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Elizabeth Hill Boone

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Seeking Indianness: Christoph Weiditz, the Aztecs, and feathered Amerindians

Elizabeth Hill Boone
Tulane University

In sixteenth-century Europe, it mattered what one wore. For people living in Spain, the Netherlands, Germany, France, and Italy, clothing reflected and defined for others who one was socially and culturally. Merchants dressed differently than peasants; Italians dressed differently than the French. Clothing, or costume, was seen as a principal signifier of social identity; it marked different social orders within Europe, and it was a vehicle by which Europeans could understand the peoples of foreign cultures. Consequently, Europeans became interested in how people from different regions and social ranks dressed, a fascination that gave rise in the mid-sixteenth century to a new publishing venture and book genre, the costume book (Figure 1). As the European world opened up to recognize newly encountered peoples from far-flung lands, the costume book became a medium by which Europeans came to see and thereby understand something of these foreigners. Not fashion manuals, costume books were proto ethnologies that brought information about other cultures and peoples into upper- and middle-class European homes (Defert 1984; Jones 2006, 93).

An early prototype of the costume book is the so-called Trachtenbuch (costume book) of Christoph Weiditz (Figures 2–7). Created c. 1529–1530, it pictures the dress, physical characteristics, and activities of people of varied social ranks and occupations from different regions of the Netherlands, Spain, and other parts of Europe, including some of the Aztecs who accompanied Hernando Cortés to Spain in 1528 and joined the court of Charles V. Weiditz’s paintings of the indigenous Americans, in particular, offered what has long been considered an eyewitness account, designed to reach Europeans eager to know more about the look and manners of peoples of the Americas. Although his paintings remained unpublished until the twentieth century, they circulated and were copied, and some were replicated in published costume books.

The thirteen paintings of Amerindians that Weiditz included are usually all said to represent the Aztecs brought by Cortés to Spain. This essay argues, however, that although some figures do represent Aztecs from Central Mexico, most were accessorized more extravagantly, to produce exotics on display, with physical and sartorial features drawn from common stocks of prints, descriptions, and objects representing the Americas, which were circulating in Europe at the time. The dissonance between Weiditz’s painted images and the Aztecs who actually visited Charles’s court points up how difficult it was for Europeans then—and even for scholars until recently—to recognize real ethnic, cultural, and, indeed, social distinctions among the indigenous people of the Americas and how easy it was simply to blend them together as exotics. Weiditz’s ‘Aztec’ figures
particularly exemplify the visual entanglement of diverse objects from and images of the Americas whose trajectories brought them together in early sixteenth-century Europe.

**European costume studies**

European interest in the dress of foreigners flowered especially in the second half of the sixteenth century and into the seventeenth, but it was well under way at least by the late fifteenth century. A celebrated early example is the Venetian painter Gentile Bellini, who served as painter for the Ottoman emperor in Istanbul between 1479 and 1481, where he executed a series of costume studies (Campbell and Chong 2005, 89–119; Ilg 2004, 35). These prefigure the costume studies of the sixteenth century by featuring a single individual sitting or standing in an otherwise empty space, the details of clothing and adornment rendered with precision. More widely disseminated and therefore more...
Indians brought by Cortés playing *patolli*, glossed ‘These are Indian people whom Ferdinand Cortez brought to His Imperial Majesty from India and they have played before His Imperial Majesty with wood and ball. With their fingers they gamble like Italians’ (Hampe 1994, 27). Christoph Weiditz, *Trachtenbuch*, pp. 12–13. Germanische Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, Hs. 22474.4.
Figure 4. Left, Indian log juggler, glossed ‘Thus he throws the log above him with the feet.’ Right, Indian warrior, glossed ‘Thus they go in India with their arms two thousand miles away, where gold is found in the water.’ Christoph Weiditz, Trachtenbuch, pp. 6–7. Germanische Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, Hs. 22474.4.

Figure 5. Indian men, respectively glossed ‘Thus the Indians go, have costly jewels let into their face, can take them out when they want to and can put them in again,’ and ‘This is also an Indian man.’ Christoph Weiditz, Trachtenbuch, pp. 2–3. Germanische Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, Hs. 22474.4.
influential was Bernhard von Breydenbach’s popular *Perigrinatio in terram sanctam* of 1486, which reported on his pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Considered to be the first printed travel account, and extensively illustrated with woodcuts by Erhard Reuwich, it included city views and prints representing the distinctive dress of Turks, Saracens, Greeks, Ethiopians, Jews, and Syrians (Ross 2014, 74–86).

Voyages of discovery and exploration exposed Europe to even more distant peoples in Asia, Africa, and the Americas, which broke the boundaries of what Europeans knew about the world. The Ottoman threat along Europe’s eastern border highlighted the need also to recognize and negotiate foreign cultures at its very doors. These phenomena opened the minds of Europeans to previously unimagined worlds and people of different customs and manners, which now had to be comprehended and regularized. Information about these foreign peoples had to be categorized and organized in a way that could make sense of all the incoming data and allow principal cultural features to stand out. In particular, attention was paid to the visage and dress of peoples as signs of their cultural identity, for clothes were seen as markers of social rank and behavioral habits, windows onto the customs and identity of people (Jones 2006, 93). In the 1510s artists like Albrecht Dürer and Hans Burgkmair began to record the features and dress of people from
Africa and Brazil; Dürer had already been drawing Turks after a trip to Venice in 1494–1495 (Levinson 1991, 212–13). Also in the 1510s the emperor Maximilian assembled images of people from vastly different parts of the world for his allegorical Triumph, a project of monumental woodcuts intended to be circulated among his royal allies and subjects. It is within this climate that Christoph Weiditz created his own compilation of the dress, occupation, and customs of folk from the Netherlands, Spain, and other regions of Europe (the Trachtenbuch).

The growing interest in habits, and thus the costumes, of diverse people eventually gave birth in the late 1550s to a new publishing venture, the costume book. They were collections of usually full-page illustrations of people and their clothing, with identifying captions and sometimes a short commentary. The first, François Deserps’s Recueil de la diversité des habits que sont de present en usage dans les pays d’Europe, Asia, Affrique et Islas sauvages le tout fait après le naturel, published in Paris in 1562, exemplifies the genre. It is a small, octavo-sized book of 121 woodcut plates that feature a single standing or striding figure above a label and four lines of descriptive verse (Figure 1). Its coverage begins locally with the French Chevalier, followed by French people from different occupations and stations in life (e.g. gentlewoman, bourgeois, doctor, artisan, laborer) and different regions of France. It then extends outward to cover other parts of Europe, the regions of Spain and Portugal, areas close to Europe (Barbary Moors), and finally the more distant lands of India, Persia, Egypt, Brazil, and Africa. The Recueil proved immensely popular; it was reprinted a number of times and mined for its images by other compilers of costume books. The 1577 Habitus of Hans Weigel with drawings by Jost Amman

Figure 7. Indian men, respectively glossed ‘This is an Indian, a noble of their kind’ and ‘This is also the Indian manner, how they have brought wood jugs with them out of which they drink.’ Christoph Weiditz, Trachtenbuch, pp. 4–5. Germanische Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, Hs. 22474.4
repeated many of the Recueil’s images and reached an even wider audience. For those Europeans who could not travel the world but were interested in the strange people and customs of newly explored lands, costume books offered both astonishment and wonder (Jones 2006, 93–94). In this manner publishing houses throughout Europe satisfied their clients’ curiosity about faraway places.

**Christoph Weiditz’s Trachtenbuch**

Christoph Weiditz’s *Trachtenbuch* is a forerunner of these published efforts and is the first such compilation to feature people specifically identified as Mexicans (Weiditz 2001). A medalist from Augsburg, Weiditz journeyed to the court of Charles V in 1529 to request a royal patent and then traveled with the court for some months before returning home (Hampe 1994, 5–24). During the trip he painted the diversity of people he encountered in the Netherlands and Spain, and, upon his return, redrew the images in watercolor on cardboard-like paper, added others of folk elsewhere in Europe from images then in circulation at the time, and had his paintings annotated by a professional draftsman, probably with the intent to have woodcuts made and distributed. The 154 existing painted pages, each painted only on one side, depict a range of classes and folk types, the great majority from the regions of Spain: e.g. Castilian noblemen and noblewomen, peasants and galley slaves, Basques and Catalanians, and Moriscos from Granada (Figure 2). The paintings feature single or small groups of individuals, most posed against a neutral ground to best display the details of their dress and aspect. Almost half of the pages are intended to form 34 double-page presentations that feature multiple individuals who are usually traveling (on a horse or mule or with a carriage) or working (plowing, tugging a boat, drawing water). Glosses added after 1530 once Weiditz had returned home identify the people and their activities.

Although the collection of painted sheets has been given the title *Trachtenbuch* (Hampe 1927), it has a broader ethnological reach, for it also records details about peoples’ occupations and diversions: people dance, play music, weep, spin, and prepare ships for sail. It was an early visual manifestation of the widespread interest by educated Europeans in the appearance and customs of diverse peoples. Its influence was felt in other sixteenth-century compilations that drew directly or indirectly on some of its images.

Thirteen pages (now numbered 1–13) show Amerindians, all labeled as ‘Indians’ and identified by one gloss as those who accompanied Cortés to Charles’s court; they have long been assumed to be the Aztecs who went with Cortés to Spain in 1528. A double-page painting (pp. 12–13; Figure 3) shows players of the dice-like game *patolli* popular in Aztec Mexico, glossed in German as ‘These are Indian people whom Ferdinand Cortez brought to His Imperial Majesty from India and they have played before His Imperial Majesty with wood and ball. With their fingers they gamble like Italians’ (Hampe 1994, 27). Another double-page painting (pp. 10–11) shows players of the Mesoamerican ball game in action, and three pages (pp. 6, 8–9; Figure 4 left) show jugglers rolling and flipping a large log with their feet, both activities from Aztec Mexico that were demonstrated before the emperor. Three other paintings (pp. 2, 3, 5; Figures 4 right, 5, 7) are of standing men in feathered capes and skirts; sheet 2 (Figure 5 left) is
Thus the Indians go, have costly jewels let into their face, and take them out when they want to and can put them in again’ (Hampe 1994, 29). One pictures a woman in a feathered cape and skirt, according to the gloss the only woman to make the journey (Figure 6). The two others represent nearly nude men with tropical accouterments: a man with a parrot and a circular feathered standard (p. 4; Figure 7 left) is labeled ‘This is also an Indian, a nobleman of their kind’ (Hampe 1994, 30); and the one with the circular shield and the great saw-toothed spear (p. 7; Figure 4 right) is glossed ‘Thus they go in India with their arms two thousand miles away, where gold is found in the water’ (Hampe 1994, 30).

The paintings of the indigenous Americans form a distinctive group because the costumes and activities they describe are so different from the others. They picture the only non-Europeans who are not shown socially or economically integrated into Spanish society. This contrasts to the images of the fashionably dressed black drummer on a mule (p. 66) and the three black slaves and two light-skinned galley slaves (said to be Moriscos) who wear simple European clothing and toil in leg irons (pp. 22, 53–54, 73–74); these blacks and Moriscos are part of the engine that drives Spanish culture, whereas the Mexican entertainers, however, remain exterior to Spanish cultural life. The standing Amerindian figures parallel their standing European counterparts in being manikins that display costume, although theirs is particularly exotic in its construction and materiality.

Historians have consistently identified Weiditz’s indigenous Americans as Aztecs, and indeed they are generally considered to be the first European images of Aztecs drawn from life and rendered with great fidelity. This attribution is problematic, however, for most of the paintings are at odds with what is known about Aztec dress and decoration. Rather, some of Weiditz’s ‘Aztecs’ have been considerably Brazilianized, a notion suggested but not developed by Hugh Honour (1979, 281). The male figures have lip plugs and ear ornaments, which Aztec men did wear, but they also have jewels in their cheeks, in the sides of their noses, and in the center of their foreheads, which Mesoamericans did not. Contrary to Aztec practice, the standing figures are also costumed with clothes entirely of feathers: feathered capes, feathered anklets and neckbands, and feathered skirts, and they are consistently barefoot.

Some of this featherwork was added after the paintings were first made, as noted by Jean Michel Massing (1991, 518) and José Luis Casado Soto (2001, 102), who consulted the original. The additions are not distinguished from the original clothing in the 1927 facsimile edited by Theodor Hampe—widely disseminated by the Dover Press reprint of 1994—which is why they have not been more noticed; the additions are clear in the 2001 facsimile. Specifically extra feathers were added to the loincloths of four of the male figures (pp. 2, 3, 4, 7 [Figures 5, 7 left, 4 right]), giving them the look of feathered skirts, and the log juggler figures (pp. 8, 6, 9 [Figure 4 left]) were provided with short puffed pants (Trunkhose). These additions seem to date to the seventeenth century, because they are absent in Sigmund Heldt’s unpublished costume book of 1560–1580, which drew some of its images—including those of the Amerindians—from Weiditz, and they are absent in a copy of Weiditz made around 1600. Casado Soto (2001, 102) argues that these amendments were added out of a sense of modesty at the same time that the upper chests of several European women who are painted elsewhere in the Trachtenbuch were also covered.
Aztecs at the court

We know a fair amount about the Mexicans who accompanied Cortés to Spain in 1528 (Cline 1969). It was a large group of probably around 70 people that included seven high-ranking Aztec nobles, among them three sons of Moctezuma and the ruling son of Cortés’s Tlaxcalan ally Maxixcatzin, fifteen lesser nobles, and seventeen men important enough to be named and given gifts; all these men had been baptized and had taken Christian names. The principals may well have accompanied Cortés because they expected Charles to grant them rights, privileges, and lands, for Charles had granted encomiendas to two young Aztec nobles who had visited just three years prior (Cline 1969, 81). Even without such a grant, they would have recognized the political importance of visiting the emperor, a distinction that would serve them well once they returned to New Spain. One son of Moctezuma returned with a Spanish wife; records also reveal that another son was later granted the title of grandee of Spain with the key of a gentleman, a coat of arms, and a royal pension (Cline 1969, 84–88). The nobles of lesser rank, many being the sons of local rulers, may have hoped for similar favors.

Filling out this retinue was a group of about thirty unnamed entertainers, including a dozen Tlaxcalan ball players, eight or nine foot-jugglers, male and female dwarfs, as well as malformed individuals and albinos of both sexes. This troupe of exotica also included animals unknown in Europe (jaguars, pelicans, parrots, an armadillo, and a possum) as well as a treasure trove of gold and silver objects and a large quantity of luminous feather creations. Indeed Cortés brought a whole spectacle, making a grand entrance at court and delighting the emperor (Cline 1969, 70–71). The entourage was at Charles V’s court from mid-summer 1528 to April 1529, where Weiditz encountered them, after which most of the nobles repaired to Seville to prepare to sail back to Mexico, while some stayed longer at court. Some of the entertainers apparently stayed even longer, because they performed before Pope Clement VII in Rome and perhaps later to audiences in the Netherlands (Honour 1975b, 61).

Weiditz paid attention to the entertainers: the jugglers, ball players, and patolli players, who so enchanted Europeans with their athleticism and performance (Figures 3 and 4 left). There is no dispute that in these paintings he pictures Mexicans, because they engage in particularly Mexican sports and diversions, although the facial jewels Weiditz gives some figures are at odds with Aztec customs. The five images of standing men and the woman, however, have only a few features that are identifiably Aztec (pp. 2–5, Figures 4 right, 5, 6). Three male figures and the female figure are shown wearing rectangular feathered capes tied via a wide ribbon at one corner, something vaguely like short, feathered versions of the Aztec man’s cloak, or tilmatli, although the tilmatli was always tied using the natural corners of the rectangular cloth, and it was of cotton cloth. One (Figure 5 left) has a loincloth knotted in front with the distinct knot of Aztec loincloths, and three have chin/shoulder-length hair with bangs in the Aztec fashion. There is little else that is Aztec about them, however. The female figure should not be wearing the man’s tilmatli, and her long loose hair, headband, and feathered undergarment with a pointed hem are not typical of Aztec Mexico (Figure 6). Three of the male figures have unkempt short hair curling slightly at the ends. Two wear only loincloths knotted at the side (rather than in front), all are barefoot, and four have jewels studding their faces. The figure labeled a noble (Figure 7 left) holds a large feathered standard and a
parrot, which itself holds a leafy twig with berries; Weiditz renders this man as if he is consciously posing as an exotic.

A comparison of these images with a painting of an Aztec lord created in Mexico (Figure 8) reveals similarities but also telling distinctions. The Mexican rendering, although painted near the end of the sixteenth-century as a remembrance, is a knowledgeable account of elite dress. It belongs to a set of four paintings representing the Preconquest lords of Texcoco, now bound together with two images and text fragments from Juan Bautista Pomar’s Relación de Texcoco in the Codex Ixtlixochitl. Pictured here is the Texcocan ruler Nezahualpilli. The Texcocan lords were painted by indigenous artists who, judging by the details and accuracy of the costuming, probably themselves remembered the details of royal costumes or saw surviving, antique clothes and accouterments.

The Mexican and European presentations share certain formal conventions that are common in costume books: both present three-dimensional, corporeal figures posed in

Figure 8. The Texcocan ruler Nezahualpilli, Codex Ixtlixochitl 106r. Bibliothèque nationale France, Ms. Mex. 65–71.
contrapposto with feet angled and the weight on one leg, set against an undefined space. Here the similarity largely ends, however, for the Weiditz images stand out for the darkness of the men’s skin, the bare feet, the abundance of feathered costuming, the relative plainness of the bulky feathered cloaks, and the golden studs on the sides of the individuals’ noses, on their cheeks, and in their foreheads. Weiditz’s figures hold objects, like props, that signify within a European context. In contrast, the figure of the Texcocan lord (Figure 8) has skin that is not marked as dark, and his face is subtly jeweled with only a turquoise blue lip plug and gold ear rods. The fine cloak and loincloth are intricately and symbolically patterned to signify Nezahualpilli’s ancient heritage, and the style and ornamentation of the hair symbolize his ethnicity, warrior status, and rule.24 The body jewelry is both subtle and precious; the figure wears jade-beaded wrist bands and a great jade collar and has gold bands around the upper arms and shins. The figure holds delicate batons of feathers and flowers that also signify within Aztec codes of comportment.

This contrast between the Mexican paintings and the Weiditz ones undercuts assumptions that the Weiditz figures are identifiable as Aztecs. The one labeled a noble (Figure 7 left) cannot represent an Aztec lord, for the sons of Moctezuma and the ruler of Tlaxcala would never have appeared this way: without a cloak, headdress, or sandals, and holding a parrot. In Mexico these same high nobles would have worn luxurious sandals and finely woven cotton cloaks and loincloths of intricate design, not the coarse and bulky feathered cloaks and loincloths Weiditz assigns them here, and by the late 1520s, some may have even converted to Spanish dress. Already baptized and bearing Christian names, the sons of indigenous rulers who traveled to Spain would have astutely recognized the power behind the clothes and accouterments of their Spaniard overlords.

The Aztec nobles who attended the court of Charles V would probably not have worn their ancestral garb in any case. Rather they very likely would have been dressed in the clothing of European courtiers, for it was the tradition of the Hapsburg court to furnish wardrobes to its attendants, befitting their status and rank. Indeed a major expense of royal courts was the clothing required by its members.25 In 1519 when the first Mexican visitors—four noblemen and two women servants—accompanied Cortés’s first shipment of gifts for the emperor (Martyr d’Anghiera 1912, 2, 38; Cline 1969, 81), Charles ordered the indigenous strangers to be given Spanish clothes so that they could be appropriately dressed when they first appeared at court (Bataillon 1959, 140; Johnson 2011, 83–84). No record of an initial gift of clothes has yet been found for the 1528 contingent, and they may not have needed one. As lords, nobles, and men of rank, the Mexicans who accompanied Cortés to Spain were already predisposed to participate in the protocols of Spanish government and society, and they may well have arrived already appropriately dressed for the court.

Certainly they possessed suitable Spanish clothes by the time Weiditz arrived at court in 1529. A cédula of October 1528 indicates that the crown granted them gifts of clothes befitting their status. The seven major nobles were given coats and hats of blue velvet, doublets of yellow damask, scarlet capes and breeches, shirts, shoes with ribbons, and leather gaiters; the Mexicans of lesser status were given more modest outfits (Cline 1969, 82). Charles financially supported them during their visit in Spain and gave them more clothing before they departed (Cline 1969, 82–84; Johnson 2011, 86–89). In the sixteenth century clothes were political currency, which displayed power relations and
marked allegiance. Royal gifts of clothing to nobles and to other rulers carried great social weight.

This disjunction between Weiditz’s feathered folk and the Mexicans who accompanied Cortés raises the issue of seriality and intent in the Weiditz paintings. Hampe (1994, 20) reported that when the manuscript was given to the Germanische Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg in the late nineteenth century (and the paintings probably then numbered), the paintings were ordered haphazardly. He therefore reordered them in the 1927 facsimile publication (Hampe 1994). He placed the self-portrait of Weiditz (p. 78) first, followed by portraits of known persons (including Cortés) and those pictures relating to the imperial court (‘to which the representations of Indians also belong’), then geographically through Spain and then beyond. Within each group he placed ‘the larger scenes portraying the life of the people and containing several figures […] ahead of the mere costume pictures.’ In this way, the first Indian picture in his 1927 facsimile is of the patolli players (pp. 12–13, Figure 3), who were the only ones glossed as Indians brought by Cortés. He followed these with the ball players (pp. 10–11) and foot jugglers (pp. 6, 8, 9, Figure 4 left), whose activities identify them as Mexicans. Then he included the woman (p. 1, Figure 6) and the standing men (pp. 2, 3, 5, 4, 7, Figures 4 right, 5, 7). Glosses throughout identify them as ‘Indians.’ Subsequent scholars have assumed that all the Indians represented in the series were based on the Cortés contingency, assuming that the first gloss pertained also to the rest. But if we recognize that the painting of the Mexican patolli players was the last in the group, this frees the other figures to be representations of other kinds of Indians (not necessarily the Aztecs) or, indeed, renderings of an exoticized concept of Indianness.

**Feathered Amerindians and other exotics**

This raises the question of who or what the models of these standing Indian people in Weiditz’s paintings really are. Indigenous people from the Americas had begun to arrive in Europe as early as Christopher Columbus’s first return. Thereafter slavers imported hundreds from various regions of the Americas, while explorers and others brought back Amerindians for display and service (Foreman 1943, 3–10; Franco Silva 1978; Mira Caballos 2010; van Deuren 2010, 2015, 64–78). Distinctive among them were the Tupinambá from Brazil, whose facial piercings and feathered accoutrements align best with Weiditz’s images. The Tupinambá became known to Europeans in 1500 when Pedro Álvares Cabal’s voyage made landfall in Brazil, claiming it for Portugal, on its way to India. Immediate reports described its inhabitants as wearing no clothing, but the men had bone rods emerging from piercings below their lower lip (in the middle and on the sides) and sometimes wore caps of long feathers (Cabral 1967, 9–16). Tupinambá feathered objects were in European collections by 1505, some likely sent by Cabral himself (Honour 1975a, no. 4; 1979, 275; Massing 1991, 515–16). Amerigo Vespucci’s 1505 account of his third voyage to the Americas elaborated on the more extraordinary cultural characteristics of the Tupinambá and described the men with up to seven piercings in the cheeks, lips, noses, and ears, all filled with beautiful stones or bones, some half a handsppan long (Vespucci 1992, 49).

Two of the first descriptive images of Amerindians—German broadsheets of 1505 that illustrate Vespucci’s voyage—show Brazilian men wearing feathered crowns and feathered
skirts and with colored stones in their faces and chests. The broadsheet printed in Augsburg in 1505 pictures the habits and costumes of men, women, and children, with four lines of text that summarize Vespucci (Figure 9). The woodcut image echoes this text in describing Brazilians as a cannibalistic and lascivious people, who did not know marriage, who had no government, and whose heads, necks, arms, genitals, and feet ‘are slightly covered with feathers. The men also have many precious stones in their faces and chests.’ The woodcut follows this text in depicting round precious stones in multiple piercings rather than the rods originally described by Vespucci. The beards are erroneous. However, most of the feathered headdresses, collars, and elbow and neck bands in the woodcut are considered fairly accurate renderings of costuming the Tupinambá wore on special occasions, but the feathered skirts are thought to be fabrications based on verbal descriptions, a misunderstanding of the Brazilians’ feathered capes, or a rare variant of the feathered belt that the Tupinambá did wear. Brazilians are likewise pictured wearing feathered headdresses, capes, and skirts on the map of South America in the Miller Atlas of 1519.

By 1529, when Weiditz drew his version of Indians, the feathered skirt—whether fabricated or not—had become a canonical signifier of the Brazilian Tupinambá and Amerindians more broadly: for example, an archer in a feathered skirt and tall feathered crown stands in for the Aztecs on the title page to the 1523 Dutch translation from Cortés’s first and second letters (Bucher et al. 1991, 259). As Peter Mason (1998, 16–26), Stephanie Leitch (2010, 63–64) and Christian Feest (2014) have noted, this signification even extended outward to embrace south Asians from Calicut and beyond; these were the
other Indians with whom Portugal was closely tied. The feathered skirt thus appears in a painting by Albrecht Altdorfer and in prints by Hans Burgkmair for the Triumph of the Habsburg emperor Maximilian I (1513–1519), where it is used to signify the ‘people of Calicut’ near the southern tip of India. Maximilian dictated to his secretary the specifications that the Calicut men were all to be ‘naked like Indians or dressed in Moorish fashion’ and followed by Calicut people (Sturtevant 1976, 421; Feest 2014, 295). Altdorfer painted the men with headdresses and skirts of billowing feathers and with feather bands on the arms and legs, and wearing beards as in the 1505 broadsheets. As Hans Burgkmair translated this scene into woodcuts (c. 1516–1519), he more accurately rendered elements of Tupinambá costume and accouterments, specifically the radial crown of feathers and the long club or staff whose proximal end is wrapped in a wide band of leather and feathers, but he also dressed the men in knee-length skirts of long feathers that emerge below a hip-band of short feathers. In the following scene, Burgkmair mingled these people dressed as Brazilians and carrying corn with Africans and natives of India’s Malabar coast (Leitch 2010, 153). This same costume type came to represent people of Calicut and Sumatra in the 1515 edition of Ludovico de Varthema’s Die ritterlich und lobwirdig Rayss, which reported on his overland journey to India and Southeast Asia and his return via the Portuguese sea route (1500–1508). It was one of the most popular travel books of its time (Hammond 1963, xx). The third, German edition, printed in Augsburg, was illustrated with 46 handsome woodcuts by Jörg Breu, several of which feature males costumed in the same two-tiered feathered skirt, radial headdress, and feathered arm and leg bands, and holding the same long wrapped club (Figure 10) (Leitch 2010, 109, 119–23, 137–40; Feest 2014, 297–98). Breu’s men, like two in the 1505 woodcut and several in Altdorfer’s paintings and Burgkmair’s prints, are bearded.

Also in 1515 Albrecht Dürer drew a similarly clad but beardless man in the margin of the Book of Hours of Maximilian, where it illustrates Psalm 24, which refers to the Lord’s sovereignty of the world and all within it (f. 41r). Paired with a man in Turkish garb leading a camel on the following page, it indicates those living on the edges of the known world (Feest 2014, 299). It is not clear whether Dürer himself intended to represent a Brazilian or a man from Calicut, for the two had merged conceptually. This conflation of Brazilian and Calicut identity probably began with Cabral’s 1500 voyage to India via Brazil, which linked the eastern and western Indias in Europeans’ minds; both were dominated by Portuguese interests and reached via Portuguese sea routes. Both stood for the exotic exterior of European activity.

When Cortés in 1519 sent his first shipment of treasures from Aztec Mexico, the Mexican materials joined the Tupinambá artifacts already in Europe to create a rich and entangled mix of wondrous items from afar. The Mexican objects included feathered costumes and armor, exquisite goldworks, masks and helmets of turquoise mosaic, elaborate weapons, and precious stones of inventive design; other shipments followed. The six indigenous men and women who accompanied the treasure were described as wearing cotton cloaks and loincloths colored with feathers, before Charles V had them dressed in Spanish clothes (Batallion 1959, 139–40). Peter Martyr d’Anghiera (1912, 2, 202) later described an Aztec slave brought by Cortés’s secretary as performing a battle in a robe of woven feathers. The extraordinary things brought from Brazil and Mexico, and especially the featherwork, attracted such attention and wonder in Europe that it was
easy for artists to bring the two together. Both the Aztecs and the Brazilians became known for their feathered dress. In two ink sketches of c. 1519/20, Burgkmair dressed men with African physiognomic features as feather-skirted Tupinambá, rendering the items accurately but probably misreading a feathered panel or cloak for a skirt. In a conflation of distinct cultural attributes, he pictures one holding up an Aztec shield and grasping an Aztec macuahuitl, the obsidian-edged wooden sword that was the preferred weapon of Aztec warriors (Figure 11).34

Two conceptual strands run through these images, both related to the issue of entangled trajectories. One is the feathering of Amerindians and beyond this to other ‘Indians,’ what Sturtevant (1988) has called the Tupinambization of indigenous Americans and others. The second, broader strand is the conceptual interweaving of ideas about and things and people from distant regions outside of Europe, all merged together under the term Indian, a term that was clearly fluid in the sixteenth century. This feathering, interweaving, and merging formed what Mason (1998, 16–41) calls the ‘exotic genre.’ As Keating and Markey (2011) explain, the term ‘Indian’ came to be used by collectors of kunstkammern to connote the whole range of exotic objects—vessels, chests, featherwork, weapons, etc.—from the Americas and India but also from Africa, China, Japan, and the Levant, even when the owner knew the more specific provenience. The term, as it was employed in 16th–18th-century inventories, might suggest an object’s provenance from outside of Europe, its non-European style, or its ritual function, but they note that ‘Indian’ also ‘denoted abundance, wealth, and the exotic’ (Keating and Markey 2011, 297). The
exotic, as Mason (1998, 3, 24) has asserted, originates in knowledge of a distant place that is decontextualized and then recontextualized to signify a special kind of otherness.

Weiditz’s Indians

Returning to Weiditz’s Indian figures, it becomes clear that they are stereotypes, not quite Aztec and not quite Brazilian, but patched together from Amerindian objects and people who were seen in Europe by the late 1520s, as well as conceptions about people that were then circulating through prints and written reports. The city of Augsburg, as a major trade and printing center, figures strongly in this circulation. It was in Augsburg that the 1505 broadsheet and Varthema’s 1515 travel account with Breu’s woodcuts were printed, and where both Burgkmair and Weiditz worked.

It is clear that Weiditz’s renderings misrepresent Tupinambá dress as it is currently understood (Buono 2007, 85–95; Sturtevant 1976, 420–24; 1992, 26–30), and the saw-toothed spear of the warrior (Weiditz, 7, Figure 4 right) was unknown in the Americas, as far as I can determine. The feathered cloaks are an amalgam of actual Tupinambá feathered capes, collars, and bustles, combined with the variety of feather creations Cortés

Figure 11. Hans Burgkmair, African youth costumed and accoutered with Tupinambá and Aztec objects. British Museum, SL.5218.128. © Trustees of the British Museum.
shipped and brought with him from Mexico. Then someone later added even more feathers to the Weiditz figures, further Brazilianizing the men’s wardrobe and achieving the cliché of feathered skirts. The jewel-studded faces are traceable only to the Tupinambá, but not as they were originally described with longish labrets but as they were rendered in the 1505 broadsheet with colorful flat stones in their faces. Altdorfer, Dürer, and Burgkmair show no facial piercings. The feathered neck band (7, Figure 4 right) and ankle bands (Weiditz, 8, 9) may also derive from this broadsheet. Since Dürer, Burgkmair, and Breu depicted Tupinambá attire with a greater understanding of what these Brazilians actually wore and how they wore it, as did artists of later costume books, better models were available if Weiditz had decided to pursue them.\textsuperscript{35}

Weiditz’s Amerindian figures also have Aztec features—loincloths, hairstyles, feathered capes—as already mentioned. Two of the male figures hold what may be renderings of actual feather objects Cortés sent from Mexico. The circular feathered standard held by the figure of the so-called noble (p. 4; Figure 6 left) may represent an Aztec standard called a \textit{quetzaltonatiuh} (quetzal-feather/sun) device (Sahagún 1950–1982, bk. 8, 35; Seler 1992, 55–56), which was mounted high on a frame worn on a warrior’s back; here is it simply attached to a pole. The feather-fringed shield with a blue-grey cross across its surface that is held by Weiditz’s warrior figure (Figure 4 right) resonates with an Aztec feather-fringed shield Martyr d’Anghiera (1912, 2, 47) saw and described as having golden bands in the form of a cross. Additionally, the gloss’s reference to gold found in the water fits Mexico better than Brazil, for not only was Mexico known for the quantities of gold Cortés had sent, but Martyr d’Anghiera (1912, 2, 195) had specifically reported that in Mexico gold was found in rivers. Like Dürer and Burgkmair, Weiditz may well have based his costume elements on Amerindian objects—feathered capes, feathered shields—that were then in Europe, and he was not above decontextualizing and combining them on the same figure. He joined them with ideas and images about Brazilians to create highly exoticized Mexicans.

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The jugglers, ball players, and \textit{patolli} players he rendered clearly belonged to the Mexican contingent that accompanied Cortés to Spain, but Weiditz Brazilianized the images by adding jeweled studs to the men’s faces. The six standing figures with some Mexican features as well as the facial studs and feathered cloaks of the Tupinambá cannot reflect the Mexican nobles at Charles’s court, although they could be aligned with the Mexican entertainers rendered as exotics. The function of these figures is to pose in the manner of the standing European figures in the \textit{Trachtenbuch} in order to display their dress and artifacts. Weiditz enhanced them to satisfy expectations of how Amerindians should look. Tupinambá were already known in Europe through their cultural products, travelers’ accounts of cannibalistic savages wearing little but feathers, and woodblock prints that depicted the same. By the time Weiditz was gathering images for this collection of costumes and customs, the Tupinambá had come to signify for Europeans the indigenous people of the Americas. The visit of a contingent of Mexican nobles and entertainers at Charles’s court seems to have done little to dispel this notion.

Weiditz seems to have been perfectly willing to present a kind of amalgamated Indian in his \textit{trachtenbuch} collection: dark strangers from across the Atlantic whose foreignness was amplified by facial jewels and feathers, and reinforced by a parrot. The annotator also had no difficulty identifying as a nobleman the figure with the most tropical accoutrements who is posed holding a large feathered standard in one hand and the parrot...
grasping a branch with berries in the other. These choices fit well the notion of exotic others from the Americas, whereas the actual appearance of Mexican nobles—termed ‘principals señores de la tierra’ by Oviedo y Valdes (1851–1855, 3, 527)—who were dressed as courtiers, did not.

The desires and trajectories of Weiditz and the Aztecs came together at Charles’s court, where both parties hoped for royal privilege and enhanced influence upon their return home. The Aztec lords left with fine gifts, the distinction of having addressed the emperor and participated in Spanish courtly life, and, for one noble, a Spanish wife. Weiditz, for his part, returned home with his royal patent and a misunderstanding, intentional or not, of the indigenous visitors from Mexico, whom he reduced to exotic types. Weiditz and his annotator could not recognize, or chose not to portray, real distinctions of indigenous ethnicity and class, but instead intertwined Mexicans and Brazilians, and compressed nobles and entertainers, into the single category of Indians. His Trachtenbuch is an early example of the tendency in Europe to fabricate an exotic Indianness that encompassed and entangled peoples and artifacts from afar.

Notes
1. For ease of reference, I use the names of the modern nation states to designate the various regions.
2. I use the term Aztec inclusively to refer to the Nahua-speaking peoples of central Mexico who shared a culture and ideology and who were conquered by or allied with Cortés; these include the Tenochca-Mexica, Texcocsans, Tlaxcallans, and others whose envoys traveled with Cortés to Spain.
4. For costume books see esp. Defert 1984; Ilg 2004; Jones 2006; Rosenthal and Jones 2008, which also includes an extensive bibliography; Rublack 2010, 13, 146–60. Jones and Stally-brass 2000 cover Renaissance clothing more generally. For constructions and representations of the exotic, see Mason 1998.
6. Weiditz’s Trachtenbuch is Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, Hs. 22474; available online at: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Trachtenbuch_des_Christoph_Weiditz.
7. Hampe 1994, 8–10. Casado Soto (2001, 58–60) proposed an itinerary that includes most of the regions whose people are pictured, but this extended route still does not account for the English and Irish costumes. Weiditz had to have amplified this collection with costumes previously documented by others.
8. Hampe (1994, 26) and Casado Soto (2001, 50) note that glosses accompanying the portraits of Cortés and the admiral Andrea Doria allude to events after 1530. According to Hampe (1994, 9) some of the annotations exhibit ‘serious orthographic and syntactical mistakes,’ and others ‘are completely corrupted and at times hardly understandable.’ He suggests that the accuracy of the annotations was not ‘taken too seriously in those days.’
9. The current binding is late eighteenth century; the title trachtenbuch was first used when it was given to the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremburg in 1886. Hampe 1994, 6, 22; Casado Soto 2001, 49. The pagination probably dates from this time as well.
10. The view of Weiditz’s work as an ethnography has been taken by Casado Soto (2001, 7–8), but especially advanced by Briesemeister (2006) and Satterfield (2007).
11. The unpublished costume book of Sigmund Heldt, compiled of nearly 900 renderings c. 1560–1580, contains many of the same figures (the Amerindians are on pp. 370r–74v). Some may not derive directly from Weiditz but from a prototype used by both (Casado
Soto 2001, 103, 104; Rublack 2007, 276–82; Wilson 2005, 116). A copy of Weiditz’s Trachtenbuch, dated c. 1600, is Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Cod.icon 342 (the Amerindians are on pp. 3v–9v). This library also contains a late seventeenth-century compilation, Cod.icon. 361, that includes a number of Weiditz’s images (the Amerindians are on pp. 25r–26v), as well as some of Pliny’s monstrous races (pp. 22r–23v). Briesemeister (2006, 12–13) mentions a few others. Many of Weiditz’s costume figures reappear with others in Weigel’s popular costume book of 1577.

12. Labeled ‘In such manner the Indians play with a blown-up ball with the seat without moving their hands from the ground; they have also a hard leather before their seat in order that it shall receive the blow from the ball, they have also such leather gloves on’ (Hampe 1994, 28).

13. Labeled respectively, ‘This is an Indian, he lies on his back and throws a block of wood around on his heels, is as long as a man and as heavy, he has on the earth a leather under him, is as big as a calf skin’; ‘Thus he throws the wood above him with his feet’; ‘Thus he again catches the wood on his feet as he has thrown it up’ (Hampe 1994, 28).

14. Sheets 3 and 5 are glossed, ‘This is also an Indian man,’ and ‘This is also the Indian manner, how they have brought wood jugs with them out of which they drink’ (Hampe 1994, 29).

15. The gloss reads, ‘In this manner the Indian women go. Not more than one of them has come out [to Europe]’ (Hampe 1994, 28).


17. Aztec dress has been extensively documented by Anawalt 1981.


19. Briesemeister (2006, 7) cites Pietschmann (2005, xvii–xviii n.4) as saying that an unnamed colleague from Mexico thought Weiditz’s jeweled Amerindians were probably Matlatzincans because of their ‘facial tattoos.’ The ornaments on their faces are not tattoos, however, and there is no evidence the Matlatzincans had such multiple facial jewels.


22. Aztec clothing is well known by means of written descriptions and pictorial manuscripts painted after the conquest, examined in detail in Anawalt 1981. See Anawalt 1981, 22, 27–32 for the tilmatl.

23. The paintings of the lords seem to be associated with Pomar’s Relación of 1582 but not actually a part of it. They are linked to it because the painter of this lord (Nezahualpilli) also rendered the image of the deity Tlaloc in the Relación (first noted by Robertson 1959, 150). The Relación, however, does not refer directly to any of the paintings of the lords, although it does refer specifically to eight other illustrations. The lords are individually named by glosses in the hand of Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl, a descendent of the lords of Texcoco who copied Pomar’s Relación. For Pomar’s Relación, its images, and the representations of the four lords, see Acuña 1986, esp. 31–32, 42–44; Durand Forest 1976, 14, 29–31; and Doesberg 1996, 17–30.

24. See Anawalt (1990 and 1996) for the production and symbolism of the royal blue cloak; see Durand-forest (1976, 28) and Seler (1992, 5–6, 16–17) for the hair style and ornamentation.

25. For gifts of clothing by the Hapsburg court to Aztecs and others, and the expense of doing so, see Johnson (2011, 83–90). Hayward (2004, 166, 171–76) examines gifts of clothing as an informal but costly part of Henry VIII’s system of patronage; Henry also received gifts of clothing from Frances I. Jones and Stallybrass (2000, 5, 18–26) discuss the social signification of gifts of clothes more broadly.

26. One of the wise men in an Adoration of the Magi painting of c. 1505 wears a radial crown of feathers and a feathered collar and belt, and holds a Tupinambá arrow, all accurately
rendered (Honour 1975a, no. 4). Tupinambá feathered capes dating to the sixteenth century are found in several old European collections; complete list in Buono 2007, 128–33.

27. I draw here on the analyses by Honour (1975b, 12–13), who translates the four-line text (1979, 271–72; Sturtevant 1992, 27; Massing 1991, 516; Mason 1998, 17–18; and Leitch 2010, 63). Honour (1979, 277) sees the feathered skirt as a fabrication; Sturtevant (1976, 420) originally thought so also but later proposed that ‘they can be considered rare variants of the belts made of shorter feathers that are among the Tupinambá objects in Copenhagen’ (1992, 27). The other 1505 broadsheet, printed in Leipzig, is published in Leitch 2010, 145.

28. For the map of South America in the Miller Atlas, see Honour 1975a, no. 17 and Sturtevant 1976, 424.


32. A sixteenth-century costume book (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Cod.icon 342), copied for the most part from Weiditz, includes a man labeled as being from Calicut who wears only a loin-cloth, a tall cylindrical feathered headdress, and feathers around his ankles like those worn by two of Weiditz’s log jugglers (13r). Feest (2014, 299) publishes and discusses a woodcut of a ‘nobleman of Calicut’ whose entire body is studded with jewels and who wears a cape, skirt, headdress, and arm and leg bands all of feathers.

33. Described by Cortés 1986, 39–46; López de Gómara 1943, 1:138–42; Martyr d’Anghiera 1912, 2:45–48. The literature on the circulation of Mexican works is great but is dominated by the studies of Nowotny 1960, Feest 1990, and Heikamp 1972. See Keating and Markey (2011) for a more recent analysis and a more complete bibliography.


35. E.g. Deserps 2001, 138, 139; Weigel 1577, pls. 181–83. Weiditz’s image of the Indian woman was the only one of his Amerindian collection to live on in Weigel’s costume book and others thereafter, where she is labeled simply as an Indian woman, although Weigel identifies two figures in Brazilian dress as from Brazil.

Notes on contributor

Elizabeth Hill Boone holds the Martha and Donald Robertson Chair in Latin American Art at Tulane University. She has written extensively on the painted books of Preconquest and early colonial Mexico as well as pictographic and other non-language writing systems. Her interests also include the ideology and visual expression of Aztec Mexico. Her current project examines changes in the indigenous tradition of pictography and manuscript painting after the conquest.

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