

FOREST / TREE / MAN

Museum of Ethnology, Vienna

September 7, 2011 - May 28, 2012

Visitors to the exhibition are greeted by a forest of poles, 4 meters high, painted white and featuring ancestral figures of the Asmat people from South-West New Guinea. The Asmat believe that once upon a time a primeval hero, the "Windman", carved their ancestors from a tree trunk and brought them to life with a drum. Not far from these carved mangrove poles is a huge wooden gate from a temple in Myanmar, a large oil press from Siwa Oasis in Egypt's western desert, the costume worn by an actress playing the witch Baba Yaga, the most popular figure in Russian and Slav fairy tales, and an outsize New-Guinean slit drum carved from a tree trunk whose sound was believed to scare away enemies and frightening ghosts. In the New Hebrides these drums were stored standing up in a line to convince unwelcome „visitors“ that they are facing an impenetrable "forest". The walls of the galleries are decorated with Maya dresses embroidered with the tree of life, a knotted Persian carpet depicting a hero - identified either as St. George or St. Theodore, or as Rostam, the hero celebrated in Iranian poetry - vanquishing a dragon, thangkas from Tibet and Nepal with sacred trees or a hermit meditating under a tree, monumental paintings depicting alpine hunting scenes from Austria, as well as charcoal drawings of lumberjacks at work in the snow on Ötztal mountain by the artist Anton Velim. Painted ritual cards from Mongolia depict frightening forest demons from the pre-Buddhist period.

The plans and designs for artificial forests, parks and gardens document the importance of woods as a place to which man can withdraw. As a foretaste of Paradise, garden idylls are frequently depicted on Mughal and Persian lacquerware. Richly decorated tiles and ceramics illustrate Ottoman and Moroccan potters' love of flowers and arabesques. Miniatures of Hindu deities show Krishna as a youth hungry for love playing his flute to lure married shepherdesses into the woods at night, or many-armed Shiva practicing his asceticism sitting under a tree.

2011 was designated the "International Year of Forests" by the General Assembly of the United Nations. „We must use the International Year of the Forest to make the Austrian public understand the importance of woods and trees“, said Niki Berlakowich, the Austrian Minister of Agriculture and the Environment, in connection with the exhibition. "We are grateful to our partners who help to spread the word - like the Museum of Ethnology who is hosting an important and fascinating exhibition on this subject that looks at the many different aspects of the forest."

The exhibition “Forest/Tree/Man” at the Museum of Ethnology focuses on the many different and culturally defined interactions between man and forests. Selected subjects arranged in three large sections (“The Mystified Forest”, “The De-Mystified Forest” and “The Maltreated Forest”) help visitors focus on the now forgotten close network of relationships that connect man, trees and forests. „With the exhibition „Forest / Tree / Man“ the Museum of Ethnology hopes to focus the attention of visitors on the many different and culturally determined relations between man, forests and trees”, said director-general Sabine Haag. “Since the beginning of time, forests and trees have been part of man’s environment - his habitat, an irreplaceable part of his livelihood, and a real-fictitious counter-world”

Since time immemorial woods and trees accompany man. Forests formed the environment in which man lived, a vital part of everyone’s livelihood as well as a real-fictitious counter-world.

People have always projected their fears, desires and ideas onto woods and trees. Within these impassable, dark and forbidding forests lived “the others”: “uncivilized people”, frightening animals, deities and nymphs, evil demons or strange fantastic creatures like dragons, witches, trolls and “wild men” wielding clubs. In many cultures the forest is regarded as a place of utmost danger. The Inka battled the „forest dwellers“; they depicted them on ritual drinking vessels and saw them as symbols of wildness and chaos. However, the Makuna who live in the rain forests of south-eastern Colombia regard the forest not as an evil counter-world but as their real every-day environment to which they feel close in many different ways. At the centre of the area settled by the Piaroa in southern Venezuela a huge table mountain called Cerro Altano pierces the roof of the rain forest. The Piaroa believe it is the petrified stump of the world tree that bore all the fruits of the forests at the beginning of time. In classical antiquity the forest deities Pan and Silvanus watched over the growth and well-being of the woods and the herds grazing in them. In Ancient Egypt tree-goddesses in the shape of a sycamore appeared, and the deceased dwelled under their branches and nourished on everlasting food. Sacred woods or groves and trees of life in, for example, Afghanistan, India and Mexico, in Judaism, Christianity and Islam as well as in the religions of the Maya, the Batak and the Dayak illustrate that for man always and everywhere forests and trees have been - and in many cases still are - a source of life. Until quite recently agriculture and forestry were closely linked here in Europe, too. Forests supplied not only fuel and building material for cities and villages and boats. Almost every object used in daily life was carved from wood, furniture or dishes, a craftsman’s or

agricultural tools. Cattle, horses, sheep, goats and pigs grazed in forests. To augment their meager diet, peasants collected nuts, berries, mushrooms and fruits there. Farmers sometimes even cultivated forest land. Charcoal burners supplied salt-mines, mines, iron- and glass-works with charcoal. Since the early Middle Ages timber rafting helped keep the less-wooded areas on Europe's fringes supplied. The hunt was part of noblemen's life, with sometimes catastrophic results for forests and cultivated land. In the exhibition the Wienerwald, the Habsburgs' hunting grounds, is represented by hunting trophies, targets from the former Austrian-Hungarian Empire, and statuettes of Emperor Franz Joseph I and Crown Prince Rudolf. Also on show is a hunting coat of Emperor Joseph II ripped by the antlers of a deer, which is probably the reason it has survived. America did not have a landed gentry, but the arrival of the first white settlers and the subsequent fight over hunting rights and land not only had catastrophic consequences for the continent's indigenous population; it also marked the beginning of the end for a number of animal species and resulted in the irreversible destruction of forests that once covered great swathes of the continent. In addition to wood and bark, forests and trees all over the world are the source of products vital for man's survival, for example honey, maple sugar, cocoa, palm wine, rubber, coconuts and medications derived from plants. The Japanese cultivated mulberry trees for the production of expensive silks, an example of the specific use of a particular tree; this incidentally is something that had already been attempted in Vienna and Linz as early as the 18th and 19th century.

Objects made of wood or bamboo, like the ubiquitous chopsticks, as well as a wealth of every-day things made from tree-bark such as baskets, clothes or shoes also illustrate how forests have become a vital source of raw materials.

Every year the area of the globe covered by forests decreases to meet the rising demand for industrial wood, palm- or soy bean plantations. This leads to a continual reduction in the variety of species inhabiting the earth. The example of the Nasca Indians illustrates that in the past as well man was not always able to coexist peacefully with nature and his environment. Mainly admired today for the geoglyphs they produced in the Peruvian desert, this civilization may have caused their own demise in the 7th - 8th century by uncontrolled logging and de-forestation that led to land erosion. A few centuries earlier the inhabitants of the Easter Islands destroyed their own livelihood by cutting down all the palm trees. Today the Black Ash forests of North America are being decimated by a bug inadvertently introduced from Asia; millions of trees are succumbing to the pest, which seriously threatens the basket-weaving traditions of local Indian tribes, and much else. A painting by Bwalya Dominique from 1999 documents the destruction of forests and nature in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo by armed groups who finance



themselves by exploiting the country's rich deposits of minerals coveted by the industrialized world. In February 2010 the NGO Survival International compared the opposition of the local Khond people to the extraction of the huge bauxite deposits in the east-Indian State of Orissa (bauxite is required in the production of aluminum) with the fictitious Na'vi in the film "Avatar" whose defense of their wooded homeland stands in the way of the exploitation of metal deposits that are of great importance to mankind. Following a ruling by the Indian election commission that the extraction of bauxite would "drastically alter" the local eco-system and water supply, the Indian Ministry of the Environment has stopped the work for now. After their ancestral habitat in western Brazil was threatened by massive logging the Surui Indians tried to convince the industrialized nations assembled for the Climate Control Conference in 2009 that a living forest is much more valuable than a dead one. Since the 1970s, the Kingdom of Bhutan has striven for "gross national happiness" by trying to enforce the economic, political and cultural parameters that guarantee the basic right of the inhabitants of this Himalayan country to individual happiness within the confines of society's well-being. This includes the protection of forests. While here in Europe our re-planted forests comprising a limited number of tree varieties are not immediately threatened by natural or human factors, the depletion and progressive destruction of tropical rain forests and sub-arctic coniferous forests may result in a dramatic loss of forests as a natural resource. Sustained conservation of forests will probably only be possible if the economic, social and cultural requirements of this and coming generations are reconciled.

Man's adventure begins with forests, and will probably end without them.

PRESSEFOTOS

Mbidi Kiluwe
Male Figure
 Democratic Republic of Congo
 Luba, before 1885
 wood, bast fibres
 h 29,5 cm
 © KHM mit MVK und ÖTM



Tree of Life
 Mexico, Metepec, 1975
 terracotta, colours
 h 40 cm, w 27 cm
 © KHM mit MVK und ÖTM



Book of the Dead of Chonsu-mes
 Ancient Egypt, 3rd Intermediary Period
 21st Dynasty, c. 1000 B.C.
 from Thebes (probably)
 papyrus, colours
 l 410 cm, h 15,5 - 16 cm
 © KHM mit MVK und ÖTM



Lekythos with Hare Hunt in a Wood
 Greece, c. 500 B.C.
 terracotta, Attic black-figure vase
 h 34,1 cm, diam. 13,6 cm
 © KHM mit MVK und ÖTM



Johannes Leemans

Hunting Objects

The Hague, c. 1660

canvas

117,5 x 167,3 cm

© KHM mit MVK und ÖTM



Theatre Costume

Robert Hauer-Riedl as the Oak
 floor-length coat, dark brown, russet, green
 with green textile leaves

head covering: hat with twigs

design: Hubert Aratym

© KHM mit MVK und ÖTM



„Weddahs on a Clearing“

Ceylon (Sri Lanka), around 1900

h 216 mm, w 272 mm

© KHM mit MVK und ÖTM



**The „Ship Pine“ (rikushu-no-matsu) in the
 Garden of Kinkaku-ji Temple**

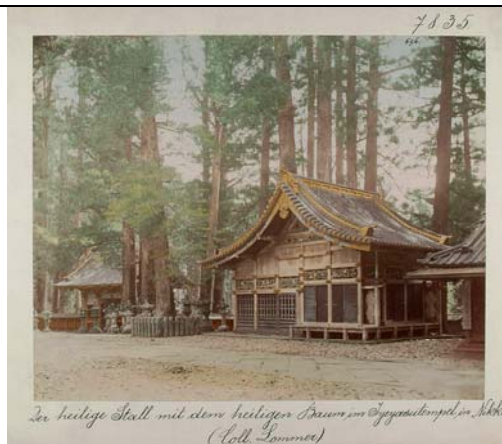
Japan, Kyōto.

© KHM mit MVK und ÖTM



The sacred barn (Shinkyusha) with the sacred tree (kōya-maki, Umbrella-pine) in Leyasu Temple

Japan, Nikko
h 195 mm, w 242 mm
© KHM mit MVK und ÖTM



Timber Rafting on Olonka River

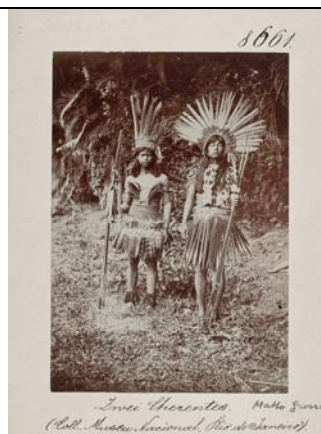
Russia, Federal District North-West Russia,
Karelia, Rajon Olonez.
© KHM mit MVK und ÖTM



Matto Grosso

Two Sherenté

Brazil, Tocantins; Xerente, before 1907
Coll. Museu Nacional, Rio de Janeiro
© KHM mit MVK und ÖTM



„Drum Grove“

Vila Islands, New Hebrides
© KHM mit MVK und ÖTM



Krishna and Radha

India, 19th century
paper
h 43cm, w 33 cm
© KHM mit MVK und ÖTM

**Relief**

Leopard, Nigeria, Kingdom of Benin
16th-17th century
cast metal
w 48 cm, h 30 cm
© KHM mit MVK und ÖTM

**Breeding silkworms with mulberry leaves**

Japan, 1937
Woodcut on paper
h 380 mm, w 260 mm
© KHM mit MVK und ÖTM

**Vessels**

Beaker with depictions of supernatural creatures, trophy heads and crops
Peru, Nasca Civilization, 4th century A.D.
terracotta, h 12 cm, diam. 13,5 cm
© KHM mit MVK und ÖTM



Tree mask madask, medaska,
Papua New Guinea, Bismarck-Archipelago,
New Britain, Gazelle Peninsular; Baining,
bast fibre, pigment, rattan, feathers, c. 1970
h 140 cm, w 70 cm
© KHM mit MVK und ÖTM



Keros
Peru; Inka, 1600-1800
wood, resin colours
h 19,2 cm, diam. 13,5 cm
© KHM mit MVK und ÖTM



Window Shutter, dwāk, made of Cedrus deodara
Eastern Afghanistan, Nuristan, Kamdesh,
c. 1930
48 x 45,5 x 5,7 cm
© KHM mit MVK und ÖTM



Block-printed and painted wall-hanging, qalamkār
featuring four lines by
Omar-e Khayyam (11th century), the
Persian poet
Iran, Isfahan, c. 1900
l 135 cm, w. 90 cm
© KHM mit MVK und ÖTM





OPENING HOURS

Museum of Ethnology
1010 Vienna, Heldenplatz

Daily except Tuesdays
10 am - 6 pm

Library

Mondays and Tuesdays 10 am - 4 pm
Wednesdays 10 am - 6 pm
Thursdays 10 am - 4 pm
closed on Fridays

ENTRANCE FEES

adults	€ 8,-
concessions	€ 6,-
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Guided tour, p.p.	€ 2,-
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Annual Ticket	€ 29,-

GUIDED TOURS

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EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

An exhibition catalogue will be published in conjunction with the show

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