

The German Invention of *Völkerkunde*

Ethnological Discourse in Europe and Asia, 1740–1798

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Anthropology is characterized by a fundamental distinction between the physical study of the human species (physical anthropology or anthropobiology) and the sociocultural study of humankind (social or cultural anthropology). As the term anthropology is in use for both approaches, it is vital to distinguish between them for historical purposes. The American historian of anthropology George W. Stocking, Jr. calls anthropology “the hybrid study of human culture and nature,” describing it as “a hybrid discipline uniting at least two distinct scholarly traditions: the natural historical and the social theoretical (with input as well from various lines of humanistic inquiry).”¹ This statement is in accord with the American “four-fields approach,” which, together with archaeology and linguistic anthropology, links the two traditions in a common study program. In Europe, however, physical and cultural anthropology have developed separately and, even today, are seen as separate branches of learning. Both studies are generally regarded as having emerged in the mid-nineteenth century, parallel to and influenced by evolutionism. The papers collected in the present book demonstrate that this dating is false as

far as physical and philosophical anthropology are concerned. I shall adopt the same position and argue that sociocultural anthropology also emerged much earlier than has been assumed, namely, during the eighteenth century.

Ethnography is one of anthropology's most important components and, in fact, its distinguishing feature. This applies especially to cultural and social anthropology: the terms "cultural anthropology" and "social anthropology" were introduced as new names for a study previously called "ethnology" (*Völkerkunde*) or "ethnography." This process of name-changing took place in the United Kingdom during the 1870s,² in France and the United States during the 1880s, in the Netherlands after World War II, and in Germany after the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989). From the 1920s, thanks to the Malinowskian revolution, ethnography has come to be regarded as being characterized by long-term fieldwork in a foreign society. Nowadays, ethnography is the single most important term in the anthropological vocabulary; it is characteristic for fieldwork-based research conducted by cultural and social anthropologists. As we shall see, "ethnography" is also the oldest of the ethnos-concepts, originating from eighteenth-century praxis as a study of peoples and of nations.

The history of anthropology has been studied in great detail by a variety of scholars, but studies on the history of ethnography are rare.³ Ethnography as a descriptive study is subordinated to "anthropology," a broader term denoting the "study of man," of mankind or humankind. The term "anthropologia," dating back to the sixteenth century (first reported in 1501), has been employed since the mid-nineteenth century (1860 in France, 1871 in the United Kingdom) as an encompassing concept: an umbrella term, so to speak, for a group of studies dealing with humankind and its diversity. Generally, however, "anthropology" came to stand for the physical study of man, particularly on the European continent, whereas cultural or social anthropology was denoted as "ethnology" (*Völkerkunde* in German-speaking countries, *volkenkunde* in Dutch). Lately, since 1989, the term "ethnology" has been abandoned by cultural and social anthropologists—leaving the term free for appropriation by students of folklore (*Volkskunde*), which is now referred to as "European ethnology."

Recent research has demonstrated that ethnography and ethnology emerged much earlier than has been assumed, namely, in the second half of the eighteenth century rather than in the mid-nineteenth. The concept "ethnographia" first surfaced in 1767 and 1771 (in the latter case as *Ethnographie*); the terms *Völkerkunde* and *Volkskunde* in 1771 and 1776, respectively. "Ethnologia," meanwhile, appeared in 1781–83 and "ethnologie" in 1787.⁴ Contrary to the standard account, this development took place not in Scotland, the United States, or France, but in German-speaking areas including Austria, Switzerland, and what later became Germany. These terms first arose in the work of German historians associated with the Second Kamchatka expedition (1733–43) working in Russia and the Siberian parts

of Asia, and—a few decades later—in that of German-speaking historians connected to the University of Göttingen (Germany) or operating in Vienna (Austria) and Lausanne (Switzerland).

On the basis of these new datings of strategic concepts in anthropology, we must revise the history of anthropology, including ethnology and ethnography. Michèle Duchet, in her celebrated *Anthropologie et histoire au siècle des Lumières* (1971, 2nd ed. 1995), concentrated on the anthropological discourse of French philosophers such as Georges-Louis Buffon, Voltaire, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Claude-Adrien Helvétius, and Denis Diderot. She also identified an “ethnological discourse,”⁵ but was able to identify only one of the authors contributing to that discourse: the Swiss Protestant French- and German-speaking theologian Alexandre-César Chavannes, who used the term “ethnologie” in 1787 and 1788. Chavannes, working at Lausanne, saw “ethnologie” as part of a larger study or anthropology, which he called “a new science” (*une science nouvelle*) or “general science of man” (*science générale de l’homme*).⁶

In this essay I shall present central- and eastern-European ethnological discourse in relation to the anthropological discourse discussed in the present book. My thesis is that an ethnological discourse developed during the eighteenth century alongside, and partly in opposition to, the anthropological discourse, subsequently defined as either the philosophical or the physical study of man. The relevance of this thesis is clear: if a discourse on peoples and on nations (*Völker*) developed alongside a discourse on race and on races; if, further, this discourse developed even earlier than the racial discourse, which is the subject of the present book, then we have to reflect on its origins. Cultural and social anthropology are direct offshoots of ethnology, and the study of cultured groups is widely pursued today. What, then, is the relationship between these two discourses? How do they affect one another?

Concentrating on those German-speaking historians working in Russia, Germany, Austria/Hungary, and Switzerland who have dealt with ethnography and ethnology as a nascent discipline, I shall in the following discuss four stages in a process lasting half a century. I shall then concentrate on the discipline’s relations with anthropology, particularly as applied by the philosophers Immanuel Kant and Johann Gottfried von Herder, and shall conclude by presenting some conclusions on ethnological discourse in eighteenth-century Europe and in Asia.

1. THE INTRODUCTION OF “VÖLKER-BESCHREIBUNG” (1740)

A possible prototype of ethnography was the German concept “Völker-Beschreibung,” denoting a descriptive study of peoples (*Völker*). This term

occurred some thirty years earlier than “ethnography,” not in Germany but in the Russian Empire. In fact, the concept “Völker-Beschreibung” first appeared in Siberia, where it was used by German-speaking explorers such as Gerhard Friedrich Müller (in 1740) and Peter Simon Pallas in 1781.

Gerhard Friedrich Müller (1705–1783), a historian educated at Leipzig, had traveled to St. Petersburg in 1725, where he was invited to become a junior member of the Russian Academy of Sciences. He taught Latin, history, and geography at the academic *gymnasium*, attended sessions at the Russian Academy, and worked in the Academy’s library and archives. He edited several journals and was appointed professor of history at the Academy in 1731. Müller was present as secretary when the extensive collections of Daniel Gottlieb Messerschmidt (1685–1735) were catalogued in the Russian Academy of Sciences in 1728. Messerschmidt had been the first Western explorer of Siberia and had traveled through the eastern parts of the Russian Empire as far as its Chinese and Mongolian frontiers (1720–27). The impressive collections of “indigenous natural-historical objects and rarities” he acquired were included in the Imperial *Kunstkamera* (*Kunstkammer*), founded at St. Petersburg in 1713–14. A few years after Messerschmidt’s return, Müller embarked on the Second Kamchatka expedition (1733–43). Directed by Vitus Bering, this expedition would take Müller to the heart of Siberia, albeit not to Kamchatka itself. During this trip, Müller assembled huge collections pertaining to the history, geography, and linguistics of the Siberian peoples, in addition to ethnographical and archeological artifacts.¹

Müller’s reputation is based on his publications in the fields of Siberian history and geography. By contrast, his ethnographic work has hardly been published and is almost unknown in the West. Müller published very little on Siberian ethnography, and the ethnographic artifacts, including Siberian costumes he collected in northern Asia, were destroyed by a fire in the *Kunstkammer* in 1747. Recent research in Russia and East Germany reveals, however, that Müller not only collected artifacts, but also made ethnographic inquiries along the way, the results of which he recorded in a separate log-book. This journal was recently published as *Nachrichten über Völker Sibiriens (1736–1742)*.⁷ These ethnographic fieldnotes served as the basis for Müller’s systematically arranged description of Siberian peoples (*Beschreibung der sibirischen Völker*).⁸

Thanks to these works, it has finally become clear that Müller dealt not only with the history and geography of Siberia, but also, and quite extensively, with the ethnography of Siberian peoples. Müller’s interest in this subject is also demonstrated by the instructions, at least six, which he wrote for his own assignment and for those of his assistants and his successor.⁹ The last instruction, dated June 1740, is the most important. Having been underway for seven years, Müller requested that he be replaced for health reasons.

Then, in Surgut, on the borders of the Ob river, he wrote an elaborate instruction for the “geographical and historical description of Siberia” to be carried out by his successor, Johann Eberhard Fischer (1697–1771), a German historian and linguist. The sixth and final part of this document dealt with “the description of manners and customs of peoples” (*Von Beschreibung der Sitten und Gebräuche der Völcker*). In it Müller summed up in 923 points all aspects to be studied by Fischer and his assistants in Siberia. Starting with the outward appearance of peoples, including physical characteristics, Müller moved from language to cultural subjects, including religion. The editor Fjodor Russow called this sixth part “ethnographisch” but Müller himself summarized it as “Völker-Beschreibung.”¹⁰ Thus, apart from studying the history and geography of Siberia, Müller also collected ethnographic artifacts (including textiles), made ethnographic inquiries among Siberian peoples, and wrote a systematic study of those peoples on the basis of his own field recordings and those of his assistants.¹¹ In addition, and in order to arrive at such a “Völker-Beschreibung” of Siberia, Müller summarized his ethnographic findings in an extensive catalogue (1740), a veritable “Notes and Queries” consisting of almost one thousand questions waiting to be answered in Siberia.

2. THE EMERGENCE OF “ETHNOGRAPHIA” (1767–1775)

It took less than thirty years for ethnography, the neo-Greek equivalent of the term “Völker-Beschreibung,” to surface in Germany. In 1767 the term “ethnographia” occurred in a short history of Swabia (*Provsio scholastica qua Sueviae veteris*) written in Latin by Johann Friedrich Schöpferlin (1732–1772), a historian and head of a *gymnasium* at Nördlingen (Swabia). Following a description of the Swabian people and their history, Schöpferlin remarked: “Ethnographia haec potius dicenda est, quam geographia Sueviae veteris, quam nunc brevissime subiicimus,” meaning: “This (the preceding) must rather be called the ethnography than the geography of ancient Swabia, which we shall now briefly represent.”¹² The idea was that for the study of the ancient history of Swabia ethnography was crucial, rather than geography, as the ancient inhabitants of that area were still migrating. The term “ethnographia” was coined from the Greek words “ethnos” (people, *Volk*) and “graphein” (to write). Its introduction was an important innovation in the field of history. The distinction Schöpferlin made between “ethnographia” and “geographia” is clear-cut, and it could confirm Hans Fischer’s hypothesis that the term *Ethnographie* was coined by analogy to the word *Geographie*.¹³ In a journal he coedited at Nördlingen, Schöpferlin returned to the parallelism between geography and ethnography: “In geography proper, as far as she is recently distinguished from ethnography [. . .].”¹⁴ This indicates

that the term “Völker-Beschreibung” had become known on a wider scale since 1740. Schöpferlin used “ethnographia” more or less in passing, as if it spoke for itself. He did not claim its coinage, nor did he provide its definition. He did, however, use it in important contexts, contrasting it with geography while reserving it a special place as a new discipline in historiography.

Four years later August Ludwig Schlözer (1735–1809), an up-and-coming historian at Göttingen, introduced the term “Ethnographie” in his *General History of the North (Allgemeine Nordische Geschichte)*, published at Halle in 1771. In this book, Schlözer presented a new outline of the history of the European and Asiatic North in an attempt to supplant earlier “myths” with fresh new ideas on the origin, kinship, and migration of the Nordic nations. Those nations in the European part of this enormous area were divided in five large groups, in fact language groups, which Schlözer spoke of as “Haupt- und Stammvölker.” These included not only the Germanic, Slavic, Lettish, and Finnish peoples, but also the Samoyeds; the latter also partly belonged to Europe due to their location west of the Urals—which Schlözer, following Müller, suggested as a boundary between Europe and Asia. For the Asiatic part of the north, Schlözer mentioned no fewer than twenty-two peoples, which we nowadays would call ethnic groups but which Schlözer called “Völker”; these groups he, following Leibniz and Müller, distinguished on linguistic grounds.¹⁵

In this context, Schlözer introduced the concepts “Völkerkunde” (ethnology), “Ethnographie” (ethnography), “ethnographisch” (ethnographic), and even “Ethnograph” (ethnographer). He did not present a definition of these terms, but from the context in which he used them, and on the basis of contemporary sources, it seems clear (1) that “Ethnographie” was seen as the equivalent of the German term “Völkerkunde” (a study of peoples); (2) that it occurred in contrast to such terms as “Kosmographie,” “Chronographie,” “Geographie,” “Biographie,” “Technographie,” and “Hydrographie;” and (3) that the meaning of “ethnographisch” was more or less equivalent to ethnography’s present-day meaning as a descriptive study of peoples or nations, of cultures or societies. Thus, we may conclude that “Ethnographie” in Schlözer’s view was a generalized science of peoples, empirical and descriptive as well as holistic and universal.¹⁶ If there was to be a study of peoples (*Völkerkunde*), all peoples of the world should be included and, in principle, all aspects should be dealt with.

Of special interest here is the concept “ethnographisch,” which Schlözer introduced in his monograph of 1771 and in a later book titled *Vorstellung seiner Universal-Historie* (Göttingen 1772, 2nd ed. 1775). In the latter, a manual for students, Schlözer devised an “ethnographical method” as one of the four methods of history¹⁷—basically, a history of the world arranged according to peoples. “Following the ethnographical method,” Schlözer wrote,

“world history would have as many chapters as there are separate peoples.”¹⁸ In the preface to the second edition Schlözer estimated that “between 150 and 200 peoples” exist, adding: “We need a description of each.” Therefore, at least 150 or 200 ethnographies should be written in order to arrive at a genuine world history.

It is likely that Schlözer formed the connection between Schöpferlin and Müller, as he had been in contact with both. Schlözer was a relative of Thilo and had been Müller’s assistant for half a year at St. Petersburg. He had lived in Müller’s house in 1761–62, until he found his own specialization: the ancient and modern history of Russia.

3. THE EMERGENCE OF “VÖLKERKUNDE” (1771–1775)

In addition to “Ethnographie” and “ethnographisch,” Schlözer introduced *Völkerkunde*, another concept of scholarly importance. This term, even if it has lately been losing ground to “ethnology” and especially to “social anthropology,” is still in use as the name of the discipline of (sociocultural) anthropology in Germany. Schlözer used the term *Völkerkunde* both in his monograph *Allgemeine Nordische Geschichte* (1771) and in *Vorstellung seiner Universal-Historie* (1772). Although “ethnographisch” is the most important and in any case longest lasting of these terms, it is clear that by coining the term “Völkerkunde,” Schlözer elevated the descriptive work of Müller and of others to a higher, more general level.

Völkerkunde as such means “knowledge of peoples,” and Schlözer contrasted it with *Weltkunde*, the “knowledge of the world.” In his *Allgemeine Nordische Geschichte*, Schlözer showed little respect for the *Weltkunde* of the ancient Greeks and Romans: “Their ethnology could not reach beyond their cosmology” [*Ihre Völkerkunde konnte nicht weiter als ihre Weltkunde gehen*], adding that their cosmology ended at the Rhine, Danube, Don, and Tigris rivers; in the same context, he wrote about the ignorance of the Greeks in regard to cosmology (*Welt-Unkunde der Griechen*).¹⁹ More respect, according to Schlözer, was due the ancient Persians who had under Cyrus founded the first “world empire,” which implied “the first large state union of humankind.” The Persians had united four principal peoples from the Ancient World as well as peoples from three continents, bringing the kingdoms of the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and the Medes within a single state.²⁰ With the Romans, history had become somewhat “world historic”; with Cyrus and the founding of the Persian Empire, “the world itself had become world historic.” “Only since then did humankind join in closer union and acquaintance.”²¹ Although the object of such a “Völkerkunde” was *all* peoples, only a selection of peoples could be discussed in a systematic world history, which would

focus on the interconnection of peoples and of states. Peoples who had founded states were, according to Schlözer, more advanced than those peoples without a state insofar as the former party had connected other peoples. Therefore, the study of the former was more essential both to arriving at that process of increased connection (*Verbindung*) which occurs partly through conquests; and to arriving at a greater *Verkettung* of the world, namely, at that process of increased concatenation on a global scale which we, since the fall of the Berlin Wall, call “globalization.”²² Schlözer was one of the first world historians to pay close attention to this process of increasing interconnectedness, and it is highly significant that he introduced the terms *Ethnographie* and *Völkerkunde* in this context.

The second source in which the concepts *Völkerkunde* and *Ethnographie* appeared, and the first in which they were expressly equated with each other, was an overview of geography (*Abriß der Geographie*) by Schlözer’s senior colleague, the historian Johann Christoph Gatterer (1727–1799). This book is dated 1775 but it appeared in 1778, even if the relevant sections occur in passages that were printed in 1775. Gatterer spoke of “Menschen- und Völkerkunde (Anthropographia und Ethnographia),” giving the subject a place in his classification of geographical sciences. He divided geography in four main chapters, including physical geography (*Gränzkunde*), geography proper (*Länderkunde*), political geography (*Staatenkunde*), and ethnology (*Völkerkunde*). The latter category was combined with anthropology (*Menschenkunde*), thereby linking both the anthropological and the ethnological discourses. Gatterer formulated his views on the classification of geographical sciences as follows:

The entire description of the Earth, with and without respect to the division in ancient, middle and new [periods], can conveniently be brought, I think, under four main categories or sciences: (1) the study of boundaries [*Gränzkunde (Horismographia)*], (2) the study of countries [*Länderkunde (Chorographia)*], (3) the study of states [*Staatenkunde (Poleographia or geographica Politice)*], and (4) the study of people and peoples [*Menschen- und Völkerkunde (Anthropographia and Ethnographia)*]. As we deal with geography here, it stands to reason that these four artificial terms are to be taken in their geographical meaning, not in their historical, political or statistical sense.²³

That Gatterer classified the new discipline of *Völkerkunde* in the domain of geography is remarkable, as Schlözer had given it a place in the historical domain and had even designed an “ethnographical method” as one of the four methods of history (see above). The reason for this reordering was probably

that Gatterer was aware that some peoples, including “wild peoples” (*wilde Völker*), do not have a written history (as he wrote in 1773);²⁴ this made their treatment within the discipline of history problematic. However, as Gatterer regarded geography as an auxiliary discipline of history, it was to be expected that the results obtained by ethnography—within the domain of geography—would find their way back into the mother discipline of history, from which ethnography had just been split off.

Gatterer also presented a first table of contents of the combined *Menschen- und Völkerkunde*, which should deal with people according to: (1) the human body, both in terms of stature and of color; (2) languages; (3) religions; (4) natural products; (5) culture (*Kultur*); (6) trade; and (7) geography.²⁵

Schlözer and Gatterer were the first two historians to use the concept *Völkerkunde*, not only in what later became Germany, but also worldwide. The University of Göttingen occupied a central place in the scholarly network of Germany, connecting western Europe and the Americas with eastern Europe and Asia. That the concept *Völkerkunde* was coined in the context of a study of peoples introduced by Müller in Siberia (1740) and by Schöpferlin in Swabia (1767) places this fact in a much brighter light. The next step was to move from a descriptive study of separate peoples towards a general science of the same.

4. FROM “ETHNOGRAPHIA” TO “ETHNOLOGIA” (1767–1787)

Several years after the concepts *Völkerkunde* and *Ethnographie* had been introduced, the concepts *Volkskunde* and *Ethnologie* appeared. In Germany the term “Volks-Kunde” first surfaced in the journal *Der Reisende* (The Traveller), published in 1782 by Friedrich Ekkard, a close collaborator of Schlözer’s.²⁶ It reappeared in 1787 in an article by Joseph Mader in Prague, and in 1788 in a Stuttgart chronicle by the popular poet C. F. D. Schubart.²⁷ Although none of these authors supplied a definition for *Volkskunde*, its meaning was probably the same as *Völkerkunde* in the singular, that is a study of a (one) people, as opposed to the study of more than one people or even of all peoples.

In the Netherlands, however, the term *Volkskunde* appeared even earlier, namely, in the work of the Dutch physician and natural historian Johannes le Francq van Berkhey (1729–1812). Le Francq used the term in volume three of his *Natuurlyke historie van Holland* (published at Amsterdam in 1776), in which, at the end of a chapter on children’s games, he writes: “The foregoing expositions will suffice, I trust, to open up this subject. Its study still seems to lack in our *Volkskunde* [in the study of our people] and, in my opinion, is here highly appropriate.”²⁸ There may have been a connection with Göttingen

scholars again, as Le Francq later adapted an introduction to natural history for children, written by George Christian Raff and published in Göttingen (*Naturgeschichte für Kinder*, 1778), for a Dutch readership as *Natuurlyke historie voor kinderen* (1781).

More fundamental was the term “Ethnologie,” which many scholars suppose was first used in 1787 by Alexandre-César Chavannes (1731–1800), professor of theology in Lausanne. This reference has been known for more than a century in France and Switzerland.²⁹ However, an earlier, even more important reference to the term, discovered by Ján Tibensky, a historian from Bratislava (Slovakia), in 1978, has long been neglected in western Europe.³⁰ Tibensky found out that the concept “ethnologia” already occurred in a work by the historian and librarian Adam Ferenc Kollár (1718–1783) on the History and Constitutional Law of the Kingdom of Hungary, written in Latin (Vienna, 1783). The importance of this discovery is not only that Kollár introduced this term earlier than Chavannes (the term may have been common in the intervening years), but Kollár also supplied a definition, different from the one given by Chavannes, which comes close to the (implicit) meaning of *Ethnographie* given by Schlözer. Chavannes’s definition was general in scope. He defined *ethnologie* as “the history of peoples progressing towards civilization” [*l’histoire des progrès des peuples vers la civilisation*],³¹ and saw ethnology as a part of anthropology, or “the general study of man.”³² This definition fit well within the conceptual scheme of the Enlightenment and its theory of stage-like progress. But Kollár, four years earlier, defined “Ethnologia” in a quite different way:

Ethnology, which I have mentioned occasionally above, is the science of nations and peoples, or, that study of learned men in which they inquire into the origins, languages, customs, and institutions of various nations, and finally into the fatherland and ancient seats, in order to be able better to judge the nations and peoples in their own times.³³

This means that Kollár, writing from Vienna, the capital of the Austrian-Hungarian multinational state, generalized Schlözer’s view, extending “ethnologia” to peoples and to nations (*populis* and *gens*). His list of topics included the origins, languages, customs, (legal) institutions, and “ancient seats” of nations; and he added that ethnology’s aim was also a practical one: to improve evaluations of nations and of peoples in their own day and age. Earlier, in his annotations to Petrus Lambecius, Kollár had written “. . . Graecos ultra Istrum ac Tanaïm in geographicis admodum parum, in ethnologicis nihil omnino vidisse” [beyond the Danube and the Don the Greeks noticed very little in geography and nothing in ethnology].³⁴ This view comes close to what we observed earlier in Schöpferlin, Schlözer and Gatterer.

In fact, the meaning of Schlözer's *Ethnographie* was very similar to Kollár's *Ethnologia*; both concepts referred to a historical description of peoples. However, Kollár added "nations," as he referred to ethnology as *notitia gentium populorumque*, that is, the study of nations and of peoples. The main object of this study was to arrive at reliable information on "the origins of nations," or, as Schlözer called it, *origines gentibus*. This was an old problem; but new was the linguistic method used in order to arrive at information on the early history of peoples of which no documented history existed.

We find in the *Ethnographie* and *ethnologia* presented by Schlözer and Kollár a very different kind of ethnology from that presented in Chavannes's *Ethnologie*. This difference was expressed by Vitomir Belaj in the following way: whereas the definition by Chavannes "puts an emphasis on the understanding of the laws of the general development of mankind," Kollár's definition places it "on the ethnic characteristics of the culture of a certain group of people (*gens*)." While Kollár's "criteria are cultural" and his orientation is historical, Chavannes's "subject matter is 'people' as a political, i.e. sociological category"; and Chavannes's "aim is to reconstruct the universal cultural development of all mankind."³⁵ Belaj also pointed at the different conceptions of *Volk* implicit in these definitions of ethnology: in the definition of Kollár the "ethnic characteristics" of a group of people are considered important; in that of Chavannes, the concept "people" became a sociopolitical category or "another word for a certain stage of development in the hierarchy of universal history" (*ibid.*).

In Kollár's view, as in Schlözer's, ethnology and anthropology are not explicitly related. In their views on history, and how it should be reformed, there is a need for a philosophically informed discourse on human development, but not for a study of the physical differences among people and between humans and other animals. This is striking, as such a connection does occur in Gatterer's and Chavannes's work. It also occurs, explicitly, in the historical and philosophical work of Johann Gottfried Herder.

5. THE VIEW OF HERDER

Alongside the view of Schlözer and Kollár on the one hand, and that of Chavannes on the other, there was a third perspective on ethnology—an even more appealing one. This view, developed by the philosopher and historian Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), was influential in the northern and eastern parts of Europe, particularly through his *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (4 vols. 1784–91) and his later *Briefe zur Beförderung der Humanität* (1793–97). Herder's ideas on the originality of the "folk-life," as expressed in national songs or "Volkslieder," which he began collecting in

1772, added to the rise of nationalism in eastern Europe, particularly in Poland and Bohemia.³⁶ Herder's star rose again in the early twentieth century, when Franz Boas used Herder's vision in his successful attempts to found (modern) ethnology in the United States.³⁷ Herder's work has remained important ever since as one of the major sources of anthropological thinking.³⁸

Whereas for Schläözer *Volk* was a taxonomical unit, a subgroup of the larger unity of humankind, Herder regarded *Volk* as something natural and organic in which humanity expressed itself. These differences are essential, since Schläözer was a staunch adherent of the Enlightenment, in particular of the German *Spätaufklärung*, whereas Herder belonged to the avant-garde of that countermovement to the Enlightenment called "*Frühromantik*," which in the early nineteenth century resulted in Romanticism proper (*Hochromantik*). Already in 1772 Herder attacked not only Schläözer's concept of "ethnographisch," which he found "difficult" and ugly,³⁹ but also Schläözer's view on world history and especially his implicit assumption that humankind was progressing through specific stages of civilization towards some penultimate goal: "Where is that one great endpole? Where is the straight way leading to it? What does 'progress of the human race' mean? Is it Enlightenment?"⁴⁰

Schläözer reacted with a second volume of his *Vorstellung* in 1773,⁴¹ but could offer very little in reply to Herder's main critique. Schläözer had taken great pains to distinguish between the different definitions of *Volk* current at the time. In his *Allgemeine Nordische Geschichte* (1771) and *Vorstellung seiner Universal-Historie* (1772), Schläözer distinguished between a "geographic," a "genetic" (or historical), and a "political" definition of *Volk*, summarizing his views by stating that in the first definition people are regarded as making up a class of peoples (in the Linnaean sense); in the second as belonging to a tribe (*Stamm*); and in the third as forming a state.⁴² He concluded his exposition with the remark: "It would be difficult to imagine how fertile and important these distinctions will be for a critique on [ancient] ethnology [i.e., on the knowledge of peoples]."⁴³

Further reactions by Herder to Schläözer's work are few. Herder simultaneously worked on his own project of writing a world history, to which purpose he contributed part of his travel journal (1769), a fragment on the teaching of the subject (*Grundriß des Unterrichts in der Universal-historie*; 1773, unpublished at the time), and his essay *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit* (1774; its title is intentionally sarcastic). Especially in his later works, the *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (1784–91), and *Briefe zur Beförderung der Humanität* (1793–97), Herder put forward a relativist, almost pluralistic vision of world history in which peoples are regarded not as objects in an "aggregate," as Schläözer had suggested, but as the "most noble part of humanity" (*edelsten Teil der Menschheit*), possessing an inherent value of their own. A people's value,

indeed their specificity was not to be judged by reference to the stage (or phase) which they occupied.

In his work, Herder consistently seems to have avoided the term *Ethnographie*. He occasionally used the term *Völkerkunde* but never again *ethnographisch*. His ethnological view, expressed in the sixth book of his *Ideen*, was deeply entrenched in his anthropological vision of humankind and of *Völker* as the bearers of humanity. Instead, Herder preferred more poetic phrases such as a "painting of nations" [*Gemälde der Nationen*] or "a painting of the diversity of our species" [*ein Gemälde der Verschiedenheit unseres Geschlechts*].⁴⁴

Ironically, Herder, who is generally accepted as a founder of anthropology, while not accepting Schläzer's term *Ethnographie*, contributed to nationalism in Europe, whereas Schläzer, a real patriot (in the sense of a *citoyen* or *Weltbürger*), introduced the new science of peoples or of nations—without any real influence on nationalism as it later developed.⁴⁵ Was *Völkerkunde* therefore a descriptive reflection on the condition of peoples or of nations, a reflection that developed *before* the phenomenon of nationalism had reached such a magnitude as to become visible on the world screen? Or have certain protoforms of this social process escaped our attention?

The relation between "Nation" and "Volk" seems relevant in the context of current discussions on ethnicity as a broader, more general phenomenon than nationalism. The question is: how was it possible that that study of nations dubbed *Völkerkunde* was conceived before the political movement of European nations gained momentum?

During the following years in Germany and in surrounding countries, the subject of *Völkerkunde* was developed most intensively in combination with "Länderkunde" or geography. From 1781 onwards, several journals were founded which carried the combination of "Völker- und Länderkunde" (or vice versa) in their title and contents.⁴⁶ The concept *Völkerkunde* became popular in the form of "Staaten-, Länder- und Völkerkunde," that is in combination with political history and geography; and it is noteworthy that the ethnographical method which Schläzer designed remained part and parcel of the historiographical paradigm up to the work of Leopold von Ranke.

Even more striking is that one finds the term *Ethnographie* in the work of such historians as Schöpferlin, Schläzer and Gatterer, but not in the work of philosophers such as Herder and Kant.

6. RELATIONS BETWEEN ETHNOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

The first historian to deal with the relations between ethnology (or ethnography) and anthropology (anthropography) was Gatterer. As we have seen, he spoke of "the study of people and peoples" (*Menschen- und Völkerkunde*),

Anthropographia and *Ethnographia*, giving each subject a place in his classification of geographical sciences (1775). Gatterer expressly linked the two subjects, obviously aware of the great opportunities for the “science of man” (not yet exclusively physical but also philosophical) in his day and age.

Schlözer did not comment on anthropology as such, although he agreed with Georges-Louis Buffon that only varieties, and not races, exist. Müller, as we have seen, dealt with the physical characteristics of Siberian peoples in his “Völker-Beschreibung,” thereby including physical anthropology in ethnography. However, not only historians such as Gatterer and Müller were aware of the links between these two approaches. The same applies to Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752–1840), one of the founders of physical anthropology or, as he preferred to call it, the “natural history of man.” Shortly after presenting his dissertation “On the Natural Varieties of Humankind” [*De generis humani varietate nativa*] at Göttingen in 1775,⁴⁷ Blumenbach published a sketch of anthropology (concerned with medical anthropology) and an article on “Diversity in Humanity” in which he described drawings of several varieties of people.⁴⁸ Three years later, Blumenbach compiled a catalogue of the Academic Museum of Göttingen, including a category “Kunst Sachen” (*artifacts*) totaling sixty-six items. By that time, he had been appointed extraordinary Professor of Medicine as well as Inspector of the Museum. On August 27, 1781, Blumenbach wrote to the government in Hannover asking for “some of the superfluous foreign natural curiosities” acquired during James Cook’s third voyage (1776–80). George III, King of Great Britain and Ireland and Elector of Hannover, ordered a shipment of 350 items, predominantly of an ethnographic nature, to be shipped from London in December that year.⁴⁹ This unexpected high-quality gift enhanced the reputation of the University of Göttingen as a center of eighteenth-century South Seas artifacts, stimulating Blumenbach’s interest in ethnography. During his long life, Blumenbach combined this interest with his main subject: anthropology. He published little on ethnological subjects (e.g., an article on the “Abilities and Manners of Savages”),⁵⁰ but maintained his position as director of the Göttingen Academic Museum until his death.

By contrast, the best-known philosopher of the German Enlightenment, Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), does not seem to have taken notice of these new developments in the field of ethnology. The concepts ethnography and ethnology do not figure in his work, with one exception (see below). This is surprising, as Kant was teaching anthropology at Königsberg during the winter semester from 1772–73 until 1795–96, alternating with lectures on geography during the summer semester. Kant was aware of Herder’s historical work and that of Schlözer; he studied Gatterer’s work on geography. It is unlikely that he could have overlooked the many references to a new study of nations and of peoples in the German literature. The history of terminology shows that

these terms were so popular during the 1780s and 1790s,⁵¹ that they could hardly have escaped Kant's attention. We may therefore assume that ethnography, as a descriptive study of peoples, was deemed unworthy to be included in Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798)⁵²—as if in his philosophical accounts of “man” the study of *Volk/Völker*, and of ethnicity as such, did not need to be incorporated. If this is true, Kant was not “culture conscious” in the sense Alfred Louis Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn (1952) imputed to the term.⁵³

Another explanation for Kant's negligence, that he was not familiar with the new discipline of *Völkerkunde*, is not very likely. In his review of Herder's second volume of *Ideas* (1785), Kant used the term “ethnographic” when summarizing Herder's view that “a collection of new ethnographic illustrations” would be needed.⁵⁴ However, as we have seen, Herder avoided the term ethnography in his work and preferred to speak of a “painting of nations” or “a painting of the diversity of our species.”

Several years ago, Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze deplored the fact that Kant's views on race had been dismissed by then-recent scholarship: in Howard Caygill's *Kant Dictionary* (1995), the entry “race” is lacking.⁵⁵ I would add that of importance here is Kant's failure to acknowledge the contemporary, growing body of work on ethnography and on ethnology in his work regarding (philosophical) anthropology. This failure on Kant's behalf is, at some level, detrimental to our scholarship inasmuch as his work is regarded as the summation of the German Enlightenment and forms the basis of most recent studies on eighteenth-century philosophy in the United States. John H. Zammito claims that (philosophical) anthropology was born out of philosophy in the work of Kant and of Herder during the late 1760s and early 1770s.⁵⁶ This claim may be true, but it neglects the part played by ethnography and by ethnology in German Enlightenment thinking—a neglect which partly resulted from Kant's failure to acknowledge what was going on in central and eastern Europe, as well as from Herder's refusal to adopt innovative terminology.

Indeed, the mainstream of eighteenth-century German ethnological thinking was not voiced by Herder—his influence is of a later date. Mainstream summaries were provided by authors such as Theophil Friedrich Ehrmann (1762–1811), a compiler and translator of travel accounts. Ehrmann presented the earliest overview of “*Völkerkunde*” (1787) and returned to the subject several times.⁵⁷ To the important journal *Allgemeines Archiv für Ethnographie und Linguistik*, published at Weimar in 1808, Ehrmann contributed a summary of general and special ethnology (*allgemeinen und besonderen Völkerkunde*),⁵⁸ making clear that the first term refers to a general, comparative study of peoples (*Ethnologie*), whereas the second is a descriptive study of a people or of several peoples (*Ethnographie*). This distinction would remain essential until the 1920s.

In a separate article in the same journal, Ehrmann went into the field of (biological) anthropology, presenting an overview of the most important “varieties of mankind.” Following Blumenbach, he wrote several paragraphs to supplement a map of human races according to skin color. In the title of that article, Ehrmann speaks of “main diversities of peoples” (*Hauptverschiedenheiten der Völker*); in the subtitle, though, he refers to the map of “human races” (*Menschen-Rassen*).⁵⁹ This confusion is significant. The map is in color and five main “diversities” are distinguished. In pink are engraved the Europeans (excepting the Lapps and Finns), West-Asians and North Africans (the Caucasian variety); in yellow: the East- and South-Asians (excepting the Malay peoples), Finns, Lapps, Eskimos, inhabitants of Greenland, and inhabitants of part of the North-West Coast of America (the Mongolian variety); in black: the Africans (the Ethiopian variety), excepting the North Africans; in brown: the Americans (the American variety), excepting the most northerly inhabitants; in red: the Malays from Malaysia and the Indonesian Islands, as well as the Australians (the Malay variety).

The map is a symbol of Western industriousness and shows the eighteenth century’s triumph: the geographical discovery of the world is almost complete. All continents are in place, with their locations fairly correct though not yet definite. Africa is too small, the northern parts of America, Asia, and Europe too large; Oceania is in place; however, the interior of many continents remains uncharted. Over these geographical boundaries is woven a web of physical-anthropological categorization in which Lapps and Finns are located outside the Caucasian variety and brought under the Mongolian variety; and in which West Asians and North Africans are brought into the Caucasian family, thereby separating North Africans from the Ethiopian variety that subsequently includes only African Blacks. Interesting is the Malay variety, which, separated from the Asians, includes both the Australian Aborigines and the original population of New Zealand. All this is indeed based on Blumenbach’s system as set forth in the second edition of his thesis (1781), wherein the human species is divided into five “varieties” instead of four, acknowledging the Malayan (Austral-Asian) as the fifth.⁶⁰

In Ehrmann’s work we have the clearest example that both studies, ethnology and anthropology, were formulated alongside each other, albeit in separate branches of learning. This suggests a conception of the world inhabited by people living in groups, which are called “Völker” or “Volksstammen” (tribes) as subcategories of humankind, which can also be subdivided in human “races” (varieties). Whereas the earlier ethnographers were historians, geographers, and linguists, the physical anthropologists were physicians and anatomists. The philosopher Kant was neither, and for this reason his anthropological work is not relevant to the current overview of ethnology.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The concepts *ethnographia*, *Völkerkunde*, and *ethnologia*, together with related concepts such as *Völkerbeschreibung* and *Volkskunde*, all appeared in Russia, Germany, and Austria-Hungary within a relatively short time span (1740–1783). This ethnological discourse, a way of thinking in terms of peoples (*Völker*), quickly spread to such other countries of Europe as Switzerland, the Netherlands, France, Bohemia, and England, as well as to the United States. The consequences of this discovery are yet to be integrated into the existing views on the history of anthropology as a whole. It appears that all the concepts mentioned above referred to a new and separate field of knowledge, namely, the history and contemporary condition of nations and of peoples (*Völker*), or ethnic groups.

The emergence of this new ethnological discourse was clearly related to the universalistic tendencies of the Enlightenment. It also had to do with processes of state-formation and nation-building in the German-speaking countries and in the Russian and Austrian/Hungarian empires. A third factor was the increasing amount of knowledge regarding peoples recently discovered in Siberia and in other areas of Europe, Asia, and Oceania. The growing knowledge of peoples in the world was incorporated in history and in geography as developed at the University of Göttingen. Schlözer and Gatterer incorporated field studies by Müller and by others into their writings, raising the discussion to a theoretical level. How many peoples exist? What is a people (*Volk*)? Which peoples should be included? What aspects of these peoples should be studied? Kollár extended the argument of Müller and Schlözer, and generalized the problem, drawing on a more pressing subject at hand: the management of ethnic diversity in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Shortly after its introduction in Göttingen, *Ethnographie* met forceful critiques formulated by such early Romantics as Herder, who developed a new concept of *Volk* and who claimed that a particularistic approach was necessary to do justice to the inherent value of nations and of peoples (their culture). Herder devised a new view of peoples unfolding towards humanity (*Humanisierung*), and he avoided the new vocabulary as did his teacher Kant, who ignored the topic altogether. Herder's views entered American anthropology in the early twentieth century through the work of Franz Boas, who heralded Herder's vision of peoples unfolding towards humanity and becoming (more) human.

Relevant to the German invention of race is the fact that the ethnological discourse was developed alongside that anthropological discourse in western Europe and in the United States in which philosophical or physical comments were given on human "races" and "race" in general. While the

latter, “anthropological” tradition has received a great deal of the limelight, ethnological discourse has largely gone unnoticed in recent scholarship. This new way of thinking in terms of peoples and of cultures (nations, as such, without a political meaning) has been overlooked not only in France, England, the United States, and even partly in Russia, but also in Germany. These processes deserve more attention, for “nations” are not the same as “races”—even if the concept anthropology seems to include both.

Philosophical anthropology may have been born out of philosophy, as Zammito claims. Yet, ethnography and ethnology, as forerunners of sociocultural anthropology, were born out of an ethnological praxis: they resulted from attempts to understand a dazzling diversity of “peoples” and “nations” in Europe and Asia, particularly those brought together in multinational states such as Russia and Austria-Hungary. These attempts dealt both with the present state of these nations and with the historical analysis of their origins, languages, migrations, and states. Sociocultural anthropology, in the form of ethnography and ethnology, resulted during the eighteenth century from the theoretical and practical need to study these processes in order to grasp important aspects of the world.

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32. See note 6.

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