

On uncivilized art and civilized 'artistry'  
An ethnological enquiry  
by  
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„Sicher ist zwischen der Seele eines Goethe und der eines Wedda ein grösserer Unterschied als zwischen letzterem und einer Menschenaffen'.<sup>1</sup> In the year 1909 the 'Tierpsychologe'<sup>2</sup> P. Ohm wrote in this way in his book entitled 'Das Seelenleben der Tiere'. The fact that this statement did not provoke a general protest is evident: even in the year 1912 another learned person considered it necessary to once again especially draw attention to this statement in appreciative words.<sup>3</sup> If Mr. Ohm had used an average civilized German as his object of comparison, he would presumably have been called a lunatic: it is indeed difficult for us to imagine that a civilized – let alone a learned German would hold the view to inwardly resemble an ape more than Goethe. Apparently Goethe's personal geniality was not the determining factor as to this peculiar comparison, but the general state of civilization of which he was one of the most gifted representatives. We can safely assume that according to Mr. Ohm the difference between modern culture and the level of civilization of certain 'uncivilized' tribes is larger than the spiritual difference between Man and ape.

In this notion we easily recognize a mixture of ideas, which have been outdated for centuries and poorly digested modern science. On the one hand Mr. Ohm does still see a 'wild' man in the uncivilized fellow human being. On the other hand his fanatical devotion to the theory of descent causes him to lose all perspective from view. One would almost be inclined to think that his familiar contact with abstract quantities such as 'our apelike predecessors' has played tricks on him; in a manner that the Wedda too have become

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<sup>1</sup> English: 'There is certainly a larger difference between the soul of Goethe and that of a Wedda, as there is between the soul of the latter and of a chimpanzee'.

<sup>2</sup> English: 'animal psychologist'.

<sup>3</sup> De Josselin de Jong states in endnote 1 of his original manuscript: Ferdinand Pax in *Zeitschrift für angewandte Psychologie* etc., vol. 6, 1912, 278.

something abstract for him, an expressive indication of 'something apelijke'. We have therefore not cited his judgment in order to comprehensively refute it, but merely because it forms an interesting counterpart to another opinion, also antiquated and yet ultramodern, of which the adept simply ignore the difference between 'civilized' and 'uncivilized' or rather 'differently civilized', they throw the science that studies dissimilarity overboard as useless ballast and with truly enviable self-confidence think to find the spiritual life of the primitive brother in their own more or less vague emotions and impressions. The essence of their belief forms the conviction that Man's innermost self expresses itself in the arts and that real art, thus a revelation of the soul, is always recognizable as such among the many 'imitations', 'fakes' in which it especially in the scientific museums, is lost. Regardless from which cultural circle the artwork has originated, to which level of civilization it belongs – always as to the artist 'his artwork is always driven' by an 'immense psychic tension' which in turn is 'processed' by means of an always 'similar spiritual emotionality'.<sup>4</sup> This 'spiritual affection of the maker at the moment of his creating art'<sup>5</sup> is therefore that which the twentieth-century confessor of this belief thinks to be able to '*nachfühlen*'<sup>6</sup> in each 'real' piece of art; and this psychic contact enables him to acquire a pure aesthetic appreciation, even if he does not know what the work of art represents, with which non-aesthetic ulterior motives it has been created, in short which place it has occupied within the artist's entire level of civilization and of the community where he lived. We will not dwell on the vague terminology with which these 'artistical people' prevent us from gaining any insight into their ideas, but only merely momentarily draw attention to the consequences according to which in their view the practical implementation of these notions will have to lead. As it is possible to distinguish between a 'work of art' and a 'single piece of home crafts', it is desirable to split 'the contents of the ethnographical museums into works of art and objects of ethnographic interest'.<sup>7</sup> As only the artist (read: adept of the above-mentioned school of thought) has the distinguishing judgement, it goes without saying that not only the separation itself but also

<sup>4</sup> De Josselin de Jong states in endnote 2 of his original manuscript: See the declaration of intent of The Society of Friends of Asiatic Art; it is explicitly mentioned here: by no means whatsoever do all members of this society, not even all the board members, adhere to the school of thought referred to above. [This declaration of intent has as yet not been found in the archives of this society].

<sup>5</sup> De Josselin de Jong states in endnote 3 of his original manuscript: T.a.p. *Ter aangehaalder plaatse*: the location in the text where it was quoted.

<sup>6</sup> De Josselin de Jong states in endnote 4 of his original manuscript: No citation. English: 'sympathize with'.

<sup>7</sup> De Josselin de Jong states in endnote 5 of his original manuscript: see *Nederlandsch-Indië Oud en Nieuw*, 1919, 380.

the management of the released 'works of art' will have to be entrusted to them.

Although at present the realisation of these ideas will as yet continue to be wishful thinking or rather 'artistic' thinking, it can however serve in order to investigate that which scientific ethnology to date has brought to light with regard to the essence of primitive art. The reader may then personally judge which guide is to be preferred here the 'artistic' sensitivity or the ethnological facts.

## I

By and large, the most characteristic feature of primitive art is without doubt its bewildering variety of forms. When relying, upon the since Adolf Bastian<sup>8</sup> almost generally excepted axiom concerning the unity of human civilization as a consequence of the unity of the human psyche, we begin to discover a single general line of evolution within the artistic products of numerous peoples, tribal societies or spheres of civilization, to then soon recognize that that theoretical unity is in practise difficult. What we find in the first place is not a large number of parallel series of evolution, supplied ready to fit Edward B. Tylor's<sup>9</sup> frequently incorrectly applied scheme, but striking contrasts, which at first sight mock everything we would expect from the theory of the '*Elementargedanken*' and the concept of evolution. And if even some of these contrasts may disappear or at least become less sharply defined under continued research, with one of them rather the opposite is the case: its sharpness always increases, until we finally realise that our concept concerning the nature and growth of primitive art is in fact largely defined by our judgement of this one phenomenon. I am referring to the contrast between the predominantly naturalistic character of the art of certain, mainly very primitive tribes and the remarkable lack of naturalism characteristic of the art of the vast majority of uncivilized peoples across the globe. Where we find that naturalistic art is quickly mentioned: with the Bushmen, the 'Palaeolithic' cave dwellers of Western Europe, and under certain reservation,

<sup>8</sup> Adolf Bastian (1826-1905), ethnologist and coiner of the concept of '*Elementargedanken*' i.e., all humans share the same spiritual background. Author of: *Der Mensch in der Geschichte, zur Begründung einer psychologischen Weltanschauung*, Leipzig: O. Wiegand 1860; *Ethnische Elementargedanken in der Lehre vom Menschen*, 2 vols, Berlin: Weidmann'sche Buchhandlung, 1895.

<sup>9</sup> Edward B. Tylor (1832-1917), ethnologist and author of: *Researches into the early history of mankind and the development of civilization*, London: J. Murray, 1865; *Anthropology, an introduction to the study of man and civilization*, London: Macmillan and co., 1881; *Primitive culture: researches into the development of mythology, philosophy, religion, language, art, and custom*, London: J. Murray, 1891.

with the Arctic peoples, especially the Eskimo. We should reflect on all these groups for a moment.

The Bushmen represent one of the earliest layers of population in Africa. These regions were presumably uninhabited when they spread across a large part of Southern Africa, yielding to the pressure of powerful tribes intruding from the North. They are possibly closely related to the Pygmy groups, also remnants of a very ancient layer of habitation nowadays pushed back into the most inaccessible parts of Central Africa. Wherever the Bushmen have been, they have left their traces in painted or incised drawings on cave walls or rocks. As it is no longer doubted that these drawings, wherever one finds them, indeed originate from the Bushmen - imitations by *Kaffers*<sup>10</sup> or others are immediately recognizable -, it is possible to determine their entire protracted ordeal through Southern Africa with fairly large precision. Based on meticulous research George W. Stow<sup>11</sup>, the leading expert on the small people, has arrived at the conclusion that one can clearly discern two main groups, which have each entered Southern Africa along their own path differing more or less as to language and further culture. One group consists of the 'cave dwellers': they have left the paintings on the cave walls. The other group, the '*kopje-dwellers*'<sup>12</sup>, built huts by way of a temporary residence on the '*kopjes*'. They incised their drawings into the rocks and random boulders with sharp stones. Stow's opinion is quite strong, but it is the question whether or not he has drawn the line a little too sharply. Others have observed that the paintings were preferably made on soft, porous rock, into which the paint could penetrate, so that the drawing could not be erased and also did not wear off quickly, whereas the incised figures are mainly found on the hardest kinds of stone. There is as yet no certainty with regard to the relative and precise age of both groups of drawings. On the basis of weathering phenomena Stow estimates that the earliest incised drawings are at least 2,500 years old and that the most recent ones are aged half a century. Any indication as to the age of certain paintings is presented by means of the communication of elder Bushmen comprising one never made a drawing on a

<sup>10</sup> The term 'Kaffer' is derived from the Arabic 'Kafir', meaning unbeliever. Once Dutch seafarers had become familiar with this term they adopted it in order to refer to the Khoisan inhabiting the Cape of Southern Africa. During the 1920s, this term still served to distinguish between the Khoisan, who had a browner skin colour in comparison with their eastern and northern, Bantu speaking neighbours who were darker skinned.

<sup>11</sup> George W. Stow (1822-1882), geologist, ethnologist and author of: *The Native Races of South Africa. A History of the Intrusion of the Hottentots and Bantu into the Hunting Grounds of the Bushmen, the Aborigines of the Country*. With numerous illustrations, London: Swan Sonnenschein and co., 1905.

<sup>12</sup> The Dutch term '*kopje*' (English: 'little head') is applied in Southern and Southern-central Africa when referring to an isolated granite rock hill, knob, ridge, or small mountain, which rises abruptly from a gently sloping or virtually level surrounding plain.

location where signs of earlier drawings were still visible, as long as one still remembered its creator. In practise one cannot do much with this criterion. To begin with the earlier drawer can be unknown – which indeed may have often occurred with the nomadic way of life of the Bushmen. Moreover, it seems to be somewhat hazardous to estimate the duration of this memory, as Stow does, to be three generations. Nor do the subjects the Bushmen chose to draw provide us with a useful criterion with which to determine the age. It can merely be surely stated that the earlier drawings, almost exclusively depictions of animals, are in general more beautiful than the more recent ones, in which humans come to the fore more. It is as if one sees that their artistic capacity gradually diminishes; the figures become more rigid, clumsier, more conventional, too, and therefore less realistic. However, the drawer's personal talent is also a factor of importance. And, it would again be therefore premature for us to solely speculate about its relative age on the basis of a drawing's artistic value. We find a great variety, also with regard to the choice and the use of colours. More than one researcher has had the impression that the drawing was simply filled with one or more similar colours, such as red and yellow, in the most random manner. This is certainly incorrect. Although there are drawings, many even, of which the singular colouring has indeed nothing in common with the incidentally masterfully represented reality, it cannot be disputed, that certain drawers have in this regard, too, managed to achieve results of which, as those more competent have remarked, a present-day painter should not be ashamed.

It almost goes without saying that one has often asked the question, what the Bushmen actually intended with their drawings, which role they played in their life. Were they a people of artists that drew because they could not resist drawing, or are those images in the first place meant as communications, or do they perhaps have a religious significance? Especially certain drawings that can hardly be considered to be realistic representations of well-known animals or scenes from daily life, such as humans with animal heads, and enigmatic figures Stow describes as 'hieroglyphical emblems' or 'symbolic designs', have led to various hypotheses. At this moment we cannot reflect upon these questions; only at the end of our research will it perhaps be possible to answer them at least partly.

From the Bushmen to the Palaeolithic cavemen of Western Europe seems a great leap; but those who have become acquainted with the striking resemblance between Bushmen drawings and the figures incised into mammoth tooth or reindeer horn of the early prehistoric hunter in Southern France and Northern Spain will involuntarily wonder if we are not dealing

here with a psychological kinship that can only find a satisfactory explanation in an extremely close anthropological relationship.<sup>13</sup>

Much has been written about this primeval European art and much has been contested. Archaeologists, geologists and ethnologists have each from their own standpoint studied this phenomenon; all have contributed somewhat towards solving the riddle and have thus gradually at least agreed upon several important issues. One no longer doubts it entirely falls under the Palaeolithic era, that is to say its results only occur in layers earlier than those in which polished stone artefacts are found or in an environment that provides ample indications of such scope. And, of even more relevance, the chronological sequence of the most important types or schools one can distinguish in this art, too, is at present more or less fixed: the sculpture (round as well as relief sculpture) is earlier than the (incised or painted) drawing, the portraying of the human being comes before that of the animal. The statuettes and reliefs in ivory, reindeer horn and stone, which represent the earliest sculpture, almost exclusively depict female figures with apparently deliberately exaggerated sexual characteristics; moreover, the genitals are singly indicated during this earliest art phase – and even long after that – in relief or round sculpture. In spite of the caricature-like exaggeration of sexuality this earliest sculpture strikes us by means of its sharp and striking representation. For instance, the well-known ivory female statuette of *Brassempouy* (the 'Venus of *Brassempouy*')<sup>14</sup> of which sadly only the far from intact torso remains, is undoubtedly one of the finest examples of 'uncivilized' sculpture known to us, from whichever part of the world.

Not much more recent than this earliest sculpture are the earliest drawings or rather incisions on rock faces with however almost exclusively animals as a subject. This is no coincidence as is proven by the fact that not only the earliest, but almost all cave drawings dating from the era of the Palaeolithic art depict animals only.

The course of the further evolution is highly remarkable. Alongside the sculpture, that noticeably becomes more rare, the incised drawing appears; and in both we gradually see Man being replaced by the animal. The finest examples of animal sculpture are found among the most recent results of Palaeolithic art. Now and again the material comprises ivory of the mammoth

<sup>13</sup> See Larissa Mendoza Straffon, *Art in the making. The evolutionary origins of visual art as a communication signal*. Leiden University dissertation: Department of Art History. Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society (LUCAS), Faculty of Humanities. 2014.

<sup>14</sup> The Venus of *Brassempouy* was discovered in a cave near the eponymous village in South-western France in 1894. It is carved from mammoth ivory and dates from the Gravettian (26000-24000 BP). The same excavation yielded several fragments of female statuettes, which may be examples of unfinished work as if craftsmen had carved several figurines at the same time. See Randall White, 'The Women of *Brassempouy*, a Century of Research and Interpretation', *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory*, 13, 4 December 2006, 250-303.

tooth, but is usually reindeer horn. At this stage we find the beautiful sculpturing on weapons and tools and the renowned engravings on pieces of bone. Wherever the human figure is still present it is not more than a caricature of the realistic representations of the earliest era. The evolution of the cave drawings runs parallel with this: here the animal figure develops along a gradually increasing line, too. During the era of the realistic human sculptures cave drawings were apparently not yet made.

As with the Bushmen inexplicable figures occur with the Palaeolithic West Europeans. 'Geometrical ornaments' are as yet alien to the first era. Later one finds them sporadically, partly standing on their own, partly linked to naturalistic animal figures. Now and again they may perhaps depict hair; sometimes we find them dispersed seemingly at random between realistic representations. However, albeit hardly prominent, they are of such an unmistakably subordinate relevance, that their sporadic presence does detract anything from the predominantly naturalistic character of this art.

Merely on the basis of the remarkable resemblance between the Eskimo drawings incised into ivory, bone and reindeer horn and similar art products of the Palaeolithic European, researchers have thought they should consider the historic Eskimo to be a descendant of the European cave dweller and have even attempted to elaborate this strange hypothesis in detail. That resemblance is indeed striking, but this does not imply that the Arctic art - which reaches its peak among the Eskimo -, is in its entirety considered to be of a totally different nature when compared with the nature of the Bushmen and primeval Europeans. In the face of the important point of resemblance, the prominent talent for realistic reproduction in sculpture or drawing, which comes with all Arctic people, there is another not less significant difference: the art of these people is, in spite of the artistic capacity, absolutely not predominantly naturalistic. As their entire spiritual culture is higher and more differentiated, their art is also less simple, much more difficult to judge in its entirety. In addition to many products of free, realistic sculpture and drawings we find ancestor statues and other pieces of art with a magical-religious connotation, which when observed from an artistic perspective are at a lower level: they are stiff and conventional. Simple geometric ornaments such as concentric circles, zigzag lines and the like as well as more complicated forms of conventional ornamentation, which often convey the impression of stylisation products, are present too; now and again they seemingly absolutely do not refer to a realistic proto-type, but instead refer to technical oddities of form, in which one later saw natural objects. An important part of this art is ultimately the remarkable figure script, in which the separate denotations, especially with the Eskimo, but also with certain

Siberian peoples, such as the Chukotko<sup>15</sup>, are still for the larger part genuine-naturalistic depictions.

We cannot mention the arctic art in one and the same breath with the art of the two above-mentioned groups, nor does it allow itself to be placed among the general type of primitive art, of which the other two are that much different. In that respect, not only the art, but also the entire culture of Arctic peoples shows a too decidedly individual character. And finally it cannot be considered a transitional form, especially as we do not want to work with the evolutionistic schema in the spirit of Tylor, but also because the combination of very primitive and at the same time undeniably recent elements, comprising one of its essential features, that includes much more than that which can be brought in line with the concept of 'transitional form'.

Before turning to other types of primitive art, we must for the sake of completeness mention that Australian rock and cave drawings too are often described as feats of primitive naturalistic art. Undoubtedly certain examples reveal sharp observational abilities and a remarkable talent for drawing, but by and large these products are of an inferior quality when compared with those of the above-mentioned tribes whereas generally speaking there can indeed be no talk of a predominant naturalistic character in Australian art. Moreover, these Australian data have, as far as I know, never been methodically acquired with due criticism so much so that the stereotypical judgement of this art is presumably more based on reports forwarded by travellers than on the acquisition of reliable reproductions. The representations one encounters in the more recent ethnographical literature on this part of the world, certainly do not justify that judgement.

## II

In face of these few groups with a predominantly naturalistic art, now stands an overwhelming majority of tribes in which the naturalistic element is almost completely absent: the conventional ornament, occurring as a stylization product or not, plays a much more important role than the representation of an existing example recognizable to us; and in so far as this representation occurs, either as a sculpture or graphically, it is always inadequate, awkward and highly unrealistic. Summarized as briefly as possible, this is the overall impression which primitive art in the broadest sense tends to make on all who have dealt with it in a more than superficial manner. Almost all ethnologists and art historians who have tried to approach its essence and evolution consider this lack of interest and capability with regard to realistic

<sup>15</sup> The arctic people named Chukotko inhabit the extreme northeastern part of Siberia in an area equal to the autonomous district of Chukotko.

representations as the main issue. In this connection they try to arrive at a correct insight into the genetic connections between the conventional, especially the 'geometrical' decorative motif and the naturalistic image.

Even before the discovery of the Palaeolithic art in Europe had rendered this issue a '*question brûlante*'. Long before the drawings of the Bushmen had entered the circle of the research, archaeologists had formulated the thesis that all decorative art goes back to the geometrical ornament which, in turn, can be directly explained by means of the technique, especially of the art of braiding and weaving. This contention was based on the fact that the earliest known ornamentation in Europe displayed a purely geometrical character. Although one could not provide conclusive arguments as to the origin of those geometrical ornaments from the technique, this conclusion seemed to be obvious, as plaiting and weaving seem to include the familiarity with certain geometrical forms. Meanwhile many also consider such an explanation completely superfluous; that ornamentation was in their view simply the product of a pure, not yet digressed artistry.

Although, after some time, it appeared from Mycenaean finds that at least here a more naturalistic style preceded the 'geometrical style'; in general, the priority of the latter style was held on to. Based on certain finds it was thought that – a suspicion seemingly confirmed by later finds – the geometrical style had been merely temporarily pushed to the background due to foreign influences. Moreover, the American archaeologist William H. Holmes<sup>16</sup> had already in 1884 indisputably proven that the adornment of certain types of North American earthenware, the earliest found in those regions, had indeed originated directly from the weaving and braiding techniques. This ornamentation, however, turned out to be nothing but imprints of braiding or later imitations of it. Often these imprints are so sharp that the technique of the applied braiding is still clearly recognizable, whereas remnants of this braiding themselves remove the last doubt as to the

<sup>16</sup> William Henry Holmes (1846-1933), geologist, archaeologist, anthropologist and author of: 'Prehistoric textile fabrics of the United States, derived from impressions on pottery', *Third Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology*, 1881-1882, 393-425. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1884. See also: 'Origin and development of form and ornament in ceramic art. [Abstract]', *Transactions of the Anthropological Society of Washington*, 1885, 112-4, and *Fourth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology*, Washington: Government Printing Office, 1886, 437-65; 'A study of the textile art in its relation to the development of form and ornament', *Sixth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology*, Washington: Government Printing Office, 1888, 189-252. 'On the evolution of ornament – an American lesson', *American Anthropologist*, vol. 3, 1890, 137-46. Holmes's 190 publications included many devoted to the study of Native American Art. His essays on Native American artefacts were among the first serious contributions to the study of Native American art. Holmes opposed a popular belief concerning an era in the New World prehistory comparable to the Upper Palaeolithic (Old Stone Age) Europe, which proved to be correct.

correctness of Holmes' conclusions. Holmes also illustrated that earthenware forms go back to objects from natural or from further material. The calabash and the shell, the crude stone pot, the wooden dish or bowl, the horn spoon, woven baskets and small bowls made of tree bark; in short all the vessels dating from the time that ceramics did not yet exist are encountered among the earliest earthenware. In this way the intimate association between the braid pattern and the earliest earthenware ornamentation was proven at least in North America; so one could expect similar data to be found elsewhere, too, all the more as it was already known that braiding was an ancient art. However, any systematic research in this direction was as yet absent. Only in 1909 did the German archaeologist Carl Schuchardt<sup>17</sup> carry out with regard to Europe that which Holmes had done a quarter of a century earlier regarding North America with this difference, however, that he tried to prove more with less data. The imprinted or incised ornaments on European earthenware are never braiding imprints but at best copies of braid patterns; moreover Schuchardt did not derive his knowledge of the braid patterns, which in his view had served as examples, from prehistoric European, but from South American braid work. It will soon become clear to the reader how he came to this. In order not to lose sight of the historical connection between the events, we must momentarily rest Schuchardt's theory just a little and concentrate on several earlier studies and discoveries of an entirely different nature, which had in fact already brought research to a new phase. One must first mention here the discovery of Palaeolithic art in Europe. The initial reports in this regard were received rather sceptically, but it soon appeared that the products of this art were indeed 'genuine', and that their great age could not be doubted; therefore the most ancient art of all to be accessed in Europe does not even slightly display anything that recalls a 'geometrical style': it is indeed as naturalistic as can be. Did one have to now assume that this naturalism too had developed from an earlier geometrical style? But how did it then come about that all the numerous finds have not retained a trace of this transition? The few geometrical figures which now and again appear among the naturalistic drawings and reliefs could certainly not be considered the final remnants of a lost style: the finds indeed rather point to a development in the opposite direction. None of the adherents to the geometrical theory has consequently dared to seriously advocate such an interpretation; all had to admit one had indeed to do with an art with a naturalistic origin. In

<sup>17</sup> Carl Schuchardt (1859-1943), archaeologist, founder of the *Prähistorisches Zeitschrift* (Prehistoric Journal) and author of: 'Das technische Ornament in den Anfängen der Kunst, 1. Das Ornamentsystem der nordwestdeutschen neolithischen Keramik', 37-54, Tables 6-14 + 18 Figures; '2. Buckelkeramik', 351-69, Tables 38-43 + 10 Figures, *Prähistorische Zeitschrift*, I, Berlin: de Gruyter 1909; '3. Verschiedene Stoffe: Leder, Weberei, Knüpf- und Näharbeit', *Prähistorische Zeitschrift*, II, Berlin: de Gruyter 1910:145-62 + 29 Figures.

archaeological circles one nevertheless adhered to the old belief. One was inclined to consider the Palaeolithic art an exception to the rule or something. Or slightly further, to rely on the possibility that, always and everywhere, both styles would alternately have dominated the plastic art. Moreover, one therefore had to explain the remarkable contrasts in this field by means of '*une oscillation perpétuelle entre le réalisme et le schématisme, entre la conception organique et la conception géométrique de la nature*' (Salomon Reinach).<sup>18</sup>

Nonetheless, even other difficulties arose. During his expeditions to Central Brazil (in 1884 and 1887-'88) Karl von den Steinen<sup>19</sup> made the remarkable discovery that the geometrical ornaments of certain Indian tribes, as yet completely beyond the sphere of influence of the European civilization, are in effect simplified images of certain animals and tools, which for one reason or other are of special significance to these Indians. The frequently occurring triangle represents, for instance, a small women's apron and the diamond a specific fish etc. According to Von den Steinen such simplified images would originate in the descriptive gestures that play an important role in the conversations of these Indians: he therefore considered them as nuclear forms of a figure script. This discovery too made little impression on the archaeologists. That which had happened to the Indians of Central Brazil, it was deemed, need not have occurred everywhere. Some could not agree with Von den Steinen's interpretation, too: they then argued that the meaning discovered by Von den Steinen of certain geometrical figures was surely not original, but must have merely been subsequently '*hinein gesehen*'<sup>20</sup> in already long existing decorative motifs (born from the technique). In ethnologic circles however Von den Steinen's opinion was broadly acclaimed. His position grew even stronger when several years later (1891) two well-known

<sup>18</sup> Cited from Salomon Reinach (1858-1932), archaeologist, art historian and author of: '*La sculpture en Europe avant les influences gréco-romaines*', *L'Anthropologie*, vol. 5, 1894, 5-34, 173-86, 288-305; vol. 6, 1895, 18-39, 293-311, 549-63, 662-74; vol. 7, 1896, 168-94. English: A perpetual oscillation between realism and schematism, between the organic notion and the geometrical notion of nature, cited from *L'Anthropologie*, vol. 5, 1894, 288. See also: *Catalogue sommaire du Musée des Antiquités nationales au Château de Saint-Germain-de-Laye*. 3rd edn, Paris: Librairies-Imprimeries réunies 1898 [1887]; *L'art et la magie à propos des peintures et des gravures de l'âge du renne*, Paris: L'Anthropologie, 1903; *Cultes, Mythes et Religions*, Paris: Leroux 1905; *Répertoire de l'art quaternaire*, Paris: Leroux 1913; *Apollo. An Illustrated Manual of the History of Art Throughout the Ages*, New York: C. Scribner's and Sons London: W. Heinemann 1917.

<sup>19</sup> Karl von den Steinen (1855-1929), physician, ethnologist and author of: *Unter den Naturvölkern Zentral-Brasiliens. Reiseschilderung und Ergebnisse der zweiten Schingú Expedition, 1887-1888*, Berlin: D. Reimer 1894. Especially Chapters 10-1: Das Zeichnen (Drawing) and 10-2 Zeichenornamente (Symbolic ornaments). Geometrical ornaments: 245-6; Triangular woman's skirt: 264-5; 267 + Table 17; Table 21, nos. 14-7; Table 22, no. 2; Diamonds as fish: 258-62, 266-70, 320-4, Table 20, nos. 3, 8, 9; Table 22, nos. 3-5; Figures 43, 48, 51, 117. See also: *Durch Central Brasilien. Expedition zur Erforschung des Schingú im Jahre 1884*, Leipzig: Brockhaus 1886.

<sup>20</sup> English: 'seen into'.

ethnologists, Hjalmar Stolpe<sup>21</sup> and Hercules Read (sic)<sup>22</sup>, almost simultaneously and independently of one and other, illustrated that the complicated, seemingly pure geometrical ornamentation on certain South Sea islands in fact went back to a more or less realistic, at any rate immediately recognizable human figure. In addition, they considered it very possible – but certainly did not prove – that not only this prototype, but also all its later stylized figures included a religious connotation and may therefore not be considered to be pure decorative motifs. Moreover, Von den Steinen not only attacked the archaeological school on its own field some five years later by proving that the Old Trojan ornamentation, the Swastika, represents a stork, but also illustrated to everybody wishing to see, how easy it was to stylize the image of a stork with spread wings into a Swastika. He also pointed out, that the Trojan plain being infested with venomous snakes was only habitable for human beings thanks to the presence of numerous storks who fed on those pests: reason enough therefore to honour this bird as well as its image!<sup>23</sup> Needless to say, archaeologists disputed his opinion. Reinach and Moritz Hoernes<sup>24</sup> considered it much more plausible that not the stork figure had

<sup>21</sup> Hjalmar Stolpe (1841-1905), entomologist, archaeologist, ethnologist and author of: 'Utvecklingsföreteelser I naturfolkens ornamentik', *Ymer*, 10, 1890, 193-250 + 58 Figures; 11, 1891-11, 198-229 + 5 Figures. Translated as: 'Features of Evolution in the Ornamental Art of Primitive Peoples' (by H. Colley March, *Transactions of the Rochdale Literary and Scientific Society*, vol. 3, 1891-1892, 73-150). 'Entwicklungserscheinungen in der Ornamentik der Naturvölker', *Mittheilungen der Anthropologische Gesellschaft*, Wien, vol. 22, 1892, 19-62 [1890]. *Studier i amerikansk ornamentik, ett bidrag till ornamentes biologi*, (Studies in American Ornamentation - a Contribution to the Biology of Ornament) Stockholm 1896. *Über die Tätowierung der Oster-Insulaner*, *Abhandlungen des königlichen Zoologischen und Anthropologischen Ethnographisches Museum zu Dresden. Festschrift für A.B. Meyer*, Berlin: Friedländer. 1899. See also: *Collected Essays in the Study of Ornamental Art*, Stockholm: Aftonbladets tryckeri, 1927.

<sup>22</sup> Charles Hercules Read (1857-1929), archaeologist and author of: 'An Account of a Collection of Ethnographical Specimens formed during Vancouver's Voyage in the Pacific Ocean, 1790-1795', *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, vol. 21, 1892, 99-108. 'On the Origin and Sacred Character of certain Ornaments of the South-east Pacific', *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, vol. 21, 1892, 139-59; 'Primitive Art and Its Modern Development' (+ Plates and Figures), *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, vol. 48, 1918, 11-21. Read's results corresponded very closely with those acquired independently by Stolpe, and were commented upon by the latter in *Ymer*, 1891.

<sup>23</sup> Von den Steinen, 'Prähistorisches Zeichen und Ornamente. Svastika. Triskeles. Runenalphabet?', *Festschrift für Adolf Bastian zu seinem 70. Geburtstage*, 26 Juni 1896, Berlin: D. Reimer 1896, 247-88 + 65 Figures.

<sup>24</sup> S. Reinach, 386 in: 'A propos d'un stamnos béotien du Musée de Madrid', *Revue archéologique* 1, 1902, 372-86; *L'Anthropologie*, 14, 1903, 713. Moritz Hoernes (1852-1917), archaeologist and author of: *Urgeschichte der bildenden Kunst in Europa von den Anfängen bis um 500 v. Chr.*, Wien: A. Holzhausen 1898, 341. See also: *Der diluviale Mensch in Europa. Die*

been simplified into a Swastika, but that the latter had suggested the stork figure. In the meantime Von den Steinen's opinion had again earned credibility by means of the interesting investigations carried out by Karl Weule<sup>25</sup> and Leo Frobenius<sup>26</sup> in the field of African ornamentation. Here especially lizard figures, in countless degrees of stylization, proved to appear again and again in decorative motifs. In the face of all these data – from the four corners of the world – one could hardly persevere that the stylization process was an exception rather than the rule; in so far these above-mentioned discoveries had indeed advanced the research. However, what they had discovered merely shed light on the external course of development, not on the inner causes of this process. Of much greater interest from this standpoint were the investigations of two scholars dealing directly with the issue how to explain that naturalistic art as we for instance find with the Bushmen, and apart from the few very primitive peoples we mentioned at the beginning of this essay, is in effect found almost nowhere. The first attempt to

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*Kulturstufen der Älteren Steinzeit*, Braunschweig: F. Vieweg 1903; *Natur- und Urgeschichte des Menschen*, Wien: Hartleben 1909.

<sup>25</sup> Karl Weule (1864-1926), geographer, ethnologist and author of: 'Die Eidechse als Ornament in Afrika', *Festschrift für Adolf Bastian zu seinem 70. Geburtstag*, 26 juni 1896, Berlin: D. Reimer 1896, 169-94. *Negerleben in Ostafrika. Ergebnissen einer ethnologischen Forschungsreise*, Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus 2nd edn. 1909. See also: *Der Afrikanische Pfeil. Eine anthropogeographische Studie*, Leipzig: O. Schmidt 1899; *Wissenschaftliche Ergebnisse meiner ethnographischen Forschungsreise in den Südosten Deutsch-Ostafrikas*, Berlin: E.S. Mittler 1908; *Die Kultur der Kulturlosen. Ein Blick in die Anfänge menschlicher Geistesbetätigung*, Stuttgart: Kosmos 1910; *Kulturelemente der Menschheit. Anfänge und Urformen der materiellen Kultur*, Stuttgart: Kosmos 1911; *Leitfaden der Völkerkunde*, Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut 1912; *Die Urgesellschaft und ihre Lebensfürsorge*, Stuttgart: Kosmos 1912; *Vom Kerbstock zum Alphabet. Uniformen der Schrift*, Stuttgart: Franckh'sche Verlagshandlung 1915.

<sup>26</sup> Leo Frobenius (1873-1938), ethnologist, archaeologist, expert in the field of pre-historic art and author of: *Die bildende Kunst der Afrikaner, Mittheilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien* + 73 Figures. [Separatabdruck aus Band XXVII, der neuen Folge Band 17]. 1897; L. Frobenius & H. Obermaier: *Hadschra Maktuba Urzeitliche Felsbilder Kleinafrikas*, München: K. Wolff 1925. See also: *Stilgerechte Phantasie*, *Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie*, 9, 1896, 129-36; *Das Hakenkreuz in Afrika*, *Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie*, 9, 1896, 205-7; *Oceanische Masken (Table 6)*, *Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie*, 10, 1897, 69-70; *Über Oceanische Masken. Fische in Melanesische Masken (Table 17 and 24 Figures, 207)*, *Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie*, 10, 1897, 206-9; *Über Oceanische Masken. Die Eidechsen in Melanesische Masken (Tables 3, 4 + Figures 25-32, 83)*, *Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie*, 11, 1898, 82-5; *Über Oceanische Masken. Die Vögel in Melanesischen Masken. (Table 9)*, *Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie*, 11, 1898, 130-2; *Über Oceanische Masken. Schädelmasken (Tables 10-12)*, *Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie*, 11, 1898, 162-4. [For more information on representations of lizards elsewhere e.g., in northeast New Guinea, Preuss, see: *Künstlerische Darstellungen aus Kaiser-Wilhelms-Land, Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, 29, 1897, 123-4; 30, 1898, 80-2.]

explain this phenomenon comprises the theory of Ernst Grosse<sup>27</sup>, which he has elaborated in his renowned book on primitive art, the very first complete treatise on the history of primitive art on an ethnological basis. Grosse attached great importance to the fact that such naturalistic art only occurs among peoples who find their only means of existence in hunting. The various spiritual and bodily features, such as a sharpened sense of observation, firmness of hand etc., which an existence as a hunter must necessarily cultivate over many generations, must in Grosse's view lead naturally as it were to the desire and the talent for a true-to-nature reproduction of which the art of the Bushmen and of prehistoric Europeans bear such an eloquent testimony. When hunting, however, no longer forms the focus of the social and economic life, because it obtained a powerful competitor in agriculture, which dictated various requirements to society and the individual, the majority of the characteristic hunting qualities had to lose much of their pronounced character: as hunting declined in respect, primitive naturalism was lost. It is now clear that, aside from the direct influence of the changed lifestyle with regard to the development of the plastic art, indirect influences must also have been at work, starting from the increased level of civilization in general. Grosse was indeed aware of this, too, but did not realize all the implications of this phenomenon. He very rightly observed that all, which is summarized as 'primitive ornamentation' is in fact a complex of the most heterogeneous elements. It can surely not be denied that those numerous 'ornaments' include a very large number e.g., marks of ownership and honour, script characters, magical symbols etc., which originally did not fulfil an aesthetic, but a purely practical, function, and which therefore cannot be put on a par with the much smaller group that owes its existence to a purely artistic creative urge without any practical ulterior purpose. That original practical significance is indeed lost in the long run while the symbol as 'ornament' still exists, but that does not alter the fact that such decorative motifs cannot be seen as expressions of art in the strict sense of the word. Remarkably Grosse, without attempting to prove his proposition, now also draws from this point of view a sharp line between real-naturalistic art and the 'ornamentation' under which he summarizes almost everything else. The fact that the first-mentioned was born out of '*reinen Lust am Darstellen*'<sup>28</sup> is obvious to him. He also has not delved into the question how it comes about that ornamentation (within the meaning he attached to it) and naturalistic art actually never go hand in hand in the most primitive societies. Generally speaking, the connection between the rise of the level of civilization and the

<sup>27</sup> Ernst Grosse (1862-1927), ethnologist and author of: *Die Anfänge der Kunst*, Freiburg: Mohr 1894.

<sup>28</sup> English: 'the pure pleasure of depicting'.

development of the art – apart from the influence of agriculture, however, on which his opinion is quite strong – has remained an unsolved riddle to him.

When compared with Grosse, who tried to oversee the entirety from the beginning, the well-known ethnologist Frobenius proceeded in an entirely different way. His ideas on the development of primitive art, when considered as a whole, are mainly based on the results of his investigations in the field of African ethnography, a field with which he is very familiar. Moreover, Frobenius<sup>29</sup> started where Grosse ceased: he realized that his [Grosse's] theory did not even touch the deeper causes of the decline of the naturalistic art. Therefore he first tried to account for the dissimilarity between the spiritual civilisation of peoples and naturalistic art, such as the Bushmen, and the countless others to which, as he proved, the vast majority of the African peoples must be added. In his view this difference implied that the first-mentioned represent a stage of culture in which instinct still dominates thinking, whereas the uncivilised peoples have already reached a transitional stage, in which instinct loses its monopoly, and thinking begins to prevail. This psychological process one finds mirrored in art. The Bushman derives his motifs directly from nature itself: he depicts the things as he sees them in reality. His art is naive and unattached, rich in forms, free of repetition. This latter quality is especially important. As soon as the artist starts to repeat, to copy his own creations or those of others instead of tapping into the source of nature itself, the first step on the path of decline is taken. The harmony between form and meaning of the reproduction is lost. The sensual motif becomes a spiritual motif; the restrained choice from a limited treasure of motifs takes the place of the free choice from nature. Thinking gains ground at the cost of the power of the instinct, the level of civilization rises, art spiritualizes, but impoverishment accompanies that spiritualization. Art therefore finally enters the stage in which a large part of the motifs fossilizes into genuine 'character-ornaments'<sup>30</sup>, whereas another

<sup>29</sup> Frobenius, 'Die Kunst der Naturvölker'. *Westermanns Monatshefte*, vol. 79, 1896, 329-40, 593-606. *Der Ursprung der Afrikanische Kulturen*, Berlin: Borntraeger 1898. See also: *Probleme der Kultur*, 4 vols, Berlin: Dümmler. vol. 1. Die naturwissenschaftliche Kulturlehre, 1899; vol. 2. Die Mathematik der Oceanier, 1900; vol. 3. Die Schilde der Oceanier, 1900; vol. 4. Die Bogen der Oceanier, 1900; *Völkerkunde in Charakterbildern des Lebens, Treibens und Denkens der Wilden und der reifere Menschheit*, 2 vols, Hannover: Jaenecke 1902; *Im Schatten des Kongostaates*, Berlin: D. Reimer 1907; *Der schwarze Dekameron. Belegen und Aktenstücke über Liebe, Witz und Heldentum in Innerafrika*, Berlin: Vita 1910; *Und Afrika sprach ... wissenschaftlich erweiterte Ausgabe des Berichts über den Verlauf der dritten Reiseperiode der Deutschen Inner-Afrikanischen Forschungs-Expedition in den Jahren 1910 bis 1912*, 3 vols, Berlin: Vita 1912-1913.

<sup>30</sup> De Josselin de Jong states in endnote 6 of his original manuscript: Frobenius did not at all consider all non-naturalistic figures as 'character-ornaments'. He considered a part of these figures as having evolved from technique; he named these 'material ornaments'. The place he gave them in his system remains unclear.

part has not yet entirely lost its sensual character. At this point the development splits in two directions. The character-ornament becomes a script-character (pictogram): the process of spiritualization is thereby, as it were, led towards another path, that of science. As to art, this implies liberation: the artistic impulse is resurrected, but now at a higher level of civilization; the sensual adornment develops into cultural art.

Whatever one may think of Grosse's and Frobenius's theories – it cannot be denied that they placed the entire research on broader foundations and significantly widened the as yet rather limited horizon. That which immediately strikes us in Frobenius' theory is his understanding of the relationship between primitive naturalism and modern art. In his opinion, this is surely not a gradual perfection, we are only dealing here with two dissimilar series of developments or (to apply a less ambiguous term) processes of change, to wit the deterioration of natural art into conventional character-ornamentation and the revival of its final languishing remnants into the art of modern civilization. Closely related to the ideas of Frobenius is the theory of Max Verworn,<sup>31</sup> which the latter forwarded several years later (1906) for the first time. The essential feature of the earliest art is, he argued, that it presents the genuine memory image: it is purely physio-plastic. The art of the following epoch, however, is governed by the 'existence of ideas': the memory image is changed and obscured by means of all kinds of associations: art is no longer physio-plastic but ideo-plastic. In explaining this change in spiritual life, Verworn was not content, as was Frobenius, with the rather vague assertion that instinct was more and more dominated by thought, but he pointed in particular to the increased meaning of all kinds of magic-animistic representations, as so clearly illustrated by means of prehistoric finds. He also saw contributing factors in the large scale copying (mass production) and the loss of skill Grosse gives prominence to, but the main cause in his view was the rise and development of primitive religious life. Only under the influence of critical, experimental thinking, a trait of modern civilization has art become untethered again: in present-day art, physio-plastic and ideo-plastic go hand in hand. As with Grosse and Frobenius, Verworn thus also paid tribute to the concept that primitive and modern naturalism are not directly linked, but separated by means of an intervening

<sup>31</sup> Max Verworn (1863-1921), physiologist, archaeologist and author of: 'Archäologische und paläolithische Reisestudien in Frankreich und Portugal', *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, 38, 1906, 611-55; *Die archäolithische Cultur in den Hipparionschichten von Aurillac (Cantal)*, Berlin: Weidmann 1905; *Die Mechanik des Geistes – Rede*, Göttingen: Kästner 1906; *Die Mechanik des Geisteslebens*, Leipzig: B.G. Teubner 1907; *Die Anfänge der Kunst*, Jena: G. Fischer 1909; *Zur Psychologie der primitiven Kunst. Ein Vortrag*, Jena: G. Fischer 1908; *Die Entwicklung des menschlichen Geistes. Ein Vortrag*, Jena: G. Fischer 1912; *Ideoplastische Kunst. Ein Vortrag*, Jena: G. Fischer 1914.

era of ideo-plastic reproduction. The fact that this view would not encounter an undivided agreement was to be expected. Primitive physio-plastic art seems to be much closer to us, is much more comprehensible than the fanciful, often very complicated game of motifs considered so much more recent. It is less explicable, however, that these initial attempts to penetrate further into the history of primitive art caused such an exceedingly small impression. The main cause of this indifference is perhaps to be found in the circumstances that the focus especially during these years was strongly concentrated on the results of Max Schmidt's<sup>32</sup> diligent studies on South American plaiting-ornamentation, results by means of which the issue concerning the relationship between technique and art seemed to indeed be very close to a solution. Schmidt had arrived at the conclusion, after a very meticulous research into the development of various types of braid work in Central Brazil, that in one of these types all kinds of geometrical figures, even very complicated ones, must as it were automatically come into being during the practical application of the technique. In his view, the entire South American ornamentation has evolved from these as it were spontaneously developed geometrical patterns: the treasure of ornamentation, initially closely linked to technique expanded by means of untethered imitation and variation and form-suggestion did the rest. We will have the opportunity to slightly elaborate on Schmidt's line of thought later; however, we must momentarily dwell upon the scope of his conclusions in connection with the preceding discoveries. The fact that a certain kind of ornamentation, especially of primitive earthenware, has developed directly from the even earlier braid work did no longer have to be proven since Holmes's studies. However the plaiting-imprints, which Holmes demonstrated, originated from cords, nets or primitively woven and plaited fabrics of an entirely uniform structure: certain geometrical figures, developed by means of application – with whatever goal – of technical contrivances, did not occur in these earliest textile products. The same goes for the primitive baskets involved in the earliest earthenware production: in so far as the imprints they have left were recognized as such – no mean feat – they did not display anything remotely reminiscent of a varied braid pattern. The question of how the geometrical ornamentation in the strict sense has developed, from which it has derived its

<sup>32</sup> Max Schmidt (1874-1950), ethnologist and author of: 'Ableitung südamerikanischer Geflechtmuster aus der Technik des Flechtens', *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, 36, 1904, 490-512 + 40 Figures; 'Aus den Ergebnissen meiner Expedition in das Schingúquellgebiet', *Globus*, 86, 1904, 119-25. See also: *Indianerstudien in Zentralbrasilien*, Berlin: D. Reimer 1905; 'Peruvian pottery, with designs representing scenes from life and mythological lore', *The Magazine of Fine Arts*, vol. 1, no. 1 London 1905, 45-54; 'Über altperuanische Ornamente', *Archiv für Anthropologie*, Neue Folge, vol. 7-1: 1909, 22-36; *Die Aruaken. Ein Beitrag zum Problem der Kulturverbreitung*, Inaug. Diss. Leipzig: Veit 1917. *Unter Indianern Süd-Amerikas. Erlebnisse in Zentralbrasilien*, Berlin: Ullstein 1924.

motifs, therefore continued to also exist after Holmes' discovery. This question was now seemingly sufficiently answered by Schmidt: a higher developed braiding technique provided automatically created ornaments, simple and more complicated, in abundance. It is therefore explicable that Holmes' discovery was almost neglected during many years and that Schuchardt, when he finally took the trouble to investigate the European material thoroughly in 1909, did apply Holmes's findings, relying nonetheless almost entirely on Schmidt for his argumentation: the relief ornamentation of European earthenware could theoretically go back to braiding imprints. Moreover the individual figures displayed a great resemblance with the braid patterns Schmidt demonstrated – it could not be better!

However, in which way could Schmidt's viewpoint now be consistent with the fact that in many cases geometrical figures turned out to be simplified or schematized images? As the reader will recall, these cases were of a twofold nature: sometimes the entire transformation of naturalistic images up to meaningless ornament could now and again be followed step by step; on occasion the ornament itself appears to be a schematic image, too, at least in the eyes of the makers. This latter case – we recall the triangle representing the triangular woman's skirt – resulted in but a few problems. One only had to assume that representing a small triangular piece of tree bark by means of a triangle must have preceded the 'discovery' of this figure in the plaiting, in other words to return to that which archaeologists had prior hereto – *à bout portant* – advocated as an interpretation of such geometrical 'images' – and at least this objection was cleared. Schmidt did indeed do so and with him almost the entire German ethnological school, firstly Von den Steinen who as a matter of fact had seemingly in part abandoned his earlier theory, even before Schmidt proposed his finding.

What to think of the other, afore-mentioned case! A geometrical figure one had seen develop before one's eyes seen from a genuine image could hardly at the same time be considered an unintentional product of the technique! Apparently, it was reasoned, that two in origin entirely dissimilar kinds of geometrical ornaments existed: former braid patterns and stylized images or as, as we saw, Frobenius expressed it: 'material ornaments' and 'character ornaments'. Of course, this does not at all imply that these two categories have always remained separated. On the contrary: there is no alternative but that they have intermingled; a fine case therefore of 'convergent evolution'. Indeed, but this conclusion –supposing it was correct – merely implied a new set of questions. Should one now have to assume that no historical connection had existed between these primeval forms of these two groups of ornaments? What was the previous history of the 'representation' that later became a geometrical ornament? Did this ultimately also trace back to the technique, in a similar manner, as was assumed, that the

more recent, more liberated, forms of South American ornamentation had developed from the strict geometrical braid patterns? Or was the earliest art we are capable of approaching here naturalistic, as Grosse, Frobenius and Verworn argued?

With these questions – which were therefore certainly not recent – one had in fact once again returned to the old problem, which Grosse had dealt directly with for the first time: Schmidt's theory had merely moved the difficulty aside. However, the exchange of views to which it gave rise had not been unfruitful. New facts had come to the forefront; one had been forced to give due consideration to their significance in connection with earlier discoveries. In this way the complicated issue of the development of primitive art gradually took sharper defined forms and consequently lent itself more to a complete, synthetic treatment.

As we remarked casually, Frobenius and Verworn had little success with their theories. Their adversaries deepened the theorem that the so-called earliest natural art should, from a standpoint of development, be considered as recent, indeed, in fact as the immediate precursor of the entirely '*anschauungsgemässe*'<sup>33</sup> art of modern civilization. However, none of them were able to satisfactorily explain the remarkable phenomenon that the few tribes having created such a high quality art were among the most primitive peoples on earth. Wilhelm Wundt<sup>34</sup>, who in this respect only mentions the Bushmen, argues that they must have learned their art from the White people. Konrad Theodor Preuss<sup>35</sup> confines himself to the remark that this art too must

<sup>33</sup> English: (the art considered) 'according to intuition'.

<sup>34</sup> Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920), physician, psychologist and philosopher, who became known as the father of experimental psychology, and the author of: *Elemente der Völkerpsychologie*, Leipzig: Kröner 1912, see: Chapter 1, Part 8: Die Anfänge der Kunst, 94-108. On the assumption the Bushmen have learned their art from the White man, see 108. See also: Chapter 3. Das Zeitalter der Helden und Götter, Abteilung 17: Die Kunst des Heldenzeitalters, 443-64; *Völkerpsychologie. Eine Untersuchung der Entwicklungsgesetze von Sprache, Mythos und Sitte*. With vols on: *Die Sprache, die Kunst, Mythos und Religion, die Gesellschaft, das Recht en Kultur in der Geschichte. Elemente der Völkerpsychologie*, 10 vols, Leipzig: W. Engelmann 1900-1920, vol. 3: Die Kunst 1908.

<sup>35</sup> Konrad Theodor Preuss (1869-1938), ethnologist. He officiated as curator at the *Museum für Völkerkunde* in Berlin, initially in the Departments of Africa and Oceania and later in the Department of America. He served as a supernumerary professor at the University of Berlin. Preuss as well as De Josselin de Jong had been in part philologically schooled, and both applied the study of psychology to his research. Preuss carried out fieldwork in Mexico and Colombia. His publications deal with religion and art. Preuss was befriended with De Josselin de Jong. *Die geistige Kultur der Naturvölker*, Leipzig: B.G. Treubner 1913, 109. See also: 'Künstlerische Darstellungen aus Kaiser-Wilhelms-Land', *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, 29, 1897, 77-139; 30, 1898, 74-120; 'Über einige Ornamente vom Kaiserin-Augusta-Fluss in Deutsch Neu-Guinea (Table VIII)', *Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie*, 10, 1897, 145-53;

have developed in a completely normal way from more primitive forms and therefore does not touch the essence of the issue. Alfred Vierkandt<sup>36</sup> and Theodor Wilhelm Danzel<sup>37</sup>, however, acknowledge that currently the historical explanation remains as yet hidden to us. All these researchers do nonetheless provide a very definite answer to the less obvious question which art may we in fact consider as genuinely 'primitive'. By the way, the answer to this question already follows from their opinion that the primeval European and similar art represents the most recent developmental phase: the simplest scribbles on rocks, the extremely simple ornaments combined with incisions or stripes on weapons and household items as we, for instance, find with the Wedda of Ceylon and other such tribes, with a highly limited cultural heritage. Now what is surely the true nature of this, in their view, most primitive art? How was it created? Are such drawings considered to be meaningless scribbles, as '*Spielereien*', initial expressions perhaps of an artistic instinct to create? Or did they have a certain relevance to the maker? And did he in this case draw inspired by non-aesthetic, ulterior motives? It is obvious that the simplest rock drawings of which one generally speaking does not know when they were made and from what culture they originate cannot contribute but a little in answering these questions. On the other hand the research into the significance of a similar ornamentation with certain tribes considered very primitive has already produced relevant information. Investigations carried out by Hrolf Vaughan Stevens and Preuss<sup>38</sup> have thus

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'Künstlerische Darstellungen aus dem deutsch-Holländischen Grenzgebiet in Neu-Guinea (Tables 5-7)', *Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie*, 12, 1898, 161-85.

<sup>36</sup> Alfred Vierkandt (1867-1953), ethnologist, sociologist, philosopher and author of: 'Die Anfänge der Religion und Zauberei', *Globus*, 21, 1907, 21-5, 40-5, 61-5; 'Das Problem der Felszeichnungen und der Ursprung des Zeichnens', *Archiv für Anthropologie*, Neue Folge, vol. 7, 1909, 110-8. See also: *Naturvölker und Kulturvölker. Ein Beitrag zur Socialpsychologie*, Leipzig: Duncker und Humblot 1896.

<sup>37</sup> Theodor Wilhelm Danzel (1886-1954), ethnologist and author of *Die Anfänge der Schrift*, Leipzig: L. Lamprecht 1912.

<sup>38</sup> Hrolf Vaughan Stevens (1835-1897), ethnologist, and author of: 1892-1894: *Materialien zur Kenntniss der wilden Stämme auf der Halbinsel Malôka*, Berlin: W. Spemann, 2 vols, 1893: *Die wilden Stämme auf Malaka*, *Veröffentlichungen aus dem Königlichen Museum für Völkerkunde Berlin* III: 133; 'Die Zaubermuster der Ôrang Sēmang. 1. Die Kämme', *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, 25, 1893, 71-100 + 4 Tables; 'Die Zaubermuster der Ôrang Hütan. Die „Toon-tong“-Ceremonie', *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, 26, 1894, 141-88; 'Die Zaubermuster der Ôrang Sēmang in Malaka. 2. Die Gor und Gar', *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, 31, 1899, 137-97. See also: K.Th. Preuss, 'Die Zauberbilderschriften der Negrito in Malaka', *Globus*, 75, 1899, 345-8, 364-9; 'Hr. Grünwedel spricht, unter Vorlegung einer reichen Collection ethnographischer Gegenstände, über Die Reisen des Hrn. Vaughan Stevens in Malacca', *Verhandlungen der Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte*, 23, 1891, 829-37; 'Hr. Grünwedel macht weitere Mitteilungen über die Forschungsreise des Hrn. Stevens, insbesondere über die Ôrang-Panggang und Ôrang-Benüa', *Verhandlungen der Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie*,

brought to light that the figures on women's combs with certain tribes of Malacca are considered to be repellents against diseases. These figures mainly consist of rows of triangles, small parallel lines and wave lines, and partly represent certain diseases, partly also the flowers applied as medicine for the cure. These combs therefore acquire a twofold meaning: they are themselves magical repellents against the diseases 'depicted' on them, and they indicate to which flower the female wearer must seek her salvation in the case the magical power of the comb itself fails. It is indeed mainly on this discovery that Wundt now bases his opinion that the so frequently observed magical function of the visual arts of later eras dates back to the time of its genesis. He opines one should not however deduce that that magical function is the primary: psychologically the tendency to repeat and to combine stripes and the like formed by chance allows itself to be explained in an informal manner by means of the esthetical effect of symmetry and rhythm, which in other areas of artistic actions, too, especially dance, comes to light so clearly. Once the first ornaments had been achieved in this manner, representations of plants, animal figures and possibly demons were soon recognized herein, just as the Bakairí in Central Brazil in retrospect identified the triangular figure as the small triangular skirt worn by women.<sup>39</sup> The fact that the figures of the Malacca tribes – in contrast to the ornamentation of the Bakairí (as Wundt believes) – did indeed have a magical connotation in the capacity of their 'representations', appears to be especially obvious in his view from the fact that those same tribes also drew deficient animal figures on bows and blowpipes in order to ensure a rich catch. Of course, he does not consider those animal figures as original representations, but as primeval ornaments altered caused by the suggestion of shape. During the following epoch this ambivalent (aesthetic-magic) character of the earliest art does as yet not undergo any real change. On the other hand, one can observe a remarkable reversal in the evolution of the art forms during this era. The representation, as shaped in the manner outlined above, initially becomes more and more true to nature to then however subsequently undergo a lengthy process of stylisation, through which it is gradually reduced to simple geometrical forms. Among Oceanic tribes, for instance, the earliest forms of tattooing still show numerous animals and even plants, while the more recent types almost exclusively consist of geometrical ornaments. Above all in ceramics, especially on American soil, the entire process can be very clearly observed. This second development phase of primitive art coincides with the cultural

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*Ethnologie und Urgeschichte*. 1892, 465-(46S); Grünwedel: 'Notizen aus den Reisen des Hrolf Vaughan Stevens in Maläka', *Ethnologisches Notizblatt*, 96-3, 1894, 9, 1896, 1-11.

<sup>39</sup> Wundt: *Elemente der Völkerpsychologie*, Leipzig: Kröner 1912. See Chapter 1, Part 8: Die Anfänge der Kunst, 94-108; for more information on triangular skirts worn by women, etc., see 102-8.

epoch that forms the transition to modern civilization, where art captures its independence, in other words becomes purely aesthetical.

One sees that Wundt's theory, in spite of his diametrically opposite conclusion on the relative age of primitive naturalism does indeed in a key aspect correspond with the opinions expressed by Frobenius and Verworn. He also holds the view that the peculiar character of the 'uncivilized' art may largely be explained by its lack of freedom: being subservient to magic, the purely artistic instinct which created it can never fully come into its own. However, seeing the highest expressions of the primitive art in the least conventional types of art of the second era, he lacks the reference material in order to personally ascertain the restrictive effect of the non-aesthetic added motifs on the artefacts: to him it remains a theoretical postulant with which he cannot do a thing with regard to the practise of the research.

Vierkandt, who indeed already as a result hereof possessed more information, allowing him to do full justice to the naturalistic art of the Bushmen and the like, has dealt more boldly with this issue. In his treatises on the rock drawings and the uncivilized art of drawing in general he departs from his cherished concept that not only culture as a whole, but also each element of culture develops 'along lines of graduality', in other words: abrupt changes such as a spontaneous emergence, or a sudden disappearance without a trace is totally inconceivable with regard to a specific cultural phenomenon. With this axiom in mind he devises a twofold classification of his material. According to their artistic qualities he groups the drawings into three categories, belonging to as many consecutive development phases, namely the 'indicative' or 'referential', the 'descriptive' and the 'pictorial'. Moreover, according to their psychological conditions of existence, he divides them into 'autotelic' and 'hetero-telic' (products of the 'free' or 'pure' and of a 'bound' or 'applied' art). He considers the majority of rock drawings (especially the petroglyphs) to be autotelic art of the earliest (indicative) type.<sup>40</sup> The second (descriptive) type in the autotelic group is represented by the imperfect images highly reminiscent of the child's drawings South American Indians made on request of Von den Steinen and Theodor Koch-Grünberg<sup>41</sup>, and the most recent (pictorial) type by the naturalistic drawings

<sup>40</sup> De Josselin de Jong states in endnote 7 of his original manuscript: For instance, scratched or grinded figures; as distinguished from 'pictographs' often meaning drawn or painted figures.

<sup>41</sup> Theodor Koch Grünberg (1872-1924), ethnologist and author of: *Anfänge der Kunst im Urwald. Indianer-Handzeichnungen auf seinen Reisen in Brasilien gesammelt*, Berlin: E. Wasmuth 1905. See also: *Die Guakurú-Gruppe*, Inaug. Diss. Wien 1902; *Zum Animismus der Südamerikanische Indianer*, Suppl. zu Band 13 von *Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie*, 1900, 146; *Vom Roroima zum Orinoco. Ergebnisse einer Reise in Nordbrasilien und Venezuela in den Jahren 1911-1913*, 5 vols, Berlin: D. Reimer 1917-1928; *Indianermärchen aus Südamerika*. Jena: Diederichs, 1920.

by Bushmen and Eskimo. His decisive judgement related to the petroglyphs is also based on the research carried out by Koch-Grünberg in South America. The latter researcher, who during his travels could have at least partially observed the origin of such drawings, argued that their origin is to be found in the playfully applied incisions mimicking and in line with existing grinding grooves. These drawings are far removed from illustrative representations. Through an accumulation of geometrical forms, figures originate in which images of certain things by means of form suggestion are then observed. That suggested meaning can however again undergo a variety of changes; one plays with as it were. A creative fantasy is barely perceivable. The preference for rhythm and symmetry is however is undeniable.

The drawings of the descriptive type are intended as representations. They do not render things as the drawer sees them, but as he remembers them to be. That is the reason why certain parts of the object which interest the drawer in particular, are often depicted although they are in fact invisible, while conversely easily visible details are now and again neglected because they are insignificant to the drawer. At this stage, too, there is indeed still no perspective. In general these figures share numerous similarities with child's drawings as far as the technical execution is concerned, but on the other hand they are much more characteristic, that is to say they demonstrate a much more strongly developed awareness.

The third (pictorial) type finally shows us something we perhaps could with certain reservations consider a lifelike representation. This applies especially to the individual figures: the representation of scenes is as yet rather imperfect, although we find an onset of perspective. A common quality is further that they merely characterize types, never individuals.

Everything primitive society has produced as to autotelic art is, in Vierkandt's view, hereby enumerated; the remainder belongs to the heterotelic group, which is still entirely situated in the earliest, indicative phase. In addition to magical figures and primitive script and markings, he includes here the (conventional) ornament, as it is applied with the purpose of decorating a certain object. Therefore it has to be adjusted to the qualities of that specific object (material, shape, size etc.), while at the same time the manifold repeating of the same motifs also hugely promotes the adherence to conventional forms. This opinion is closely linked to his view on the development of geometrical adornment. There is in fact no mention of 'development': the geometrical ornament is, according to him, neither a representation itself nor a stylization product of a representation. Its form is probably original; its possible significance however is always secondary. How it has originated remains unclear; as far as the South American adornment is

concerned Schmidt's theory is very plausible to Vierkandt, too. It is obvious how he arrives at this conception. In his theory as to a gradual transition from simple to more intricate, from lower to higher art forms, which positions a small number of scratches in a rock at the start and the drawings by the Bushmen at the conclusion of the development series, there is no place for a relapse during a later era into geometrical primeval forms, no more as there is place for the notion that not only the forms of the geometrical ornaments but also their apparent meanings are original.

It is clear too how, in Vierkandt's view, the development of the hetero-telic art is illustrated by means of the practical motifs to which its nascence is partially attributed. This factor does not have a modifying effect, but inhibits the development and therefore petrifies the forms: it does not lead to simplification or stylization, but obstructs the natural growth as to illustration purposes, which the autotelic art teaches us. It is however as yet not proven in which way the hetero-telic art differs from the earliest three types of untethered art. The two groups have the simplest geometrical forms in common. Unless Vierkandt can accordingly demonstrate that for instance a triangle with a magical significance does not resemble a triangular petroglyph, he will have to admit there is no distinction between these kinds of figures. As to the more developed forms, it has only to be mentioned that for instance the petroglyphs interpreted as 'human figures' consisting of a vertical line (the body) and a few diagonal lines with upwardly or downwardly curved ends (the limbs), especially in Africa, but indeed also elsewhere, belong to the most common ornaments on weapons and household items, in order to realise that hardly any difference in form can be detected here too. This difficulty did not escape Vierkandt at all. However, he could not solve it by simply admitting that, during the phase of 'indicative' art, the hetero-telic drawing did not differ in any way from the autotelic one, because his entire classification would then have to expire as there would no longer be any higher hetero-telic forms in his view. He indeed stops short at the observation that the gap between magical and autotelic drawing can for that matter not be so wide because the belief in a magical relationship between the figure and that which it represents is of course also asserted by means of the autotelic drawing, albeit not as prominent. This is a far-reaching statement. After all which reason is there to assume that not every primitive drawing, regardless under which circumstances and with which intentions it is created, has experienced the influence of this belief? In this way Vierkandt's argument – even if he does not seem to realise this himself – leads to the final result Wundt arrived at that practically the entire primitive visual arts beared a mixed magic-aesthetic character.

All later studies have fully confirmed this result. Even in the same year (1912) in which Vierkandt published his final treatise on this subject, Danzel's

book on the origin and earliest eras of development of the script was published.<sup>42</sup> In it this researcher tried to prove that the pictograph has emerged from the magical symbol and not, as previously thought, from the most primitive representation (i.e., that which one deemed to be: the rock drawings and the like) and the profane distinguishing mark. Two (sic) years later Preuss's masterly booklet on the spiritual life of the primitive society was published.<sup>43</sup> In it he processed all thus far acquired data into a finalised theory based on ethno-psychology.<sup>44</sup> Especially with regard to the evolution of primitive art, he tries to more precisely determine, the significance of the magical way of thinking, towards the explanation of which he himself had contributed so much. Finally, in 1916, Rafael Karsten<sup>45</sup> came forward with his surprising argument: the entire South American adornment is originally magical-animistic and, in the form with which we are familiar, still largely controlled by means of magical, therefore non-aesthetical, motifs.

If we wanted to limit ourselves to the most important, it would probably not be necessary to dwell on each of these authors individually. Neither in the guiding thought of Danzel's book, nor in his method of argumentation can anything quite new be found: the former has been completely adopted, the latter has been adopted from his earlier predecessors with almost no alterations. His views on the primitive way of thinking in general as well as the relationship between art and religion in primitive society in particular were formed in the Franco-German school of which Lucien Lévy-Bruhl<sup>46</sup> and Preuss are the most renowned representatives, whereas his psychological reflections made him known as a loyal follower of

<sup>42</sup> Vierkandt: 'Das Zeichnen bei den Naturvölkern', *Zeitschrift für Angewandte Psychologie und psychologische Sammelforschung*, Leipzig, 1912-6, 299-373. Th.W. Danzel, *Die Anfänge der Schrift*.

<sup>43</sup> Preuss, *Die geistige Kultur der Naturvölker*, Leipzig: B.G. Treubner 1913. Presented an innovative view on extra-European cultures in its totality and criticized the distinction between Nature peoples and Culture peoples.

<sup>44</sup> Ethno-psychology is the study of psychological characteristics in ethnic groups and was very much in vogue at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century.

<sup>45</sup> Rafael Karsten (1879-1956), ethnologist and author of: 'Der Ursprung der indianischen Verzierung in Südamerika', *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, 48, 1916, 155-216, which was also published in: *Civilization of the South American Indians. With Special Reference to Magic and Religion*. With a preface by Dr. Edward Westermarck. Chapters 7, 8, 198-264. New York: A.A. Knopf 1926.

<sup>46</sup> Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1857-1939), philosopher, ethnologist and author of : *Les fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures*, Paris: Les Presses universitaires de France 1910, which was translated in 1926 as *How Natives Think*. Inspired by the French sociologist Émile Durkheim he adopted the concept of *représentations collectives*, or group ideas, which account for differences in reasoning between people in primitive societies and those in modern Western ones. Lévy-Bruhl suggested that primitive thought and perceptions are pervaded by mysticism and that the primitive mentality, albeit not opposed to the laws of logic, is not governed exclusively by these laws.

Wundt and Vierkandt. Moreover, his main result has been adopted by Preuss in order to be discussed automatically when dealing with his theory. On the other hand, several very delicate issues have not been discussed by any of his colleagues in such a comprehensive manner. His book thus indeed brings out very clearly the shortcomings as to the most common theories. In this respect his argument undoubtedly has an independent value.

Just as Vierkandt does, Danzel considers the issue concerning the petroglyphs to be solved. In passing he points to the fact that tree drawings and sand drawings also belong to this level of civilization. All these primitive drawings have in common that, following technical traces, they were merely formed in play and they have no specific significance. They gradually developed into very schematic figures, which surely already shelter genuine 'depictions'. Up to this point one can follow the development process step by step, but then the question arises: how did the outline drawing emerge from these 'skeleton-like' figures, the character of which is as yet entirely governed by their technical origin. Danzel suggests the possibility that 'homomorphs'<sup>47</sup> perhaps played a role here, nonetheless acknowledging we are in fact dealing here with an unsolved problem. It thus goes without saying that the remarkable naturalistic art of the Bushmen and the Palaeolithic Europeans are certainly no less enigmatic to him. He does indeed declare this explicitly. He rejects Verworn's solution and does not acknowledge a pre-magical era, in which art was as yet untethered. The reason for this: he agrees with Preuss that the magical-subjective way of thinking must have always and everywhere preceded the rational-objective way of thinking, and as with Vierkandt holds on to the view that the most simple is also the most original. He seemingly finds a confirmation of this idea in the experience gained by several researchers: tribes with a very primitive civilization cannot recognize representations rising above the level of petroglyphs (the representations concerned were of European origin). Even though these drawings, in his view, observed from the standpoint of development must be much more recent than the far more imperfectly executed petroglyphs, indeed separated by a unbridgeable chasm, he does however not hesitate any more than Vierkandt does to assume the same origin as to both groups. With regard to naturalistic art he only thinks of more spontaneous expression of emotions – joy over a rich hunt, a defeated enemy and the like – than the playful scribbling from which the earliest petroglyphs are said to have originated; indeed a distinction he rightly does not emphasise, as the emotional element was perhaps never entirely absent when idly scratching a rock.

At first glance it seems not unlikely that the more recent pictography has evolved from this playful emotional art. Danzel argues that on closer

<sup>47</sup> English: 'prints' or 'silhouettes'.

examination however this position proves to be untenable. First of all we observe that, among many peoples with a 'depicting' art, there are but a few among which these representations also serve as a pictography, whereas on the other hand, not only among peoples with but also among those without a pictography, the representation as a rule also acts as religious symbol. Hence it can be concluded that the rational application of the representation in the figure script did not evolve directly from the playful-emotional, but must have developed from the magic-religious drawing. In addition, however, the earlier theory is to be rejected on ethno-psychological grounds. A genuine pictography, even the most primitive, is only possible when all the figures from which it is assembled have a specific meaning with which all the individuals of the group utilizing it must be completely familiar. It requires the ability to abstract a certain part from a certain conceptual complex, which regarding each individual is separately attached to the representation, namely that which is indicated as part of its function as a communicating or informing symbol. Such an objective, generalizing way of looking is apparently as yet absent with the primitive artist. The images this representation arouses in him are as yet of such an individual-subjective nature that they prevent the development of a conventional meaning.

In addition to these primitive autotelic drawings we nonetheless find a series of artefacts with a completely different character. Danzel divides them into five separate categories, which for brevity we can summarize under the general term of marks and distinguishing features. As the name already suggests these figures fulfil a purely practical function; in psychological terms they can only be considered predecessors of pictography if they were likewise produced with the purpose to communicate something. In fact however there is no direct genetic connection too between these figures and script. Their deficient character and the in general very limited extent of their sphere of utilisation combine in order to form an insurmountable obstacle with regard to the development of the essential properties of the genuine real script figures. Moreover, it looks as if their rational function has often originated from a magical one; therefore here once again the direct transition from the playful-emotional to a purely rational art product seems to be excluded.

Even though neither the autotelic drawing, nor the distinguishing feature can be considered the mother of the pictograph, both have contributed somewhat to the genesis and development of pictography. They have, according to Danzel, prepared it: the former technically – one had now indeed learned to draw, the latter psychologically, through which one had become familiar with the use of mnemotechnical figures. The pictograph however stems directly from the magical figure which when utilised with whatever special purpose, has an unvariedly more abstract than individual-concrete significance under the conservative influence of the magic-religious tradition

and mentality; it is thus as it were predestined to live on as an ideogram once it loses its magical character. It is true that Danzel cannot demonstrate in a completely satisfactory manner precisely how this came about. However, the fact one can prove that the majority of pictographs originally merely served as notices of a religious nature and as such were closely related to ritual acts, seems to point to the fact that once the magical significance had faded the connection between act of magic and figure was not immediately broken, but that the latter initially served the cult as a mnemotechnical tool for some time. When Danzel speaks of the conservative influence of magical representations and practises, he hereby already indicates that he, no more than Vierkandt does, believes in a gradual stylisation as a result of the changed relationship between figure and that which it depicts or indicates or in the purport Verworn attaches to it: 'stylization' to him only means 'un-naturalism'. Nevertheless he agrees with Verworn that this lack of naturalism is an essential characteristic of the magical figure, by means of which it unmistakably stands out from the primitive autotelic drawing. While precisely studying the many categories of magical figures which he successively deals with, it could of course not have eluded him that one often comes across rock drawings there and that Koch-Grünberg's theory can at best be applied to petroglyphs in South America, but apparently not to petroglyphs in general. However, he can determine that those magical rock drawings are indeed far less naturalistic and they have not for a single moment shaken his belief in the correctness of Koch-Grünberg's theory.

As to this point he surely shows less independence in his assessment of the data when compared with Preuss, who as a matter of fact had arrived at the conclusion by means of his own research: in fact all primitive art, as a product of a society as yet entirely controlled by a 'collective' or 'complex' way of thinking, contains a magic nucleus which now and again lies dormant too.<sup>48</sup> In theory he indeed acknowledges that the origin of the visual arts cannot be explained from that complex way of thinking, that the very earliest expressions of art must have been of a purely emotional nature and that in later stages of development, too, products of profane emotional art are by no means absent – he thereby thinks mainly of hunting scenes and the like which he evaluates in the same way Danzel does – but in fact the difference for him between these profane and real-magic depictions lies merely in this that in

<sup>48</sup> Preuss. Der Ursprung der Religion und Kunst. Vorläufige Mitteilungen, *Globus*, 86, 1904, 321-7, 355-63, 375-9, 388-92; *Globus*, 87, 1905, 333-7, 347-50, 380-4, 394-400, 413-9. See also: 'Der Ursprung der Menschenopfer in Mexiko', *Globus*, 86, 1904, 108-19; 'Der Kampf der Sonne mit den Sternen in Mexiko', *Globus*, 87, 1905, 136-40. Book Review: Leo Frobenius, *Das Zeitalter des Sonnengottes*, Bd. 1, Berlin 1904, *Globus*, 87, 1905, 353; *Die Nayarit-Expedition. Textaufnahmen und Beobachtungen unter Mexikanischen Indianern*, Leipzig: Teubner, 1912, vol. 1: Die Religion der Cora-Indianer in Texten nebst ein Wörterbuch.

none of them the magical nucleus has remained dormant. Needless to say, this opinion does not prevent him from assuming that the ornaments on weapons and household items considered most primitive, the most simple rock drawings etc. go back to traces of technical actions and that especially the braiding technique can have largely contributed to the development of a certain adornment. So far he indeed follows Schmidt's theory, but as Schmidt factually wanted to derive the entire South American adornment from automatically created braid patterns, Preuss apparently holds the view that the majority of animal figures only relate to the braid pattern to the extent that they have preserved its style. The profane as well as the real-magical adornment is for the time being ruled by that ancient technical style, especially the latter. The reason for this: on the one hand the method of implementation is by all means less important in this case and on the other hand its religious character encourages in the extreme the adherence to the old conventional forms. Of course Preuss cannot believe in a profound difference in form between the magical and profane art, a difference in form with the value of a criterion: How could this indeed rhyme with his theory that all primitive art is at the very least *latent*-magical, that each ornament, each drawing can formerly have had a magical connotation and can always acquire this one at any time! He consequently considers the naturalistic art of the Bushmen and the like quite simply as a product of a higher development, expressing itself in an increasing independency with respect to the original technical styles, which provide the basis everywhere. Elsewhere too primitive art has surely reached a certain degree of naturalism and there is no cause - according to his reasoning - to consider the artistic creations of the Bushmen and the Palaeolithic Europeans as other than *primae inter pares*. He does however not deny that, as Vierkandt and Danzel do, as soon as the primitive representation has to a certain degree freed itself from the traditional technical style, a process of change in the opposite direction, the gradual schematization towards 'geometrical ornament' begins. On the contrary, he recalls that such '*Verkummerungsreihen*'<sup>49</sup>, as he names them, since Stolpe's afore-mentioned treatise so often demonstrated and studied that their frequent appearance can no longer be disputed. He does not doubt the cause of this phenomenon. As previously with Frobenius he points to the consequences of the repetitive copying, the mass production, but while Frobenius merely acknowledges this as a contributing factor of a technical nature, Preuss deems the search for deeper causes to be superfluous.

Although Preuss has undoubtedly earnestly strived at constructing a theory in which all data and hypothesis of any relevance could come into their own, the fruit of this endeavour can indeed not be considered the

<sup>49</sup> English: 'a degenerating series'.

reflection of a 'prevailing opinion'. The fact that such a 'prevailing opinion' does not yet in effect exist, and that, on the contrary, the views on several of the most important issues mentioned above as yet differ widely, are on occasion even engaged in a diametrical clash, we cannot reveal more clearly than to conclude this survey with Karsten's peculiar theory, which has apparently already acquired a certain following outside the actual school of Preuss.<sup>50</sup> As we have indicated briefly above, Karsten attempts to prove that the South American art has from the beginning been subservient to the magic act and that its existence is indeed exclusively the outcome of certain magic-animistic representations. We should in fact speak of animistic-magic representations because Karsten considers – as does Wundt in his *Völkerpsychologie* and contrary to the pre-animistic theory forwarded by Preuss and the like – the belief that a soul which is more or less dependent upon the body, as the mother of all magic. The representation-magic, the kind of magic with which we mainly deal with in the field of the visual arts, he explains exclusively departing from the belief that the representation is, as is its name, one of the bearers of the soul, by means of the possession of which one acquires a certain power over that soul, can in various ways exert a certain pressure on it. How one, in his view, now envisioned the effectuation of this process, under the conditions and the special purpose with which the representation-magic was carried out, is less relevant here; the main issue is that apparently none of the arguments expressed by the supporters of the pre-animistic theory could convince Karsten that the magic act must be earlier than the belief in the existence of a soul. Considered superficially, it now indeed seems a case of minor significance if, when adopting representations for magical purposes, one was thinking of a soul or not. Nonetheless when looking meticulously into a full range of depiction-magic utilising Karsten's explanation as guideline, one realises the inaccuracy of that first impression. It would go too far if we were to demonstrate this in detail here. Moreover, of far more importance – from an art historical point of view – is the second issue where his opinion differs from the views of the majority of present-day researchers: the origin of visual art. In his opinion, there has never been a profane and at the same time in the strictest sense of the word an 'autotelic' art, or at any rate that which passes for it is in reality something completely different. In the face of Koch-Grünberg's<sup>51</sup> observations and arguments which

<sup>50</sup> De Josselin de Jong states in endnote 8 of his original manuscript: Remarkably for instance Eduard Seler deemed it relevant to translate Karsten's treatise from English into German to be published in the *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*.

<sup>51</sup> Koch-Grünberg. *Südamerikanische Felszeichnungen*, Berlin E. Wasmuth, 1907, 68 states they are mainly playful expressions of a naive feeling for art: '*dass es sich lediglich Spielende Äusserungen eines naiven Kunstempfindens handelt*' or idem, 75: basically it does not matter where these pictures are found, on the wall of a house, in the wet sands on a river bank or on

as we have seen the majority of the contemporaries consider to be conclusive, he places the testimonies of several early travellers that point in an entirely different direction. Most of them report that the natives accompanying them always evince a 'superstitious fear' when seeing rock drawings. Jules Crevaux<sup>52</sup> communicates that the Indians were accustomed to painting their bodies with the same figures one finds on the rocks when they set out on a journey in order to 'deter death-bringing demons', a fact from which Crevaux concluded that petroglyphs and body drawings have the same religious connotation. In addition Karsten remarks that the petroglyphs include for example representations of dance masks, well known magic paraphernalia, as Koch-Grünberg<sup>53</sup> has to acknowledge too. Finally he calls upon the fact, likewise established by many, that petroglyphs are nearly always found in or in the vicinity of places considered to be residences of 'spirits', such as waterfalls and rapids, high and secluded mountains, steep rock slopes and caves. This fact, he argues, is entirely consistent with his theory: by depicting the spirits one as it were forces them to reside within those representations. Karsten thus arrives at the final conclusion that South American visual art<sup>54</sup>, *'nur die Dienstmagd der Zauberei gewesen ist, und dass das Studium der Ornamentik der Indianer nur zum Ziele führen kann, wenn es Hand in Hand geht mit einem Studium ihrer Religion und ihres Zauberglaubens'*.

### III

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a smooth rock surface. Everywhere they are the useless and raw beginnings of primitive art: *'Im Grunde genommen, ist es völlig gleichgültig, wo sich diese Bilder befinden, auf der Wand des Hauses, im weichen Ufersande oder auf der glatten Felsfläche. Überall sind es die müssigen und rohen Anfänge primitiver Kunst.'*

<sup>52</sup> Jules Crevaux (1847-1882), physician, ethnologist and author of: *Voyages dans l'Amérique du Sud* (1880-1881), Paris: Hachette 1883, 145. We read here: *'Les Indiens actuels ne partent jamais en voyage ou en guerre sans se couvrir le corps de peintures qui ont pour but, disent-ils, de chasser les diables qui pourraient les faire mourir.'* See also: *Voyage d'exploration dans l'intérieur des Guyanes 1876-1877, Le Tour du Monde*, vol. 37, Paris: Hachette 1879, 337-416; *Voyages dans l'Amérique du Sud*. 4 vols, 1. *Voyage dans l'intérieur des Guyanes (1876-1877), exploration du Maroni et du Yary*. 2. *De Cayenne aux Andes (1878-1879), exploration de l'Oyapock, du Parou, de l'Iça et du Yapura*. 3. *A travers la Nouvelle-Grenade et le Vénézuëla (1880-1881), exploration, en compagnie de M. Lejanne, du Magdalena, du Guaviare, et de l'Orénoque*. 4. *Excursion chez les Guaraounos (1881)*, Paris Hachette 1883.

<sup>53</sup> Koch-Grünberg. On rock engravings see: *Zwei Jahre unter den Indianern, Reisen in Nordwest Brasilien 1903-1905*. 2 vols, Berlin E. Wasmuth, 1909-1910, vol. 1, 149; vol. 2, 70; on mask dances: vol. 2, 152-201. *Die Maskentänze der Indianer des oberen Rio Negro und Yapura, Archiv für Anthropologie*, 4, 1906, 294. For dance masks as observed in petroglyphs, see: K. von den Steinen, *Unter den Naturvölkern Zentral-Brasiliens*. Chapter 11: Maskenornamentik und Tanzschmuck. 1894: 295-329.

<sup>54</sup> Karsten 1916. English: 'has only been the maidservant of magic, and that the study of adornments of the Indians can only lead to the goal if it goes hand in hand with the study of their religion and their magical beliefs'.

From this very concise, but as we hope objective, sketch of the various phases the scientific research into the earliest history of primitive art has gone through to date, the main difficulties researchers came across and the most essential differences of opinion to which the often conflicting data gave rise, the reader will now at least have understood that even the extrinsic process of development of this art, let alone the intrinsic laws that have governed it, may as yet be considered an unresolved problem. However, it would be incorrect to state that all these investigations have not brought us any further. They have the value of temporary explorations in all directions through a vast and rugged terrain. The many difficulties of the most varied nature, apparently just as many problems in themselves which, initially slowed us down now and then, forcing us time and again to reconsider the already achieved results, have been gradually reduced to several key problems, of which the mutual coherence is already becoming clear to us and the solution of which no longer seems to be unattainable to us. We would now like to momentarily return to two of these problems, in our view among the most important, not in order to merely repeat more extensively what has already been stated above on this subject, but in order to reach an independent judgment on the value of the hitherto proposed solutions. In the first place our research does indeed concern the connection between visual art and technique<sup>55</sup> and subsequently the genetic relationship between primitive naturalism and the non-naturalistic kinds of 'uncivilized' art.

These theories especially now once again demand our attention, as the currently prevalent view that the earliest ornaments go back to automatically created braid patterns and other purposely produced 'traces' of technical actions is mainly based on the almost universally accepted theory presented by Max Schmidt and Koch-Grünberg.<sup>56</sup> The numerous forms of braiding technique in vogue among the Indian tribes, which Schmidt visited and studied thoroughly, as has been mentioned, included only one which our researcher has been able to apply to his investigations. This kind of braiding consists of two sets of strips of palm leaves or reed of which one is braided

<sup>55</sup> De Josselin de Jong states in endnote 9 of his original manuscript: When writing my article I have not utilised Dr. F. Adama van Scheltema's interesting essay entitled 'De verklaring der oudste ornamentvormen uit de techniek' ('The explanation of the oldest ornamental forms from the technique'), see *De Gids (The Guide)*, August 1920, 301-26), which I came across only after my article had been completed. As the reader will observe, Van Scheltema's arguments against the archaeological theory complement mine in more than one respect.

<sup>56</sup> Koch-Grünberg. On braiding and weaving see: *Zwei Jahre unter den Indianern, Reisen in Nordwest Brasilien 1903-1905*. 2 vols, Berlin E. Wasmuth, 1909-1910. vol. 2, 209-24 and *Vom Rorima zum Orinoco. Ergebnisse einer Reise in Nordbrasilien und Venezuela in den Jahren 1911-1913*, 5 vols, 1917-1928, vol. 3, Ethnographie, 80-5, 88-90 + Tables 22-4, 57.

through the other in the perpendicular direction. If done in the most simple and most obvious manner, then the result is of course a checkerboard pattern, but one well can imagine that even without the help of technical tests or even representations, this pattern can be varied in many ways. In addition, it will be clear that it is impossible to create even the slightest variation without departing from this most simple braid method, either by means of applying a less simple system from the start and keeping to it from then on, or by changing the system while braiding. Now nobody will contradict – as a matter of fact Schmidt himself admits it – that any change in the system which according to the braid pattern cannot be considered a result of negligence, must have been carried out purposely. It comes down to determining if the technical artifices that created all kinds of variations in the braid pattern did indeed aim at these variations, or were applied with a different goal merely yielding the widely discussed ornaments as a unexpected and unintentional secondary result. Regarding the more recent, more complicated forms of this braiding, the answer to this question is not doubtful. One only has to glance at the infinitely varied braid adornment of Surinam Indians in order to realise that at least here the ornament entirely dominates the braid method completely. Among the innumerable, perfectly conformed baskets, that all comply with exactly the same technical requirements, a pair with entirely identical braid patterns cannot be found. In order to better reflect the pattern one often works with dichromatic braid strips, in other words one set is blackened beforehand. Alongside all kinds of geometrical motifs, combined in all possible ways, one also often creates 'stylized' human figures; in short, the unlimited options with regard to varying this technique fully come into their own here. Less easy to judge are the infinitely simpler deviations of the rigid checkerboard scheme by means of which, for instance, a pattern arises consisting of parallel horizontal, vertical or diagonal stripes. This braid scheme is still so obvious, demands so very little thought as yet, one would like to believe Schmidt when he claims that, in certain cases, – on which we cannot elaborate without representations -, even without a certain pattern in mind, should indeed emerge spontaneously. However, stripes are not yet figures, and Schmidt does indeed attempt to prove that the next step, too, on the road to random variation in patterns i.e., the one leading to the rectangular broken line and thus to the square and the rectangle and from there to the concentric squares and the like, the braider has merely departed from considerations of a practical-technical nature. We shall not dwell upon whether he has succeeded here because a discussion on the important technical details will indeed demand far too much from the reader's imagination without illustrations. Provided, however, that if Schmidt's judgment in this case would turn out to be correct, what would this have subsequently proven? In fact, merely that with a certain

method of braiding in specific circumstances certain geometrical figures spontaneously emerged in the pattern, but not that the braiders then for the first time have become acquainted with those figures. And how could this ever be proven! How would one ever be able to claim on duly substantiated grounds that the South American Indian had never ever drawn a cross, a rectangular when these, albeit spontaneously, appeared in his braid pattern! And how would anybody ever be able to adequately prove that these Indians once having somehow become familiar with rectangular broken lines and squares, while combining and varying, had not playfully arrived at drawing more complicated figures, such as meanders, but also prove that they 'discovered' these ornaments when the braid method while becoming increasingly less simple conjured them up beneath their hands! In all fairness everyone must admit that these theorems are unverifiable; however we must also investigate the extent to which they are plausible. Subsequently above all it can be observed it would be very un-methodical to start from the idea that such a widespread phenomenon, as adornment in Central America is, could have an entirely different origin than elsewhere. Therefore if Schmidt is correct, we may expect that elsewhere, too, the close relationship between braid technique and decorative art will become clearly evident in the motifs preferably applied. However this by no means the case. Already on South American soil, indeed as soon as we take a look outside the region, in which Schmidt has acquired his information, this relationship apparently does not exist. Yet in Guyana, as we mentioned, where the referred braid method has reached its highest development, we find, alongside a strictly linear, but unique rich basketry adornment, on other utensils such as earthenware and clubs, a kind of ornamentation which, whatever its origin may be, can on no account have been inspired by means of geometrical braid patterns. In particular, the embellishment of clubs with their wondrously stylized human figures and their frivolously twisted, often curvilinear motifs of unknown origin deviates so much from the characteristic basketry ornamentation that a direct genetic relationship between both is simply unthinkable. Likewise one cannot think of such a relationship in the many regions outside America where we, notwithstanding the presence of the same braiding technique, find a rich ornamentation which in no way reminds us of braid patterns such as, for instance, on New Mecklenburg<sup>57</sup> or where, as in Australia, the geometrical ornamentation can indeed not go back to braid patterns, because such braid patterns do not exist there. One could nevertheless now raise that wherever the textile origin of the adornment can no longer be discerned, either the braiding technique, or the art of ornamentation, or perhaps both, have since

<sup>57</sup> From 1918 on, the former German colony of Neu-Mecklenburg was part of the Bismarck Archipelago. Now known as New Ireland, it forms the most northeastern part of Papua New Guinea.

long followed its own path. However, one shall admit that a theory based on the as yet very much pending hypotheses is of very little scientific value. We must nonetheless take other facts into consideration. Twenty years ago, in his '*Geschichte der Kunst*', Karl Woerman<sup>58</sup> already pointed at the fact that indeed no complaint can be submitted against the assumption that pure geometrical figures, too, at least in certain cases can be direct representations of objects in nature, because in nature the geometrical form is not at all absent. He mentioned among others the skin pattern of certain animals, the plant world, and although all his examples are not equally fortunate, one shall not however be able to deny that statements such as delivered by Hoernes<sup>59</sup>: the curved line is indeed something concrete and the straight line something abstract. Therefore, too, in all places, with regard to adornment, where the former must have preceded the latter the label '*graue Theorie*'<sup>60</sup> may be valid. Woerman<sup>61</sup> thus held the view that the significance of braiding and weaving for the development of geometric ornamentation can easily be overestimated, an opinion many shared with him at the time, but which since Schmidt's 'discovery' apparently carries no weight. As we saw, certain researchers, especially Vierkandt *cum suis* deem the geometrical ornament to be original, but only as far as the form is concerned: they unanimously reject the possibility it could be an original representation. And yet we do not even need once more to come up with crystals and starfish in order to prove that this decisive judgment is premature. Among numerous tribes we do indeed find an adornment that can neither be explained by one or other technique, nor shows the signs of a gradual stylisation, but of which each small part, up to the most simple small geometrical figure, not only represents a certain object from nature, but is regarded by all tribesmen as a direct representation of that object. Especially Emil Stephan's thorough investigations<sup>62</sup> in the

<sup>58</sup> Karl Woermann (1844-1933), art historian and author of: *Geschichte der Kunst aller Zeiten und Völker*, Band 2: *Die Kunst der Naturvölker und der übrigen nichtschriftlichen Kulturvölker, einschliesslich der Kunst des Islams*, Wien: Bibliographisches Institut 2nd edn, 1915 in which for geometrical figures directly originating from nature, see 80.

<sup>59</sup> Hoernes. *Urgeschichte der bildenden Kunst in Europa von den Anfängen bis um 500 v. Chr.*, Wien: A. Holzhausen 1898, 35. Here we read the remark on curved and straight lines.

<sup>60</sup> English: 'grey theory'.

<sup>61</sup> Woermann. *Geschichte der Kunst aller Zeiten und Völker*, Band 1: *Die Kunst der vor- und ausserchristlichen Völker*, 1900, 39-40. Here it is remarked that the significance of braiding and weaving with regard to the development of geometric ornamentation can easily be overestimated.

<sup>62</sup> Emil Stephan (1870-1908), physician, ethnologist and author of: *Südsee Kunst. Beiträge zur Kunst des Bismarck-archipels und zur Urgeschichte der Kunst überhaupt*, Aus dem Königlichen Museum für Völkerkunde zu Berlin mit Unterstützung des Reichsmarine-Amts, Berlin: D. Reimer 1907, 86, 91, Plates 9-4a, 5a; 102, Figure 83. See also: E. Stephan and Fritz Graebner: *Neu-Mecklenburg (Bismarck Archipel). Die Küste von Umuddu bis Kap St. Georg. Forschungsreise bei den Vermessungsfahrten von S.M.S. Möwe im Jahre 1904*, Berlin: D. Reimer 1907.

Bismarck Archipelago have spread much light on this matter, although it cannot be said that ethnology has made much use of that light to date. The braiding technique among these tribes is little developed. Only the extremely simple components of their often very complicated figures, only for a small part linear, could also be found in the braid patterns: the straight line, the triangular, the zigzag line. Earthenware is or was until recently unknown here, as was the art of weaving; therefore the mechanical transmission of textile patterns on clay, especially familiar to America, is out of the question here. These figures often occur as very simplified representations, albeit however that various stages of this simplification process are not assignable. Moreover, among them representations are found of which it is difficult to imagine that they would trace back to a less conventional prototype. In this way a rectangular field with two sets of parallel lines intersecting at an oblique angle can thus have the meaning of 'the sea in the rain' and specks suggest the stars as well as lights of the sea. It seems to be difficult for certain researchers to imagine the form and meaning of especially the first figure to be original. On the other hand, however, no one has as yet ventured to come forward with another explanation. Moreover, in connection with the character of this art in its totality, it seems that Stephan's opinion that we must consider it a kind of primitive-impressionistic representation is indeed the most plausible.

These ethnographic facts by no means deplete the arguments put forward against Schmidt's theory. The considerations of a general ethnological nature one could adduce against his, in our view, extremely superficial manner of reflection are at least as relevant. Before putting these forth we shall just momentarily ascertain if perhaps the results of Koch-Grünberg's research can provide us with the clues we are searching for in vain in Schmidt's reasoning.

We should actually commence with mentioning that Koch-Grünberg's theory, if it is correct, factually renders Schmidt's theory superfluous – and vice-versa. After all, when reasoning as Koch-Grünberg does, one spontaneously arrives at the conclusion that the South American adornment in its entirety goes back to grinding grooves. Those wishing to hold on to both theories must therefore meticulously determine the precise implications of each of these two. Until now only one researcher has made a first attempt in this direction, namely Preuss, who seems to hold the view that the simple figures originating from grinding grooves have arrived at higher stages of development later by means of the braiding technique. This is a presupposition of which the correctness would nevertheless be very difficult to prove, as the relative age of the petroglyphs as well as the above-

mentioned braiding techniques are completely unknown to us.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, Preuss takes in a very cautious stance: he points to the fact that, apart from grinding grooves, one can mention all kinds of other traces of technical labour which can equally have contributed to the creation of simple figures. Nevertheless it is far from certain that Koch-Grünberg has drawn the correct conclusions from his observations. It is indeed extremely risky to assume that the issue concerning the petroglyphs is solved, based on the discovery that contemporary Indians now and again by way of a pastime engage in scratching more deeply and the like into the ancient rock drawings. In particular because there are, as Karsten has demonstrated, all kinds of indications that the genesis of these drawings is much less simple than Koch-Grünberg's Indian friends themselves seem to presume. This theory also does in fact not bring us any further. However, the main argument against this as well as the briefly mentioned above one, provides us with a consideration of a general-ethnological nature. Thereby the underlying idea itself that the origin of adornment and the art of drawing must be looked for in one or other special technique or in the technique in general is in my opinion sufficiently refuted, namely the consideration that we are not dealing here with a gradually and laboriously acquired cultural heritage, an '*Errungenschaft*'<sup>64</sup> of cultures such as, for instance, the present-day experimental science, but with an integral part of human civilization as such, a prerequisite *sine-qua-non* of our being humans. Peoples without art do not occur nor do the peoples 'with no religion' or 'with no language', which the ethnographic research of the last 25 years has for once and for all dismissed to the realm of fiction. And just as no present-day linguistic scholar imagines to find the most simple, according to popular belief, the most inept languages, in the earliest forms of the human language, no ethnologist can seriously believe in the possibility of becoming familiar with the earliest art by means of the most simple art forms of the contemporary or at least historically 'uncivilized' peoples. In theory all ethnologists now agree that Tylor's simplistic evolutionistic idea of the genesis and growth of human civilization has proven to be entirely untenable, but if it comes to putting the later acquired conviction into practice, we usually fail miserably. It should not be imagined that I not even in the

<sup>63</sup> See e.g., Cornelis Nicolaas Dubelaar (1917-2005), author of: *A study on South American and Antillean petroglyphs*, Dissertation Leiden 1984; *The petroglyphs in the Guianas and adjacent areas of Brazil and Venezuela. An inventory, with a comprehensive bibliography of South American and Antillean petroglyphs*, Los Angeles, California. The University of California, The Institute of Archaeology, Series Monumenta Archaeologica, 12, 1986; *South American and Caribbean Petroglyphs*, Caribbean Series. KITLV Leiden 1986; *The petroglyphs of the Lesser Antilles, the Virgin Islands and Trinidad*. Foundation for scientific research in Caribbean regions, Amsterdam 1995; C.N. Dubelaar, ed., *Puerto Rican rock art. A resource guide*, Buffalo N.Y.: Panamerican consultants for Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Office 1999.

<sup>64</sup> English: 'achievement' or 'acquisition'.

slightest degree would like to haggle on the general theorem that the development of art is closely linked to the development of technique (in the broadest sense). This close relationship is indeed undeniable, although its true nature has never been examined thoroughly perhaps precisely because one could not doubt its existence. In some areas, as for instance in certain regions of South America, it is extremely manifest, in other regions such as the South Sea it is far less easy to establish. When Schmidt and Von den Steinen contend that the angular, geometric looking adornment of Central Brazil is strongly influenced by the art of braiding, they are undoubtedly correct. In addition, when Stephan expresses his amazement at the expressions of art of the South Sea Islands which are sometimes located close to each other demonstrate such a remarkable difference in 'style', we can subsequently surmise, but not prove that here, too, the predominance of this or that special local technique if it did not cause this differentiation in style, it at least encouraged it to the extreme. Thorough research would in all probability prove that the most salient style zones coincide largely with certain technique zones, in the sense that wherever especially the adornment strongly deviates in style from the adornment of the adjoining regions, this always goes together with the practice of a certain technique, which is less prominent elsewhere. In Central South America where the art of braiding is highly respected as of old, the style of adornment must necessarily evolve differently than for instance in regions where pottery, woodcarving or leatherworking has acquired a predominant position in the material culture. Thus understood, the influence of the technique on the development of the visual arts can hardly be overestimated, but it certainly does not imply that the one emanated from the other.

As we touched upon above, the popularity of Schmidt's and Koch-Grünberg's theories can be mainly attributed to the fact they fitted so perfectly in with the evolutionistic system, from which we, despite all theoretical objections, have not yet extricated ourselves. That which is very simple, or seemingly simple – because evidence is lacking –, must per se be 'primitive', that is to say belong to that indefinable and, at the same time entirely hypothetical, germination era of the human civilization, in which we are accustomed to store everything the origin of which is totally unknown. Therefore, too, – and this brings us to the second issue we would yet like to dwell upon –, that for instance the surely ancient Palaeolithic art in Europe has quite recently, with the same certainty, indeed been described as 'non-primitive', even as '*entwicklungsgeschichtlich*'.<sup>65</sup>

The arguments with which one opposes those few researchers who think differently (Grosse, Frobenius, Verworn) are, as we observed, twofold.

<sup>65</sup> English: 'developmentally'.

In part they concern the forms of this art itself, in part they turn against the manner in which the above researchers attempt to explain the transition from the, in their opinion, age-old naturalism to the fanciful-conventional forms of later times. Apart from its evolutionistic core, about which we can be silent after the above, it strikes us in the first-mentioned argumentation that the certainty with which the existence of a close genetic relationship between the 'uncivilized' and the modern naturalism is taken for granted by the same researchers. Almost without exception they acknowledge that a direct transition between the first and the last is nowhere to be seen. Because the art of uncivilized peoples is simply considered as a whole to be un-naturalistic, one opines that all visual art of which this cannot be said has to be regarded as recent, without in the least taking the level of the spiritual civilization to which these works of art refer into consideration. Now we are arriving here at very thin ice, on which the ethnologist can only venture with extreme caution, I would like to remark however that the art of the primeval Europeans and Bushmen, in spite of all its venerable qualities creates anything but a modern impression. It is impossible that even its most fervent admirers can fail to notice its exclusively sensual character, its complete inability to individualize (which it has in common with all 'uncivilized' art), not to mention the numerous technical shortcomings. Who can for instance be blind to the profound distinction between the products of this characteristic '*urwüchsige*'<sup>66</sup> naturalism and the sophisticated, remarkably 'civilized' portrait vases of the old Peruvians? However, as yet, even an extraordinary astute and learned researcher such as Wundt does not hesitate a single moment to refer to the American stoneware as an example of the gradual ascent to a certain (but not at all high) degree of naturalism, followed by an equally gradual decline to the purely geometric adornment.<sup>67</sup> He thus does not hesitate for a single moment to parallel these unrivalled portraits in clay with for instance the small figures representing lizards and snakes from Central America, the small well-known human heads of Mexico and so many, doubtlessly very beautiful, others; but with all that characteristically 'uncivilized' samples of American earthenware adornment! Moreover, the same researcher is convinced that the Bushmen must have learned their art from the White man, apparently because he considers that art to be so strikingly 'modern': arguments in

<sup>66</sup> English: 'pristine'.

<sup>67</sup> J.P.B de Josselin de Jong published three articles on this subject: 'Oud-Peruaansch aardewerk in 's Rijks Ethnographisch Museum, Deel 1, Inleiding stijlen'; 'Deel 2: Plastische weergave van mensch en dier'; 'Deel 3: Het bovennatuurlijke in de keramiek. Schilderingen. Besluit', *Elsevier's Geïllustreerd Maandschrift*, 27, 1917, 1-15; 28, 1918, 315-25; 29, 1919, 1-11. (English translations of the above-mentioned titles: 'Old Peruvian Pottery in the National Museum of Ethnography, Part 1, Introduction to Styles'; 'Part 2: Plastic reproduction of humans and animals'; 'Part 3: The super-natural in the ceramics. Paintings. Conclusion.')

favour of his opinion he does factually not supply! Reasoning in this way one can indeed easily arrive at a splendidly conclusive theory. Nevertheless they, too, who are not blind, as Wundt is, to everything that hardly allows any reconciliation with their theory, make it very easy for themselves when admittedly explaining the unruly phenomena as 'unsolved', without for that matter expressing any concern at all. At present we shall still have to ascertain if their criticism on the hitherto made efforts in order to find a solution justifies this scepticism.

This criticism is mainly targeted at the opinion advocated by Verworn that the primitive naturalism of the Palaeolithic Europeans and Bushmen culturally and historically belongs to an epoch in which all kinds of magic-animistic representations dominated thinking and that, as a result of the rise of these representations, the previously unattached nature-art was constrained and falling into decay. The opponents invoke the well-known theory that the magical way of thinking is age-old, indeed as old as human culture itself, but do not all utilise this argument in an identical manner.<sup>68</sup> As to Danzel, it simply proves in a short and sweet way that such a highly evolved pre-magic art is inconceivable. As to Preuss, who emphasizes that all uncivilized art is at least latent-magic, it adequately demonstrates that such a profound difference as Verworn wants us to believe exists between the magic and profane art can never have been the case. It has to be admitted that this argumentation is far from convincing. To begin with it is not so much a question whether the earliest art is pre-magic, or un-magic, a question everyone including Danzel and Preuss answer in the affirmative. From the fact Verworn considers un-magic art to be pre-magic, too, does not at all follow that he must be incorrect in maintaining that the earliest art we can approach was naturalistic and that it lost its naturalistic character when it became magic. Furthermore everyone agrees that the servitude of the uncivilized art to a magic-religious act has indeed led to fossilization and conventionalism. Danzel himself has gone to great lengths in order to explain this phenomenon psychologically: it is as a matter of fact one of the main bases of his theory on the genesis of writing. Needless to say, one can disagree on the degree in which that rigidifying effect has asserted itself – Preuss holds the view that Verworn overrates it – but there can be no question of any proof as yet.

Taking everything into consideration one has managed to argue precious little against Verworn's theory. The entire challenge finally comes down to the fact that one simply cannot believe in the primitivism of peoples that bequeathed such beautiful drawings. Moreover, on what does this

<sup>68</sup> See e.g., Wil Roebroeks on magic-realism among Neanderthals. *Guts and brains. An integrative approach to the hominin record*, Amsterdam University Press - Leiden University Press, 2007.

disbelief rest other than on an evolutionistic chimera, at present already old, but ultra modern half a century ago, the phantasm that we are able to reconstruct the history of the human civilization from the short epoch we believe to oversee, with a biological accuracy, as from basic cell to Homo sapiens! From this consideration does of course not at all follow that Verworn's theory is correct in every respect: his pre-magic-animistic epoch is as yet as much in the air as the evolutionistic theory of his opponents. In any case, however, the facts indeed lead us at least to a careful examination into the essence of his hypothesis: namely the idea that we must not consider the physio-plastic art of the Palaeolithic European and the Bushmen as a product of a rather recent, but as the last remnant of a very ancient era of civilization and that the transition from physio-plastic to ideo-plastic is most closely linked to a drastic spiritual change process, which has left its mark on the entire culture of the following era – that of the historic 'uncivilized peoples' in general. We should for the time being let the question concerning the nature of this process rest. In the first place we have to examine if phenomena can perhaps also be perceived in other fields of spiritual life which, when viewed objectively, apparently do not fit in with the traditional evolutionistic scheme, because it is apparent from indisputable information that they date from a much earlier cultural epoch than should be the case according to this scheme. Such phenomena can in my opinion indeed be designated and indeed especially in the field of religion, a field moreover which as we have seen, has throughout the entire uncivilized era never been separated from the field of art. I am particularly thinking here of the so-called 'primitive monotheism', a phenomenon which scientific ethnology, in spite of the ever increasing number of ethnographic testimonies, has for many years been regarded with an unshakable scepticism as something impossible and – sometimes considered a consequence of missionary work, then again as a product of missionary imagination -, but at present, especially since Father Wilhelm Schmidt's thorough examinations<sup>69</sup> and the talented arguments of the late Andrew Lang,<sup>70</sup> it can no longer not even by the most hardened evolutionist be deemed dismissed with an incredulous shrug or at most with an appeal to the unreliability of the data. Nowadays one follows a different procedure and

<sup>69</sup> Wilhelm Schmidt S.V.D. (1868-1954), linguist, ethnologist and founder of the *Journal Anthropos* (1906). Author of: *Der Ursprung der Gottesidee, eine historisch-kritische und positive Studie*. 12 vols, Münster: Aschendorff 1912-1955. See also: *Die Stellung der Pygmäen-völker in der Entwicklungsgeschichte des Menschen*, Studien und Forschungen zur Menschen- und Völkerkunde, 6-7, Stuttgart: Strecker und Schröder, 1910.

<sup>70</sup> Andrew Lang (1844-1912), historian, poet, literary reviewer and author of: *Myth, Ritual and Religion*, 2 vols, London: Longmans, Green and co., 1887; *The making of Religion*, London: Longmans, Green and co., 1898; *The Origins of Religion*, London: Watts and co., 1908. See also: *Custom and Myth*, London: Longmans, Green and co., 1884; *Magic and Religion*, London: Longmans, Green and co., 1901.

attempts to present a 'natural' i.e., an evolutionistic explanation; and now once again Preuss's very synthetically inclined mind has already established a theory by means of which the phenomenon ingeniously disposes of its anachronistic character. However, as long as the correctness of this hypothesis is not proven, it seems safer to me to for the time being accept the anachronism as it is and to focus our attention on the question if our evolutionistic scheme is perhaps faltering.

An indication in this direction is perhaps also provided by means of a third phenomenon, one of a more tangible nature because it is expressed in all the doings of our uncivilized brother. As every ethnologist knows, and everybody who has ever resided among an uncivilized people can know, the difficulty in understanding these people does not lie in the fact they think differently in many respects and feel differently than we do, but in the fact that they appear only to do so on certain occasions, under certain circumstances. After days long conversations with an Indian, one shall indeed have remarked to oneself one could have had exactly the same conversations with an uneducated fellow countryman: – and lo and behold, all of a sudden he does or says something so astounding one suddenly feels to be once again transferred to a world of thinking or of emotion completely alien to us.<sup>71</sup> It is exactly these surprises that make fieldwork so appealing, but also so arduous, all the more because they present us with an indication that even behind certain seemingly extremely transparent expressions of our study object possibly entirely different motives and representations are hidden than we can presume. Now if the various theories on the character of 'primitive mentality' can be ascertained from this perspective, one can observe that they automatically fall into two groups, depending on the position taken when facing that singular contradiction. The final analysis of the theories of the first group are based on that which the primitive spiritual life has in common with ours, on the other hand those of the second group are based on the numerous phenomena of which the actual meaning remains concealed to us even after thorough research. According to the adherents of the first group a 'rational' explanation must be found from a modern standpoint for these phenomena, too; as to the representatives of the other direction we only have any chance of finding the correct solution when we succeed in tearing ourselves from our own habits of thought and consider nothing as 'unthinkable'. It subsequently stands to reason that the contrast in each separate case is not as sharp as this wording would suggest. These two extremes are indeed separated by means

<sup>71</sup> Here De Josselin de Jong refers to his fieldwork on the Peigan (Blackfoot: Piikani) and the Chippewa which he carried out in the North American reservations of Montana (1910) and Minnesota (1911) respectively. See Effert, *J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong Curator and Archaeologist. A study of his early career (1910-1935)*, Centre for Non-Western Studies, Leiden, The Netherlands, 1992.

of an impassable chasm – think for instance of Tylor's ultra-nationalistic manner of reflection and Lévy-Bruhl's ultra-mystical ideas – but one can easily mention theories, those Wundt presented for instance, in which both views come so close that with a superficial introduction one could doubt which of the two was decisive. As a matter of fact, the majority of researchers have hardly touched upon the core of the issue: which of the two points of view they take often becomes more apparent from their research method than from a direct explanation. One of the few exceptions is Lévy-Bruhl, who in his astute book not only formulates the question, but also answers it directly. As we know, he characterizes the primitive way of thinking as 'pre-logic' or 'mystic', contrary to ours, which he by comparison of course calls 'logic'. He nevertheless states emphatically that this distinction merely applies to the collective, not the individual thinking. As an individual, primitive man thinks in exactly the same way we do, as a member of society however he thinks as that society does i.e., pre-logically. Indeed this explanation is entirely consistent with the nowadays widely excepted theory that the link between the individual and community in primitive societies is much, much closer than in ours, indeed to such a degree that there can be hardly any question of individual opinions, but in my view it is highly doubtful whether in this case the right nail is hit on the head. We cannot elaborate here on the question whether the difference between the 'pre-logic' and the 'logic' way of thinking is indeed as large as Lévy-Bruhl thinks. But even if we accept he is right in this regard, we must still wonder if it is psychologically plausible that people whose communal life is entirely governed by a way of thinking so significantly dissimilar to ours, can now and again as it were completely shake off that mentality. This question is all the more legitimate as Lévy-Bruhl – according to his examples – imagines the area of representation to which individual thinking remains limited to without a doubt be much smaller than it is in reality. In the cases he quotes one could almost speak of instinct as of a 'logical way of thinking', whereas it cannot be denied that also for instance in intimate conversations often nothing 'pre-logic' comes to the fore. Moreover, if Lévy-Bruhl's explanation was correct, it would follow that in the numerous cases in which the community as such operates for instance during all kinds of religious ceremonies, the collective, pre-logical way of thinking would hold absolute power. And who shall dare to claim such a thing! The tribe's entire social organization, the entire religious life, yes even that community's entire spiritual civilization should then have to be pre-logical in its very being! Lévy-Bruhl himself comes to inform us how mindless this hypothesis is. He argues it is indeed obvious that the individual as an individual can think logically and often does so: an individual would surely be doomed if not doing so! Well then, that which applies to the individual, certainly also '*à plus forte raison*' applies to the community, especially to the primitive community,

in which the individual plays such an insignificant role! The distinction between the individual and the collective mentality cannot be possibly as large as Lévy-Bruhl claims however: now and again both appear as 'pre-logic' or whatever you wish to call it, but in neither case is this exclusive, or perhaps better, continuous. If we now devise how much spiritual legacy which, from an earlier era of civilization to the present day, lives on in our modern culture, to which degree atavistic elements still assert themselves in our own way of thinking, then the question is involuntary forced upon us if the enigmatic character of the uncivilized mentality can also possibly be considered an ambivalent result of two different eras of civilization. That which we consider 'logical' in primitive culture would have adhered to the one era, which is immediately understandable to us, whereas to the other era that which is alien to our modern way of thinking would have belonged and which Lévy-Bruhl qualifies as 'pre-logic'.

Everybody who does not a priori reject this consideration will have to admit it at least contains a hint to the same effect as the remarkable phenomena in the field of art and religion we discussed earlier. In addition to the contrast between an very old naturalistic type of art and a doubtlessly no less earlier monotheistic form of religion and the frivolous-conventional forms of art of historically uncivilized peoples, closely linked to an extremely confused complex of magic-animistic representations on the one hand, we now seem to discern the no less remarkable contrast between an epoch in which the way of thinking, therefore civilization, bore a 'logical' character and an era during which all kinds of so-called 'pre-logical' elements controlled the spiritual life. The link between these contrasts – assuming they are not imaginary – cannot elude anybody. Primitive monotheism originates from the 'logical' era, the earliest of the two, as does the earliest naturalistic art and, in general, the 'logical' element in primitive spiritual life; minus the second era which we can rather entitle as 'post-logical' than as 'pre-logical'. It produced that which ethnology considers as characteristically uncivilized and which we indeed find back in the spiritual life of the vast majority of historically uncivilized peoples albeit then in many gradations. I deliberately speak of the 'earliest' naturalistic art, because now and again we also find beyond the sphere of influence of modern civilization types of art that are certainly naturalistic but not old (in a cultural and historical sense). The finest products of the pre-historic Peruvian ceramics – even if they date from before the Incan era – are therefore early when observed from a cultural and historical viewpoint. Moreover, other clues also suggest that the Old-Peruvian civilization at least in certain respects had indeed left the second era behind it. Reversely non-naturalistic art can of course be very old. As mentioned above, here and there even among the naturalistic drawings of the Palaeolithic Europeans we come across figures we would rather expect in a conventional,

more or less geometrical adornment of later times. They occur in Bushmen art, too, and here already less sporadic. Among the Australians and Eskimo they are so common, that the art of these peoples, in spite of their unmistakable ability with regard to naturalistic representation, cannot be set on a par with the art of one of the first mentioned groups. In connection with these facts it does not seem to be too daring to consider the sporadic 'geometrical' figures in primitive-naturalistic art as the first phenomena of a transitional era, a presumption that perhaps may become a certainty by means of a comparative research on the entire material culture of the groups mentioned here. In any case, these phenomena will not at all jeopardize our hypothesis: indeed how would they ever be able to indicate where the one cultural era ends and the other begins! Those who as yet think differently will soon be disillusioned by means of Vierkandt's argument concerning the gradualism of cultural changes. A more serious objection for many is perhaps the vagueness of our characteristics of the two eras. As a matter of fact the term 'logical' which tells us very little in this connection must be replaced by means of a more precise qualification as soon as possible. I have merely applied this term in order to clearly disclose the difference between the hypothesis proposed here and Lévy-Bruhl's theory, the only one who has dealt with our issue extensively. The following may indeed serve as a clarification. In the title of one of his books Frobenius speaks of the 'humanity's years of indiscretion'.<sup>72</sup> Admittedly this expression – although there is perhaps much to consider from a biological point of view – leaves nothing to be desired concerning conciseness: it not only typifies the character of 'primitive culture' as it currently occurs to us, but it also reminds us that this era of civilization must have been preceded by an even earlier one, of the 'childhood'. Well, for all who see in Frobenius' title something more than a superficial witticism, my intention shall become clear when I voice the presumption that the term 'childhood' is equally applicable to my hypothetical 'logical' era as is the term 'years of indiscretion' on the subsequent era, which I have named 'post-logical' in a comparative way.

For the time being I must leave it at this short designation. Before moving away from the subject I would like to nonetheless in advance reply to an accusation I surely will not be spared, namely the accusation I have come questionably near to the time-honoured ecclesiastical-dogmatic theory of degeneration which ever since Tylor's devastating critique no longer plays any important role in scholarly ethnology. Now apart altogether from the fact

<sup>72</sup> Frobenius, *Aus den Flegeljahren der Menschheit. Bilder des Lebens, Treibens und Denkens der Wilden*, Hannover: Jaenecke 1901. At the turn of the nineteenth century, feelings of Western superiority lead to prejudice towards other cultures. Colonial powers often justified their policy as having to educate 'primitive peoples' who were considered children or at best adolescents.

that an ecclesiastical dogma does not per se has to be incorrect, it is already apparent from my comparison that there can be no talk of 'degeneration' here. To the catholic missionary, the most characteristic qualities of the uncivilized society are equal in number to symptoms of moral and intellectual decline. To the present author they are the results of a psychological fermentation process, which can best be compared with the puberty crisis in the life of the individual. Both opinions merely agree in this respect that another more childlike psychological life must have preceded that phase of mental turmoil.

#### IV

Although the attentive reader himself has presumably already formed an opinion on the value of the views which the exclusively 'artistic' way of looking tries to force upon us as the undeniable results of a brand new 'art science', it is perhaps not inappropriate to briefly summarize the results of our ethnological research and to test the core of the 'artistic' theory – void of the tapestry of phrases surrounding it – in the light of those results.

We have observed that, in spite of all kinds of disagreements, all academic researchers nevertheless herein see eye to eye that the enigmatic, the capricious aspect of primitive art can be largely explained by means of its boundedness. As with the entire civilization of which it is an integral part, it is governed by all kinds of magic-animistic representations to such a degree, it has become instrumental to the practices associated with these representations so that the personal talent of the artists can never fully develop and therefore itself falls prey to the rigidifying effect of a sacrosanct conventionalism. In primitive society there can thus be no talk of 'art for art sake'. But not only that: the entire mental state of the artist with respect to his creation, as well as the society's mind set with respect to the artist must necessarily be of an entirely different nature than is the case in the civilized society. The artist will never be able to entirely shirk the spiritual sphere of the civilization environment from which he has originated, never will he be completely free of the representations and emotions which in that environment are inseparably linked to the likeness as such – and all plastic art is likeness to the primitive. As to by far the majority of cases we can only conjecture about these emotions and representations; and our presumptions are only of any value when based upon a thorough knowledge of the entire spiritual and material culture of a certain community. How can we for example enter the state of mind of the Australian when working on a wooden shield as long as we do not know what the carved figures mean, which link this artist maintains between that which is designated or represented and a shield (or this particular shield), which qualities in the society he belongs to

are attributed to a shield or to certain kinds of shields, which functions they fulfil in the ritual and in how far manufacturing is in itself considered a religious act! The reader senses that this short list is amenable to expansion, indeed an honest researcher can in fact never be able to arrive at the conviction he has all the essential data at his disposal. Therefore he will almost always never know the answer to the seemingly so simple question the extent to which also emotions of a purely aesthetical nature have contributed to the artist's state of mind. After all, this largely depends on the intensity of the non-aesthetic emotions by means of which the artist is governed— and the way in which that intensity could be measured. After all the above, it goes without saying that it can hardly be overestimated. Everything the primitive artist creates is directly or indirectly involved with his personal well-being. In every real or imagined trait of his product hides a dangerous power on which he feels more or less dependent. From this viewpoint the question arises as to which degree a purely aesthetical gratification with regard to the external appearance of his creation is compatible with the intense interest in its inner properties is neither simple nor superfluous: it may even be claimed with some justice that it contains the essence of the problem of the primitive aesthetics.

Behold, summarized in a few words, all that academic ethnology has achieved in this field. One could think it is not much, but in any case one must admit we have outgrown the phase of groping about blindly: slowly but surely research is currently progressing, the goal is still far away, but by and large the road is paved. Let us now ascertain that which the artistic inventors of the very latest 'art science' have for their part contributed to the solution of the problem.

We must first remark it is not a 'problem' to them. They do indeed ask questions, but those questions only concern the nature of their own 'beauty emotion', not the gist of the objects by means of which this emotion is aroused. The fact they experience the same emotion 'when seeing a Dayak tattoo board and a Buddhist kakemono they think they have to conclude that both artists in question were driven by the same kind of spiritual emotion when creating their work of art'.<sup>73</sup> And the echo of this emotion reverberates through the soul of the artistically minded viewer when becoming aware of the cause of his own 'beauty emotion'. The fact this emotion is also identified with the "divine' or 'demonic' possession', which 'enables' the Asian 'to create these astonishing objects' does not clarify its essence, all the more because ethnology informs us so little on that artistic obsession. Nevertheless, without having penetrated any deeper into this problem we can establish

<sup>73</sup> The source of this quote is as yet unknown. It may be extracted from the Declaration of Intent drafted by 'the Society of Friends of Asiatic Art'.

where the theory of the Friends of Asiatic Art really comes down to: their personal aesthetic appreciation does not in the slightest deviate from that of the Asian artists. What they consider beautiful, he considers beautiful too; their emotion is his emotion and conversely, what leaves them cold, left him no less cold. When one presents them with two small tattoo boards, the possibility exists that they consider one as beautiful but not the other. Hence, the Dayak who created the first small board was driven by an 'awesome psychic tension' caused by that 'spiritual emotion' which is the same with all artists of all time. His small board is a 'work of art'. That which inspired the maker of the other small board is of no importance: his creation is 'merely an object of home crafts' or 'murky surrogate'. And yet we know that in the life of the Dayak tattooing fulfils certain functions which cannot at all be adequately explained by means of the term 'bodily decoration', that all figures go back to a relatively limited wealth of motifs, that those motifs generally represent creatures or objects with an important role in Dayak mythology, that one can prove that a number of them serve as magical repellents, that now and again tattooing, especially when the patient is a female, is considered a religious act according to all kinds of taboo rules and a complicated ceremony. In short that the 'cultural value' of this tradition in Dayak community can neither be understood nor 'felt' as long as one completely disregards the thoughts, the sphere of emotion to which it belongs. Modern artistry however is exalted above these considerations. Science entertains itself with 'cultural values' and thoughts; it is familiar with and acknowledges only a single sphere of emotion: its own!

It is unnecessary to dwell upon these opinions any longer. I hope to have succeeded in clearly revealing the existence of an unbridgeable chasm between the scientific and the 'artistic' point of view. I thought to be capable of defending the former; in the latter I was not able to even discover anything indicating the pursuit of truth. Finally I would like to answer one more question – which the reader has surely already asked himself -: do the artistic i.e., those who acknowledge themselves and each other as such always agree with each other? The answer has to be – I feel sorry for them – in the negative. That which causes the one to 'experience' the true 'emotion of beauty' leaves the other cold. Hence, science, realising it is fallible, can find this solace that even 'divine possession' can now and again err.

**J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong** (1886-1964) was the most prominent Dutch ethnologist of the first half of the twentieth century. He began his career as a curator at the National Museum of Ethnology (Leiden) and later became a professor of anthropology and Indonesian ethnography at Leiden University. He was the founder of the Dutch school of structural anthropology.

