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# Costume Imagery and the Visualisation of Humanity in Early Modern Europe

Katherine Bond

Addressed in a range of materials from travel sketches and ethnographic prints to lavishly illustrated costume books and albums, the subject of who wore what and where became an urgent priority in early modern Europe. The impulse to distinguish and classify populations by their dress launched a visual culture that sought to map human difference on a global scale. In an era of enhanced cross-cultural exchange and encounter, the typologies of dress formulated by costume imagery in the sixteenth century became a fundamental site for ethnographic enquiry and the evaluation of diverse populations, their qualities and clothing.

Visualising the many faces of humanity was no simple feat. Populations at the outer reaches of Europeans' line of vision posed a particular challenge. The manner in which news of 'new' peoples was acquired, perceived and transmitted was mediated through contemporary visual strategies that need to be unpacked in order to chart developing ethnographic visions. In line with this volume's initiative to underscore visual processes and decision-making, this chapter investigates how practitioners sourced and shaped ethnographic information according to contemporary material constraints, working practices, and audience expectations. The genesis and consequent recycling of a popular series of 'Indian' costume figures, originally composed by the southern German artist-traveller Christoph Weiditz (*c*. 1500–59), exemplify the tension that existed between perception and representation. The series commemorated a remarkable moment of cultural encounter between the artist and a visiting group of Nahua, people of the indigenous populations inhabiting pre-Columbian Mexico, that took place at the Spanish court of the Habsburg emperor Charles V (r. 1519–56) in 1529. Although the resulting images have been feted as highly naturalistic and objective, a critical reappraisal reveals that they offer a tailored view moderated by familiar motifs and accepted frameworks of knowledge that competed with eye-witness cognition. Recycled in later costume works, the Indian costume figures made inroads into the period's visual culture, where their iconicity was augmented. Their transition illuminates the course by which costume icons entered into and shaped the

'period eye' shared by authors and audiences for envisioning, visualizing and comprehending human difference.

The dispersal of knowledge about global dress customs through visual icons fed into, and energized, ideas about dress, appearance, cultural difference and national identity. The popularity of costume books, indicated by the production of at least twelve printed publications in western Europe between 1550 and 1600, exemplifies the period's confidence in dress as a signal of kinship and identity.[1] Publishers in Paris, Venice, Nuremberg and Antwerp embraced costume icons and motifs, filtering information about foreign clothing into typologies of national character.[2] Basque figures drawn from the costume books of Parisian François Desprez (1562) and Nuremberger Hans Weigel (1577), for example, demonstrate costume motifs' rhetorical capacity to augment ideas about foreign populations. Maintaining patriotic directives, these books added fuel to the contemporary notion that different peoples ought to conserve their own styles of dress. In this context, the motif of the naked man became a popular expression for the perilous condition of lacking a defined, national habit, and provided a symbolic counterpart to clothed costume figures.

This visual history charts the processes by which costume imagery established a framework for conceptualising humanity in sixteenth-century Europe. By analysing the strategies of those producing and collecting costume imagery, and the means by which icons and images evolved through transmission, this paper dissects the role of visual media and pictorial practices in the fashioning of global identity. Visually dynamic, the iconographies of dress that emerged moulded and defined ethnographic visions and formulated social meanings about clothing, culture and nationhood. It is in this capacity that we can reflect on how the visual, as this volume posits, was active in shaping, and not merely documenting, social values, collective identities and popular discourses.

## The Versatile Costume Figure

The sixteenth century witnessed a shift in visual conventions regarding the approach to human difference. Ethnography departed the scholar's study to incorporate the acquired knowledge of travellers and artists. The pictorial arts became an opportune medium for investigating reality 'in an age when news of the newfound world was arriving thick and fast' and when

[1] For a comprehensive list see Olian, 'Sixteenth-Century Costume Books', 20–1.
[2] An already sizeable body of scholarship about such works exists: Defert, 'Un genre ethnographique'; Wilson, *The World in Venice*; Jones, 'Habits, Holdings, Heterologies'; Vecellio, Jones & Rosenthal, *Clothing of the Renaissance World*; Jones, 'The Impossible Present'; Paulicelli, 'Mapping the World'; Rublack, *Dressing Up*; Bridgeman, 'The Origins of Dress History'; and Calvi, 'Cultures of Space'.

consequently first-person observation and eye-witness testimony was emphasised.[3] Visual culture found a new and important role documenting, cataloguing and classifying aspects of the world that were newly under scrutiny, whether the curious or commonplace, the familiar or the unfamiliar.

Among the singular methods that emerged in the sixteenth century to organize visual cognition of human difference was the representative costume figure.[4] Bronwen Wilson has interrogated the possible reasons for this, isolating the semiotic capacity of clothing, which met the demands of a growing European fascination with geographic classification. As Wilson explains, it was a period in which 'it was less the body than what was worn over the skin that was the focus of alterity', especially since 'physiognomy, as a signifier of race in its modern sense – as a sign of ethnic distinctiveness – was a concept not yet clearly articulated'.[5] Accordingly, dress habits, alongside social mores, religious customs and language, among other things, provided useful markers of ethnic identity and could be studied as part of 'the interpretive skills deployed to comprehend foreigners'.[6]

Emblems for socio-cultural types such as a 'Venetian nobleman' or a 'French widow', the costume figures that populated the margins of maps and lined the pages of costume books, travel accounts and friendship albums (*alba amicorum*) were distinct from those in later centuries' fashion plates insofar as they did not promote seasonal fashions but were instructive about characteristic, customary apparel. 'Costume' is used to describe this understanding of dress because, linguistically related to 'custom', the term implies clothing which is habitual and traditional.[7] In the preface to Jean-Jacques Boissard's costume book *Habitus Variarum Orbis Gentium* (1581), the Mechelen-based publisher Caspar Rutz disclosed his view that picturing (the diversity of) mankind in 'his own costume and habit' was a useful method for showing how regions and their inhabitants differed from one another, precisely because 'through clothing, mental dispositions and local customs can be represented and easily recognized'.[8] Costume *was* custom, in this line of thought, externalising a culture's internal character and qualities.

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[3] On the development of observational practices in the visual arts, refer to Smith, 'Art, Science, and Visual Culture', 89.
[4] Observed by Leitch, *Mapping Ethnography*, 2.
[5] Wilson, *The World in Venice*, 80.
[6] Ibid., 70, 80.
[7] As was brought to attention by Defert, 'Un genre ethnographique'.
[8] Caspar Rutz in Boissard, *Habitus Variarum*, 2r. Cited in and translated by Klein, 'Mapping of Africa', 37. '…mit seiner selbst Kleidung / vnnd dracht fürbilden … vnnd durch die Kleidung die gemütter / vnnd sitten / gemeinlich abgenommen warden / vnnd leichtlich zuerkennen ist.'

This principle guided ethnographic pursuits. A 'new spatial orientation towards bodies' incorporated costume figures into cartographic projects and travelogues as though these bodies might themselves be chartable terrain.[9] In her monograph examining Renaissance ethnography, Surekha Davies has underscored that early modern European readers took for granted that 'human variety was a function of place, a tenet that took on a visually persuasive form on illustrated maps'.[10] Georg Braun and Franz Hogenberg's atlas series *Civitates Orbis Terrarum* (Towns of the World), first published in 1572, populated its topographical cityscapes and maps with costume figures, while the maps of the cartographers John Speed and Pieter van den Keere regularly positioned costume figures within bordering frames or cartouches.

The idiosyncrasies of local clothing customs had long intrigued travellers. The vivid commentary of Burgundian chronicler Laurent Vital for example, in his account of the voyages of Charles V and Ferdinand I in the years 1517–8, vocalised his astonishment at the 'strange … quite pagan' headdresses of women in Asturias, Spain, and the dress and (un)dress of female villagers in Kinsale, Cork.[11] The first costume series in book form, François Desprez's *Recueil de la diversité des habits* (A Collection of the Various Styles of Dress), published in Paris in 1562, claimed to have relied on the 'designs' of Jean-François de La Rocque (Sieur de Roberval, c. 1500–60), a French corsair and colonizer of French Canada in the early 1540s, and those of an unnamed Portuguese traveller who had frequented 'several and diverse countries'.[12] As costume books increased in popularity, they were even envisioned as a tool to assist travellers, colonizers and traders with cross-cultural diplomacy. In 1580, the promoter of English colonization Richard Hakluyt (1553–1616) proposed that, along with maps, the explorers Arthur Pet and Charles Jackman ought to present a 'booke of the attire of all nations' when visiting the Chinese court of 'Cambalu'.[13] 'Bestowed in gift', he suggested, the book surely 'would be much esteemed'.[14]

It was, in fact, the costume drawings of a travelling artist that sparked the trend for such books in the first place. For Christoph Weiditz, a portrait medal-maker from southern Germany, the discernment and comparison of clothing customs proved a useful interpretive method when he embarked on a trip to Iberia. Travelling to and from the Spanish and Netherlandish courts

[9] Traub, 'Mapping the Global Body', 46.
[10] Davies, *Renaissance Ethnography*, 5.
[11] Vital, *Relation du premier voyage*, 95. '… et leur achem et accoustrement de test sont estranges […] assez à la mode payenne'. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own.
[12] Desprez, *Recueil*, fols. a2v.–a3r. '… ayant suiuy quelque dessein […] d'vn certain Portugais ayant frequenté plusiers & diuers pays'.
[13] Hakluyt, *The Original Writings*, 155; Mancall, *Hakluyt's Promise*, 83–4. Mancall hypothesises that the costume book in question might have been Hans Weigel's *Habitus*.
[14] Hakluyt, *The Original Writings*, 155.

of Charles V between 1529 and 1532, Weiditz illustrated the dress of locals he observed on the road, at sea, in the countryside and in urban settings. With descriptive labels announcing how these people 'thus' went about, the illustrated album known as his *Trachtenbuch* (costume book) captured clothing's ability to visualise differences between places and cultures.


Figure 1. François Desprez, 'Woman of Roncevalles' from *Recueil de la diversité des habits qui sont de présent en usage tant ès pays d'Europe*, 1562, woodcut on paper, 14.6 × 8.5 cm (5¾ × 3⅜ in.). Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, RP-P-OB-33.878A (artwork in the public domain; photograph courtesy of the Rijksmuseum).

This notion reached its apogee with the emergence of printed and painted costume series in the second half of the sixteenth century, works designed to edify and entertain a public readership about the curious forms, remarkable variety and moral pitfalls of foreign fashions. Printed costume books like Cesare Vecellio's well-known *Degli habiti antichi et moderni* (On Clothing, Ancient and Modern) were the result of sustained collecting of imagery, oftentimes copied from pre-existing sources. Costume books' drive to catalogue humanity can be compared to the period persuasion to assemble, categorise, classify and order that

contemporary scholarship on early modern collecting and natural history has exposed.[15] Pairing images with text descriptions or verse, costume books followed a representational method applied in many instructional works of the era (fig. 1). The costume book was at once a literary and a visual genre for which text and pictures together formulated images, created associations and upheld ideas. The pairing of word and image created a mutually reinforcing scheme that, as Jordanova and Grant identify in the introduction to this book, is a common feature of visual culture, deployed in this case to form a didactic system. An important strategy for knowledge-making, it enabled costume figures, arranged into a comparative series, to outline and instruct upon clothing customs that were familiar or strange, local or foreign and virtuous or sumptuous.

## Imaging the Nahua

Whether used for an ethnographic manual, a travelogue or a guide for moral dressing, costume imagery was mitigated by the material and intellectual constraints of gathering and reproducing knowledge about global wardrobes. The following two sections centre upon these issues by way of the important series of 'Indian' costume figures originating in Christoph Weiditz's *Trachtenbuch*. From their inception through to their transmission in later works, these figures exemplify the tensions between observation and representation, and authenticity and authorship that manifested in the visual landscape of sixteenth-century Europe.

The group was identified with a caption above one of the figures announcing, 'These are Indian people whom Ferdinand Cortez brought to his Imperial Majesty from India and they have played before his Imperial Majesty with wood and ball'.[16] In 1528 a delegation of Nahua travellers accompanied Hernán Cortés (1485–1547) to Spain. They were still at the Spanish court when Christoph Weiditz arrived the following year, seeking the emperor's support following a dispute with the Augsburg goldsmiths' guild. A trained wood-sculptor, his use of precious metals when he segued into making portrait medals caused contention with the city's goldsmiths, who believed the right over such materials was exclusively theirs.[17] Pursuing imperial protection, Weiditz travelled to Toledo with the armorer Kolman Helmschmid in the early winter of 1529, sailing first to Portugal from the Netherlands and then journeying

[15] See for instance Daston and Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature*; Findlen, *Possessing Nature*; and Ogilvie, *The Science of Describing*.
[16] Weiditz, 'Trachtenbuch', fol. 12. Translated in Weiditz, *Authentic Everyday Dress*, 27. 'Das send die Indiannisch leit der verdinant Cordesyus K tt aus India heraus bracht hatt, vnnd haben also vor K gespilt mit dem holtz vnnd Ball'.
[17] Habich, 'Christoph Weiditz', 26–7.

overland to join the imperial entourage in Castile.[18] Passing through the landscape, Weiditz sketched regional dress habits as well as customary activities from which illuminations were later produced, today preserved in the album known as his *Trachtenbuch*. Its gouache, gold- and silver-gilt illustrations mostly cover subjects situated in Iberia but include others from Italy, France, the Low Countries, Germany, England and Ireland. The folios were potentially worked up to a decade after Weiditz's return to Augsburg in 1532, so their mediation by time and the influence of other visual examples warrants consideration.

Unlike contemporaries, whose travelogues concentrated on royal personalities, holy sites, local architecture and notable landmarks, Weiditz concentrated on people. His eye was drawn to the daily life of people from all social stations that he observed on the roads, in the cities and out in the countryside. It was not just the appearance of various folk that stood out, but also the tools, animals and methods employed for everyday tasks. He depicted how corn was threshed in Castile and how bread was kneaded in Zeeland. He captured interesting characters such as penitent self-flagellants and men who collected donations to pay the ransom of prisoners captured by Ottoman pirates. Discussing Weiditz's approach, Ulinka Rublack has argued that it was the manner in which people wore their clothes and comported themselves while performing social tasks and identities that above all interested the artist.[19] By isolating these costume figures against bare backdrops that heavily reduced architectural and landscape features, emphasis was squarely placed upon the dress and bearing of different members of society.

Historians have tended to assume that the Indian figures constitute convincing examples of first-hand observation. Since Weiditz's trip to the Spanish imperial court coincided with the Nahua group's well-documented visit, the artist's opportunity for closely observed figural study has been accepted as self-evident. The series consists of six static costume figures wearing feather mantles (*tilmatli*) and breechcloths (*maxtlal*). A further seven engage in acts of entertainment: one pair play the Aztec ball-game *tlachtli*, another demonstrates the board game *patolli* and a final three figures juggle a large wooden log with their feet. These details have led scholars to enthuse about Weiditz's careful ethnographic rendering.[20] Gabrielle

[18] This route is confirmed in a missing folio depicting Helmschmid that has been preserved in Hans Römer's copy after the *Trachtenbuch*. See "Kopie nach dem Trachtenbuch", fol. 74v: 'über mör gfaren in Portugal vnd darnach in hispania' / 'travelled across the sea to Portugal and afterward to Spain to his Imperial Majesty'.
[19] Rublack, *Dressing Up*, 188.
[20] Massing, 'Early European Images', 517.

Mentges sees their 'complex and varied' portrayal as evidence of Weiditz's 'tactile gaze', which distinguished, rather than homogenized, different members' facial features.[21]

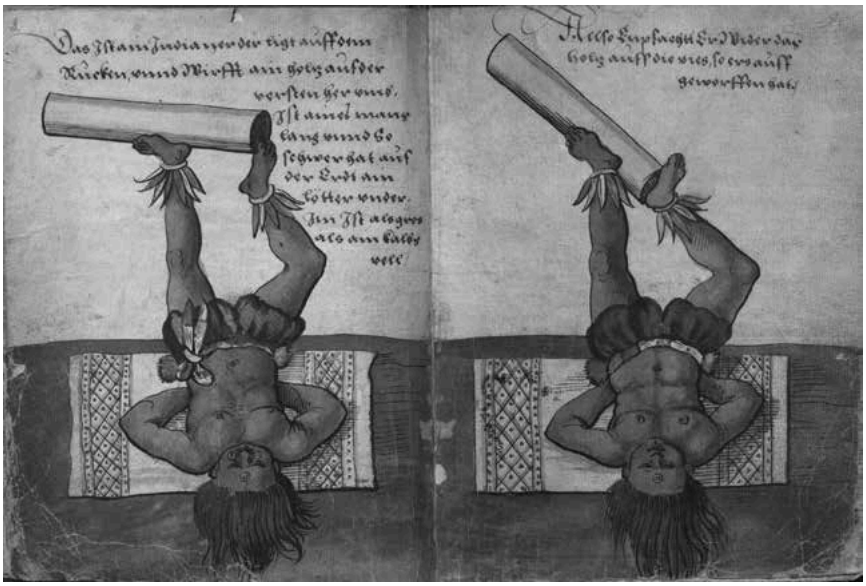
Although directly linking observation, naturalism and ethnography is tempting, there is much that is contrived about Weiditz's figures. The group's various accoutrements are painted with a uniform palette of blue, green and crimson, meriting a rethink of the images' supposed naturalism. The artist's willingness to copy or adapt existing imagery is also apparent, since a number of the *Trachtenbuch*'s costume figures are subjects of lands Weiditz is not believed to have travelled to.[22] The artist conflated New World cultural markers, too – something which has recently been highlighted by Elizabeth Hill Boone.[23] Finally, the manner in which the Nahua were presented in Spain was manipulated by courtly manoeuvres whereby members may have worn apparel that did not concord with their ethnic or social identity. By peeling back these layers of context, practice, and authorial decision-making, this case study looks beyond the immediacy of the images' subject matter to review how and why Weiditz came to synthesize a range of ethnographic knowledge on the pages of his *Trachtenbuch*. In doing so, the historian is reminded that visual materials often evidence more about past values and artistic choices than the content portrayed.

The Nahua group reached Spain in May 1528.[24] They included seven nobles, twenty-nine lesser but named elite and an unspecified number of indigenous performers, assembling approximately seventy people in total.[25] The elite individuals, who had been baptized and taken Christian first-names, demonstrated their vassalage to the Spanish crown.[26] Representatives of diverse ethnic groups and realms, including Mexico-Tenochtitlan, Tlaxcala, Cempoala, Texcoco, Tabuca and Culhuacan, they jockeyed to safeguard the emperor's favour in the wake of their new political reality.[27] Charles V decreed that Seville's House of Trade would furnish the cost of clothing their guests.[28] The seven most notable among them, three of whom were sons of Moctezuma, were granted the title '*Don*'. They were to be set apart through sumptuousness yellow damask doublets, breeches of fine scarlet with a matching cape and blue

[21] Mentges, 'Une cartographie vestimentaire', 11–3.
[22] It is doubtful Weiditz journeyed to England, Ireland, Venice or Genoa for example, destinations which are represented by only a handful of examples each. Although clear visual models for these figures have not yet been identified, their inclusion suggests Weiditz encountered other pictorial sources and desired to have a larger set of national clothing examples for comparative purposes.
[23] Hill Boone, 'Seeking Indianness'.
[24] Cline, 'Aztec Indians', 71.
[25] Ibid., 70–1, 84.
[26] Hill Boone, 'Seeking Indianness', 47.
[27] See Jovita Baber, 'Empire, Indians'.
[28] Cline, 'Aztec Indians', 82. Decree dated 2 October 1528, Madrid.

velvet caps.[29] Those of lower rank were likewise to be gifted Spanish-style garments, but seven months after the wardrobe provisions were ordered, and after the emperor had ordered the group await passage home, they still lacked their promised clothes.[30] Whether the Nahua ever received their outfits is uncertain, but it is assumable that in the interim they were supplied with Spanish garments of varying description for use in and around court. Weiditz did not depict such provisions; nevertheless, the contrived nature of the clothing and accessories they are portrayed wearing works against an assumption that this dress was ethnographically accurate.

Direct observation nevertheless took place. Weiditz must have witnessed the log-juggling and the games *tlachtli* and *patolli* at the Spanish court, since his portrayal of these actions concord with written testimony about the diversions formerly practiced in the Aztec empire, described by European arbiters.[31] Before reaching court in Toledo, Cortés had showed off the 'dexterous' jugglers in Guadalupe. They were described by Cortés's biographer Bernal Díaz del Castillo to have 'passed the stick from one foot to the other'.[32] Weiditz's lively record demonstrates the precise movements in which the log was handled and tossed into the air through a sequence of three figures who throw and catch the log, 'as long as a man and as heavy', while lying on a leather mat (fig. 2).[33]



[29] Ibid., 82–4.
[30] Ibid. Documents from Seville's House of Trade record that by April blue velvet had been purchased, but that the outfits' construction was only just being organised. Three members had been missed off the initial order, moreover, and a related notice issued in May regretted that these three were going about 'naked'.
[31] For example, the testimony of Francisco López de Gómara in his *Historia general de las Indias y Vida de Hernán Cortés* (1552).
[32] Díaz del Castillo, *The True History*, 144.
[33] Weiditz, 'Trachtenbuch', fols. 6, 8, 9. Translated in Weiditz, *Authentic Everyday Dress*, 28. 'vnnd Wirfft ain holtz aus der versten heraus, Ist aines mans lang vnnd so schwer'.

Figure 2. Christoph Weiditz, 'This is an Indian, he lies on his back and throws a block of wood around his heels, is as long as a man and as heavy, he has on the earth a leather under him, is as big as a calf skin' and 'Thus he again catches the wood on his feet as he has thrown it up,' from the Trachtenbuch, 1530–40, pen and gouache, gold and silver leaf, 15 × 20 cm (6 × 7⅞ in.). Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Historic Images / Alamy Stock Photo).

The figures have nonetheless been mediated by the influence of pre-existing visual models. When Christoph Weiditz encountered the subjects from New Spain, he may already have had a preconceived notion of how these supposed Indians ought to appear, based on material items and pictorial information circulating through artistic, intellectual and commercial channels. Among such influences was the persuasive broadsheet published in Augsburg by Johann Froschauer in 1505, which purported to show inhabitants from coastal Brazil according to Amerigo Vespucci's descriptions. The broadsheet reported that 'the people are thus naked, handsome, brown; their heads, necks, arms, private parts [and the] feet of men and women are lightly covered with feathers. The men also have many precious stones in their faces and chests'.[34] The accompanying woodcut portrays Brazilian Tupinambá wearing various feathered garments including headdresses, collars, skirts, bustles and leg-bands, and following Vespucci's prompts, practicing cannibalism (fig. 3). Weiditz's log-jugglers also wear feather anklets – a garment missing from Mesoamerican codices. Although they might have represented part of the jugglers' costume, to draw attention to the feet, it is noteworthy that the feather anklets of the woodcut, as well as the colourful stones or jewels, inserted into figures' cheeks, chins, foreheads and noses, reappear in Weiditz's corpus. Although Aztec men wore nose-rods and lip- and ear-plugs, these were unlike the small, stud-like stones Weiditz depicts and were not placed into the cheek or forehead. These features, Hill Boone has argued, became motifs purposefully marshalled by Weiditz to 'satisfy expectations of how Amerindians should look'.[35]

[34] Johann Froschauer, broadsheet after Amerigo Vespucci 'Dise figur anzaigt uns das volck und insel die gefunden ist...' (Augsburg, 1505). 'Die leüt sind also nackent hübsch. braun wolgestalt von leib. ir heübter halß. arm. scham. fuß. frawen vnd mann ain wenig mit federn bedeckt. Auch haben die mann in iren angesichten vnd brust vil edel gestain'. Translated by and cited in Davies, *Renaissance Ethnography*, 79–80.
[35] Hill Boone, 'Seeking Indianness', 55.

Figure 3. Johann Froschauer, 'Dise figur anzaigt uns das volck und insel die gefunden ist ...' after Amerigo Vespucci, 1505, woodcut broadsheet, 25.5 × 35 cm (10⅛ × 13¾ in.). Bayerisches Staatsbibliothek, Munich, Einbl. V,2 (artwork in the public domain; photograph © Bayerisches Staatsbibliothek).

The Nahua's fluffy, thick mantles are depicted with wavy, feathery surfaces in alternating rows of colour (see fig. 4). *Tilmatli* mantles in indigenous codices, however, are invariably portrayed with a smooth, flat texture. In the pre-Hispanic Valley of Mexico, luxury *tilmatli* – spun from cotton, and interwoven with feathers and rabbit fur – were part of a vibrant gift culture and diplomatic trade.[36] The Spanish had been gifted mantles in the cities of Cotaxtla and Cempoala as they edged towards Tenochtitlan and thus splendid mantles afterward made their way to Spain, including mantles worked with feathers listed in Cortés's 1522 shipments of goods.[37] The Spanish jurist Alonso de Zuazo reported his compatriots' winnings as they ventured into the Yucatán peninsula: 'I saw many doubled-faced mantles, made with turkey feathers so smooth that in drawing the hand across the grain, they seemed nothing but a well-tanned sable marten skin'.[38] The smooth materiality of feather-garments sent to the emperor also struck Peter Martyr d'Anghiera, a court humanist and official of the Spanish Council of the Indies. Recalling the garments, he wrote:

> The people of that country only use three materials for their clothing; that is to say, cotton, birds' feathers, and rabbits' hair. They make the feathers and the hair into a

[36] Umberger, 'Art and Imperial Strategy', 102–3.
[37] López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 59, 72; Russo 'Cortés's Objects', 241.
[38] Alonso de Zuazo translated and cited in Anawalt, *Indian Clothing*, 30.

> pattern upon a foundation of cotton, working them with such ingenuity that we are unable to comprehend their methods of fabrication […][39]

D'Anghiera elsewhere observed that a feather-shield 'had coloured feathers resembling our raw silk'.[40]As these comparisons to sleek textiles affirm, Nahua feather-workers produced finely woven, smooth-surfaced fabrics that disguised individual feathers, confronting and contradicting the *Trachtenbuch*'s depiction of bushy plumage fixed at its shaft and otherwise left loose and curling.[41] A more naturalistic portrayal of feather-work may have been surrendered in order to emphasise the mantles' principal material, the feather, by now a canonical marker of the New World. Moreover, the mantles' texture bears a strong resemblance to extant Brazilian Tupi cloaks and thus appear as amalgamations combining Tupi feather-work with the rectangular shape, shin-length and shoulder knot of Mexican *tilmatli*.[42] Thus they constitute artistic creations inspired by entangled visual and material stimuli. The synthesis of this ethnographic information may have been a purposeful, reinforcing tactic. Surekha Davies has noted that contemporary European mapmakers 'synthesized, transformed, and re-circulated' acquired information to construct 'socially acceptable' knowledge.[43] By combining existing visual tropes with first-hand observation, Weiditz, too, skilfully synthesized ethnographic knowledge, delivering cultural images acceptable to discerning peers familiar with the idea of the supposedly be-feathered and be-jewelled New World Indian.

[39] Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, 197–98.
[40] Ibid., 198.
[41] A good example of this is the extant Aztec shield of ca. 1500 housed in the Weltmuseum, Vienna, Inv. No. 43380.
[42] As is argued by Hill Boone, 'Seeking Indianness', 54. Exemplified by a pre-Columbian example housed by the Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, Brussels, Inv. No. AAM 05783.
[43] Davies, *Renaissance Ethnography*, 13.


Figure 4. Christoph Weiditz, 'This is also an Indian, a Nobleman of their kind' and 'This is also the Indian manner, how they have brought wood jugs with them out of which they drink' from the '*Trachtenbuch*', 1530-40, pen and gouache, gold and silver leaf, 15 x 20 cm, Hs 22474. Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Historic Images / Alamy Stock Photo).

From the time of the first Portuguese landing in Brazil in 1500, Tupi items were collected and shipped to Europe.[44] Cortés sent several shipments of Mexican goods back to Spain before his return that caused wonder among European spectators. Alessandra Russo has illuminated his influence over the material goods reaching Spain in the 1520s.[45] In a letter of 1520, he tells Charles V that Moctezuma 'had made in gold' various things Cortés had designed, including 'images, crucifixes, medals, jewels [and] collars'.[46] Cataloguing his two shipments of 1524, Cortés again refers to his commission of certain pieces.[47] Items including the 'feather and hair mantles, fans [and] shields' brought to Spain in 1528 may thus have comprised custom-designed, matching pieces. Hybrid objects thus entered the Spanish court, where they were likely incorporated into ceremonial demonstrations and could have been modelled by the visiting Nahua.

The circumstances under which the Nahua wore indigenous apparel instead of Spanish courtly garb also require consideration. Peter Martyr reports an intriguing case of a Nahua slave who arrived at the Spanish court in 1522 with a shipment of gifts. Introduced by

[44] Massing, 'Early European Images', 515.
[45] Russo, 'Cortés's Objects', 239.
[46] Cortés, *Letters*, 100–1.
[47] Russo, 'Cortés's Objects', 243.

Cortés's secretary Juan de Ribera, the slave was summoned for a demonstration. 'He had dressed himself in my room', Martyr retells, and wore a 'robe of woven feathers' and cotton trousers.[48] After a blood-curdling display of feigned human sacrifice, the slave changed into his 'gala costume' ahead of a musical performance.[49] The slave was directed to dress up in indigenous garments for cultural demonstrations, indicating that courtly audiences anticipated the connection between native customs and costume. The manufactured nature of such court displays means that the dress put aside for demonstrations could have been worn by models who had little personal connection to the items. Feather-work costumes, arms and armour, headdresses and gold, turquoise and jade jewellery were among the mix of plundered, gifted and collected artefacts circulating at the Spanish court deriving from diverse ethnic groups across Mexico, Brazil and the Caribbean.

Weiditz's animated portrayal of Aztec entertainment suggests his observation of court performances. These were not neutral displays, however, and were concocted by and for European courtiers. The *Trachtenbuch*'s gouache illuminations were probably produced several years after Weiditz's encounter. In the meantime, popular visual tropes of the New World Indian may have skewed his memory or been purposefully employed to bolster the trustworthiness of his pictures. Despite their anomalies, his images speak of the way cultural knowledge was acquired and re-contextualised into a European sphere of ethnographic understanding supported by visual cues and descriptive terms.

## The Nahua Series' Transcendency

Christoph Weiditz's Nahua series maintained its appeal and was copied, modified and dispersed through later printed and painted costume series. While Weiditz's originals have received a lot of scholarly attention, occupying a central position in the canon of European Renaissance ethnographic images, recycled copies after the Nahua series have been overlooked. These re-interpretations, decontextualized from the initial 1528 encounter, show the results of authorial agency and the transmission of knowledge over time. As Jordanova and Grant note in their introduction, looking beyond canonical makers to review those works often deemed peripheral enables historians to grasp the threads connecting a visual style or movement and assess its broader social and cultural ethos. Not only that, it can show processes in the movement of icons and ideas which, in the case of costume imagery, highlight how the

[48] Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, 202.
[49] Ibid., 203.

pictorial study of dress settled into its position as a preeminent method for contemplating the diverse nature of human kind.

In two southern German costume albums from the second half of the sixteenth century, figures originating from Weiditz's Nahua series are presented as 'moors'. One album identifies the *tilmatli*-wearing characters as 'moors in Africa', while the other labels a log-juggler an 'Arabian Moor'.[50] Blurring distinctions between ethnic groups played into the formation of exotic stereotypes, whether intentional or not. In this case, the artist may have consulted an intermediary copy that had neglected to transfer textual descriptions about the figures' ethnic identity. But labels were also subject to many costume book producers' ambition to present extensive global collections, thus identifications were purposefully altered to account for more populations.

Stylistic choices also substantiated change. In an etched series of costume figures anonymously printed in Augsburg in the late sixteenth century, several of Weiditz's Nahua reappear with the long hair, beards and moustaches fashionable in contemporary Europe (fig. 5).[51] Two of the group are even painted with the pink skin of white men. A colourist painted the *tilmatli* with rows of narrow, dagger-like feathers, highlighting each individual plume and underscoring the material of the garment even more dramatically than Weiditz. Artistic alteration even occurred directly upon the original *Trachtenbuch* when a new hand added long feathers – visible in a faded wash – to the waistbands of the Nahua group's breechcloths (see fig. 4). This transformed them into feather-skirts, the garment *par excellence* for epitomising an 'Indian' identity, however erroneously applied. Although these changes further skewed the ethnographic knowledge contained, the results were part of the solidification of ethnic icons that occurred over the century. Sartorial cues for cultural identities were only magnified as imagery became embellished. As it migrated, it constructed a broader visual culture propagating popular stereotypes. Feather mantles and facial jewels became unambiguously associated with an 'Indian' identity, more so than brown skin or nudity, reinforcing paradigms that blurred real cultural and ethnic differences existing in the Americas.

[50] 'Kostüme und Sittenbilder', fols. 30r–31v; 'Trachtenbuech', ills. 30–1.
[51] 'Kostüme der Männer', fols. 182v.–185r.

Figure 5. 'Indian Nobleman' and 'Indian Woman' from *Kostüme der Männer und Frauen in Augsburg und Nürnberg, Deutschland, Europa, Orient und Afrika*', 4th quarter 16th C., watercolour on paper, 30 x 20 cm, Cod. Icon. 341. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich (artwork in the public domain; photograph © Bayerisches Staatsbibliothek).

Around the turn of the seventeenth century, the maturing Hans Römer of Munich stumbled upon the *Trachtenbuch* and commissioned a complete copy.[52] A Bavarian native, Römer must have observed Weiditz's work in Augsburg or its surrounds. His motivations for the commission emerge in a couple of folios, positioned at the start of the album, in which the unfolding itinerary is reframed as the travels of his father, a Habsburg servant in the employ of Henry III of Nassau-Dillenberg, one of Charles V's closest advisors. On a title page presenting the Römer coat of arms, text upon curling ribbons announces that in 1523, Hans Römer of Erfurt journeyed with his master to Charles V's court and went 'over the sea to India'.[53] Because the work purports to be the father's original creation, the text claims to show 'what I saw'.[54] Overleaf, a hand-written provenance notice claims that Hans Römer the younger was bequeathed his father's book.[55]

Stylistic differences on the part of Römer's unidentified artist account for reductions of detail. The ball- and board-game playing Nahua are again portrayed with white skin but

[52] 'Kopie nach dem Trachtenbuch'.
[53] Ibid., fol. 1v. 'mit Karl. dem. v. Iber mör n India'. My grateful thanks to Stefan Hanß for his help transcribing Römer's annotations.
[54] Ibid. 'vnd was Jch gesechen'.
[55] Ibid., fol. 2r.

maintain the canonical face jewels. Although Weiditz's visual material had been extensively copied and recycled, Römer's copy was unprecedented because it dared to present itself as the visual recollections of Römer's father, hijacking Weiditz's personal travel experiences. It went elaborated this travel, however, by insisting his father journeyed 'over the sea to India'. The Nahua were thus transported from a Spanish courtly environment into an overseas world, now evidencing the supposed travel to and first-hand knowledge of a faraway continent. Costume imagery, positioned in a personal, hand-illustrated album, maintained a cachet that, around seventy years on, still signalled worldliness and the prestige of travel and cultural knowledge.

## Iconographies of National Dress

The comprehensive geographic scope that costume books aimed for demanded the resourceful reuse of pictorial information. Certain iconic characters circulated for decades, transmitted between different works and media. As motifs increased in iconic potency through repetition, their authenticity was paradoxically augmented despite the effect this had on ethnographic precision. Discussing the translation of eighteenth-century fashion caricatures across national borders, Patrick Steorm has remarked that the adaptation of imagery was a 'knowing and discriminate act on the part of artists, collectors, and other audiences who assimilate various kinds of art and images into the local visual culture'.[56] As motifs were reinterpreted, new meanings were created and older meanings reaffirmed, positioning national and cultural identities within a growing iconography of global tastes and habits. Transmittable, recyclable costume imagery, in other words, underlay the growth and success of this visual culture and buoyed the costume book genre.

The costume books that developed in the second half of the sixteenth century used the iconic nature of costume for rhetorical ends. These printed volumes were more systematic, taxonomic and often outwardly instructive than earlier, intimate works like Weiditz's, promoting the notion that diverse clothing styles could be compared and studied as a means to ruminate on the many faces of humanity, society and culture. Many books swapped basic descriptive captions for poetic verse that alerted readers to the praiseworthy or lamentable appearance of the costume figures introduced. Desprez's 1562 publication *Recueil de la diversité des habits* used costume imagery to critique the hierarchical ills and moral failings of the author's native French society during a period of intensifying religious and class conflict. By contrast, the 1577 costume book *Habitus praecipuorum populorum* (The Principal Habits

[56] Steorn, 'Caricature and Fashion Critique', 255–6.

of People), printed in Nuremberg by Hans Weigel and illustrated by Jost Amman, was more inclined to praise the upstanding, humble dress habits of the German nation, offering an alternative to the alluring dress of foreigners.

Discourses about what constituted honourable, shameful or strange clothing were augmented by circulating visual tropes. A series of widely recycled figures illustrating Basque costume, initially popularised in Weiditz's *Trachtenbuch*, came to reinforce stereotypes about the region and Spain more broadly. The conspicuous height, volume and elaborate compositions of female headdresses (*tocados*) from these parts had long captured the imagination of foreign observers. The fashion for conical, sometimes twisted, horn-shaped headdresses was particularly commented on, regularly inviting phallic references from incredulous travellers. When Burgundian chronicler Laurent Vital observed local women in the province of Asturias, he remarked that 'it seemed as if they had planted on their heads […] those things with which men make children'.[57] Andrew Boorde, a Welsh pilgrim to St James's shrine in 1532, similarly noted that women along the route wore headdresses that reminded him of codpieces.[58] This interpretation was even echoed by close neighbours. Philosopher Michel de Montaigne, who hailed from a town bordering the Basque province of Gascony, commented that 'the married women near my place twist their headscarves into the shape of the male sexual organ to revel in the enjoyment they derive from it'.[59] The mockery this style endured from outside its own community is palpable; according to Vital, when he asked Charles V's and his Flemish lords' opinion of these headdresses they 'burst out laughing, saying that the ornaments were cheerful and of great novelty'.[60] Incorporated into Desprez's *Recueil*, this idea was manifested in the dress of a woman of Roncevalles, a Basque town at the foot of the Pyrenees (see fig. 1). Readers are directed to the woman's headdress as the verse asks whether 'this *coiffure* seems dirty to you'?[61] Arranged into a phallic protuberance, the headdress becomes the source of a joke made at the expense of Basque culture, designed, in part, to boost the Parisian author's readers' sense of their cultural and sartorial sophistication.

As costume series circulated the appearance of these idiosyncratic headdresses to a wider audience, the baggage of these views seeped into critical dialogues evaluating Spanish culture more broadly. In Weigel's *Habitus*, a female figure derived from Weiditz's woman of

[57] Vital, *Relation du premier voyage*, 97. 'car il sembloit qu'elles eussent sur leurs testes […] de ces choses de quoy ces hommes font des enfans'.
[58] Boorde, *The Fyrst Boke*, 1999.
[59] Montaigne, *The Essays*, 969.
[60] Vital, *Relation du premier voyage*, 98. 'En parlant de ceste matière, le Roy et la seigneurie se prindrent à rire, disant que les atours estoient des joyeuses et nouvelles fassons'.
[61] Desprez, *Recueil*. 'La fême de rõceualle': 'si la coiffure vous semble sale'.

the mountains 'in the kingdom of Pamplona at the Basque frontier', has been reidentified as a generic Spanish 'peasant's wife'. Accompanying verse narrates her appearance 'when she comes in from the countryside / and thinks she's well adorned'.[62] Now portrayed as an older woman, the figure's reinterpretation broadcasts the idea that this style of loose, now outdated, clothing and pointed cloth headdress represents backward peasant-wear worthy of ridicule. Overleaf, another Basque woman is dressed in festival-day apparel (fig. 6). The verse teases, 'and it is for them a beautiful costume / for us it would be thought odd'.[63] Here the figure's transition from a young woman to an elderly crone is even more exaggerated. Her emphatically twisted, conical headdress, curling over her coarse features, is dramatized by the self-referential pointing gesture the woman makes – her proud insistence that her dress is beautiful. The mocking tone accompanying these two figures not merely schooled readers that the Basque region embodied the vulgar and uncultivated dress and people associated with rural Spain. The verses also addressed Weigel's imagined German audience, who could reaffirm their own value systems around what constituted normal, morally upright and attractive dress. Acknowledging that foreign populations maintained different aesthetic standards upheld another critical idea strengthened through recycled costume motifs: that people of different nations ought to preserve their own national costumes and, as such, be readily identifiable.

[62] Weigel, *Habitus*, plate CLVII. 'Ein hispanische Bäwrin': 'Wann sie kompt von dem Land herein/ Und dunckt sich wol gezieret seyn'.
[63] Ibid., plate CLVIII. 'Ein Weib in Pischeaien': 'Und ist bey im ein schöner Tracht/ Bey uns würdens für seltsam geacht'.


Figure 6. 'Basque woman from Cantabria' from Hans Weigel, *Habitus praecipuorum populorum tam virorum quam feminarum singulari arte depicti*, 1577, woodcut on paper, 30 × 19 cm (11⅞ _× 7½ in.). Bibliothèque nationale du France, Paris, ARS EST-1277 (artwork in the public domain; photograph © Bibliothèque nationale du France).

## Naked Men and National Habits

Cultural identity was understood to be quite literally worn on one's sleeve. Its opposite – cultural nakedness – was expressed in a popular period anecdote whereby a painter, having illustrated the costume of various different nations, came to the depiction of his own only to be confronted with a dilemma: how could he render his kinsmen's costume when their inconstant dress habits and love of foreign dress permitted no single design? The artist-biographer Karel van Mander (1548–1606) offers an interesting account of his former teacher, the Dutch painter Lucas de Heere (1534–84) who, during a period in England between 1567 and 1577, was commissioned to paint 'all the costumes or clothing of the nations' in a gallery for the high admiral of England, Edward Clinton, Earl of Lincoln:

> When all but the Englishman were done, he painted him naked and set beside him all manner of cloth and silk materials, and next to them tailor's scissors and chalk. When the Admiral saw this figure he asked Lucas what he meant by it. He answered that he had done that with the Englishman because he did not know what appearance or kind of clothing he should give him because they varied so much from day to day; for if he had done it one way today the next day it would have to be another – be it French or Italian, Spanish or Dutch – and I have therefore painted the material and tools to hand so that one can always make of it what one wishes.[64]

On his way to the tailor, the naked Englishman was depicted ready to have the latest fashions cut according to his whim.

The now-lost gallery was likely a casualty of the 1666 Great Fire of London.[65] But while Van Mander's testimony is the only known record of its existence, a related manuscript collection of costume illustrations produced by De Heere during his English stay preserves the gallery's ambition to chart different countries' habits.[66] The surviving album contains 195 watercolour costume figures, both historical and contemporary, covering European territories in Italy, Spain, Germany, France, England and Ireland, as well as the Ottoman Empire and the New World (in the form of a fur-parka-wearing Inuit).[67] It ends with the naked Englishman carrying a length of fabric on his arm, wielding a pair of shears (fig. 7).

[64] Van Mander, *The Lives*, 281.
[65] Hypothesised by Conrads, 'Het Theatre', 10. In his description of London, Thomas Pennant, the eighteenth-century Welsh traveller, remarks that in 1553 Edward Clinton obtained the large stone and timber residence on Old Fish Street Hill that once belonged to the Mounthauntes of Norfolk. The adjoining chapel, which became the St. Mary Magdalen church, is recorded to have burned down in the Great Fire, leaving little doubt as to the fate of the house. Penannt, *Mr. Pennant's Account of London*, 34; Stow, *A Survey of London*, 133.
[66] De Heere, *Théâtre de tous les peuples*.
[67] De Heere sourced his information about Inuit from the abducted Greenlanders English privateer Martin Frobisher brought to Bristol in 1576. See Sturtevant and Beers Quinn, "This New Prey".

Figure 7. Lucas de Heere, 'Naked Man with Fabric and Shears' from *Théâtre de tous les peuples et nations de la terre avec leurs habits et ornemens divers, tant anciens que modernes*, 1570/1580, watercolour on vellum, 32.5 × 21.5 cm (12⅞ _× 8½ in.). University Library of Ghent, Ghent, HS 2466 (artwork in the public domain; photograph courtesy of the University Library of Ghent).

As Van Mander's description of the naked Englishman reveals, foreign fashions and inconstant behaviour were charged with disrupting clear national habits. The motif was not new to De Heere; it had earlier appeared in Andrew Boorde's illustrated poem of 1542, *The natural disposition of an Englishman*, which correspondingly narrated the Englishman's predilection for new fashions. This inconstancy was not only an English trait, noted Van Mander, who accused his Flemish kinsmen of imitating the clothes of their neighbours.[68] This rebuke was soon parroted across Europe, as the motif was transferred to new settings. The naked man materialized in a 1571 embroidered chimney-hanging hung in the Leipzig town-hall.[69] Lining up nine costume figures, including a Frenchman and an Italian, in their national habits, it predictably concludes with a naked German carrying cloth. He also reappeared

[68] See Yates, *Valois Tapestries*, 17.
[69] See Rublack, *Dressing Up*, 144–5, 149.

anecdotally in the 1590 costume book of Cesare Vecellio. In Venice-based Vecellio's account, it is an Italian painter who was compelled to depict his kinsman naked, since he was 'so changeable, mutable and capricious in his dress'.[70]

A broader version of this theme was the subject of the engraved frontispiece of Weigel's *Habitus* (fig. 8). Laying out the book's global scope, the continents Asia, America and Africa are imagined as men adorned in the clothes and accessories commensurate with their place of origin. Europe, by contrast, is stark naked, lacking any recognisable garb. Wielding a bolt of fabric and shears, he holds the necessary equipment to have made up any clothing styles he fancies. Afflicted with this identity crisis, his vulnerability to foreign influence is plain. At the top of the frontispiece, a scene depicting humanity's fall from paradise adds another layer of meaning to the naked European beneath. Banished from the Garden of Eden, a naked Adam and Eve attempt to cover themselves having lost innocence and learned shame. Now on Earth, they wrap themselves in animal skins, establishing clothing as a consequence of original sin. The European's nakedness – due to his inability to resist new and foreign fashions – brings shame upon his continent. And yet the motif is not only a critique about the danger of lacking a stable costume. The naked European strides forth with purpose in the direction of the other continents.[71] Advancing in this manner and taking the best of what other continents have to offer, he embodies the ingenuity and resourcefulness that Weigel's readers were encouraged to associate with Europe and its position on the world stage.

[70] See Vecellio, Jones & Rosenthal, *Clothing of the Renaissance World*, 59.
[71] Rublack, *Dressing Up*, 149.

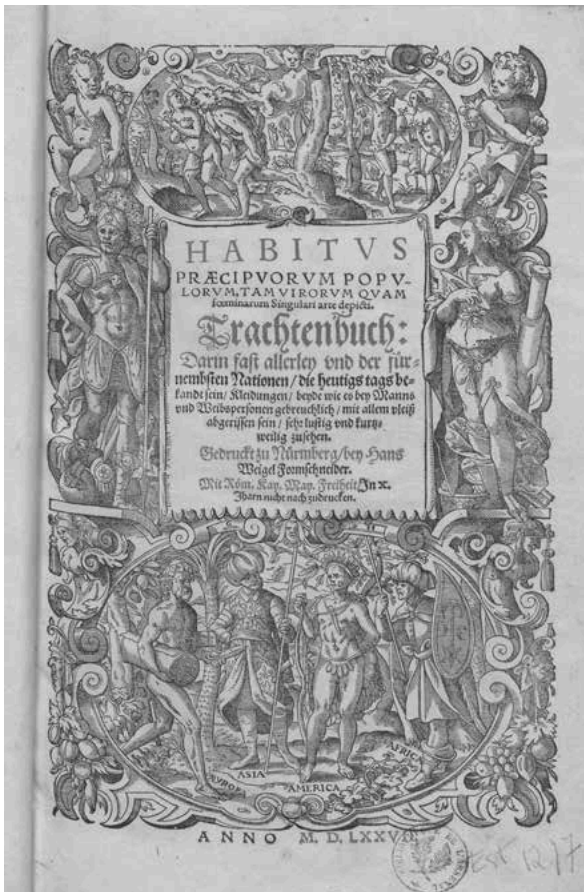



Figure 8. Jost Amman, 'Frontispiece' from Hans Weigel, *Habitus praecipuorum populorum*. Bibliothèque nationale du France, Paris (artwork in the public domain; photograph © Bibliothèque nationale du France).

Weigel was nevertheless quick to critique the negative influence of foreign fashions, particularly their adverse effect upon the dress habits of his German kinsmen. His readership, Rublack has added, was cautioned to preserve the virtuous and unassuming clothing of 'our common fatherland', offering through visual example a patriotic code of dressing based on a modest application of plain but honorable textiles, contrasted with the more ostentatious finery of other nations, above all Italy.[72] Where Italian women are typically portrayed sporting low décolletage and voluminous skirts flowing in ornate textiles, and carrying luxury accessories like ostrich-feather fans and perfumed gloves, their German counterparts adopt high necklines, narrow skirts of plain fabrics and utilitarian accessories such as purses containing scissors.

Cesare Vecellio also warned against the influence of foreign fashion. Most worryingly for contemporaries, Vecellio regarded inconstancy in dress a consequence of political

[72] Cited in and translated by ibid., 150–8.

domination. Explaining that the Italian peninsula was subject to vacillating habits because of foreign invasions, he lamented:

> …how often this beautiful country of Italy has been subject to ruin and how many diverse inhabitants and foreign invaders and barbarians have trod underfoot and plundered this most fertile region … Italy derived no benefit from them except its wide and changing array of languages, clothing and customs.[73]

Leafing through his costume book then, patriotic citizens across Italy and, indeed, wider Europe, could sort through and mull over its anthology of world dress, familiarizing themselves with the 'looks' of one's countrymen, neighbours and faraway populations, aligning their own habits accordingly.

Dressing as an act of allegiance was reinforced by this visual culture. Costume imagery crafted by printers, artists, woodblock cutters and poets surpassed its immediate requirement to amuse armchair travellers in an era discovering the capital of global cultural knowledge. Many costume books open with hyperbolic introductory tracts and histories of dress that referenced the classical age, emphasising to a wide readership the learnedness of the books' producers and their lofty, moralising aims. Following the proto-nationalist rhetoric exhibited by Weigel's *Habitus*, for example, even the body politic's wardrobe was at stake. Following the transition of costume imagery from commemorative travel albums to later printed costume books, it is observable that the adaptable costume figure donned different guises and re-envisioned human society according to the demands and subjectivities of diverse authors, artists and audiences.

## Conclusion

Circulating costume imagery, reinforced through repetition, contributed to the period's visions of what constituted human variety. Illustrators, engravers and printers had a stake in expanding global cultural knowledge, popularising ethnography through the subject of dress. The transmission of costume imagery through different forms permitted information about people, clothing and culture to migrate, gain currency and increase in conceptual weight, formulating iconographies and hierarchies of sartorial character. An important historical source, Christoph Weiditz's series of Indian figures elucidates practices and processes of dealing with new cultural knowledge in this crucial period of global encounter, showing that constructing

[73] Vecellio, Jones & Rosenthal, *Clothing of the Renaissance World*, 58.

credible pictorial representations of the latest ethnographic information called not merely for close observation, but also for engagement with familiar, accepted knowledge and popular visual and material icons. Artful synthesis provided Weiditz with a method for uniting all available knowledge, reinforcing rather than undermining the resulting costume figures. Reinterpreted through later works and patterns of circulation, the characters became formidable exotic types.

Costume images on the move popularised concepts about cultures and populations. Structured by the period's printed costume books, they partook in critical dialogue about compatriots and foreign populations alike, promoting evaluations of national traits, qualities and dress styles. The striking compositions of women's headdresses from the Basque region captivated foreign observers. The trope of the conical headdresses' supposedly phallic shape – an oft-repeated quip – was intensified through the consolidation of costume motifs and verse in the costume books of Parisian author François Desprez and Nuremberger Hans Weigel. Entering into the visual landscape of migrating costume imagery, these figures achieved pictorial currency as designs onto which assumptions and critiques about Spanish rural society could be projected.

Visualising humanity with the costume figure raised the status of dress to something of political consequence and moral gravity. Costume books addressed (and fuelled) contemporary anxieties about the corrupting influence of foreign fashions and inconstant dress habits, reinforcing the concept that diverse populations ought to retain and be recognised by their own dress styles. Without a clear, traditional outfit, the motif of the naked man embodied this concern and circulated between media and across borders. Costume imagery was a visual culture that assisted early modern contemporaries to define and redefine the boundaries of identity. What was local, what was foreign, what was virtuous and what was indecent could all be addressed by taking note of the costume figure.

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