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MAXIMILIAN, PRINCE OF WIED (1782-1867) RECONSIDERED

PAUL SCHACH

On 3 November 1992 the British Society for the History of Natural Sciences convened at the Naturkundliches Museum in Vienna. Since the theme of the six-day convention was “The Exploration and Opening Up of America as Mirrored by Natural History,” it is appropriate that one of the papers presented should have been devoted to Maximilian, Prince of Wied, whose complementary expeditions to North and South America have so greatly enriched our knowledge of Indian cultures that once flourished in Brazil and on the Great Plains. Yet, despite the fact that Maximilian

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FIG. 1. *Drawing of Prince Maximilian in later life. Artist unknown. Reproduction courtesy of Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska. Gift of the Enron Art Foundation.*

was "by far the best trained scientific observer to explore the West in the early period,"¹ he remains relatively unknown in this country and is virtually forgotten in Europe. Indeed, a major reason for honoring him with seven conferences in Germany on the 125th anniversary of his death was "to evoke recollections of the life and work of Prince Maximilian of Wied."²

During his lifetime the prince was overshadowed by three somewhat older explorers. In Europe it was Alexander von Humboldt, who was extolled by Charles Darwin as the greatest scientist who had ever lived.³ Maximilian himself acknowledged the Brandenburg baron as his "model, friend, and mentor."⁴ In this country it was Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, whose momentous expedition to the Pacific, inaugurated by Thomas Jefferson, "remains enshrined in the imagination of Americans as a heroic feat of geographic exploration."⁵ By contrast, Maximilian's unheralded private venture to the upper Missouri with two companions is not even recorded in most major American encyclopedias. His two companions were an unexcelled documentary artist and an experienced taxidermist, who was the personal huntsman of the ruling Prince of Wied on loan to his brother Maximilian for the duration of his two American expeditions.⁶

Today the most formidable obstacle to American appreciation of Maximilian as a naturalist and ethnologist is the language barrier. Not only did Maximilian write almost exclusively in German, but most of the factual literature about him is in that language. To date attempts to hurdle this barrier have not been completely successful. On the basis of a detailed *Tagebuch* or Diary, Maximilian published a comprehensive two-volume travel account of his Brazilian expedition. The anonymous English translation of this highly significant study breaks off before midpoint; thus it does not include the very heart of the work, the prince's exemplary pioneering treatise on the Botocudo Indians.⁷

H. Evans Lloyd's English translation of Maximilian's North American travel descrip-

tion is almost equally unsatisfactory, omitting as it does all "indelicate" Indian customs as well as information of importance primarily to scholars, such as the scientific identification of flora and fauna and the vocabularies of twenty-three Indian languages, several of them quite substantial.⁸ Fortunately the Indian word lists were partially restored by Reuben G. Thwaites in his reprint of this translation. We must also keep in mind the fact that Maximilian wrote his *Reise in das innere Nord-America* primarily for the benefit of European readers since he doubted that contemporary Americans would find it very informative: Lewis and Clark, after all, had not been the only explorers to precede him west of the Mississippi and to publish narratives of their travel adventures.

Ironically, at the very time Maximilian, bedridden with scurvy, was painstakingly and painfully recording Indian lore and languages in what is now North Dakota, his fellow-countryman, John Jacob Astor, was providing Washington Irving with a plenitude of material for a history of his Pacific Fur Company: *Astoria, or Anecdotes of an Enterprise beyond the Rocky Mountains*.⁹ A perennial literary favorite among Americans, this "compelling tale of romance and adventure . . . filled with heroes and villains, bold deeds and sinister betrayals" remained for decades a fertile source of inspiration for western fiction writers both in this country and abroad. It should be noted that Washington Irving's brief contact with Indians came in 1832 within the framework of Andrew Jackson's Indian-removal program.

Among Maximilian's publications the two-volume *Reise in das innere Nord-America* has been praised by Mildred Goosman as his "crowning achievement."¹⁰ Yet a comparison with its source, the prince's *Tagebuch* or Diary, reveals significant omissions (of 200,000 words) and modifications in the published work. Omitted are numerous passages that, while of slight interest to the general reader, are of substantial importance to scholars of various persuasions. Many of the modifications are a matter of style, i.e., of the manner in

which the prince, a guest in a foreign country, expresses his carefully considered opinions about such matters as the wanton destruction of timber and wildlife by European settlers and the relentless eradication of the original inhabitants of North America. Matters that were expressed with tact and discretion in the *Reise* are recorded more fully and frankly in the *Tagebuch*.

Only a small portion of the *Tagebuch* has been published in English translation.¹¹ It is difficult to imagine what purpose this publication was designed to serve. Many passages are unintelligible; not a few are incongruous. In short, it is of questionable value to either the general reader or the specialist.

In view of this concatenation of circumstances it is scarcely surprising that many of the brief statements about Maximilian readily available in English are not entirely free of misinformation. Indeed, one of the best of them is marred by six glaring errors in the first paragraph, including the double misstatement, taken from the preface to Thwaites' reprint, that the prince had entered Paris with the conquerors of Napoleon in 1813 as a major general in the Prussian army.¹² Maximilian could not have advanced to the rank of major general after only two years of military training and six years of active military service. And even the most casual student of European history knows that the occupation of Paris by the victorious allies took place in 1814, i.e., *after* the capitulation of the city.

Once such errors appear in print, however, they tend to reproduce and to spawn even more incredible ones. The entry in the *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, for example, retains the inflated military rank and adds the equally misleading assertion that Maximilian endeavored to portray the Indians of the upper Missouri "not as savages, but as civilized individuals with acquired skills and mores ideally suited for life in a wilderness."¹³ The prince was, to be sure, an earnest and sympathetic advocate of the Indians of both North and South America, and therefore he was properly characterized by Professor Herbert Baldus of

the University of São Paulo as "the forerunner of all those who today seek to protect the Indian."¹⁴ As an ethnographer, however, he depicted the Indians with unreserved objectivity. He reported the anthropophagy of several Brazilian tribes, for example, no less frankly than the practice of ceremonial self-torture or the facial disfigurement of unfaithful wives prevalent among certain Indian nations on the Great Plains. (He did, it is true, occasionally resort to Latin to reduce the shock somewhat for his more squeamish or fainthearted readers.) It is precisely because of Maximilian's strict adherence to fact that his North American *Tagebuch* is one of our most reliable sources of information about the customs of Great Plains nations that were devastated by smallpox in the mid 1830s. As late as 1988 the above-mentioned errors are faithfully preserved in a brief entry in the *Encyclopedia of Frontier Biography*, which seems to be a dehumorized, participialized adaptation of folksy anecdotes about Maximilian related in Marshall Sprague's *Gallery of Dudes*.¹⁵

It seems likely that these examples of fact and fiction derive in large part from the highly readable version of Bernard DeVoto, who inflated his unidentified sources somewhat. He introduces Maximilian as

a thin, worn man of fifty, excitable, choleric, with a gift of invective. He spoke English by main force, through an unleavened Prussian accent, and the effect was not made more intelligible by the fact that years of military service and geographical exploration had cost him his teeth. He was traveling as Baron [von] Braunsberg but he was Maximilian, Prince of Wied-Neuwied. . . .

Maximilian had fought in the Prussian army against Napoleon, had been a prisoner of war, had fought again, had been promoted major-general and decorated with the Iron Cross, had ridden at the head of his division when the Allies entered Paris. This distinguished military career had been forced upon him against his will by Napoleon's world war. For the Prince wanted a

career in science and, after his patriotic obligations were discharged, embarked on one.

DeVoto also refers to "the former major general" in embellishing a most unlikely anecdote about an accident at Fort McKenzie in which an overloaded gun "kicked him back against the rear wall, whence he caromed off to roll on the floor." In the source of the overloaded-gun anecdote, Maximilian is introduced as "an interesting character . . . from Coblenz on the Rhine," with two companions named "Boadman and Tritripel." The scene of action is the upper bastion of Fort McKenzie. When it seemed that a horde of Assiniboin warriors were attacking the fort, "Maximilian seized his gun and manned one of the portholes . . ." He aimed at a supposed attacker, "pulled the trigger, and proceeded to revolve with great rapidity across the bastion till he came in severe contact with the opposite wall and fell stunned to the floor."¹⁶ Maximilian had been an expert with firearms since early childhood and had survived six years of military combat; furthermore, the high palisade from which he fired a single shot at the skirmishing Indians had neither a rear wall from which to carom nor a floor on which to roll.

There is not even a hint in the German sources that the prince had a "gift of invective." As a German dialectologist, I cannot imagine why a Rhinelander would attempt to imitate "an unleavened Prussian accent" (whatever that is supposed to mean). We do not know how or when the prince lost his teeth. He was not forced into a military career, nor could he have entered Paris "at the head of his division." He "embarked" on two expeditions to the Americas, but his dedication to the study of natural history, as we shall see, began in early childhood.

Recently Prince Maximilian was credited with having "traversed the expanses of the Southwest, the Rocky Mountains, the Great Plains, and the Mississippi."¹⁷ The prince did, of course, travel on the Mississippi, but never south of its juncture with the Ohio. His explo-

ration of the Great Plains was perforce limited to the Missouri River and to a few trading posts and native villages in its immediate vicinity. It is true that one of Maximilian's major goals was to do field work in the Rocky Mountains but, like Moses, he had to resign himself to a distant view of the desired land. He had long planned a scientific expedition to the Southwest, but his contact with that remote region was even more tenuous: it consisted of a few artifacts that reached him via the trade route during his brief stay in Montana in 1833. In each case Maximilian's research plans were thwarted primarily by the hostility of Indian nations, whose extirpation by "the foreign usurpers" he deplored repeatedly in his *Tagebuch*.

In the following I shall not try to rectify all the many misrepresentations of Maximilian that have come to my attention (often in the form of questions or assertions from students, colleagues, or other interested persons), but simply to nullify most of them silently by presenting a brief, factual vita with emphasis on his major contributions to our knowledge of important native cultures of Brazil and especially of North America.

Alexander Philipp Maximilian was born on 23 September 1782 in the castle of Monrepos in Neuwied in the Rhenish countship of Wied about ten miles north of Coblenz. His parents were Friedrich Karl, Count of Wied-Neuwied, and Luise Wilhelmine, Countess of Sayn-Wittgenstein-Berleburg. Maximilian's godfather was Archbishop Maximilian Franz. The youngest son of Empress Maria Theresia (and thus a brother of Marie Antoinette), Maximilian Franz became Elector (*Kurfürst*) of Cologne in 1784, the year in which the house of Wied was elevated from a countship (*Grafschaft*) to a principality (*Fürstentum*), whereby counts and countesses became princes and princesses.

Maximilian's grandfather, Count (later Prince) Friedrich Alexander, had established the city of Neuwied as a place of refuge for European victims of political and religious persecution.¹⁸ Among the religious refugees in Neuwied were Mennonites and Moravian

Brethren, both of which denominations had branches in the United States, especially in Pennsylvania. Thus the young prince had the opportunity of growing up among people of diverse nationalities, languages, and religious beliefs.

Maximilian's love of nature, which is revealed throughout his journals and correspondence, was nurtured by his mother, a woman of exceptional intelligence and education. An avid hunter since childhood, the prince became intimately acquainted with local flora and fauna on his frequent hunting excursions in the Wied preserves in and near the Westerwald.¹⁹ His ingrained sense of history—his paternal ancestors were prominent in government affairs in Cologne in the thirteenth century—was sharpened through his observation of the excavation of two nearby Roman ruins undertaken by his tutor, Captain Hoffmann, at the instigation of Princess Luise Wilhelmine.

The cultural sophistication acquired in his early years contributed to Maximilian's singular ability to regard and treat Indians as fellow human beings and not merely as representatives of ethnic groups or objects of ethnological study. Consequently he was able to gain the confidence and friendship of a considerable number of them.

Although the city of Neuwied was intended as a secure retreat for the oppressed, it was repeatedly ravaged by French soldiers during the hostilities engendered by the French Revolution. Nor did the house of Wied itself remain immune to this aggression. In 1796 Princess Luise Wilhelmine fled with the younger children to Meiningen in Saxony, where they remained for several years. Maximilian's eldest brother, Prince Christian, lost his life in Bavaria in 1800 while fighting against Napoleon as a captain in the Austrian army. A younger brother, Prince Viktor, likewise a captain, was killed in 1812 while fighting with the Duke of Wellington in the peninsular campaign. After declining proffered commissions in the Hessian and Austrian armed forces, Maximilian accepted an invitation, made per-

sonally by King Friedrich Wilhelm III, to enter the Prussian army at the rank of lieutenant. Following two years of training in the royal guard, he was assigned to the army as a captain in 1802. He took part in the disastrous battle of Jena, 14 October 1806, and was captured by the French on 28 October at Prenzlau. Released in an exchange of prisoners, the prince retired to his scientific pursuits. With the outbreak of the Wars of Liberation in 1813 Maximilian returned to active military service as a major in the Third Brandenburg Hussar Regiment, from which he later transferred to the cavalry. During this time he participated in twelve battles. For distinction in the battles of La Chaussée and Château Thierry the prince was awarded the Order of the Iron Cross. On 31 March 1814 he entered Paris with the victorious allies. That three brothers should perform military service for three different countries is not surprising when we recall that German principalities like Wied enjoyed imperial immediacy (*Reichsunmittelbarkeit*) and that members of ruling families of such sovereignties might choose in which territorial army they wished to serve.

In 1804 Maximilian met Alexander von Humboldt, who had just returned to Europe following his five-year exploration of South and Central America. This meeting with Alexander von Humboldt was one of the most crucial experiences in the life of the young prince, "and there is not the slightest doubt that his paramount interest in the American continent derived from the influence of the older and famous scholar, who from that time was to remain his model, friend, and mentor."²⁰

If Alexander von Humboldt was Maximilian's "model, friend, and mentor," the University of Göttingen was his alma mater in the truest sense of the word. Founded in 1737 by Georg II August, King of England and Elector of Hannover, the Georgia Augusta soon became celebrated as "the bulwark of the enlightenment."²¹ Among its distinguished scholars was the brilliant but eccentric polyhistor Christian Wilhelm Büttner, who may

be regarded as one of the pioneers of anthropology.

One of Büttner's most receptive students was Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, who was so inspired by his teacher's anthropological approach to natural history that he wrote his famous doctoral thesis on the topic *De generis humani varietate nativa* (On the Natural Variety of Humankind). The question of varieties of the human race was widely deliberated during the time of the enlightenment, and Maximilian touched upon it repeatedly in his discussions of Indians. In further pursuit of this topic Blumenbach assembled a large collection of human skulls, which he liked to call his "Golgotha" and to which his students, including Maximilian, contributed. To judge from a casual reference in a letter from Goethe to Schiller (15 October 1796), he even carried skulls with him when he traveled: "Blumenbach also came to see me today; he had a very interesting mummy's head with him."²²

Prince Maximilian studied at the Georgia Augusta somewhat later than Alexander von Humboldt. On 16 April 1811 he entered his name in the matriculation register for members of the nobility: *Max. Princeps de Wied-Neuwied*.²³ In contrast to his peers, for whom the Georgia Augusta signified an ideal academic preparation for future responsibilities as rulers and statesmen, Maximilian devoted himself to the natural sciences. He also made good use of the university library, which, thanks largely to professors Büttner and Blumenbach, had ample holdings of travel descriptions. At this time Göttingen also attracted many American students, including Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and William Backhouse Astor, second eldest son of John Jacob Astor.²⁴ Born in Walldorf near Heidelberg in 1763, John Jacob Astor made himself the richest man in the United States, partly through skillful real-estate speculation in Manhattan and partly through his monopoly of the lucrative fur trade in the American West, with which Prince Maximilian was to become intimately familiar. Maximilian tells us little about William Backhouse Astor other

than that they both studied at Göttingen in 1811 and 1812.²⁵ To what extent the Astors helped the prince carry out his exploration on the Missouri is a question about which there has been considerable speculation.

Upon the conclusion of the Peace of Paris (1815), Maximilian completed preparations for his scientific expedition to Brazil. During this time he was in constant correspondence with Blumenbach. His preparations were made with typical thoroughness. He studied various travel accounts of Brazil, some of which he owned and some of which he borrowed from the library at Göttingen. The prince invited the French-born Adelbert von Chamisso to accompany him as a scientific consultant. Unfortunately this proved to be financially inexpedient even though Maximilian's undertaking was supported by the Portuguese government.²⁶ To American students of German literature Chamisso is best known as a creative writer, whose works include *Peter Schlemihl*, the seminal story of the man who sold his shadow; the poem "Frauenliebe und Frauenleben," which was set to music by Robert Schumann; and the subdued but bitterly ironic poem castigating the progressive dispossession and dispersion of the Creek nation that begins with the ominous line: "The Council of the Creek Indians received the emissary of President Jackson."²⁷

Among the travel descriptions used by Blumenbach in his lectures in Göttingen were notes about Indians made in 1642 by a German named Schmalkalden, who had traveled in Brazil. Blumenbach's discussion of Brazil no doubt whetted the prince's desire to visit that country. It seems likely that von Humboldt also encouraged Maximilian's Brazilian undertaking since he himself had not been permitted to explore that country during his five-year expedition to Latin America.²⁸ When Maximilian arrived at Rio de Janeiro on 16 July 1815, he was welcomed by the Portuguese minister, Count da Barca, and the Russian consul, Georg Heinrich von Langsdorff, who had taken his degree in medicine with Blumenbach in Göttingen. In Rio de Janeiro the

prince was joined by two German scientists who, like Langsdorff, were well acquainted with the country: the ornithologist Georg Wilhelm Freyreiss and the botanist Friedrich Sellow, who was especially helpful in classifying the many plants they collected as well as in making pictorial documents of the physical world described by Maximilian.

Prince Maximilian and his companions proceeded across the bay to Bahia and from there into the rain forests of eastern Brazil. Here, between the 23rd and the 48th degrees of latitude, they devoted themselves to two years of grueling exploration and demanding scientific observation. Maximilian chose this region because the land and the aborigines there had not yet been "assailed" by European civilization. Accompanied by the two German scientists, an interpreter, and about ten beaters and bearers, the prince and his two companions plunged into the primeval forest with twenty mules laden with crates of provisions. When empty, the crates were used to transport natural history objects to the coast for shipment back to Wied.

Maximilian used a method that has been characterized as "encyclopedistic." Modern specialization was still unknown, and the prince, unlike von Humboldt, had little concern with developing scientific theory. He precisely described and, with the help of specialists, classified everything that struck him as noteworthy. Perhaps it might be better to say that his interests were encyclopedic and that his method was descriptive and comparative. In minute detail the prince daily recorded all his impressions and experiences in small field journals or notebooks. Later, as already mentioned, he revised and transferred those notes into a *Tagebuch* or chronological account. This process of revising and recasting raw data into a more coherent and comprehensive form has been thoroughly analyzed by Josephine Huppertz.²⁹

A brief, preliminary report on the expedition to Brazil was published in the journal *Isis* in 1817. The editor of that journal, Lorenz Oken, was so overwhelmed by the prince's

accomplishments that he could not refrain from expressing his amazed admiration in a brief addendum to the report:

We feel obligated to add what his highness, Prince Max, did not wish to impart here: — Without ceasing, ten persons collected plants and insects, shot birds, mammals, and amphibians. Some were dried, pinned up, or pickled; others were skinned, stuffed, mounted, or preserved in alcohol. As a result the prince, who had to supervise everything, make all decisions, and record the habitat, manner of life, and sounds of the animals, determine their natural color, sex, and scientific classification, etc., scarcely had time to catch his breath. When one considers that it rains almost constantly in Brazil, and that one therefore, before retiring for the night, must build a shelter and dry one's belongings by a fire, then one simply cannot comprehend how all these many objects and activities could be compressed into a period of two years. Furthermore, no one escaped illness. For months they were hampered by fevers, but nevertheless had to work as hard as possible. All this could be accomplished only through the firm will of the prince, through his insight into the value of natural history, and through the great sacrifice from which he consequently did not shrink.³⁰

As Bernhard Gondorf has emphasized, this glowing but factual epitome of Maximilian's remarkable accomplishments in Brazil is equally valid for his achievements on the Missouri River.

Although Maximilian was primarily a zoologist and even today is regarded as a major pioneer in the study of Brazilian animal life, he gradually became more and more interested in the cultures of the various native peoples about him, especially those, as noted above, that had been exposed relatively little to European civilization. Consequently the most significant scientific contribution resulting from Maximilian's two-year exploration

of eastern Brazil is his monograph on the language and customs of the Botocudo tribe. This treatise, which constitutes the first chapter of the second volume of his *Reise nach Brasilien*, bears the modest title "Einige Worte über die Botocuden" (A Few Words about the Botocudos). It provides an accurate description of the material culture of the Botocudos in addition to important observations on religious beliefs, superstitions, legends, etc.

Especially important are Maximilian's precise recordings of language specimens of the Botocudos and, to a lesser extent, of several additional tribes. Although not a trained linguist, Maximilian had a thorough knowledge of Latin, the international language of scholarship, and of French, which he spoke almost as fluently as German. Furthermore, German orthography is virtually phonetic, and its phonology is similar to that of many Indian languages. Thus by supplementing the sound system of his native language with a few borrowings from French (primarily nasals and voiced continuants), Maximilian was able to record Brazilian Indian languages so accurately that his observations have remained the unique basis for their classification even though unwritten languages are subject to significant phonetic and semantic change within a surprisingly short period of time.

Upon returning to Neuwied Maximilian devoted himself to the publication of his Brazilian experiences and scientific observations. The first of his major publications was his two-volume *Reise nach Brasilien in den Jahren 1815 bis 1817*, which appeared in Frankfurt am Main in 1820-21. The text was accompanied by a volume of illustrations, most of them made by the prince. Since Maximilian was not a trained artist, it is scarcely surprising that his sketches and watercolors did not fully meet the approval of his sister Luise and his brother Karl, both of whom had studied at the Academy of Art in Dresden. Their technical and aesthetic improvements made Maximilian's sketches and drawings more pleasing but simultaneously impaired their value as documentary art, as Renate Löschner has demonstrated.³¹

There has been much speculation about the exact time at which Maximilian made his decision to extend his scientific investigations to North America. A brief note discovered by Josefine Huppertz among the prince's Brazilian papers gives us a welcome clue: "It would be very interesting for me to see the North American Indian tribes for the purpose of comparing them with those of Brazil, and I intend therefore perhaps some day to undertake a journey there."³² And that, as we know, is what Maximilian did as soon as he had published his voluminous Brazilian studies. Since the stated purpose of the prince's North American expedition was to undertake a comparative study of Indian cultures, some knowledge of his work in Brazil is obviously necessary for an appreciation of his parallel accomplishments on the Great Plains.

With Karl Bodmer and Maximilian's brother's hunter-taxidermist David Dreidoppel, who had accompanied him to Brazil, the prince embarked for Boston on 17 May 1832 on the tiny American brig *Janus*.³³ They reached their destination on Independence Day after being alternately becalmed or battered by storms so fierce that they could scarcely venture on deck for nine days. Unfortunately Maximilian omitted this voyage from the *Reise* for fear of boring his readers since crossings of the Atlantic had become so commonplace! Actually it reveals much about the prince's personality including his deep love of nature even in her less friendly moods. After five days of storms we read under the date of 1 June:

Toward evening violent rain and storm again. The sea rolling toward us like high mountains, we plunge from crest to trough. With only the two small storm sails the ship groans and labors mightily. We seem to be sailing in a deep valley and cannot see as far as eighty paces. The waves break violently against the ship. . . . The entire surface of the frightfully seething ocean was lashed and torn into foam and spray. The sight is dreadful but terribly beautiful! I had never seen anything like this; not even on

the entire Brazilian voyage did we have a taste of this. . . . We do not lie in bed; for several nights have not slept; cannot stand on our feet in the foul-smelling, crowded cabin. Five persons are housed here. We feel miserable and sick in this dismal captivity. (Vol. 1, p. 7.)

The “terribly beautiful” storm eventually blew itself out so that Maximilian could again describe and identify sea birds, determine the ship’s longitude and latitude with a sextant, record the English names of the ship’s sails (as pronounced by the crew), etc.

Linguistically this chapter of the *Tagebuch* is especially interesting since it marks the beginning of the anglicization of Maximilian’s German: possibly for the purpose of expanding his English vocabulary, he frequently replaced German nautical terms with corresponding English words and phrases. Such common German words as *Brise*, *Bö*, and *Dünung*, for example, are always represented by their English equivalents “breeze,” “squall,” and “swell.”³⁴ This is one characteristic of Maximilian’s style that can scarcely be preserved in English translation.

After brief visits to New York City and Philadelphia, Maximilian and his two companions set out across Pennsylvania. Since their baggage had not arrived, they proceeded slowly, and thus the prince and his painter had time to describe the forests, farms, and rivers of that beautiful state. Maximilian paid visits to the Moravian Brethren at Bethlehem, but, for reasons unknown, not to the Mennonites in Lancaster. He meticulously recorded the change of flora and fauna from east to west and noted pertinent facts about the use and misuse of the land. He was deeply concerned at the reckless destruction of the forests and frequently deplored the *Zerstörungswut* of the settlers. This word is translated by Lloyd as “love of destruction,” but literally means “destructive rage.” The prince’s deepest disappointment was the absence of Indians: “I was filled with melancholy by the reflection that, in the whole of the extensive state of Pennsyl-

vania, there is not a trace remaining of the aboriginal population. O! land of liberty!”³⁵

Maximilian had planned to stop briefly at New Harmony in Indiana; but because of a serious indisposition, nearly resembling cholera, he remained there for five months. Originally settled by Swabian pietists, New Harmony was now the residence of the naturalist Thomas Say and the French botanist Charles-Alexandre Lesueur. Since Say had an excellent, up-to-date collection of books on natural history, New Harmony was an ideal place for the prince to complete his preparations for his work among the North American Indians. Here, as in Pennsylvania, Maximilian made careful and copious observations on wild and domestic plants and animals, methods of agriculture, the use of the forests, and the manners and customs of the people. During the prince’s stay in New Harmony, Bodmer made a trip down the Mississippi to New Orleans, an illustrated report of which was incorporated into the Diary.

With the help of General William Clark, Maximilian made arrangements in Saint Louis to travel up the Missouri with steamships belonging to the American Fur Company, which, as we know, was owned by John Jacob Astor. Departing from Saint Louis on 10 April, Maximilian with his two companions reached Fort McKenzie near the juncture of the Marias River in Montana on 9 August after a difficult, dangerous voyage. Here they witnessed the bloody attack upon a small encampment of Blackfeet outside the fort by a band of Assiniboin and Cree described above. Maximilian attempted to rescue the scalped head of one of the slain attackers for Professor Blumenbach’s “Golgotha”; but before he could do so, it was hacked to bits by some of the Blackfeet women. After five weeks of collecting natural history specimens and recording local Indian lore, Maximilian wished to extend his fieldwork to the Rocky Mountains, but this proved to be impossible, primarily because of the hostility of the three Blackfeet tribes. A chieftain of the Piegan tribe assured Maximilian that his people would plunder but

probably not kill him and his associates; the Blood and Siksika, however, were "crazy" and not to be trusted.

Maximilian thereupon returned in a cramped, leaking mackinaw boat to Fort Clark, near present-day Bismarck, North Dakota, where he devoted five months to studying the cultures of the Arikara, Hidatsa and, above all, the Mandan Indians. His treatise on this nation was completed during five months of brutal suffering from near starvation, an almost fatal case of scurvy, and temperatures so low that Bodmer's paints froze while he was executing some of his superb Indian portraits.

Whereas the Botocudos were a large tribe of primitive, mostly hostile people, the Mandans had been existing on good terms with European traders for over a century when Maximilian came to live among them. Once a rather large nation, they had been greatly reduced in number through smallpox and the repeated depredations of the Sioux. Thanks to the friendly cooperation of several highly intelligent, well-informed members of this nation, and the skillful translation by the German Canadian James Kipp, Maximilian was able to produce a record of their traditions, religious beliefs, and customs that remains one of the most complete and accurate of its kind. The best known of the prince's Mandan informants was Mató-Tópe (Four Bears), who was immortalized by Bodmer in two "faithful" portraits. A function similar to that of Mató-Tópe was performed for the Hidatsas by the eminent chieftain Péhriska-Rúhpa (Two Ravens), of whom Bodmer also made two excellent portraits. Reproductions of these four watercolors are found in *Karl Bodmer's America* and in *People of the First Man*, the latter of which also contains a summary of Maximilian's study of the Mandans.³⁶

One of the most significant portions of Maximilian's treatise on the Mandans is his perceptive discussion of the medicine festival called the *Okippe* (*Okipa*) or penitential ceremony of the ark. This gruelling four-day endurance test was also vividly described by the well-known painter Catlin, who actually wit-

nessed it. Even though Maximilian never saw the *Okippe* performed, his treatment of it is more informative for ethnologists than Catlin's since it is based on detailed reports made to him by Mandan men who had not only undergone it personally but also understood and explained the religious significance of every detail of this highly complex ceremony.

After a quick journey eastward via the Erie Canal and Niagara Falls, Maximilian returned home to Wied with more than four hundred paintings made by Bodmer, two live grizzly bear cubs, field notes and journals that yielded a *Tagebuch* of 500,000 words, but only a part of the treasure of flora and fauna that had been assembled with great zeal, effort, and expertise on the Missouri. Many of these specimens were lost when the steamship *Assiniboine*, on which they were being transported, was destroyed by fire.

When Maximilian returned home from Brazil, Coenrad Heinrich Temminck, Director of the Rijksmuseum in Leiden, came to Neuwied to view his collection of flora and fauna. And following the prince's return from North America, Charles Lucien Bonaparte, nephew of Napoleon I, came from Paris to Neuwied in search of material for the second volume of his *Conspectus generum avium*, which was published in Leiden in 1851-57.³⁷

In due course Maximilian published his two-volume *Reise*, accompanied by a volume or atlas of eighty-one engravings, the production of which was supervised by Bodmer in Paris. The North American *Reise*, the historical significance of which Mildred Goosman rightly praised, was somewhat less than a financial success. Only 277 copies were produced. In this respect, too, Maximilian was a faithful disciple of his "model, friend, and mentor," for the publication of the famous multi-volume, Latin American *oeuvre* consumed Alexander von Humboldt's maternal inheritance. Although the prince did not fare quite so badly, his modest appanage was severely restricted following his expedition to North America, where he had found it necessary to borrow money to meet expenses.³⁸

Maximilian continued to pursue his scientific work, especially in the field of zoology, as long as he lived. He planned an expedition to the Baltic to make a study of the European moose (German *Elch* [*Alces alces*]), but abandoned this plan when Bodmer was unable to accompany him as illustrator. In 1863 he presented an invitational paper on the aboriginal peoples of North America before an international meeting of scientists in Neuwied. At the age of eighty Prince Maximilian undertook the study of ichthyology in order to facilitate the classification of his ever-increasing accumulation of fishes. Although Maximilian's zoological specimens came from many parts of the world, a significant number were collected by the prince himself, especially on his scientific expeditions to Brazil and North America.

Of the many honors bestowed upon "Prince Max," as he was affectionately known, it will suffice to mention four. He was elected to honorary membership in the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia (1834) and in the Bavarian Academy of Sciences (1853).³⁹ In 1840 he was awarded the title of major general in the royal Prussian army by King Friedrich Wilhelm IV in recognition of his scientific achievements, and in 1858 he was granted an honorary doctoral degree by the University of Jena.

Shortly after the death of Maximilian on 3 February 1867, his extensive zoological materials were purchased by the American Museum of Natural History and brought to New York, where they became a "valuable addition" to the museum holdings. The fruit of over six decades of buying, trading, and personal fieldwork, these collections include "over 400 mounted mammals, about 1600 mounted birds, and about 500 fishes."⁴⁰ The Linden Museum in Stuttgart and the Museum für Völkerkunde in Berlin also house collections of natural history specimens assembled by Prince Maximilian. Two precious treasures, the gift of the Enron Art Foundation, are housed in the Joslyn Art Museum in Omaha, Nebraska. The first is Maximilian's Diary, and

the second is an almost complete collection of Bodmer's Indian artworks, which the eminent art historian John C. Ewers has characterized as "uniquely significant for their nearly ideal documentation as well as their artistic qualities."⁴¹

The qualities of Bodmer's ethnographic pictures stressed by Ewers must have been uppermost in Maximilian's mind when he intimated to a friend that the Swiss artist's sketches and paintings were "probably the most interesting part of the prize (*Ausbeute*)" brought back from North America.⁴² This opinion seems to be borne out by the continued popularity of Bodmer's works ever since they were first made public after World War II, a popularity based on an aesthetic appreciation of the artistic skill with which human beings, landscapes, and natural history objects are realistically portrayed as a whole and in detail.⁴³ But since Bodmer was by contract the prince's illustrator, we must often turn to Maximilian's text for the full significance of a given sketch or watercolor. Two examples may serve for many.

Bodmer's watercolor portrait of the warrior Mató-Tópe, one of Maximilian's most reliable sources of information about Mandan customs and traditions, is technically superb. But what do all the perfectly drawn details signify? The answer is not difficult to find, for we have here an example of documentary art at its best, in which the pictorial description perfectly reflects both its model and its source, i.e., Maximilian's verbal description of Mató-Tópe. This watercolor might well be designated as a biographical portrait. The picture itself does not tell us the story of its subject, but it focuses and vivifies that story as told by Maximilian; and the warrior's biography, in turn, exemplifies important aspects of Mandan culture.

On 15 January 1834 Mató-Tópe stopped to visit Maximilian briefly while on his way to participate in a ceremony in the Mandan village of Ruhptare.

Mató-Tópe was handsomely attired. He had marked all his wounds in his hair with small sticks, of which four were yellow, one blue,



FIG. 2. Mató-Tópe, Mandan Chief. *Painting by Karl Bodmer*. Reproduction courtesy of Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska. Gift of the Enron Art Foundation.



FIG. 3. *Drawing by Mató-Tópe, Mandan Chief.* Reproduction courtesy of Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska. Gift of the Enron Art Foundation.

and one red. On the right side of his head he wore a wooden knife painted red; this signified that he had killed a Cheyenne chief with a knife. Each wooden stick was topped with the head of a yellow nail driven into it. At the back of his head he wore a large tuft of owl feathers as a sign of the dog band [of the Mandan nation]. Eagle feathers projected like rays from his hair. . . . On his chest a yellow hand showed that he had taken prisoners. (Vol. 3, p. 138.)

Several days later Mató-Tópe again appeared in full martial attire, and Bodmer executed his

portrait. From further notes made by Maximilian on other occasions we also know that the six sticks denoted bullet wounds, the split turkey feather in his headdress signified an arrow wound (or wounds), and the knife with which he killed the Cheyenne chief was wrested from his attacking enemy. Mató-Tópe was so proud of this achievement that he recorded it in the form of a painting. As a reward for these heroic deeds, Mató-Tópe was made the second highest chieftain of his people.

The second example is, perhaps, more complex than the first in that it invites speculation on the part of the viewer. The prospect



FIG. 4. Mih-Tutta-Hang-Kusch, Mandan Village. *Painting by Karl Bodmer.* Reproduction courtesy of Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska. Gift of the Enron Art Foundation.

of Fort Clark and the Mandan village *Mih-Tutta-Hang-Kusch* on the bluffs of the frozen Missouri is, to me, the most haunting contribution Bodmer made to Maximilian's record of his North American expedition. The immediate and lasting impression of this gray and brown watercolor is one of utter hopelessness. In the foreground we see several human figures huddled against the cold in their buffalo robes as well as a fatigued horse and a cringing, half-starved dog. As we know from Maximilian's account, the figures on the ice represent Mandans with bits of firewood going back and forth between their summer village on the bluffs and their winter lodges in timbered bottom land, which provided some protection from the bitter winds. Did Bodmer

intend this bleak, forbidding prospect as an embodiment of Maximilian's frequently voiced dismay at the extirpation of the Indians by the Euro-Americans? Or does the modern viewer, aware of the tragic end of the Mandan nation, subjectively project this foreboding into the drab winter landscape?

The ethnic cleansing of the Great Plains was much more swift and drastic than Maximilian could have feared in his most pessimistic moments. Three years after he and his companions had returned to Europe, smallpox erupted among the Mandans and swept away all but a handful of them. Mató-Tópe, faithful friend and indispensable helpmeet of the German ethnologist and his Swiss illustrator, was not among the survivors.

NOTES

Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from German are by the author.

1. Mildred Goosman, in *People of the First Man: Life Among the Plains Indians in Their Final Days of Glory*, ed. Davis Thomas and Karin Ronnefeldt (New York: Promontory Press, 1982), p. 10.

2. Hermann Josef Roth, "Prinz Maximilian zu Wied (1782-1867): Ein rheinischer Naturforscher und Amerikareisender des 19. Jahrhunderts," *Rheinische Heimatpflege* 29 (1992): 186; see also p. 182.

3. See A. E. Zucker, *Amerika und Deutschland: Parallel Lives of Great Americans and Germans* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1953), p. 80.

4. See Karl Viktor Prinz zu Wied, "Maximilian Prinz zu Wied: Sein Leben und seine Reisen," in *Maximilian Prinz zu Wied. Unveröffentlichte Bilder und Handschriften zur Völkerkunde Brasiliens*, ed. Josef Röder and Hermann Trimborn (Bonn-Hannover-Stuttgart: F. Dümmler, 1954), p. 17.

5. Gary E. Moulton, *American Encounters: Lewis and Clark, the People and the Land* (Lincoln, Nebraska: Center for Great Plains Studies, 1991), p. 25. On these two explorers see James P. Ronda, *Lewis and Clark among the Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984.)

6. See Bernhard Gondorf, "Die Expedition von Maximilian Prinz zu Wied und Karl Bodmer in das innere Nordamerika," in *Prärie- und Plainsindianer: Die Reise in das Nord-America von Maximilian zu Wied und Karl Bodmer* (Mainz: Verlag Hermann Schmidt, 1993), p. 42.

7. Maximilian, Prince of Wied, *Reise nach Brasilien in den Jahren 1815 bis 1817* (Frankfurt am Main: Brönner, 1820-21.); *Travels in Brazil, in 1815, 1816, and 1817*, translated from the German, and illustrated with engravings (London: Printed for Henry Colburn and Co., 1820).

8. Maximilian, Prince of Wied, *Travels in the Interior of North America*, trans. H. Evans Lloyd (London: Ackermann and Co., 1843); rpt. Reuben G. Thwaites in *Early Western Travels* (Cleveland: A. H. Clark Co., 1904-05), vols. 22-24.

9. On John Jacob Astor see James P. Ronda, *Astoria and Empire* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990). On Washington Irving see especially pp. 338-41.

10. Goosman, *People of the First Man* (note 1 above), p. 12.

11. "A Journey Through the Nebraska Region in 1833 and 1834: From the Diaries of Prince Maximilian of Wied," trans. William J. Orr, ed. William J. Orr and Joseph C. Porter, *Nebraska History* 64 (1983): 325-453.

12. Vernon Bailey, "Maximilian's Travels in the Interior of North America," *Natural History* 23 (1923): 337.

13. Philip Drennon Thomas, "Wied, Maximilian zu," in *Dictionary of Scientific Biography* 14 (New York: Scribners, 1970-80): 328-29.

14. Herbert Baldus, "Maximilian Prinz zu Wied in seiner Bedeutung für die Indianerforschung in Brasilien," in *Proceedings of the Thirty-Second International Congress of Americanists*, Copenhagen 1956, (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1958), p. 103.

15. Joseph C. Porter "Maximilian, Prince Alexander Philip [sic]," in *Encyclopedia of Frontier Biography*, by Dan L. Thrapp (Glendale, California: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1988), pp. 960-61; Marshall Sprague, *A Gallery of Dudes* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1966), pp. 33-65.

16. Bernard DeVoto, *Across the Wide Missouri* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1947), pp. 17, 144. For the "overloaded gun," see "Affairs at Fort Benton, From 1831 to 1864. From Lieut. Bradley's Journal," *Contributions to the Historical Society of Montana* 3 (1900), pp. 206-8. A realistic depiction of this battle of 28 August 1833 is provided by Bodmer's aquatint, reproduced in Goosman, *People of the First Man* (note 1 above), p. 96.

17. Glen E. Lich, "Goethe on the Guadalupe," *German Culture in Texas: A Free Earth; Essays from the 1978 Southwest Symposium*, ed. Glen E. Lich and Dona B. Reeves (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980), p. 33.

18. For reliable accounts of Maximilian's life see Philipp Wirtgen, *Zum Andenken an Prinz Maximilian zu Wied, sein Leben und wissenschaftliche Thätigkeit* (Neuwied and Leipzig: Verlag der J. H. Heuser'schen Buchhandlung, 1867), and the compendious articles by Hermann Josef Roth (note 2 above), Karl Viktor Prinz zu Wied (note 4 above), and Bernhard Gondorf (note 6 above). The most succinct and accurate account of his North American journey is Marsha V. Gallagher and David C. Hunt, "Travels in the Interior of North America," in *Views of a Vanishing Frontier*, ed. John C. Ewers (Omaha and Lincoln: Joslyn Art Museum and University of Nebraska Press, 1984), pp. 21-50.

19. See Hermann Josef Roth, "Prinz Maximilian zu Wied" (note 2 above), p. 184 and "Die Westerwälder Seenplatte," in *Rheinische Landschaften*, Heft 2, 3. neubearbeitete Auflage, 1984, passim.

20. Karl Viktor Prinz zu Wied, "Maximilian, Prinz zu Wied" (note 4 above) p. 17.

21. See Hans Plischke, *Johann Friedrich Blumenbachs Einfluss auf die Entdeckungsreisenden seiner Zeit* (Göttingen: Vanderhoek und Ruprecht, 1937), p. 55.

22. *Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe*, 2, ed. Franz Muncker (Stuttgart und Berlin: Cotta, 1892), p. 12.

23. How long Maximilian studied at Göttingen is a matter of some dispute. See Gondorf, "Die

Expedition von Maximilian Prinz zu Wied" (note 6 above), p. 40 and n. 10.

24. See *The Encyclopedia Americana* 2 (1989): 553-54, and Anneliese Harding, *John Quincy Adams: Pioneer of German-American Literary Studies* (Boston: Goethe Institute Boston and Harvard University Printing Office, 1979), pp. 52-62 and passim.

25. See Maximilian's American *Tagebuch*, vol. 1, p. 35. Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska. Hereafter cited in parentheses in text.

26. See Renate Löschner, in *Brasilien-Bibliothek der Robert Bosch GmbH. Katalog Band II. Nachlass des Prinzen Maximilian zu Wied-Neuwied. Teil I: Illustrationen zur Reise 1815 bis 1817 in Brasilien*, bearbeitet von Renate Löschner und Birgit Kirschstein-Gamber, mit einer Einführung von Renate Löschner. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1988), p. 10. The flight of the royal family of Portugal to Brazil before the advancing armies of Napoleon in 1807 made it incumbent upon the Portuguese government to obtain information quickly about this enormous colony. To this end it "liberally," as Maximilian states in the introduction to his *Reise nach Brasilien*, subsidized scientists, many of them Germans, to explore, describe, and map this vast region.

27. Adelbert von Chamisso, "Rede des alten Kriegers Brunte Schlange im Rate der Creek-Indianer" (Speech of the old warrior Colored Snake in the Council of the Creek Indians). Chamisso, a noted botanist, served as the curator of the Botanical Garden of Berlin.

28. See Gondorf, "Die Expedition von Maximilian Prinz zu Wied" (note 6 above), p. 40.

29. Josephine Huppertz, "Textkritische Analyse und Vergleich zwischen schriftlichem Nachlass und Reisewerk," in *Maximilian Prinz zu Wied* (note 4 above), pp. 32-79.

30. Quoted by Wirtgen in *Zum Andenken an Prinz Maximilian zu Wied* (note 18 above), p. 5, and by Gondorf, "Die Expedition von Maximilian Prinz zu Wied" (note 6 above), p. 41.

31. See Löschner *Illustrationen zur Reise*, (note 26 above), pp. 14-15 and passim.

32. Huppertz, "Textkritische Analyse und Vergleich" (note 29 above) p. 75.

33. See Gondorf, "Die Expedition von Maximilian Prinz zu Wied" (note 6 above), p. 44, n. 36. Gondorf believed that the ship was a steamer (*Dampfer*) and that it was not named *Janus* since he found this name nowhere in his sources. It occurs repeatedly in the *Tagebuch*.

34. See Paul Schach, "The Linguistic Impact of North America on Maximilian's *Tagebuch*," *Monatshefte* 80 (1988): 50-58.

35. Maximilian, *Travels*, trans. Lloyd (note 8 above), vol. 1, p. 97.

36. *Karl Bodmer's America*, ed. David C. Hunt and Marsha V. Gallagher (Omaha and Lincoln: Joslyn Art Foundation and University of Nebraska Press, 1984), pp. 308, 309, 318-19; Thomas and Ronnefuldt, eds., *People of the First Man* (note 1 above), pp. 228-29, 222-23.

37. See Gondorf, "Die Expedition von Maximilian Prinz zu Wied" (note 6 above), pp. 42, 45.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 49 and n. 63.

40. Bailey, "Maximilian's Travels" (note 12 above), p. 339.

41. John C. Ewers "An Appreciation of Karl Bodmer's Pictures of Indians," in *Views of a Vanishing Frontier* (note 16 above), p. 90. *Karl Bodmer's America* (note 36 above), contains more than 360 reproductions of Bodmer's works in chronological order with illuminating interpretive comments by David C. Hunt and Marsha V. Gallagher based on Maximilian's Diary.

42. Prince Maximilian to Friedrich Karl von Martius, 6 January 1836; see Gondorf, "Die Expedition von Maximilian Prinz zu Wied" (note 6 above), p. 48.

43. Evidence of the continuing popularity of Bodmer's art is the fact that the eighty-one aquatints that accompanied Maximilian's *Reise in das innere Nord-America* are currently being reissued in a new edition from the original plates by Aleco Historical Editions, London, in association with the Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska, in 1990 ff.