Ethnology in the German Democratic Republic (GDR): (Re-)Migration and Transfer of Knowledge behind the ‘Iron Curtain’

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1. Introduction

Shortly before the Cold War culminated in the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961 and the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, the American anthropological journal Current Anthropology informed the English-speaking scientific community about “Anthropological and Folkloristic Institutions in the German Democratic Republic”. [1] The author of the report was Eva Lips, one of the leading ethnologists of the GDR. Eva Lips (1906–1988), together with her husband Julius Lips (1895–1950), former director of the Cologne Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum (1928–1933) and professor of ethnology and sociology at the University of Cologne (1929–1933), [2] had returned from exile in the United States to Leipzig in the Soviet occupied zone in 1948. There Julius Lips headed the Institute for Ethnology, established the Institute for Comparative Sociology of Law and was elected rector of Leipzig University in 1949. After Julius Lips’ premature death in 1950 the Institute for Ethnology and the Institute for Comparative Sociology of Law were consolidated and under the name of “Julius Lips–Institut für Ethnologie und vergleichende Rechtssoziologie” (“Julius Lips Institute for Ethnology and Comparative Sociology of Law”) guided by Eva Lips until 1966/68. Eva Lips specialized in the Americas. The ethnologist and archaeologist Ursula Schlenther (1919–1979) specialized in the same field and was also associated with the international networks of Current Anthropology. [3] Schlenther had migrated from Hamburg to the GDR in 1956 to work at the Humboldt University in Berlin (East). From 1973 to 1979 she headed the “Bereich Ethnographie in der Sektion Geschichte” (Ethnography Department in the History Section). Schlenther and Lips played decisive roles in the development of their subjects in the GDR for more than three and a half decades through research and teaching.

The fact that little is known about ethnology in the German Democratic Republic to this day can be seen as a result of the separation of Germany (1949–1989), which continues to have an effect until today. However, the different developments in ethnology in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG, founded on 23 May 1949) and the German Democratic Republic (GDR, founded on 7 October 1949) had a common starting point: after the end of the Second World War, in the German-speaking countries the academic discipline ethnology (previously called “Völkerkunde” in German-speaking countries) was strongly discredited due to its fusion with the National Socialist racial doctrine. Alternative concepts were used for the perception of the world. Professional recommencements in both German nations were based on contrasting conceptions of new worldviews, based on different, idealistic bourgeois or materialistic understandings of history and culture. But both German nations – from their foundation in 1949 until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 – remained continuously related to each other, not only politically, but also in science. So the German division did not show any
consequences on the level of the academic job market before 1961, when the Berlin Wall was constructed (Middell 2010). Until 1961, academics moved from East to West Germany and vice versa. After 1961, the transnational exchange took place at international conferences and meetings, which brought scholars together cross-border and cross-border. Besides, publications in journals and books should also be considered: Reviews were written inter- and transnationally.

This article focuses on the new start of ethnology in Leipzig under the US re-migrant Julius Lips, the resources Lips had acquired during his exile in France and the US as well as the lasting influence of his scientific approach. Secondly, this paper will pay attention to the redesign of ethnology in the GDR in Leipzig and Berlin (East) and the concept of ethnography, which in the early 1950s, with the repeal of the separation between ethnology (previously called "Völkerkunde" in the German-speaking countries, focusing research outside of Europe) and folklore studies (previously called "Volkskunde" in the German-speaking countries, focusing research in Europe), had been discussed as a common European discipline, cross-border and cross-border internationally. In the GDR, ethnography was involved in the large interdisciplinary research field of a Marxist world historiography. In this context, ethnographic research on the Americas received impetus from Julius and Eva Lips, Friedrich Katz and Ursula Schlenther, whose scientific approaches were shaped by an international background.

2. Ethnology in Leipzig after 1945

In the founding years of the GDR, the ethnologist and jurist Julius Lips [4] set sustainable tracts introducing approaches for the formulation of a non-racist, non-Eurocentric socialist science for a post-war new start of ethnology in Leipzig, where he worked until his premature death as rector of the University (1949–1950) and holder of the two chairs for ethnology and comparative legal sociology (1948–1950).

Already in exile in the United States as a member of the “Council for a Democratic Germany” and Chairman of the Educational Science Committee (Komitee für Erziehung und Wissenschaft), Lips demanded a fundamental new beginning of history and social sciences in post-war Germany, including his own discipline, and played a leading role in the development of a corresponding programme. In 1945, the Committee’s Guidelines for the Rebuilding of the Education and Training System in Germany (Richtlinien für einen Neuaufbau des Schul- und Erziehungswesens in Deutschland) called for human rights and democracy, social and legal equality of all people and races as fundamental principles for the re-education in Germany (“Der Geist der Menschenrechte und Demokratie, die Forderung der sozialen Gleichberechtigung aller Völker muss das Prinzip dieser neuen Erziehung sein”). [5] Consequently, to Lips, ethnology was “not a science for the few, but a broad... compass of life for all”. [6] Working in this direction, Lips had already been successful in Cologne in his position as director of the Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum during the 1920s/1930s. He attracted much support with his avant-garde exhibition concepts assisted by his wife Eva Lips. [7] His popular books published in exile in the US (The Savage Hits Back or The White Man Through Native Eyes, 1937, Tents in the Wilderness, 1942; The Origin of Things, 1947)
all reached the international bestseller lists and were translated into several languages. In Leipzig, in combining ethnology and comparative legal sociology, he saw the possibility of teaching about the development of human culture, which for him was essential for all social questions as well as for social sciences. [8] After his death in 1950, his wife and successor, Eva Lips, remained inextricably linked to her husband’s scientific approaches at the Julius Lips Institute for Ethnology and Comparative Sociology of Law, as did ethnology in Leipzig, which retained the name “Julius Lips” in the designation of its institute until 1989. [9]

2.1. Julius Lips’ resources for the establishment of Comparative Sociology of Law

Lips’ establishment of comparative sociology of law at Leipzig University was unique in post-war Germany. As early as 1928, Lips had argued that it was possible to work out a history of the development of law based on the development of human economic forms. In his opinion, no people on earth would exist without rights, laws and legal institutions. In line with the argument that modern legal terms could not be transferred to stateless and preliterate societies, Lips opposed his colleagues Richard Thurnwald and Father Wilhelm Schmidt, who represented the German-speaking field of comparative ethnological law research linked to the “founding fathers” Josef Kohler (1849–1919) and Albert Post (1839–1895) (Lips 1928).

In 1933, with the seizing of power by the National Socialists in Germany, the politically engaged Social Democrat Julius Lips was relieved from his academic positions in Cologne. Forced to leave Germany, he moved to France, where his likewise committed antifascist colleague Paul Rivet (1876–1958) at the Musée d’ethnographie du Trocadéro in Paris was well informed about the political persecution of dissidents in Germany. [10] Details of the cooperation between Lips and Rivet remain to be clarified. [11] “As a special mentor and a fatherly friend” at the Paris Institut d’Ethnologie Lips mentioned Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1857–1939). [12] “Professor Lucien Lévy-Bruhl…will be only too glad to give further information of me”, wrote Lips in a letter to Franz Boas in March 1934, while staying in London “negotiating…with a publisher about a forthcoming book”. [13] In 1937, when the then planned book was published under the title *The Savage Hits Back or The White Man Through Native Eyes* in London and in New York respectively, Lips finished his acknowledgements with special thanks to his friends Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (Paris), Bronislaw Malinowski (1884–1942, London, who wrote the foreword), Erland von Nordenskiöld (1877–1932, Göteborg), “Franz Boas and the Columbia University whose invitation rendered the completion of the work possible” (Lips 1937: XIV). In fact, Lips had been appointed to Columbia University by Franz Boas in 1934. It seems likely the reason behind this was not the planned book *The Savage Hits Back*, but Lips’ unconventional ideas on ethnological law research, his professorship in ethnology and sociology in Cologne, now lost, as well as his brilliant completed doctoral thesis in law (Leipzig 1925) (Mischek 2010).

It was certainly no coincidence that Lips was appointed a month before the adoption of the “Indian Reorganization Act” by the American Congress (June 1934). [14] The objectives associated with the “Indian Reorganization Act” confronted American jurisprudence, which was undergoing a fundamental change, with new challenges concerning US anthropology. The future co-founder of American legal sociology, the legal theorist Karl N. Llewellyn
(1893–1962), [15] prevailed in the dispute between the “quantifying legal empiricists, the Scientists, and the followers of sociological jurisprudence, the Prudents” (Mischek 2010). [16] In 1935 Llewellyn, together with Franz Boas, supported Lips’ field research on the economy and law of the Naskapi (Julius Lips 1939: 129). It represented a great opportunity for Lips, whose theoretical approach had been based mainly on desk studies until then. At the same time, in collaboration with a disciple of Franz Boas, the ethnologist Adamson Hoebel (1906–1993), Llewellyn started an investigation into the law of the Cheyenne. [17] Llewellyn’s and Hoebel’s 1941 publication became a standard work in ethnology. [18] Lips’ well-received article on Naskapi law was published in 1947. [19] In his foreword, Lips explains the relevance of further research indispensable for the formulation of a comparative sociology of law:

“From the inception of my research on, the Naskapi law study was intended to be the first part of a comprehensive study to early American law, dedicated to an investigation of the legal institutions of various Indian tribes with different forms of economics... Only after the publication of a series of monographs dealing with the legal concepts in different economic stages will it become possible – considering the close relationship between economics and law – to clarify the problems of development of primitive law and of the growth of legal institutions of early American primitive law. Thus, the present study is only a modest brick to the larger building…” (Lips 1947: 379).

Julius Lips and Karl N. Llewellyn were in contact both in person and by mail until 1948. [20] Without any question, Lips’ scientific concept of the new Leipzig Chair for Comparative Sociology of Law was based on continuing the research he had started in the US. Due to his premature death, the concept did not go beyond a design stage.

2.2. Julius Lips’ “Cultural history of peoples without written history”

In the schedule of his lectures at Leipzig University, Lips supplemented the announcement of his “Einführung in die vergleichende Völkerkunde” (“Introduction to comparative ethnology”) in brackets with the addition “zugleich als Einführung in die Kulturgeschichte der Völker ohne geschriebene Geschichte” (“Simultaneously as an introduction to the cultural history of peoples without written history”). [21]

Actually, a contribution entitled Die Geschichte der Völker ohne geschriebene Geschichte (The History of Peoples without Written History) by Lips was to be released in 1947 in volume 1 of the textbook series “Die Geschichte unserer Welt” (“The History of Our World”) conceived during his American exile by the German reform pedagogue Fritz Karsen (1885–1951) for re-education in post-war Germany and published by Suhrkamp Verlag in Berlin. Why the volume remained unpublished and why Julius Lips’ manuscript is now considered lost remains mysterious. [22] But since the term “the history of peoples without written history” had been used by Lips frequently in his bestseller The Origin of Things, published in 1947 in the US, it can be assumed that Lips’ contribution to volume 1 of Fritz Karsen’s textbook series “Die Geschichte unserer Welt” had been a compressed version of The Origin of Things. In the foreword Lips declared the book’s intention:

'When conversation, inspired by the events of the day, has turned to more serious matters, like social security and, especially, the ambiguous 'democracy', these have been shown to be anything but modern achievements, to be in fact often rather
inadequate imitations of similar systems established by humanity millennia ago....

This book has been written as a contribution toward the understanding of the development of human culture" (Lips 1947: 5, 6).

Lips' history of the development of indigenous societies, connected to modern times, was conceived as a “cultural history of peoples without written history” and became Lips’ most successful bestseller internationally. [23] The idea of a world historiography that led from “the history of peoples without written history” to the present day had been in Lips' mind as early as in 1937, when he declared in his lecture on Anthropology at the New School for Social Research in New York: “...ethnology deals with CULTURE including all that the human mind has thought and created during the whole sequence of its development”. [24] In this lecture Lips for example referred to the ethnologist Wilhelm Foy (1873–1929), the first director of the Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum in Cologne (1901–1923), Max Scheler (1874–1928), professor of philosophy and sociology at the University of Cologne, and his French mentor and friend Lucien Lévy–Brühl. [25] In fact, the Origin of Things was based on preparatory works which started from 1927 onwards and took up issues which had been also discussed by Karl Weule (1864–1926, ethnologist and geographer, Lips' university teacher in Leipzig), Heinrich Cunow (1962–1936, German Social Democratic Party politician, ethnologist and Marxist theorist) and Richard Thurnwald (1869–1954, Austrian ethnologist and sociologist). These preparatory works of Julius Lips’ included lectures and an article series published in Switzerland and the US under titles slightly modified from the chapter titles Lips used in the Origin of Things. [26] Lips’ idea of the concept of the book may have been inspired by Paul Rivet’s Los orígenes del hombre Americano, published in 1943 in Mexican exile: Lips and Rivet aimed at “(using) anthropological knowledge to reform society” (Rival 2010: 132). While Rivet proves America’s multi ethnicity historically, Lips ascribes to indigenous societies’ supposedly modern achievements like copyright and asylum law (Lips 1947:325–354).

In the GDR, The Origin of Things, written as a popular book in the US for an English–speaking audience, provided the impetus for the inclusion of non–written societies in a non–Eurocentric Marxist world historiography. Eva Lips’ German translation had popular success and was reprinted four times. Its Russian translation, with a foreword by the Soviet ethnographer S. A. Tokarew, was declared an official textbook in the Soviet Union. [27] Non–Eurocentric world historiography became of fundamental significance in the GDR. When in 1956 Julius Lips’ disciple at Humboldt University in Berlin (East) Irmgard Sellnow submitted her PhD thesis “Grundprinzipien einer Periodisierung der Urgeschichte” (“Basic Principles of a Periodization of Prehistory”), she triggered an interdisciplinary, and for Marxist historiography, essential debate on the periodization of world history, which continued until 1989. [28] In Leipzig the historian Walter Markov established a non–European historiography including revolution historiography from a non–Eurocentric perspective at the Institut für Kultur– und Universalgeschichte (Institute for Cultural and Universal History, later: Institut für Allgemeine Geschichte, Abteilung Neuzeit, Institute for General History, Department of Modern Times).
3. The Redesign of Ethnology as Ethnography at Humboldt University in Berlin (East)

After Julius Lips’ death in 1950, his wife and successor, Eva Lips, closely followed her husband’s scientific approaches at the Julius Lips Institute for Ethnology and Comparative Sociology of Law. Simultaneously, in the early 1950s in Berlin (East) her work was decisively influenced by the redesign of ethnology as ethnography. With the founding of an Institute for Ethnology at Berlin’s Humboldt University (Institut für Völkerkunde 1952), the interdisciplinary concept of ethnography, combining ethnology and folklore studies (Völkerkunde and Volkskunde), also became decisive for ethnology in Leipzig. [29] The leading role in the implementation of the new concept combining both academic disciplines was taken up by Wolfgang Steinitz (1905-1967). Steinitz held a scientifically and politically influential position at Humboldt University as well as at the Academy of Sciences in Berlin (East): holding the positions of director of the university Institute of Finno-Ugrian Studies and head of the commission of folklore at the Berlin Academy, in 1953 he became director of the Institute for Folklore affiliated with the Academy and in 1954, vice-president of the Academy (Kreide-Damani 2020).

3.1. The Concept of Ethnography

The concept of ethnography was based on a methodological-theoretical re-foundation of the orientation of both disciplines, ethnology and folklore studies, which included four perspectives: the archaeological-anthropological, the ethno-historical, the linguistic and the ethnological perspective. The connection between ethnography and archaeology was underlined in 1953 by the founding of the journal Ethnographisch-Archäologische Forschungen (EAF, 1, 1953). [30] The fact that the orientation of ethnography is similar to the interdisciplinary four-field-anthropology founded by Franz Boas in the USA at the beginning of the 20th century, as well as to the newly emerging Ancient American Studies in post-war West Germany (Noack 2015), raises questions about the sources of the concept of ethnography. While it had previously been assumed that the concept of ethnography in the GDR had been fundamentally shaped by the model of Soviet etnografia, new findings point to various sources as inspiration for its formulation (Bagus 2018, Kreide-Damani 2020). These lead into early traditions of the German-speaking countries, into the Russian Tsarist Empire and the Soviet Union (Steinitz 1954) as well as into negotiation processes and academic directional struggles in Western Europe (Sweden, Finland, France) and into cross-bloc and cross-border concepts for a common European disciplinary orientation (Schmoll 2011, Bagus 2017). These had been under discussion since the beginning of the 1950s and, with the abolition of the separation between ethnology and folklore studies, sought a repositioning of both subjects burdened during German National Socialism. [31]

3.2. Agricultural Ethnography

An example of this multi-lateral cooperation is the international conference on agricultural ethnography at the Berlin Academy of Sciences (1955), which brought together representatives of Western and Eastern European folklore and ethnological material culture
studies (Steinitz 1957) who met again at the International Congress for Anthropology and Ethnology (IUAES) in Philadelphia/USA (Bagus 2017:261): The Soviet ethnographer S.A. Tokarew (1899-1985), the German–American ethnologist Paul Leser (1899–1984), professor of anthropology at Hartford Seminary in Connecticut, and the ethnologist Heinz Kothe (1914–1979), head of the Forschungsstelle für Agrarethnographie (Research Center for Agricultural Ethnography) at the Institut für Volkskunde (Institute of Folklore Studies) of the Academy of Sciences in Berlin (East), were present in 1952 at the Conference for Ethnology on the occasion of the founding of the Institute for Ethnology (Institut für Völkerkunde) at Humboldt University in Berlin. [32] With its programme, the interdisciplinary concept of ethnography, combining ethnology and folklore studies, also became trend-setting for the Julius Lips Institute in Leipzig. Tokarev, Leser and Kothe were interconnected by their relationship to the influential Wolfgang Steinitz. While S.A. Tokarev as visiting professor from the Soviet Union took on a decisive role in 1951 in Leipzig and Berlin in the unification of ethnological and folklore teaching content, [33] the young scientist Heinz Kothe assisted Steinitz in the implementation of the concept of ethnography (Heilmann 2015). Kothe’s doctoral thesis at the West German University of Göttingen in 1947 had taken up a topic of ethnological and folklore material culture research which Paul Leser had already worked on in 1925 in his dissertation, supervised by Fritz Graebner (1877–1934) in Bonn. [34] Kothe’s work aimed at completing Leser’s investigation. In 1957, Leser explained in this context that his work on a then minor, special field of ethnology had encountered scant approval by the German–speaking ethnological community during the 1920s and had even been rejected by Karl Weule in Leipzig. As a possible reason behind this, Leser suspected that his focus on European folklore studies had occupied a disproportionately large part in his research, while ethnology in the German–speaking countries normally concentrated on non-European regions of the world. Only when in exile in Sweden, while collaborating on the magazine *Folkliv* edited by Sigurd Erixon (1888–1968, Swedish ethnologist and culture historian), did Leser realize that outside of Germany many researchers worked in the field of (non-European) ethnological and (European) folklore research (Leser 1957). Also in Sweden, in the context of the cultural work of the émigré, Leser got in touch with Wolfgang Steinitz. From this encounter a long personal acquaintance and friendship developed, comparable with the relationship Steinitz cultivated with Tokarew (Steinitz 1957; Müssener, Scholz 2017, 282). In 1952, this personal connection brought Paul Leser from the US to Berlin to attend the foundation of the (East) Berlin Institute for Ethnology in 1952, where his special field within the concept of ethnography, until now poorly recognised, became a link between ethnology and folklore studies.

3.3. The Periodization of World History

A new approach to the further development of the concept of ethnography began in 1956 when Ursula Schlenther, an ethnologist and archaeologist specializing in Mesoamerica and South America, moved from the “Hamburger Amerikanistenschule” (“Hamburg American School”) (Illius, Laubscher 1990:2) to Humboldt University in Berlin. The conceptualization of a Marxist world historiography, which placed agricultural ethnography in new, expanded contexts, became fundamentally important. [35] Combining ethnography and archaeology, Julius Lips’ disciple Irmgard Sellnow, who had moved from Leipzig to Humboldt University in Berlin in 1952, [36] triggered interdisciplinary debate on the periodization of world history.
with her dissertation on the “Grundprinzipien einer Periodisierung der Urgeschichte” (“Basic Principles of a Periodization of Prehistory”; 1956). On the basis of regionally or locally limited monographic studies, the concrete socio-economic formulation of historical epochs and their positioning within the framework of universal historical development processes were examined.

3.4. Ethnographic Research on the Americas

This approach had been previously realized in 1954 by the social historian and ethnologist Friedrich Katz (1927–2010), who presented a corresponding study on the ethnography on the Americas – supervised by Wilhelm Koppers (1886–1961) in Vienna – with his ethnological dissertation on the “Sozialökonomische Verhältnisse der Azteken im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert” (“Socio-economic conditions among the Aztecs in the 15th and 16th centuries”) (Kaller 2012). In 1956, co-edited by Heinz Kothe, Katz' doctoral thesis was published in the GDR in Ethnographisch-Archäologischen Forschungen (EAF 3, 1956). In the same year, Katz, who grew up in exile in Mexico, moved to Humboldt University (Berlin East), where he attained his professorship in 1962 at the Institut für Allgemeine Geschichte (Institute for General History) with a thesis on “Deutschland, Diaz und die mexikanische Revolution” (“Germany, Diaz and the Mexican Revolution”) (Kaller 2012). The importance attached to Katz’s move to Berlin (East) in 1956 is reflected in his participation in the 32nd International Congress of Americanists in Copenhagen (1956), at which a GDR delegation was represented for the first time. [37] Katz’s initiation of an inclusion of the Americas in the universal historical periodization debate, a decisive socio-economic approach – combined with agrarian ethnographic questions – became trend-setting for Berlin and Leipzig ethnography. Thus, under Eva Lips, an economic ethnographic focus developed at the Leipzig Institute from the mid-1950s onwards, which included Eva Lips’ special field of ethno-botany and agricultural ethnographic research (Treide 2012). In 1965 Ursula Schlenther – from 1958 lecturer at the Institut für Völkerkunde und Volkskunde (Institute for Ethnology and Folklore Studies) of Humboldt University in Berlin, [38] from 1961 professor with teaching assignment and from 1962 deputy director of the institute – announced: “Themen zu sozialökonomischen Verhältnissen…bes. in Mexiko, Mittelamerika und Peru…” (“Topics on socio-economic conditions …especially in Mexico, Central America and Peru…”) alongside linguistic studies of Indian languages as focus of the subject she represented at the Berlin Institute (Schlenther 1965). In 1973 Schlenther was appointed head of the ethnography department. Her student Ursula Thiemer-Sachse (1941–) qualified as a professor in 1984 with a study on “Die Sozialökonomischen Verhältnisse bei den Zapoteca zur Zeit der spanischen Eroberung Mexikos. Ein Beitrag zur Untersuchung der ersten klassengesellschaftlichen Formation in Amerika” (“The socio-economic conditions of the Zapoteca at the time of the Spanish conquest of Mexico. A contribution to the study of the first class social formation in America”). [39] After a position of visiting professor in Mexico, in 1970 Katz moved to the University of Austin in Texas/USA. In 1971 Katz was appointed to the University of Chicago, where from 1992 to 2002 he headed the Department of Mexican History (today: Center of Mexican History Friedrich Katz) (Kaller 2012). Katz was not represented at the large international conference on the “Grundprobleme vorkapitalistischer Gesellschaftsentwicklung” (“Basic Problems of Pre-capitalist Social
Development”), which in 1984, 100 years after the publication of Friedrich Engels’ work *Der Ursprung der Familie, des Privateigentums und des Staates* (*The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*), brought together scholars from East and West, i.e. the GDR, West Germany, the USSR and USA. [40] The high-ranking interdisciplinary meeting included anthropologists, historians, philosophers, legal historians, linguists, literary scholars and regional study specialists from 15 countries who debated human social evolution from “primitive” communism to the present day (Noack 2005:40). The Dresden conference set a milestone for the internationalization of the Marxist debate on the periodization of world history, which was fundamental to Marxist sciences in the GDR, including ethnography. At the same time the significant event fed discussions about the evolutionary process in Western anthropology.

**Conclusion**

Starting from Lips’ idea of a new, contemporary interconnected history of indigenous societies and a non-Eurocentric writing of world history, based on resources Lips had acquired through his research in the US, ethnology in the GDR developed its own specific scientific foundations for a holistic, interdisciplinary approach to research into fundamental questions that arose in connection with a science that interpreted history and culture on the basis of a materialistic worldview. Still, the development of ethnography in the GDR did not take place behind the "iron curtain" isolated from the world: until 1961, when the Berlin Wall was constructed, scientists moved from East to West and vice versa. After 1961, the transnational exchange continued at international conferences and meetings, which brought together scholars cross-bloc and cross-border. Consequently, the redesign of ethnography as ethnography was based on a comprehensive process of transnational knowledge transfer, starting with the return of Julius Lips from exile in the US in 1948, continuing with the debate of the periodization of world history until 1989. In the US, decades after the release of Julius Lips’ *The Origin of Things*, Eric Wolf pursued the concern of including peoples regarded as without history in history. His book *Europe and the People without History* (Wolf 1982) became a classic of contemporary Marxist ethnology. The results of recent research leave many questions open to be investigated in the future. [41]

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100, N110. 2. 9.1945 William F. Sollmann to Julius Lips: "I have of course read about your educational committee and am sure that you and your friends do an excellent job. However I am not very optimistic about your succeeding. It seems the Americans and the British are not inclined to make use of refugees, very contrary to the Russians who more and more seem to become leading in some parts of Germany’s reconstruction.” Nachlass (Estate) Lips, Deutsche Nationalbibliothek, Deutsches Exilarchiv 1933–1945, N 100,42.


[9] Since 1969, the Lehr- und Forschungsbereich für Ethnographie ‘Julius Lips’ (‘Julius Lips’ Department of Ethnography) has been part of the newly founded section ‘African and Middle East Studies’, which was established in the course of the third university reform. In addition to numerous other honours for Julius Lips, in his honour the African and Middle East Studies Section last awarded the Julius Lips Prize in 1986 to highly qualified young scientists (UAL, NA [Nachlass] Lips 7/2.7).


[13] Lips to Boas 17.3.1934, Private Archive Gruber, Cologne.

[14] The Indian Reorganization Act or Wheeler–Howard–Act (June 18, 1934) aimed at decreasing federal control of American Indian affairs and increasing Indian self-government.

[15] Llewellyn’s investigation into “Präjudizienrecht und Rechtsprechung in Amerika” (“Prejudice Law and Jurisdiction in America”) was published in Leipzig in 1933, where Llewellyn held a visiting professorship in 1931/32.


[17] In the liberal Roman Catholic magazine ‘The Commonweal’ Lips wrote in 1935: “Above all it would be important ... – and this involves fundamental rights of the Indian – to collect together the laws of the American Indian tribes, which would be of fundamental significance not only for science...” (UAL, NA Lips 2/3/24).


[23] Translated into German by Eva Lips 1951 and into French, Hungarian, Romanian, Italian, Slovakian and Japanese.


[27] AIEUL LALII, Schriftwechsel (Correspondens) 1944–1956.


[29] The abolition of the differences between the two German disciplines ethnology and folklore studies (Völkerkunde and Volkskunde) was underlined in 1952 by the founding of a separate section for both subjects at the Berlin Academy of Sciences (ABBAW, Klassen 1945–1968, Nr.80).


[31] In this context further research is necessary.

[32] AIEUL LAL II, Schriftwechsel (Correspondence) 1944–1956 (invitation and programme of the conference for ethnology, Berlin 1952) Paul Leser was present here according to eye witnesses.


[35] The Forschungsstelle für Agrarethnographie (Research Centre for Agricultural Ethnography) established in 1954 at the Institut für Volkskunde (Institute for Folklore Studies) of the Academy of Sciences in Berlin (East) (EAF 2, 1954:169) was dissolved in 1956 (ABBAW: AKL 1945–1968, No. 94). Heinz Kothe’s work on agricultural ethnography was continued by Wolfgang Jacobit and remained limited to folklore studies thereafter.


[37] UAL, NA Lips 2/5.45.

[38] At the end of the 1950s, the Institute for Ethnology (Institut für Völkerkunde) of the Humboldt University in Berlin was renamed the Institute for Ethnology and German Folklore Studies (Institut für Völkerkunde und Deutsche Volkskunde).


[41] Carried out in 2017 and 2018 within the research programme “Actors – Practices – Theories: On the History of Ethnology in the GDR (German Democratic Republic)” (Akteurinnen – Praxen – Theorien. Zur Wissensgeschichte der Ethnologie in der DDR) funded by the Volkswagen Foundation and conducted in cooperation between the Department of Ancient American Studies of the Institute for Archeology and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Bonn and the Institute for European Ethnology at the Humboldt University of Berlin.