

The Magic of Authenticity in 19th Century Museums – The Solomon Islands caryatide by Viktor TILGNER and the discovery of the Novara spear

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(with 10 figures)

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“...museums are storytellers. They exist because once upon a time some person or group believed there was a story worth telling, over and over, for generations to come.” (Leslie BEDFORD 2001: p. 27)

Abstract

Museums of the 19th century are temples of authenticity. The objects kept in them are material testimonies that are meant to “tell stories”. Museum architecture had the task of making these objects talk. The Alte Museum (1825–1830, by Karl Friedrich SCHINKEL), the Alte Pinakothek (1826–1836, by Leo VON KLENZE) and the Neue Museum (1843–1855, by Friedrich August STÜLER) are only a few stations in the development of “talking” museum architecture. STÜLER’s Neues Museum in Berlin is the first museological “Gesamtkunstwerk” (“total work of art”) in which collections and decorative frames formed an inseparable artistic and thematic unity. The Natural History Museum (NHMW) and the Kunsthistorisches Museum (KHM) in Vienna can also be considered “Gesamtkunstwerke”: But the Viennese museum architects Gottfried SEMPER and Carl HASENAUER took STÜLER’s idea even one step further. Whereas in Berlin the decorative architectural program despite closest thematic ties remains a contextually fine-tuned frame to the content of the collection, in Vienna by incorporating authentic collection objects this boundary begins to blur. In the KHM three original Egyptian monolithic columns were used as structural elements in the Egyptian-Oriental exhibition room. Until now, nothing comparable was known in the NHMW. This assumption is falsified by the discovery of an original spear from the Novara Expedition, that was integrated in the former Ethnographic exhibition’s Solomon Islands caryatide (an art historically incorrect term, but used at the time when the sculptures were created). In contrast to the columns, that were reused as *architectural elements*, the integrated Novara spear had a purely decorative and narrative function. The spear becomes part of the “talking” architectural

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decoration. The integration of historically important specimens surely had the purpose to underline the museum's claim as an inviolable scientific authority dedicated to authenticity. However, as the analysis of the Solomon Islands caryatide also impressively demonstrates, (despite integrating an authentic spear) the figure does not follow slavishly its photographic and collection templates. Especially during the "translation" of the photography into the figure "errors" occurred – a phenomenon that can also be seen in other caryatides. These "translation errors" combined with the fact that the spear seems to have been intentionally modified to look like the "prototype of a Solomon Islands spear" suggest that the decoration program did not feel exclusively committed to scientific exactness. It rather had the task of arousing astonishment and curiosity in the visitor through a combination of authenticity and narrative freedom.

Key words: authenticity, "Gesamtkunstwerk", Novara, Gottfried Semper, Viktor Tilgner, Franz Heger, Ferdinand von Hochstetter, Ethnography.

Zusammenfassung

Museen des 19. Jahrhunderts sind Weihstätten der Authentizität. Die in ihnen verwahrten Objekte sind materielle Zeugnisse, die Geschichten erzählen sollen. Museumsarchitektur hatte die Aufgabe diese Objekte „zum Sprechen zu bringen“. Das Alte Museum (1825–1830, von Karl Friedrich SCHINKEL), die Alte Pinakothek (1826–1836, von Leo VON KLENZE) und das Neue Museum (1843–1855, von Friedrich August STÜLER) sind nur einige Stationen in der Entwicklung „sprechender“ Museumsarchitektur. Mit STÜLERS Neuem Museum in Berlin entstand erstmals ein museologisches „Gesamtkunstwerk“, in dem die Sammlungen und der dekorative Rahmen eine untrennbare künstlerische und thematische Einheit bilden. Auch das Naturhistorische (NHMW) und das Kunsthistorische Museum (KHM) in Wien sind derartige „Gesamtkunstwerke“. Doch wie gezeigt werden soll, entwickelten die Wiener Museumsarchitekten Gottfried SEMPER und Carl HASENAUER die Idee STÜLERS noch einen Schritt weiter. Während in Berlin das dekorative Architekturprogramm trotz thematischer Verflechtung letztlich ein inhaltlich feinabgestimmter Rahmen für den Inhalt der Sammlung bleibt, verschwimmt bei den Wiener Museen (durch die Einbeziehung authentischer Sammlungsstücke) diese Grenze. Im KHM wurden drei originale ägyptische monolithische Säulen als Bauelemente in der ägyptisch-orientalischen Ausstellung verwendet. Bislang war im NHMW nichts Vergleichbares bekannt. Dass diese Annahme nicht stimmt, beweist die Entdeckung eines originalen Speers aus der Novara-Expedition, der in der ehemaligen ethnographischen Ausstellung in die Karyatide (ein kunsthistorisch inkorrekt Terminus, der aber zur Zeit der Anfertigung verwendet wurde) der Salomoninseln integriert wurde. Im Gegensatz zu den Säulen, die als *architektonische Elemente* wiederverwendet wurden, hat der integrierte Novara-Speer rein dekorative und narrative Funktion. Der Speer wird Teil der „sprechenden“ Architekturdekoration. Seine Integration als historisch bedeutsames ethnographisches Sammlungsstück hatte sicherlich den Zweck, den Anspruch des Museums als unantastbare wissenschaftliche Autorität, dessen höchstes Gut Authentizität ist, zu unterstreichen. Wie die Analyse der Salomonen-Karyatide aber auch eindrucksvoll zeigt, folgt die Figur trotz der Integration des authentischen Speers nicht sklavisch den Vorlagen wie der Fotografie und den Sammlungs-Objekten. Bei der „Übersetzung“ des Fotos in die Figur traten „Fehler“ auf – ein Phänomen, das auch bei anderen Karyatiden zu beobachten ist. Diese „Übersetzungsfehler“, aber auch der Umstand, dass der Speer höchstwahrscheinlich bewusst in den „Prototyp eines Salomoninsel-Speers“ verwandelt wurde, deuten darauf hin, dass sich das Dekorationsprogramm nicht ausschließlich der wissenschaftlichen Exaktheit verpflichtet fühlte. Offenbar sollte es

vielmehr, durch seine Kombination aus Authentizität und erzählerischer Freiheit beim Besucher Erstaunen und Neugierde wecken.

Schlüsselwörter: Authentizität, „Gesamtkunstwerk“, Novara, Gottfried Semper, Viktor Tilgner, Franz Heger, Ferdinand von Hochstetter, Ethnographie.

The development of “talking” museum architecture

Museums are dedicated to the worship of authenticity. They have to collect, keep, and research the evidence of cultural and natural heritage. However, what was and is considered “authentic” is not fixed but a matter of continuous construction. Each museum object has its own discursive “story of provenance” by which it can identify itself as genuine. Within the context of the museum presentation, this “story of provenance” is embedded in an overarching museum narrative. For the creation and conveyance of this narrative, the museum architecture and the decorations are of key importance. Both can be regarded as a media of “spatial storytelling”.

In the pre-Enlightenment period, wealthy individuals or families started to bring together rare or odd artistic and natural objects. Assembled in private cabinets they served the purpose of demonstrating the wealth of their possessor. These “cabinets of curiosity” or “chambers of wonders” were presented only to private and selected audiences. Very often, the owner of the collection himself presented the collections to his guests. By this, he provided the audiences with the desired narrative.

The idea of Enlightenment led to the opening of these private collections to the public as places of education and entertainment. However, with this opening the conveyance of the narrative by the owner was omitted. The collections, still housed in the cabinets and palaces of noble men, left the visitors without instructions and information. It was surely not least because of this lack of “narrative” that the desire for purpose-built museums grew. A new building type was developed that should provide a place where objects could “talk”.

Regarding their design, the first museums of the 19th century drew on the vocabulary of religion and were built as temples of Enlightenment and cathedrals of the Modern Age (JOVANOVIĆ-KRUSPEL & SCHUMACHER 2014, 2017). The Altes Museum (1825–1830) by Karl Friedrich SCHINKEL is an example for this kind of museum architecture and many successive museums followed its example. The specialised museums of nature were no exception in this development. They also very often embedded their scientific collections in a sacral framework (*e. g.*, Oxford University Museum, London Natural History Museum, NHMW *etc.*).

Museums as educative institutions taught their visitors primarily by vision. In the centre of their lessons always stood the authentic object telling its own genuine “story”. Through the arrangement of the exhibition rooms and the presentation of the objects within them, the visitor was offered a predefined and uninterrupted passage in which the single objects became part of a bigger overarching narrative. However, apart from the visitor-flow, museum architects also started to use the architectural framework and decorative program

to communicate the museum's narratives. The question how much decoration was appropriate for a museum was a topic intensely discussed during the 19th century.

The already mentioned Alte Museum was surely one of the first and most influential museum architectures that used its stylistic and artistic program to convey a museological narrative. SCHINKEL used elements of antique temples like the prominent colonnade to give his museum the character of a place of worship. Apart from designing the museum as a sanctuary, the decorative program was still very restricted: The museum's interior was kept stylistically simple and uniform. SCHINKEL planned decorative murals only for the portico. The painting (now lost) SCHINKEL planned was executed after his death between 1841–1848 and *“showed the educational evolution of the human race and followed the aim to capture the general context of the fragmentary evidence of this development shown in the museum.”* (WITSCHURKE 2015: p. 79).

Friedrich August STÜLER's Neues Museum (1843–1855), on the other hand, can be regarded as the first museological “total work of art”. In its architectural and decorative design, the showrooms made thematic reference to the exhibits. In the exhibition rooms STÜLER divided the walls continuously into three horizontal areas: the lowest area was a pedestal zone, the middle area was a quiet background for the exhibits, and the upper area was used for expanding and illustrating the exhibition (WITSCHURKE 2015: pp. 85–106). Particularly in the central stair hall of the museum, replicas (e. g., of the Kore Hall of the Erichtheion) merged with the museum architecture. *“In the interplay between the classical formal language and the copies placed in the architectural structure, the furnishings of the stair hall had a double role between exhibition and architecture”* (WITSCHURKE 2015: p. 100). This statement shows that already in STÜLER's Neues Museum the boundary between architectural frame and content started to blur. Nevertheless, it has to be underlined that the architecture and decoration in Berlin consisted only of contemporary replicas and artwork, no historic artefact found its way into the decorations. STÜLER was intensely criticised by his contemporaries for the richness of his decoration. The Austrian art critic Alfred NOSSIG rejected the Neues Museum as too inflexible and *“resembling a place of amusement rather than a serious sanctuary”* (NOSSIG 1889: p. 509). In his comparison to the NHMW NOSSIG concluded, that the *“sparkling interior”* created by STÜLER went too far. For him the NHMW found the right mix between the two polarities represented by SCHINKEL's Altes Museum and STÜLER's Neues Museum. He stated: The *“monotony of Schinkel's rooms [was] avoided and Stüler's principle applied in a more satisfactory way”* (NOSSIG 1889). Also, others critics like the Austrian architect Julius DEININGER came to a similar conclusion: *“The decorative furnishing of the inner rooms is not overly rich, but very appropriate to its purpose.”* (DEININGER undated: p. 6). In the Viennese museums the architecture and their furnishings were completely put at service of conveying the museums' narratives (NOSSIG 1889: p. 512). But although the decoration of the NHMW seemed less distracting than in STÜLER's Neues Museum, the fusion of architectural framework and exhibition was brought – as will be shown in the following sections – to a new level.

Historical objects (spolia) in 19th century museum architecture

Is is a well-known fact that the first room of the Egyptian and Oriental Collection in the KHM incorporated three original Egyptian monolithic columns (more than six metres in height). They were used instead of the marble pillars to support the ceiling. The columns, which had been excavated in Alexandria, were a gift to Emperor Francis Joseph I in 1869 (on the opening of the Suez Canal) (KHM collection 2019). The columns were incorporated in an extensive decorative framework designed by SEMPER and HASENAUER in Egyptianesque style. The columns were accompanied by copies on paper of murals from the tomb of Prince Chnum-hetep II at Beni Hassan in Middle Egypt. They had been created by Ernst WEIDENBACH for the Vienna International Exhibition of 1873. The painter Ernst WEIDENBACH accompanied the renowned Prussian Egyptologist Carl Richard LEPSIUS (1810–1884), who had been responsible for the concept of the Egyptian Court in STÜLER's Neues Museum in Berlin on an expedition to Egypt. He was commissioned to copy the paintings from the tomb (BISCHOFF 2008: p. 169). These antique columns incorporated into the KHM architecture are a form of “spolia” (AiD-Lexikon 2019).

The incorporation of spolia in 19th century museum architecture is a topic still largely understudied. Andreas NIERHAUS, who focused on the Castle Kreuzenstein, which consists of an agglomeration of medieval spolia stated in 2014: *“Apart from its quantitative peak in the European Middle Ages, the use of spolia as a producer and guarantor of authenticity is a genuine phenomenon of modernity and its enlightened, historico-critical, scientific view of the past. No longer were sacred buildings, but museums and collections – the new ›churches‹ – now the preferred frame of the spolia [...]”* (NIERHAUS 2014: pp. 187–194). With this, NIERHAUS sees the museum as a container for spolia, referring to it in its original meaning. NIERHAUS names a number of examples for the use of spolia in modern architecture. Among them are only a few 19th century museums like the Musée des monuments français in Paris (which already existed between 1795 and 1816, in which the architect Alexandre LENOIR integrated spolia of the castles Anet und Gaillon) and the (above described) KHM. The Musée des monuments and the KHM seem to be the earliest examples in 19th century museum architecture working with this feature. All the other examples are younger. Here are to mention: Ernst VON IHNE's Bode Museum in Berlin (1894–1904) that incorporated spolia in its interior. In the showrooms, the spolia had to form an environment for the exhibits that should increase their impact. As WITSCHURKE states: *“In some cases, the spolia assumed a dual function between the explanatory context and the exhibit: In addition to paintings and sculptures, they became as historical architectural fragments part of the exhibition”* (WITSCHURKE 2015: p. 161). Ludwig HOFFMANN's Märkisches Museum (1899–1908) also incorporated spolia of historic buildings from Berlin in its façade and the same was done in the façade of the Historic Museum Bern by André LAMBERT in 1896 (Historisches Lexikon Schweiz 2018).

Although a comprehensive investigation of the use of spolia in 19th century museums is still missing, it has to be stated that the KHM's Egyptian columns are surely among the earliest and most prominent examples for this phenomenon. Until now it was assumed

that the KHM stands alone with this in Vienna. But as the discovery of a Novara spear integrated in the caryatide of the Solomon Islands in the former ethnographic collection of the NHMW illustrates this assumption needs to be revised.

The ethnographic caryatides as part of the NHMW Gesamtkunstwerk

The usage of the museum's architectural decorations for the storytelling of the museum has already been acknowledged in many aspects (JOVANOVIĆ-KRUSPEL & SCHUMACHER 2014, 2017). However, as the presentation of this case study will prove, the decorative program of the ethnographic department goes far beyond from just being a frame for the collections. Instead the frame becomes part of the exhibition itself.

According to SEMPER's idea of the "Gesamtkunstwerk" (SEMPER 1884: p. 344) all the rooms of the upper ground floor of the NHMW were adorned with more than 110 huge oil paintings. All of them were thematically linked to the exhibitions on show. Additional to the oil paintings, the corner rooms (halls 4, 6, 14, and 16) and the central room (Hall 10) of the upper ground floor were decorated by a sculpture-program (with figures half human, half pilasters – named "caryatides" at the time of their creation; this name will be used here as well). Two rooms of the former ethnographic exhibition (Hall 14 and 16) are adorned with caryatides by the famous Austrian sculptor Viktor TILGNER (1844–1896). TILGNER was commissioned to create 40 caryatides of North Americans, Mexicans, South Sea Islanders, and New Zealanders (Austrian State Archive 1884). In fact, it could be shown, that although not on the list of the commission, there are also several South-American ethnicities like the Inca, Mundurucus, and Botocudos among the caryatides (SCHIFKO 2018; SCHIFKO & JOVANOVIĆ-KRUSPEL 2018). The figures of the ethnographic exhibition halls feature different indigenous peoples of whom the museum possessed important ethnographic collections.

The first director of the museum, Ferdinand VON HOCHSTETTER (1829–1884), worked closely together with the architects Gottfried SEMPER and Carl HASENAUER. VON HOCHSTETTER was responsible for selecting the topics of the paintings (HAUER 1886: p. 27) and sculptures (JOVANOVIĆ-KRUSPEL & SCHUMACHER 2014, 2017) in the museum's decorations. He and his scientific staff had to provide the artists with templates they could work with. The paintings and the sculptures had to complement the objects on show thematically by contributing information on their origin. In order to achieve a high degree of naturalism the painters *e.g.* were even sent out on journeys so that they could paint natural scenery on the spot. If a journey was too expensive because of the distance or it was not possible for some other reason, the paintings would be based on photographs or sketches obtained from the scientists responsible (JOVANOVIĆ-KRUSPEL & SCHUMACHER 2014, 2017). The same was true for the sculptural decorations. As known from the sources, Ferdinand VON HOCHSTETTER wanted to acquire plaster casts that should be used as models by the artist Viktor TILGNER. However, this idea was considered as too expensive and was therefore neglected by the building committee (JOVANOVIĆ-KRUSPEL & SCHUMACHER 2014, 2017). In a protocol, Viktor TILGNER stated that he could also

work based on photographs and again it was VON HOCHSTETTER who had to provide them for the artist (Austrian State Archive 1884). Working with the medium photography as legitimisation for authenticity was not unusual in the second half of the 19th century (and neither is it today). The fact that the photographs used as templates for the figures were taken *in situ* – which meant in contact to the real indigenous person – was sufficient to consider them as true to life (LANGE 2006: p. 78). During the 19th century so-called “race-type” photographs became very popular. According to new studies, some of these photographs obviously served as templates for Viktor TILGNER’s Inuit caryatides in Hall 14 (JOVANOVIĆ-KRUSPEL 2019). In 1881, the German Museum Godeffroy in Hamburg published an anthropological album with “race or native-type” photographs from the South Seas. This album, which was held in the imperial library includes an image of a Solomon Islands warrior very similar to the caryatide (Museum Godeffroy 1881).

The ethnographic collections – from the NHMW to the new Weltmuseum Wien

When VON HOCHSTETTER was appointed director of the museum he introduced an organisation of the collections, in this form new to Europe and for his time radical. Instead of three galleries (botany, mineralogy, zoology) existing until then, he proposed five sections, adding palaeontology and an anthropological-ethnographical collection including prehistory. This inclusion must not be mixed up with a revival of the already outdated concept of the chamber of curiosities, in which unique, rare or beautiful objects from nature and culture were presented side by side as wonders of God’s creation. Instead, by the integration of these collections into the natural sciences, they were separated from the realm of curiosities and through this made accessible for natural sciences. This prepared the ground for the establishment of these areas as independent scientific disciplines. This inclusion of humankind in the framework of a Natural History Museum combined with an explicit reference to DARWIN’s “The Descent of Man” (DARWIN 1871) in the decorative furnishing made the NHMW then the first and only museum in Europe resolutely accepting DARWIN’s Theory of Evolution (JOVANOVIĆ-KRUSPEL 2014, 2018). VON HOCHSTETTER was well aware of this innovation and he stated in 1884: “[...] *The Viennese Natural History Court Museum will be the only one, which combines collections of all natural history disciplines, including man and his prehistory, under one roof.*” (VON HOCHSTETTER 1884: p. 285). By this, the NHMW distinguished itself strongly from the other natural history museums in Europe. In other cities like London, Berlin, and Paris the ethnographic collections formed museums of their own. To set up the basis for his new Anthropological and Ethnographic department VON HOCHSTETTER acquired the collections and the library of the Anthropological Society in Vienna and transferred them to the museum. Ferdinand VON HOCHSTETTER, who was also one of the founding members of the Viennese Anthropological Society (1870) convinced the society to donate their museum collections to the NHMW. This offer was accepted gratefully by the society in 1877 as the growing collections, which had already been presented to the

public during the Vienna World Fair 1873, had no proper home, and were stored in unacceptable conditions (HEINRICH 1996: pp. 11–42). From the moment of the organisational integration, VON HOCHSTETTER also started to launch a number of scientific enterprises such as excavations and research projects. This and a very generous acquisition policy had the aim to raise the standard and the volume of the new disciplines presented at the museum. The collection of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria's journey around the world (1892–1893), which comprised more than 14,000 objects and around 1,100 photographs, enlarged the Anthropological-Ethnographic Department enormously. Not least because of its size the ethnographic collections had to be separated from the museum and were installed in the Hofburg (Imperial Palace). This "Ethnographic Museum" (today Weltmuseum Wien) was opened on May 28th 1928.

The case of the Solomon Islands caryatide

From photograph to caryatide

In 1881 an album on the South Sea Types was published by the German Museum Godeffroy in Hamburg. It included on plate 625 a photograph of a Solomon Islands warrior (Fig. 1A) with a praided shield and a parrying club (Museums Godeffroy 1881). The picture was taken by F. H. DUFTY in Levuka on Ovalau Island around 1880. The warrior in the photograph is wearing a headdress from feathers, nose, neck, arm, and leg decorations and his earlobes were pierced. A comparison between this image and the caryatide in Hall 16 created by Viktor TILGNER shows remarkable similarities that makes it seem very likely that this has been the template TILGNER used to design his figure. Apart from the fact that this album was then already in the possession of the imperial library, the single photograph of the warrior from the Godeffroy Album is also held in the photographic collection of the Weltmuseum Wien. This fact emphasizes once more the assumption that this picture could have been used as template for the artist.

Collection objects as templates

The caryatide follows the photograph from the album very closely. Like the warrior in the picture the caryatide holds a shield that resembles the photo in shape and surface. But the photograph might not have been the only template for Viktor TILGNER. A shield of this kind was part of the ethnographic collections before the year 1885 (Fig. 2). It is therefore more than likely that TILGNER not only followed the photographic template but also saw this shield in the collections and used it as a model.

The same is possible for the other accessories like the arm-ring on the elbow, the decoration on the upper arm as well as the necklaces. Here again, Viktor TILGNER most likely followed the image but probably also saw the matching collection objects from the museum (Fig. 3–5).



Fig. 1: **A:** plate 625 of the album of the Museum Godeffroy; **B:** Solomon Islands caryatide in Hall 16, V. TILGNER, photo: Alice SCHUMACHER; **C:** parrying club, Solomon Islands, before 1889, Weltmuseum Wien, WMW inv. no. 42.968, photo: Clemens RADAUER; **D:** sceptre of a chief, Solomon Islands, collected by the Novara, Weltmuseum Wien, WMW inv. no. 3.863, photo: Clemens RADAUER.



Fig. 2: Shield, Solomon Islands, collected by the Novara, Weltmuseum Wien, WMW inv. no. 3.859, photo: Clemens RADAUER.



Fig. 3: Armring, Solomon Islands, before 1880, Weltmuseum Wien, WMW inv. no. 10.073, photo: Clemens RADAUER.



Fig. 4: Necklace, Solomon Islands, before 1883, Weltmuseum Wien, inv. no. WMW 15.143, photo: Clemens RADAUER; the man in Fig. 1A wears several similar necklaces.



Fig. 5: Decoration on the upper arm, Solomon Islands, before 1883, Weltmuseum Wien, WMW inv. no. 15.198, photo: Clemens RADAUER.

Today, the Weltmuseum Wien also possesses a headgear similar (Fig. 6) to the one the warrior in the photograph wears, but this object was not yet in the collections when the caryatide was created. So, in the case of the headgear TILGNER had no possibility to compare the image with a real object. This was most likely an additional reason why (as will be shown in the next paragraph) “errors” happened.

All these similarities between the collection objects and the figure emphasize the assumption that TILGNER knew the specimens and used them as templates following them quite accurately. This assumption is also supported by archival evidence concerning the creation of the decorative paintings, that proves that curator HEGER provided the artists with collection objects for their work (von Hochstetter Collection Basel 1883).



Fig. 6: Headgear, Solomon Islands, before 1896, Weltmuseum Wien, WMW inv. no. 119.551, photo: Clemens RADAUER.

Errors?

However, despite these striking similarities between TILGNER’s figure, the Museum Godeffroy photograph and the objects of the collections, there is among other smaller alternations one very significant difference: the headgear and the club. It seems that TILGNER misinterpreted the thickened end of the parrying club as a part of the headdress. He misread the picture as showing a man with a spear in his hand with a peculiar crescent-shaped form on the headdress.



Fig. 7: **A:** Detail of plate 625, of the album of the Museum Godeffroy; **B:** detail of Solomon Islands caryatide in Hall 16, Viktor TILGNER, photo: Alice SCHUMACHER.

There are several possible reasons for this astonishing inaccuracy:

1. TILGNER by himself surely did not know how parrying clubs from the Solomon Islands look like. If one has never seen an object of this kind, it is almost impossible to interpret the photograph correctly. As already mentioned, a headgear like the one the warrior in the photograph wears, was also not available in the collections at the time the caryatide was created. We also have to consider the possibility that TILGNER had only a bad copy of the photograph to work with.
2. The other possible reason for this misunderstanding could have been that TILGNER and the curators had to work under considerable time-pressure for finishing the decorations. From the archival sources we know that TILGNER had a maximum of 22 months for the completion of all 40 caryatides: on February 6th 1884 he got the commission and sometime in 1885 his work must have been finished. Most likely TILGNER had not even started working at the end of April 1884 because this was the date, when VON HOCHSTETTER tried to get plaster casts as templates (Austrian State Archive 1884). A letter from Franz HEGER to Carl HASENAUER from July 3rd 1884 proves that at least some of the caryatides must already have been finished by that date. In this letter, HEGER urges the architect HASENAUER to follow a plan with the correct locations of the figures that was created taking into account the collections and the paintings of the rooms (Weltmuseum Wien, Archive). Obviously, the workers had already placed six figures in wrong positions and therefore they had to be relocated (Weltmuseum Wien, Archive). The time pressure in finding adequate templates and in creating the decorations is also mirrored in the correspondences between the curators concerning the paintings in the showrooms. In a letter (dated June 6th 1885) from Franz HEGER to his colleague curator Josef SZOMBATHY,

HEGER told SZOMBATHY not to worry about finding a template for the planned painting of Stonehenge because there was a very good oil painting in the British Museum in London and for money it should not be a problem to get a copy (NHMW, Archive of the Prehistory Department 1885).

3. A third possible explanation of the inaccuracy is a conscious decision not to follow slavishly the photographic template but to create a rather free associative interpretation. The likeliness of this explanation is supported by the analysis of other ethnographic caryatides in the NHMW (JOVANOVIĆ-KRUSPEL 2019). One motive for alternations obviously was to moderate the alienness of the peoples presented. This might have been the reason why the Solomon Islands warrior's nose peg was omitted and replaced by a moustache. This moderation can also be seen in the Inuit caryatides (JOVANOVIĆ-KRUSPEL 2021) or in the Maya caryatides (JOVANOVIĆ-KRUSPEL 2020). Although discomposing and thrilling topics like tattooing, piercing and human sacrifice were repeatedly addressed in the decorative program of the ethnographic department (*e.g.*, Maori and Mundurucu or Maya caryatides and in the paintings) it seems that the museum always tried to find an unagitated form of presentation rather than emphasizing the sensational (SCHIFKO & JOVANOVIĆ-KRUSPEL 2018). By this the museum as a scientific institution obviously sought to avoid getting too close to the staginess of the then very popular performances of the "Human Zoos", in which indigenous people presented their customs in effective shows (JOVANOVIĆ-KRUSPEL 2021). However, although the museum wanted to keep safe from too much theatricality it still had to find a way to make the exhibition visually attractive and intuitively accessible for the public. The decorative sculptures by Viktor TILGNER definitely had the purpose of bringing the research subject of ethnography – the indigenous people – in a life-like form into the museum. As already pointed out in another paper by JOVANOVIĆ-KRUSPEL and the conservator Hans HOFFMANN the original appearance of the ethnographic caryatides must have been different than today (JOVANOVIĆ-KRUSPEL & HOFFMANN 2019). Being subtle coloured, they possessed an aura of liveliness without being too naturalistic and therefore appearing as uncanny (JOVANOVIĆ-KRUSPEL & HOFFMANN 2019). But compared to the omission of the nose peg the misinterpretation of the parrying club as a curiously shaped headgear seems to be an error too serious to be explained just by the attempt of moderating alienness.

The question remains why the curator did not correct this error. There are again two possible explanations for this:

1. Because of VON HOCHSTETTER's early death (in 1884, five years before the opening of the museum) there was no real expert on Polynesian Culture at the museum. This could be the reason why TILGNER did not get to see parrying clubs from the Solomon Islands [even though they existed in the collection at this time; the parrying club and the similar sceptre (Fig. 1D) was already in the museum's collection before 1885) and, therefore, he could not interpret the photographic template correctly. The main fields of expertise of TILGNER's advising curator Franz HEGER were elsewhere (in the Caucasus and Southeast Asia) and so it is also possible that HEGER did not even notice the mistake or even if he did it might have been – given the time pressure – too late to correct.

2. Another explanation, which needs to be considered is that the artists commissioned for the museum were given a certain artistic freedom for their creations. The people commissioned by the building committee to decorate the museum were all well-known and independent artists. The misinterpretation of the parrying club with the headgear and other “errors” suggest that scientific accuracy was maybe not the only purpose of the decorative program of the museum. It seems that the decorations are border-crossers between scientific visualizations and genuine artworks, which had the primary task of arousing astonishment and curiosity in the visitor through a combination of authenticity and narrative freedom (JOVANOVIĆ-KRUSPEL 2019).

The authentic Novara Spear?

As already described, the caryatide representing the Solomon Islands holds a spear in his right hand. Spears, like this one, were numerous in the collection. The first guidebook of the museum from 1889 mentions that there were several artfully decorated spears on display in Hall 16 (HAUER 1889: p. 176 ff.). As we want to prove here, TILGNER not only took the spears held in the collections as an inspiration for the caryatide’s attribute but instead he really incorporated a genuine ethnographic specimen. In the following section we want to take up to this case.

There are two main reasons why this assumption is more than plausible:

1. The appearance

The design of the spear in the hand of the caryatide is somehow a prototypical spear for the Solomon Islands. Of course, the designs of the 19th century spears from the Solomon Islands differ between the islands (PARAVICINI 1932). However, in an article on the various spears from the Solomon Islands, Eugen PARAVICINI describes among other types the spears from Bougainville. This is the most common type throughout the Solomon Islands and therefore can be considered the “typical Solomon Islands spear”. The spear acquired by H. HERNSHEIM in 1880 and donated to the Ethnographic collection at the NHMW by L. SCHIFFMANN; WMW inv. no. 11.752 (Fig. 8A) is an example for this type. PARAVICINI describes several characteristics of these spears: Made from one long piece of hard wood the length varies between 280 and 330 cm. Several barbs made of thin bones are attached with plant fibers on the front part of the spearhead. This segment is followed by several turns of yellow and red plant fibers and carvings of stylized human figures or zigzag ornaments. The spearhead ends in a ball made of bark. As usual, these typologies differ between regions and time. Nevertheless, the barbed spearhead and the plant fiber ball are significant features.

The spear held by the Solomon Islands caryatide looks very similar to this one. It can clearly be classified as a spear from the Solomon Islands (Fig. 8B). If we compare the caryatide with the photographic template, one recognizes that the spear differs a lot from the supposed “spear” of the template (which is actually a club; see above). It has to be assumed that it was a conscious decision to “give” the caryatide a spear that resembles

this “prototype of a Solomon Islands spear”. Whereas other spears from the Solomon Islands are “simpler” in their appearance and ornamentation (and in consequence hard to identify, especially when seen from the distance) this particular type of spear gives the (ethnographically interested and educated) beholder a clear indication that the depicted person comes from the Solomon Islands.

Although the caryatide was overpainted with white chalk-paint in the 1960’s (like all the other caryatides; JOVANOVIĆ-KRUSPEL 2017; JOVANOVIĆ-KRUSPEL & HOFFMANN 2019), the spear allows some glimpses below the painted surface, as there are some smaller areas where the paint already fell off. The mentioned characteristics of a typical Solomon Islands spear are clearly visible even despite the fact that the paint makes a closer examination not easy.

Everything in the appearance of the spear held by the caryatide intensifies the assumption that this is a genuine spear from the Solomon Islands. There are no indications whatsoever suggesting it could be a replica. The colour and structure of the wood matches with other spears from the collection; the same goes for the colour and structure of the used plant fibers.

The barbs and the ball at the end of the spear head look a little bit different compared to other Solomon Islands spears: There is a wider gap between the barbs and the spear, and the ball seems to be in a corroded condition. Whereas the wider gaps between the barbs are still in the normal range of this type of spear, as there is a great diversity depending on the region of origin, the poor condition of the ball could be a result of mistreatment while overpainting or insect feeding. Another important fact that does not match to the original artefact is the length of the spear from the caryatide. It is only 160 cm long and is clearly shorter than typical spears of this type (280–330 cm). However, this reduction can be explained by aesthetic and practical reasons: It seems very likely that the spear was deliberately shortened because the caryatides were not allowed to overstep the boundaries of the frieze zone.

Finally, the fact, that the spear is not fixed to the caryatide but is inserted in the hand of the caryatide through a wide enough hole to be removable (only a string knot keeps it from slipping out) makes its genuineness more than likely. Of course, although a lot of evidence supports the assumption that the spear is genuine, a definitive proof for this claim could only be offered after a full removal of the overpaint.



Fig. 8: **A:** spear, Solomon Islands, 1880, Weltmuseum Wien 11.752, photo: Clemens RADAUER; **B:** spear from the Solomon Islands caryatide in Hall 16, photo: Reinhard BLUMAUER.

2. The inventory & the missing spear

In 1889, the inventory of the ethnographic collection (today Weltmuseum Wien) lists 27 spears from the Solomon Islands. The earliest ones were collected during the expedition of the frigate Novara in 1857–1859. This expedition was the first Austrian circumnavigation of the world. According to the official reports, the Novara stayed only for a short time on these islands. On October 13th 1858 there was a short stay next to the island of Malaita, where they only had contact with local people coming close to the ship by canoes. During this event, nothing had been traded. A few days later, the Novara reached the island of Sikaiana. Again, it was just a short stay but this time the crew traded with the locals focusing on food supplies. There are no clear indications that ethnographic objects had been acquired (SCHERZER 1866). The contact between the members of the expedition and the locals seems to have been quite reserved. The accusation, that the Novara used force to acquire their food supply, which came up a few years afterwards, could not be proven. They are most likely the result of a confusion with another expedition (WEISS 2012). It is also possible, that the ethnographic objects originating from the Solomon Islands were acquired somewhere else. The trade with ethnographical objects was already well established, so it is more than possible, that the objects could have been bought in Sydney.

One of the participants of the Novara Expedition was Ferdinand VON HOCHSTETTER. The inventory of the Novara collection – handwritten by Franz HEGER – lists six spears (WMW inv. nos. 3.831–3.836, Fig. 9) from the Solomon Islands. One of them (WMW inv. no. 3.835) was crossed off the list accompanied by the also hand-written comment: *“Used for the Solomon Islands caryatide”* (translated from German).

The German verb “verwendet” (= “used”) unambiguously refers to a literal use of the object for the caryatide. The Novara inventory was completed on November 5th 1884 according to HEGER’s dated signature. The fact that HEGER assigned an inventory number to the spear shows that then he did not plan to use it for the caryatide. The crossing out of the spear and the additional comment (also in HEGER’s handwriting) obviously stems from a later date. Given the fact that this remark is in HEGER’s handwriting and that VON HOCHSTETTER already died in July 1884 (leaving his former assistants HEGER and SZOMBATHY to finish the interior furnishings of the museum on their own) it can be assumed that the decision for the usage of the spear had been taken by HEGER. Most probably the remark dates from after the completion of the inventory, which means sometime between November 1884 and the finishing of the caryatide in 1885.

The crossed-out spear from the inventory (WMW inv. no. 3.835) is in fact missing and therefore there are only 5 Solomon Islands spears in the Novara Collection:

Unfortunately, the description of the crossed-out spear in the inventory (WMW inv. no. 3.835) does not match the appearance of the spear integrated in the caryatide. HEGER describes a *“spear, made of palm wood, smooth, the thickest part is slightly aside from*

Novara-Expedition: Yap. — Salomon-Inseln.				
Zur Nr.	Gegenstand	Stück- zahl	Nummern des Catalogs	
<u>2539</u> 3830	Schmuck, aus schwarz, roth und gelb gefärbten Pflanzenfasern, angeblich Anhang vorheisselnder Frauen Provinz fraglich, wahrscheinlich Yap	1.	265.	
<u>21. Salomons-Inseln.</u>				
<u>2540</u> 3831	Speer aus dunklen Palmbolz, die Spitze 2 Th. ge- schnitten, mit roth und gelbem Fleck umflochten und bemalt, mit einer Anzahl grosser und kleiner Wider- haken besetzt, die äusserste Spitze fehlt. Länge: 5.23. (Angeblich von den Admirals-Inseln)	1.	263.	
<u>2541</u> 3832	Speer aus braunem Palmbolz, die Spitze mit gel- bem Fleck und andersgefärbten Bastfasern umfloch- ten und mit kleinen Widerhaken besetzt, der Schaft vierkantig. Länge: 2.5.	1.	346.	
<u>2542</u> 3833	Speer von besonderer Länge, etwa 1.3 vor der Spitze am stärksten, dann gegen beide Enden an Dicke abnehmend von rundem Querschnitt, 5.8 cm hinter der Spitze auf 19 cm Länge angeschnitten, sowie roth und schwarz be- malt, vor und hinter dieser Schnitzerei sowie an der Spitze mit roth und gelb gefärbten Streifen verziert. Länge: 3.33. Aus Palmbolz.	1.	351.	
<u>2543</u> 3834	Speer aus braunem, schwarz gestreiftem Palmbolz, von rundem Querschnitt, die Anlage der Verzierung ähnlich wie beim vorigen, die Schnitzerei selbst roth und weiss bemalt, vor und hinter derselben, an der Spitze sowie in der Nähe des verdickten hinteren En- des mit gelben Streifen umrandet. Länge: 2.74.	1.	290.	
2544 3835	Speer aus braunem Palmbolz, ganz glatt, etwa vor der Mitte am stärksten, gegen beide Enden angespitzt, von run- dem Querschnitt, das hintere Ende in einen stumpfen Knopf übergehend. Länge: 2.9	1.	317.	Für die Maryside Sal. Inseln. requirirt



Fig. 10: Five spears from the Solomon Islands, Weltmuseum Wien, Novara coll.,
A: WMW inv. no. 3.831;
B: WMW inv. no. 3.832;
C: WMW inv. no. 3.833;
D: WMW inv. no. 3.834;
E: WMW inv. no. 3.836,
 photo: Clemens RADAUER.

the middle, pointed on both ends, circular cross-section, with a blunt button on one end, length; 2.9 cm” (translated from German). Two essential features of the caryatide spear are different to the description of the missing spear (WMW inv. no. 3.835): the barbs and the ball at the end of the spearhead. So, we need to ask what the reason for this difference is:

Is it possible that HEGER’s description is not exact or did he cross out the wrong spear?

The possibility of HEGER’s description being inaccurate as reason for the difference is ruled out by a comparison between the other spears from the Novara collection and their inventory descriptions: in all the other descriptions HEGER is always most accurate. Another probable reason for this difference between description and the caryatide spear could be that the wrong spear was accidentally crossed out of the inventory. However, if that was true, we would expect to have a Solomon Islands spear in the museum collection without a corresponding inventory number. However, this is not the case.

Is a “reassembly” of the spear a possible explanation?

The solution to the mystery could be an intentional reassembly of the object: it is possible that the missing original artifact (WMW inv. no. 3.835) was “made more authentic

Solomonian” by adding barbs and a ball onto the original spear thus making it look like the already mentioned “prototype of a Solomon Islands spear” (like the one from Bougainville). Such an adaptation was technically no problem to create. Given the fact that also the translation of the photographic template was done with artistic license (as shown above) this explanation seems more than likely. Also, the shortening of the spear shows that one was not afraid to manipulate the object to satisfy all demands.

Conclusion

The chain of evidence presented here makes it highly probable that the spear of the caryatide is really an authentic ethnographic collection specimen although manipulated to look “typical”.

There is no evidence for any further incorporations of original objects (spolia) in the other caryatides in the NHMW. A closer examination of the attributes of the other caryatides shows that they are all shorter and thicker in their appearance, which lets it seem likely that they are modelled out of plaster. This made it easier to place them on the sculpture. There are not many caryatides that have wooden attributes in their hands: The male Inca caryatide is one further example. Here the caryatide holds a wooden object – a club (SCHIFKO 2018) – in its hands. However, in this case, the club can be identified immediately as a replica. Beside the fact that the short club was surely easy to copy in plaster there was then also no examples for this kind of club in the collections of the museum. The other caryatide that has a wooden object as attribute is the male Mayan caryatide. The stick in its hand is made from wood but it is a completely fantastic artifact with no reference to a collection specimen (JOVANOVIĆ-KRUSPEL 2019).

Reasons for the choice of the Novara spear

- It must be underlined that the Novara Expedition (1857–1859) was by far the most important and ambitious scientific Austrian enterprise of the 19th century.
- The collections originating from this expedition were so large and scientifically important that they can be understood as “constitutional” for the museum. The fact that the founding director of the museum, Ferdinand VON HOCHSTETTER, himself was participant of this expedition surely contributed to its appreciation at the time of the conception of the museum. Although VON HOCHSTETTER had already died at the time the decision to integrate this object had been taken by his assistant HEGER, it is likely that through this choice both the Novara and the deceased founding director VON HOCHSTETTER should have been honored.
- The objects from the Solomon Islands must be considered symbolic for the Austrian frigate reaching the “*end of civilisation*”. For the Novara crew, these people represented the “*the wildest, most uncivilized humans*” they came to see during their expedition (SCHERZER 1866: p. 182). In the intended evolutionistic framework of the

NHMW (JOVANOVIĆ-KRUSPEL & SCHUMACHER 2014, 2017), they could stand for the low state of civilization. VON HOCHSTETTER considered the inhabitants of the Solomon Islands “*nearest akin to the aborigines of Australia and Tasmania, and like these seem to be the remnants of a very ancient race possibly the oldest branch of the human family*” (VON HOCHSTETTER 1867: p. 199). This would somehow match the choice of spolia in the KHM. The columns were also representing a kind of superlative: Egypt was seen as the “most ancient” High Culture.

Interpretation

According to SEMPER’s idea of a “Gesamtkunstwerk” in both Viennese museums the decorations and collections formed an indivisible unity. However, the incorporation of genuine collection objects spolia in these two museums takes the idea of the “Gesamtkunstwerk” to a completely new level. In both NHMW and KHM authentic collection objects (Novara spear and Egyptian columns) were incorporated into an extensive decorative framework that had the task of conveying the exhibition’s narratives in an intuitively accessible and at the same time fact-based way to the museum’s audiences. In both museums, the fragmented artefacts were complimented by artistic reconstructions: the columns by copies of Egyptian tomb-murals by WEIDENBACH and the Novara spear itself is – by being “upgraded” to look “typical Solomonian” – a “border-crosser” between authenticity and “reconstruction”.

Whereas the columns were reused in their constructive function, the Novara spear – held by a life-like figure of a Solomon Islands warrior created by Viktor TILGNER – had a purely decorative and narrative function.

The incorporation of genuine collection objects sheds new light on the idea of the “talking museum architecture”. Their integration emphasized the museums’ authority as first rank science and cultural institutions. In contrast to the columns whose ancient origin was always known, the Novara spear obviously led a somehow “secret life” in the NHMW. Its existence was not mentioned in the first guidebook of the museum (HAUER 1889) or in any issue of the museum’s annual journal (Annalen des k. k. naturhistorischen Hofmuseums). It can be understood as an “material anecdote” – addressing the “expert” visitor in a witty and playful way. It seems likely that the curators hinted at this object during their guided tours using it to tell its story of provenance. Coming back to the quotation by Leslie BEDFORD the incorporated authentic spear should conjure up for the museum’s visitors the foreign world the participants of the Novara Expedition had seen with their own eyes (BEDFORD 2001: pp. 27–34).

Abbreviations

NHMW	Natural History Museum Vienna
KHM	Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien (Museum of Fine Arts Vienna)
WMW	Weltmuseum Wien

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