum (NHM), and since 1912 at Vienna University. The discipline would remain thus defined until the mid-1920s. “Anthropology and ethnography” of that era in Vienna comprised what are the current subfields of biological and socio-cultural anthropology of both non-European and European parts of the world. Research that today is accommodated by three different departments at three different faculties at the University of Vienna—i.e., natural sciences, social sciences, and historical studies—was exercised then, throughout half a century, as a unified academic discipline. It was therefore employed as one academic endeavour for the POW camp research. Taking “measurements” of human body parts in order to elaborate biological typologies and “observing” socio-cultural patterns of behaviour among human groups were seen as the two crucial methodological approaches of the endeavour. *Measuring* was the physical anthropological side and *observing* was the ethnographic side of one and the same area of academic expertise (Gingrich 2016).

In terms of his academic *biography*, Rudolf Pöch had won a longstanding rivalry against the ethnographers when he took over the first professorship at the University of Vienna shortly before the war. The scholars identified as ethnographers were primarily philologists trained in Semitic and Indo-German studies; others were Catholic theologians. For the most part, they had promoted one or several chairs exclusively for ethnography. Pöch was the candidate of scholars in geography and medicine who were lobbying for an “integrated” professorship and chair, one that would encompass both biological anthropology and ethnography—as it had been pursued at the Natural History Museum in Vienna for several decades. Both Pöch and his life-long mentor, Felix von Luschan at the Berlin Museum, had obtained their primary training and qualifications from the school of medical sciences in Vienna. They had some interest in the ethnographic side of their professorships, but they had carried out very limited amounts of ethnographic fieldwork themselves. Luschan had pursued that work primarily as a side project to his biological and archaeological expeditions in the Middle East (Six-Hohenbalken 2009). Pöch’s reputation as an ethnographer was somewhat better, due to his spectacular visual and sound documentations (1907–1909) in southern Africa, which had not, however,

included any participant observation (Lechleitner 2018). Still, neither man was well-versed in any field language, and their approach to field work was strongly influenced by earlier Austro-Hungarian and German records of academic expeditions, as well as by the British Torres Straits expedition. On several occasions, Pöch referred to the influence of William Halse Rivers upon his own work. Franz Boas's fieldwork record was well known to Luschan and Pöch by 1910, but was not absorbed by them as a methodological guideline. When they proposed the POW camp inquiries—and once they obtained permission for them—both Pöch and Luschan brought with them an academic methodological predisposition that was heavily biased in favour of biological anthropology and of grand expedition-like forms of ethnographic inquiry (Lange & Gingrich 2014).

The explicit *financial* rationale in the Academy's support for Pöch was simple, and is intriguing primarily because of the key academic actors involved. Before the war began, ethnographic and anthropological inquiries in remote regions of the Austro-Hungarian Empire or overseas had been time consuming, expensive, and full of risk for researchers' lives and health. By the time the war entered its second year, the thousands of POWs in various military camps seemed to represent that "extraordinary research opportunity" that Pöch and Luschan referred to in their official proposals. To them, this appeared to be a unique chance for doing "measurement" and "observation" not *in-situ*, elsewhere in the world, but *ex-situ*, nearby—in far less risky contexts than earlier, and under faster and much cheaper conditions. To that explicit rationale an implicit factor was added: without a major project having some basic official support, most of Pöch's (and Luschan's) students would most likely be recruited for their countries' armies. Protecting one's school's continuity seems to have been part of a hidden agenda (Gingrich 2012).

## IMPLICATIONS

Providing "war-relevant" tasks and duties for many of their own students as well as for other young scholars in numbers that looked good in academia, to the military authorities and to the public necessitated a large-scale project that would extend across several years and various locations.

Before the war, large-scale projects had their main organizational predecessor in the grand expeditions mounted during the decades before and after the turn of the century. Several German and Austro-Hungarian expeditions had included experts from the humanities (e.g., linguists), and several of them were carried out in cooperation, either explicit or implicit, with the navy or

other military units and offices. Some of Pöch's own earlier career highlights had built on such expeditions, especially his campaigns in New Guinea and southern Africa. To an extent, and in certain mimetic ways, the POW camp investigations can therefore be understood as the activation and readaptation of the model of large-scale, colonial overseas expeditions pursued in peacetime, now adjusted to the domestic contexts of war.

Overseas expeditions were in many ways a crucial trademark of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century research endeavours by the imperial centres. As one of the typical organizational forms of colonialist and orientalist academic curiosity, their triumphant public performance at home corresponded to the unilateral ways of imposing academic encounters upon local inhabitants in remote regions. In the context of expeditions, such encounters with locals tended to be abrupt and short-lived (i.e., with little time for preliminaries and explorations), hierarchical (i.e., researchers as representatives of the imperial centre introduced by local authorities to the resident population), and massively invasive (i.e., with a dozen or more researchers exhausting local hospitality) (Gingrich 2007). In their different war-time contexts, the POW camp investigations shared all three of these characteristic features. Certainly they were similarly abrupt and short-lived, hierarchical and impersonal, and massively invasive. Other peacetime experiences of investigations under camp-like conditions had also been available, and these too influenced the organizational format of the POW investigations of WWI. They included short academic encounters during the spectacular, zoo-like "Völkerschauen" (peoples' fairs) before the war (Schwarz 2001), hygienic control procedures imposed upon Bosnian pilgrims before departure for Mecca, and the like (Heuberger 2018). All of these large-scale, colonial, peacetime formats provided similar contexts of empirical inquiry: while they opened up a very limited and predefined space for "observation," they did not allow for any true "ethnographic fieldwork" in the sense of the type of participant observation that had already emerged in academia at the time.

Ethnography as a set of methods for field inquiry had, in fact, had significant local pioneers in the Habsburg realm even before Bronisław Malinowski set off for Melanesia in 1914, ranging from Eduard Glaser's four famous field trips to Ottoman Yemen (1882–1894) (Dostal 1990), via Friedrich Salomo(n) Krauss's ethnomusicology work in Bosnia (1884/85) (Burt 1990), to Wilhelm and Marie Hein's 1901/02 sojourn in the British-controlled zones of southern Yemen (Sturm 2007; Gingrich 2016). These had been small-scale projects in terms of staff and finances, but the researchers spent much more time being introduced to local residents and were devoted to steady improvement of their

expertise in local languages. These ethnographic fieldwork projects exhibited an inherently dialogical orientation, and they were known and appreciated for their valid and successful “observational” format in Habsburg academic circles around 1910. In the case of the POW camp investigations, however, ethnographic fieldwork in the proto-Malinowskian sense was excluded from the methodological portfolio for several reasons. One reason was that Pöch’s rivals in philology and theology, those who had lost against him in the quest for the new professorship for anthropology and ethnography, had elaborated serious ethnographic fieldwork skills, but Pöch himself had neither the experience nor the language skills to practise or supervise the same kind of ethnographic fieldwork those rivals were advancing. But aside from this, the long-term and dialogical features of the (proto-Malinowskian) type of ethnographic fieldwork would not have been compatible with the kind of quick and invasive research that Pöch had in mind; that is, a very narrow definition of “ethnography” conducted as a side-activity to the all-important “measurement” he intended to conduct in the POW camps.

Indeed, the proto-Malinowskian ethnographic fieldwork standards that had emerged in the Habsburg domain before 1914 could be carried out without physical anthropology; they did not in any way require a simultaneous pursuit of expertise in “measurement”. What Pöch needed was the opposite: some type of “ethnography” that was nominally observational but could be squeezed into the rapid sequences of his primary biological measurement activities as a subordinate and auxiliary activity.

The “ethnography” advocated by Pöch was therefore not proto-Malinowskian; it was not dialogical; and it did not focus on participant observation in the legacy of Glaser, Krauss, or the Heins. Following his earlier work in mechanical documentation in southern Africa, using the advanced technologies of his time, by 1914 Pöch had acquired for himself the reputation of a pioneer in ethnographic documentary recordings by means of films, photographs, and phonogram. Pöch’s “ethnography” was in fact an “observation” of staged performances of dancing, singing, or reciting. Pöch’s vision of “ethnography in POW camps” was similar, and did not and could not include a field of local dialogical interactions and participant observation. It focused instead on the technical documentation of staged *ex-situ* performances by (adult male) prisoners. Pöch’s view of these modern documentation technologies—with the machine inserted at a safe distance between the researcher and his interlocutor—was that the machine itself ensured “objective” data collection and reduced the researcher’s risks of subjective failure, including any failure or inadequacy in mastering local language skills (Lange 2013).

Basically, Pöch and Luschan knew in advance that they would be able to speak very few (if any) of the languages they would encounter among the camp inmates. They were keen not to embarrass themselves in front of members of the academy, the media, or in the eyes of the military authorities on whom their entire project depended. They therefore mostly avoided documenting themselves the “staged-performance” ethnography they envisioned as part of their POW camp inquiries. Instead, they out-sourced the ethnographic documentation of most of these performances to others, most importantly to ethnomusicologist Robert Lach, and kept the overall numbers and sizes of the “ethnographic” visual and sound documentations to a minimum (Stangl 2000). Meanwhile, they and most of their students focused on what they could do much better and faster (and which looked good to the military authorities): measuring the bodies of POWs and thereby measuring the physical potential of the enemy’s armies.

#### **SHORT-TERM CONSEQUENCES FOR SOCIO-CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY IN GERMAN**

Pöch’s measurements of the enemy armies’ physical properties appear to have effected no practical results in any military sense of the term, although some internal reports to the respective Austro-Hungarian authorities and their follow-up have yet to be scrutinized in that regard. In fact, current research seems to indicate that other anthropological and ethnographic activities sponsored by Vienna’s Imperial Academy of Sciences during WWI were of much greater military relevance than the POW camp investigations. This may be said, for instance, of the Imperial Austro-Hungarian ethnographic expedition to Albania (led by Michael Haberlandt) and its relevance for military logistics (Marchetti 2013), or of Alois Musil’s North Arabian explorations and their crucial significance for the Imperial Army’s espionage in the region (Bauer 1989).

But a quasi-military side effect of the POW camp investigations did in fact result from the researchers’ implicit agenda. By integrating large numbers of advanced students and young doctoral graduates, the POW camp investigations by Austrian (and to an extent by Hungarian and German) “anthropologists *cum* ethnographers” managed to keep large parts of the next generation of young scholars out of military service during the Great War. The POW camp inquiries therefore functioned as a huge graduate and postgraduate training programme before the interwar and pre-WWII periods: those young scholars



who were twenty or twenty-five years of age in 1918 were forty or forty-five in 1938.

The “anthropology and ethnography” in which this scholarly generation of 1918 survivors had been trained through their work in POW camps displayed a heavy preference for biological anthropology, with an increasing marginalization of an “ethnography” that focused on the technical documentation of staged *ex-situ* performances and had virtually nothing to do with fieldwork. The fact that most of these ethnographic documentations were out-sourced indicates that the POW camp investigations promoted an increasingly hierarchical division between biological anthropology and ethnography and accelerated the practical separation of the two disciplines. By 1918, then, the institutionalized disciplinary unity between anthropology and ethnography had reached its final stage in Austria’s academic institutions: biological anthropology had gained unprecedented hegemony, and the ethnographers were preparing to break away into two different disciplinary directions—those of *Völkerkunde* and *Volkskunde*, or general socio-cultural anthropology and the anthropology of Europe.

## MEDIUM-TERM CONSEQUENCES

These main short-term consequences also shed some light on resulting medium-term developments for the relevant academic fields in German. For Austrian and for certain parts of German academia, three such medium-term results stand out: first, the institutional differentiation of “anthropology and ethnography” into three different successor disciplines during the 1920s; second, certain continuities between the POW camp investigations under Pösch and Luschan in WWI and core elements of “ethnography” in various camps administered by the Nazis in WWII. As a third factor, the broken sequences of various formats of ethnographic methodological practices in German will be outlined in the final section.

As for the differentiation of “anthropology and ethnography” into three institutionalized successor disciplines, that development set in very rapidly—which, in hindsight, is an indicator of how far that process had already advanced by 1918. After Pösch’s early death in 1921, it took only one succeeding professor’s term in office until, by 1927, the University of Vienna introduced the official separation into two distinct institutes, *Völkerkunde* and (physical) anthropology. At about the same time, a largely separate Museum for *Völkerkunde* was also established out of the Natural History Museum (NHM).

That successful separation of *Völkerkunde* from biological anthropology at both institutional levels, i.e. museum as well as university, was to a considerable extent the result of intense lobbying efforts by the Catholic missionary priests *cum* ethnographers of the SVD order under Wilhelm Schmidt's leadership. Skeptical about the rising significance of social Darwinism in biological anthropology, they sought to carve out an institutional academic realm of their own in a separate academic *Völkerkunde*. This separate emergence of socio-cultural anthropology was also in line with parallel developments elsewhere in Europe (Gingrich 2010).

The story went somewhat differently with *Volkskunde* (anthropology of Europe). Its private museum in Vienna had been established long before the war. Yet it never obtained the status of a public museum, largely because the Imperial Habsburg administration had been reluctant to promote any academic direction in ethnography with such a clear national (and pan-Germanic) priority. After the demise of Habsburg rule, a first university professorship for *Volkskunde* was created at Graz University in 1930. Meanwhile, however, a post-imperial skepticism about establishing *Volkskunde* as a separate field continued to prevail at the University of Vienna. There, it took until the Nazi takeover of 1938 that a new University institute for "Germanic" *Volkskunde* was established.

The emergence of three institutionalized successor disciplines from the 1920s onward therefore had a certain empirical and technical foundation in underlying processes of increasing empirical specialization and academic division of labour. At the same time, however, it was also driven by conflicting ideological and theoretical orientations. *Völkerkunde* in Vienna until 1938 would largely be dominated by a post-Habsburg theological and missionary orientation, while biological anthropology was increasingly dominated by social Darwinist paradigms of primarily secular and racist orientations. Ideologically, *Volkskunde* was at first situated between these two, but increasingly sided with those aspirations represented by biological anthropologists. In short, between 1918 and 1938, the main political orientations in Vienna's academia would be fairly clear and simple: biological anthropology increasingly became a domain for secular, (social Darwinist) racist, pan-Germanic and pro-Nazi tendencies. By contrast, *Völkerkunde* in Vienna was largely shaped by transnational, post-Habsburg missionary interests that had some roots in Austrian patriotism.

A second point in this investigation about medium-term consequences relates to certain elements of continuity, i.e. between the POW camp investigations in WWI by experts from "anthropology and ethnography" and certain

forms of “ethnography” in camps under Nazi administration before and during WWII.<sup>1</sup>

One important element of continuity built upon the academic legitimacy and reputation that had been obtained for those POW camp investigations at the end of WWI and thereafter, including the subsequent careers of the “generation of 1918” until 1938. As a consequence, the basic idea of “prison camp investigations” in contexts of war continued to be seen as a serious and respectable professional academic agenda in Vienna and elsewhere in the German-speaking countries—despite, or maybe even because of, their inherently hierarchical and de-humanizing characteristics. Results of the investigations in POW camps were analysed, interpreted under increasingly racist perspectives, and prominently published until right before the outbreak of WWII. This contributed to a certain amount of seemingly legitimate support among established academic professionals in physical anthropology and *Völkerkunde* after the Nazi takeover in Germany (1933) and Austria (1938) for those very different forms of “camp investigations” launched by the Nazis in ghettos, deportation camps, POW camps and concentration camps.

Such elements of continued legitimacy and of active support by leading academics for “prison camp investigations” after 1933 and 1938 combined, secondly, with elements of methodological continuity. Cinematographic documentation (partly in colour) by means of the relevant technologies available in the late 1930s were employed, for instance, as part of Eva Justin’s doctoral *Völkerkunde* project among Roma and Sinti children and juveniles in the respective deportation camps of Ravensbrück and elsewhere (Gingrich 2005). Near Vienna, the NHM “investigations” (by biological anthropologists with some “*Völkerkunde*” experts) in POW camps also used colour film documentation as an additional part of their activities in 1940–42. While the methodological legacies of Pösch’s and Luschan’s cinematographic research from WWI only played an implicit role in Justin’s and the NHM’s activities in WWII, methodological continuity was more explicit in other realms. In Cracow, the Vienna *Völkerkunde* PhD graduate and committed Nazi researcher Adolf Plügel would become crucial in German preparations for establishing the Cracow Jewish ghetto as a deportation camp. For his exploratory investigations among the

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1 This entire point is summarizing certain results of a book to be published in 2019 (Gingrich & Rohrbacher forthcoming 2019). If not indicated otherwise, all the subsequent statements are based on this volume and the author’s chapters in it.

Polish population south of Cracow, Plügel in 1942 used exactly the same type of questionnaire that Pöch had developed for his POW camp endeavours in WWI—as a standardized tool of data procurement that always featured “race” as a crucial category to be filled in by the researcher (Trebunia-Staszal & Maj 2011). Finally, institutional and methodological continuity were also conspicuous in phonographic activities carried out as of 1943 in the premises of, and with organizational and technical support by, the Vienna Academy of Sciences’ Phonogrammarchiv. These were again “staged” *ex-situ* performances, yet this time not by POW camp inmates, but by Central Asian and Caucasian defectors to the Nazis from those camps. The phonogram recordings in question were initiated by young researchers under the supervision of Viktor Christian, an Oriental and Semitic studies expert with ethnographic training. As a young man returning from service in WWI, Viktor Christian had been mentored by Rudolf Pöch.

It is obvious that there indeed were several clear factors of continuity between “camp investigations” in the respective WWI and WWII academic contexts of Vienna and Berlin. They related to elements of scholarly legitimacy, to the overlap in the academic staff involved, as well as to implicit and explicit methodological legacies. This leads to the conclusion that, in several ways, in a medium-term perspective the WWI POW camp investigations helped to prepare the grounds for the very different forms of “prison camp investigations” under the Nazis. Such a conclusion, it has to be emphasized, does not imply any teleological or causal reasoning. The Habsburg Empire and the Nazi regime were two entirely different polities. The POW camps of WWI definitely never served as tools and laboratories for mass death and mass murder. The continuities in “camp investigations” of WWI and WWII, as addressed here in the form of academic legitimacy, the overlap of staff and methodological tools, are therefore of a cumulative, but not of a causal type. No unavoidable necessity led from 1918 to 1933/38/39, neither in German and Austrian societies at large, nor in the much more specific academic fields of biological and socio-cultural anthropology in Berlin and Vienna. Things still might have taken a different direction in 1918. Yet once the masters of tyranny and persecution took over in 1933 and 1938, those tools and experiences available since 1918 were re-activated and adjusted for Nazi purposes of camp investigations.

## MEDIUM-TERM DISCONTINUITIES OF ETHNOGRAPHIC PRACTICE

Within these wider transformations of institutional, ideological and political contexts, the broken sequences of various formats of ethnographic methodological practices deserve some special attention here, at least in their Vienna dimensions, as a final theme of medium-term insights in this analysis. Four such sequences of main sets of ethnographic practice can be identified.

Before WWI, ethnographic fieldwork had been elaborated along proto-Malinowskian trajectories (between the 1880s and 1905) primarily through the efforts of Glaser, Krauss and the Heins. During that first sequence ethnographic fieldwork co-existed, sometimes intersecting and often competing, with ethnographic tours for the acquisition of museum objects as a second major ethnographic format, such as those carried out by Heger (Plankensteiner 2002) or Leder (Lang 2013) from Vienna, or by Bastian from Berlin (Koepping 1984). In turn, large- (and medium-) scale expeditions represented a competing third format, represented in Vienna primarily by Pöch, increasingly relying on modern documentation technologies and the observation of short, staged indigenous performances.

During WWI, as the second sequence under consideration here, ethnographic fieldwork and ethnographic tours for acquiring museum objects became almost impossible and basically fell into insignificance. By contrast, the previous overseas expedition format was re-designed for domestic and wartime contexts as the large-scale POW camp investigations under Pöch and Luschan, including the broad usage of questionnaires as well as audio-visual documentation techniques. As a pre-existing version of “ethnography” without fieldwork, these staged forms of ethnographic observation also gained priority because they minimized the role of researchers’ language skills. Even more importantly, only this particular format of “ethnography” was compatible with a priority for large-scale measurement activities in physical anthropology.

During the post-WWI decade, as the third sequence under scrutiny here, the impoverished First Republic of Austria could not provide any means for large-scale expeditions. Biological anthropologists in Vienna to some extent focused on the incipient data analysis of WWI POW camp investigation results, while pursuing the new analytical priorities of Pöch’s previous assistant (Weninger) and chair successor (Reche) through small-scale investigation series that increasingly focused on topics of race and hereditary transmission. Meanwhile, the rising school of SVD theologians *cum* ethnographers re-invented their own brand of ethnographic fieldwork. It combined substantial elements from the local proto-Malinowskian sequence (i.e. from around the turn of the century)

with an older legacy from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when “armchair anthropologists” at home had corresponded with missionaries and traders in remote and oversea areas. In this third sequence, therefore, Wilhelm Schmidt was the supreme armchair anthropologist, who either sent his missionary disciples as trained ethnographers (Koppers, Schebesta) into the field (Brandewie 1990), or who helped to advance the training of missionaries in the field as ethnographers (e.g., Worms in Australia) (Gingrich 2017). Contrary to the Viennese proto-Malinowskian fieldwork legacy from before the Great War, therefore, Schmidt’s re-invention of ethnographic fieldwork implied a pre-defined ideological (i.e. theological) agenda in the field, supervised from afar through the re-activated role of an armchair anthropologist at home. Elsewhere in the German-speaking countries, other representatives of *Völkerkunde* meanwhile began to follow more closely the model type of ethnographic fieldwork advocated by Malinowski, now in Britain.

Against the background of these three broken sequences of ethnography in Vienna before, during and after WWI, the POW camp investigations in retrospect appear as a last and in that regard largely unsuccessful attempt at implementing biological measurements together with staged ethnographic observations within one and the same disciplinary context and research team. The decisions to outsource the observational component parts of ethnographic documentation in the POW camp investigations not only indicated that the unified discipline of “anthropology and ethnography” was reaching the limits of its institutionalized existence. Moreover, this also made the narrow limits of “ethnography as observing staged *ex-situ* performances” as a specific format of observation even more visible. After 1918, this particular brand of ethnography had no immediate successor recorded in Vienna or elsewhere in the German-speaking countries until the Nazis came to power in 1933 in Berlin.

In certain ways, a perverted form of Nazi era “ethnography” in camps (i.e. POW camps, as well as camps for deportation and mass murder) represented an important element within a fourth sequence of “academic ethnography”, certainly at its lowest possible level by any moral, ethical and political standard. Before the outbreak of WWII, Nazi “camp ethnography” was still of minor significance, while some ethnographic fieldwork and a few expeditions took place (e.g. Karl Schäfer’s Tibet expedition from 1938/39 with an element of collecting ethnographic museum objects in it) (Meier-Hüsing 2017). Once the war had begun, however, collecting museum objects was transformed into official looting and robbing, while ethnography was perverted into a rising significance of camp investigations. The details of such “camp ethnography” under the Nazis are discussed elsewhere, but in retrospect certain parallels

to the WWI POW camp investigations help to elucidate a number of additional aspects in the WWI camp enterprises with regard to the observational dimensions in their methodology. Those aspects demonstrate that the specific combination of technically documented, staged *ex-situ* performances with large-scale inquiries represented a particular set of ethnographic tools that had nothing to do with participant observation. Instead, this set of ethnographic tools positioned the researcher(s) at a maximum, hierarchical distance to the persons under research while reducing dialogues between them to a minimum. At the same time, this procedure obliged both researcher and subject to observe a standardized choreography of fast data delivery by means of modern documentation machinery. This was a specific ethnographic format to be employed under military conditions among imprisoned camp inmates—hierarchical, standardized, largely anonymous, and therefore, in the worst sense of the term, radically modern.

## SUMMARY

As a small-scale format of observation and documentation, staged ethnographic performances had already been tried out long before WWI by Vienna-based ethnographers. To an extent, they built on 19th century traditions of documenting narrative and verbalized genres in German. Since the early 20th century, these staged ethnographic performances had been carried out within *in-situ* as well as *ex-situ* settings. Individually staged ethnographic performances had been part, for example, of the *in-situ* documentation of legends carried out by D.H. Müller during the Academy's Arabian expedition in 1898/99 (Sturm 2015), and during the *ex-situ* documentation by speakers of the Mehri language at the Academy's Phonogrammarchiv following the Heins' fieldwork sojourn of 1901/02 (Sturm 2007). When Pöch carried out his spectacular sound and film documentation with his !Kung informants in southern Africa in 1907–09, this merely continued an established legacy of small-scale *in-situ* and *ex-situ* staged performances with the most modern tools available at the time. In these small-scale formats, staged performances were thus known and accepted as specialized documentary and observational procedures that had emerged as a result of ethnographic fieldwork (e.g., after the Heins' South Arabian sojourn in 1901/02), but also as crucial accompanying elements in expeditions (e.g., during Müller's 1898/99 and Pöch's respective endeavours).

In terms of methodological history, the Austro-Hungarian and German POW camp investigations of WWI therefore re-invented, transformed and

combined two pre-existing sets of ethnographic operations into a new format. Individualized *in-situ* and *ex-situ* performances “on demand” from before WWI were transformed into larger sets of staged camp performances that, by necessity, could only be positioned in the *ex-situ* contexts of WWI. Simultaneously, the large-scale format of colonial expeditions was transformed in the large-scale format of camp inquiries with priority being given to biological anthropology, striving to integrate large numbers of those staged ethnographic performances into the overall sequence of documentation.

This WWI POW camp format of “ethnography” therefore had almost nothing to do with the proto-Malinowskian legacy of participant observation that had emerged out of Vienna before and after 1900. Instead, it represented a large-scale, hierarchical format of enforced, non-dialogical staged performances. This format was particularly well suited for the contexts of camp inmates under regimes of military authority.

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