

**Fourth Annual International Conference on Social Sciences,
June 13-16, 2005, Honolulu, Hawaii**

**German V. Dziebel
(Stanford University)**

**Spearheading American Indian Cultures:
Cultural Appropriation and Military Encounters in Europe and the Middle East**

The pow-wow of 1999 near St. Petersburg looked like no other Indianist rally. It was full of special forces soldiers – young brawny fellows marching in heavy military boots down forest trails scaring off small birds and local dwellers. They were staying in Mato Najin’s big tipi, all ten of them sleeping next to each other in a manner reminiscent of soldier barracks. Some Indianists could not help but laughing when they watched them crawling out of the tipi in a strict “Indian file” and taking a regular morning run to the neighboring Wolf Creek. Others were intimidated by the presence of an alien force that could put in question their imaginary claims on Indian military prowess. “Being an Indian warrior”, argued Kekstas from Lithuania months later, “is not about brandishing one’s muscles or killing people – it is a spiritual path, it’s a different meaning of warfare.” Finally, “traditionalists” such as Wandering Spirit and Kagagi, who had just returned from a twenty-year sojourn among Siberian natives, were abhorred by the sight of Russian military outfits, the sounds of rabid soldier jokes and the smell of vodka and medical alcohol coming from a small dining area next to Mato Najin’s tipi. For us, insisted Wandering Spirit, Pow-Wow is not a picnic, not a soldier’s camp, not a saloon but a “temple.” After all, “Indians don’t drink.”

The soldiers’ military caps were adorned with eagle feathers and some of them were craving to learn more about Indians. Mato Najin (Lakota ‘Standing Bear’) was their chief interlocutor who eagerly introduced them to the art of building a tipi, making

moccasins and respecting the holy altar and the forest world but was more enthusiastic about telling fables about his own military service experiences in the late 1970s mixed with stories about living and laboring in the Altai Indianist commune in the mid-1980s. The young soldiers had just retired from the ongoing Chechen campaign; they still remembered the smell of fire and were still troubled by horrendous nightmares. For Mato Najin, they represented a piece of harsh reality that suddenly interfered with the rhythmical course of Indianist life and prompted his mind and memory to make stronger bridges between the world of social action and the world of solitary aesthetics. Soon thereafter he started using his old Marines cap as part of his Indian dancing attire mimicking both present-day Native American veterans and the young Russian soldiers who he hosted during one of the pow-wows. I told him once that, at a Native American pow-wow, older and respectable members of a community tend to dance separately from the rest often moving in the opposite direction from the general flow of dancers that encompasses both natives and non-natives.

Those two worlds were akin to the wheels of power rotating in opposite directions. Within the world of solitary aesthetics, the patterns of thought, action and living commonly known as “civilization” or the “white world” and immediately present in the Russian-Soviet environment were devalued as rootless and inauthentic, while the bygone and distant “Indianness” was held to be a depository of true moral virtues and realistic descriptions of being. Imagination was accorded the status of a supreme reality. The world of social action has always been pressing on Mato Najin from the outside posing ineluctable problems in the form of income, family, Russian politics, war and personal education and questioning the solidity of his romantic philosophy. From the ongoing flow

of life, the second wheel of power was bringing new experiences that could not be easily accommodated in his pretentious but largely subjective “Indian story.” Once, when our overnight conversations led me finally to develop an idea that the image of the Indian as we know Him is a balloon of imagination hopelessly torn away from the ground, Mato Najin lit up his cigarette off the tipi fire, paused for a few seconds and responded with the unheeded dignity of a defeated Indian chief: “Well, then, you’re destroying the vision that I’ve lived by for more than thirty years.” I spoke to a major riddle of Mato Najin’s life with which he coped by constructing an outer world of an Indian warrior, dancer and visionary and an inner world of a harsh, stoic, often rude mixture of an American cowboy and a Russian bugbear. The arrival of the Russian “Chechens”¹ into his pow-wow tipi put Mato Najin’s two wheels of power into smoother cooperation. A rumor that he performed “restorative” and “healing” ceremonies for the soldiers is as enduring as the Durkheimian “social fact”, as diffused as the Schneiderian “kinship solidarity” and as unverifiable as the success of his career as an “Indian.”

The “Chechens” came to the 1999 Pow-Wow with their commander known among Indianists as Wolf Wind and among Russian special troops as Shaman. When I met him in 1999, Wolf Wind was sitting in a dignified cross-legged position on a blanket surrounded by his slouching troopers, a couple of Indianists and several “white” women.² The women were gasping to hear a new story about Wolf Wind’s heroic exploits in Chechnya and ready to soothe his frequent lamentations over his loss of “human feelings” in the bloodbath of war. Stripped to the waist to meet the rays of a July sun, with a wolf claw on his bare chest, a red bandana on his cleanly shaved head and an exhibit of tattoos on his arms, he was a perfect version of a ferocious old-time pirate or

one of the Mongol nomads that tormented the southern Russia in the 12th-15th centuries and finally made it to the very north by the end of the second millenium.

Wolf Wind's deeply-seated eyes were not just looking at a stranger's face, they were seizing his whole body in a quick martial maneuver, plucking him out of his spatial zone to hoist him in a discourse that would weld together *lie* and *truth* in the web of a superior knowledge of *life* and *death*. Imagination, pretense, lie, distortion, stereotypization, masking, posture, concealment, denial, vanity formed a consistent and deliberate pattern of Wolf Wind's action and an ever-to-remain-undeciphered code stretching its spiderweb-like shield from the deadly moments of war into the fortuitous moments of peace. A year before our meeting, Wolf Wind became the hero of the novel *I Chose the Way of Death* by a contemporary Russian pulp fiction author Vladimir Shitov. Wolf Wind, fresh from the battlefield, accidentally befriended the writer on a train (Shitov 1999). The novel sketched the mysterious customs of Russian Indians, Wolf Wind's exploits in Chechnya, his subsequent victories as a businessman's bodyguard and his vertiginous love for a confused prostitute. Shitov's and/or Wolf Wind's creative imagination transformed the actual visit of a Native American anthropologist, Bea Medicine, to the Russian Pow-Wow of 1995 into a historical exchange between an Indian "elder" and a Russian warrior in which a 200-year-old tomahawk accompanied by "traditional Indian" instructions for a male warrior was solemnly traded for a silver vodka flask (Shitov 1999, 33-34). A Russian transculturated into an Indian survived as a truth translated into a lie in a manner of the escalating resistance of living reality to the lethal touch of representation.

A native of Krasnodar (North Caucasus), the hotbed of the Cossack revivalist movement in the 1990s, Wolf Wind surfaced in the Russian Indianist community in 1992

by participating in the pow-wow of that year through his acquaintance with another Krasnodar Indianist, Mato Sapa (Lakota 'Black Bear'). As a special forces (*spetsnaz*) officer he quickly inherited from Lone Wolf, who could only boast the career of a professional boxer, the title of the chief of the Dog Soldiers. "He is stronger, younger and swifter than me", easily acknowledged Lone Wolf harboring a secret fatherly gladness that the military power and authority always remain inside a wolf pack. Wolf happens to be a symbol of the Chechen Republic too. One of the Chechen guerilla troops that Wolf Wind fought was called "Lone Wolf." One of its members Wolf Wind killed with a knife and took his wolf badge as a trophy.

In January of 1995, Wolf Wind was dispatched to Grozny to participate in the bloody and ill-prepared initial Russian assault on the capital of the breakaway nation³. "All I had with me was a wolf skull and a pipe tomahawk. I had nowhere to leave them, so I took them with me", he recalled later. He was placed in charge of a scouting and raiding platoon numbering 27 people. "My platoon was made up of either non-Russians or those Russians who really don't look Russian, including myself." Among Russian special forces detachments, it was common to imitate Islam warriors by growing beards, shaving bald and wearing headbands with Arabic inscriptions. Military shirts and pants were identical on both sides since they were designed to make any soldier invisible in a natural environment. Wolf Wind added to this parade of local mimickry a good deal of translocal Indian imagery⁴. Early in his career in Chechnya, he started to put war paint on his cheeks and forehead, tie his Indian ornaments around his neck and retreat into the mountains, before each combat, to smoke his war pipe. Several times, his troopers had

seen him walking away with a strange red bundle in his hands until finally they dared to ask him a relevant question⁵.

I remember that night very well: a bonfire, an APC [armored personnel carrier] and *almost a church atmosphere*. All night I was speaking about the path of the warrior, about Dog Soldiers, about the magical significance of many [material] objects, about spirits. They were listening to me with hot breath. In the morning, we entered a skirmish and one of the soldiers got wounded. They asked me to *make a prayer*. I tossed out something in a rhyme, something that just occurred to me at that moment. He did not hope to survive, me neither, but it turned out that he did survive. That's how it all began.

A Christian prayer for the repose of a soul turned into an "Indian" resuscitation song. Soon the platoon became known among both Russians and Chechens as "Indians." The deferral of his actual death and the dodging of his factual Russianness through symbolic reenactment of mortality and the simulation of Indianness became the cornerstone of Wolf Wind's spirituality: "I chose the way of death", "I am dead, I faced death", "I can smell death", "The smile of death", "I ate death", "I carry the sound of death" were his free interpretations of various Plains Indian face paint designs derived from such ethnographic classics as, for example, *The Mystic Warriors of the Plains* by Thomas Mails (Mails 1972) and extensively used in his platoon.

Wolf Wind simultaneously challenged and reaffirmed the Orthodox Christian paradigm. On a mundane level permeated with innumerable possibilities and forebodings of physical death and torn apart by the Hobbesque complexity of conflicting social perspectives, Christianity had to give room to magical practices and warrior ethos. On a cosmic level, it had to retain its significance through the salvation of alien cultural elements within an all-encompassing ecclesiastical framework. The deep play of peace and war, life and death, Christian forgiveness and Indian militancy, to which Wolf

Wind's heart was deeply attuned captures the essence of many tribal social structures as described, for instance, by Anthony Wallace:

All human societies... are observed to exist alternately in two states... The former state I shall call the relaxed state; the latter, the mobilized state... These two structural poses for peace and war... are assumed by a number of North American Indian tribes. One thinks also of the elegant and rigid arrangements of camp circle and police developed by the Plains Indians when they were hunting buffalo (Wallace 1968, 173-174).

The structure of Chechen society is described by a prominent Russian anthropologist, Sergei Arutyunov, in very similar terms and through direct comparison with Native American societies:

Chechnya was and is a society of military democracy. Chechnya never had any kings, emirs, princes or barons. Unlike other Caucasian nations, there was never feudalism in Chechnya. Traditionally, it was governed by a council of elders on the basis of consensus, but like all military democracies – like the Iroquois in America or the Zulu in southern Africa – Chechens retain the institution of military chief. In peacetime, they recognize no sovereign authority and may be fragmented into a hundred rival clans. However, in time of danger, when faced with aggression, the rival clans unite and elect a military leader. The leader may be known to everyone as an unpleasant personality, but is elected nonetheless for being a good general. While the war is on, this leader is obeyed (Arutyunov 1996, 17).

Other observers highlight in the Chechen military ethos those features that seem to be identical with the qualities of Plains Indian societies displayed in Wild West shows (see Chapter II). For instance, Anatol Lieven writes,

At first sight, many younger Chechen fighters appear – and would certainly like to appear – as Homeric heroes, Achilles with a rocket-propelled grenade. It shows in their love of personal display – especially in clothes – their boasting and general swagger, their impatience with formal discipline... The Russians were especially impressed with the way that during actions Chechen horsemen would ride out and perform showy displays of horsemanship in front of the Russian lines and under Russian fire (Lieven 1998, 329-330)⁶.

As Wolf Wind explained, many draftees in the Russian army were not ethnically Russian and religiously Christian, and, while the Russian Orthodox Church, in a sweeping attempt to restore the role of religion in a post-Soviet country, used to commission ministers to perform ritual services in front of the soldier lines, they had little impact on the audience composed of either non-believers or non-Christians. Wolf Wind repeatedly asserted,

Christianity is a religion of peace, and it has no place in times of war, especially when you're fighting Moslems with their strong military spirit, with their *gazavat* and so on. Indian military spirituality is just exactly what we all needed in this war. Chechens often look down on Russians thinking they were emasculated by such things as Christianity and socialism. Chechens used to put a wolf, their national symbol, on top of an APCs, you can see it on videotapes, but they knew I was also a wolf, they knew who I was, they respected and feared me, because I had a power understandable to them.

This profound identification with the enemy brings Wolf Wind into immediate transhistorical kinship with such a prominent figure of the American West as Daniel Boone, who was captured several times by different native groups, introduced into native ways and started to out-Indianize Indians using his acquired knowledge to wipe Indians away (Namias 1993, 64). Russian Indianists believe that Indian means "freeman." After 200 years of Russian domination and regardless of the infamous deportation of 1944, Chechens continue to call each other *uzden*, which means exactly the same (Bennett 2001, XIII). To Wolf Wind, the edifice of Christianity (he meant primarily Orthodox Christianity) is too bulky and cumbersome to respond to the fortuitousness of the flow of life and the immediacy of many life experiences. How does one relate in a holy Christian manner to a night, to a bonfire, to the violent death of a comrade, or to the brevity of a soldier's life? At times of war, the whole world is pulsating with unknown and unpre-

table dangers as well as unsuspected chances for survival. War is an ontology of human existence, something that takes its course beyond human will, into which an individual is thrown at birth through a kind of primeval alienation from himself/herself. Hence every action of an individual, however violent it may appear on the outside, is a love-like transcendence of the deep immanence of war. Indianists often say that “the Indian is foremostly a warrior” thus expressing iconically (diagrammatically, in Roman Jakobson’s terms) their recognition of ontological alienation and their determination to (violently) achieve harmony through “Indian play.” Presently, Wolf Wind is working on a book devoted to the North American Indian ways and understandings of warfare as simultaneously violent in its transient effects and non-violent, spiritual and aesthetic in its perennial causes.

All soldiers engaged in military actions (*na boevyh*) are 100% superstitious. Say, you never piss on the wheels of an APC – it will cause its blowing up on a mine. It means they are superstitious anyway, and what I was trying to do is to bring order into their superstitions, to make a true spiritual system out of these gimmicks, to submit them to one single idea of being an Indian warrior and behaving accordingly in similar circumstances. War is always and everywhere the same. From a subjective position.

Wolf Wind started with a pipe rite. The night before a raid onto a Chechen fortified settlement near Grozny he brought his soldiers together on a lawn. It was a proper night for such a ceremony since the situation itself was a natural ceremony, a natural *rite of passage*, either into the other world or into a world of glory⁷. During the raid, “no one was even touched by a pebble”, recalled the captain. Wolf Wind did not want to believe nominalistically that it was the pipe ceremony itself that shielded his soldiers. Rather, he was inclined to think that the boys wholeheartedly accepted his “medicine” (*koldovstvo*)⁸ and created a special bond among themselves that ensured their vitality and immunity to

Chechen bullets. During twenty-one month of warfare, Wolf Wind's group suffered no casualties, and only one soldier was wounded.

Wolf Wind's next step was the introduction of the sweatlodge (*inipi*) ceremony. It happened half-a-year later after his platoon had been transferred to a woody area of Barmut (a Chechen bulwark 35 miles southwest of Grozny). For several months, Wolf Wind and his soldiers were hiding in an ambush rarely routing Chechen settlements and retreating away in order to wait for new commands from the main body of Russian troops. Periods of starvation alternated with cow and dog meat feasts, conjuring up Wolf Wind's "memories" of the traditional Indian days and bringing about prophetic visionary experiences of the kind Native American soldiers were having during the World War II (Townsend 2000, 142-143). Sweatlodges took place twice a week with a cow heart, if available, placed on the altar. They were used not only for prayers but also as healing zones where a wound would heal faster and where a fever would pass instantly. The platoon *went native* after having been left with no food or arms support from the central headquarters.

Only rarely fed and having had little sleep, we were darned pissed at our "motherland." We were having many fights and were ordering many awards. But these awards were accreting not to the soldiers but to the overfed division colonels who could barely take their asses off their comfie seats in order to bring firewoods in a severe winter. Then we with my deputy (*zampolit*) established our own award – a dog tooth, which was being tied to a pipe during *inipi* ceremonies. And this award, this regard, minor as it was, made a soldier feel the warmth not only of our hearts but of the hearts of many people in the USSR [the old name of the country continues to slip from people's tongues]. We may not know each other in person but we are all related (*rodnye*) at the bottom of our hearts.

The intensity of the Wolf Wind platoon immersion into the unity of local circumstances and Indian interpretative frameworks escalated over time destroying the last traces

of conventional military hierarchies, crashing interpersonal boundaries rooted in the differences in the soldiers' respective backgrounds, accomplishing a radical generation of a new form of collectivity and making the Indian platoon a perfect exemplar of the Turnerian concept of *communitas*, an ideal simulacrum of a Plains Indian warrior society or a successful reenactment of Francis of Assisi's radical brotherhood.

Then, after the taste of blood and the smell of corpses had driven us utterly berserk, we ordered everybody to forget the names of their parents, their own names, their military titles and to begin addressing each other only by their Indian nicknames. These Indian names they continue to wear as their awards, as a proof of their participation in real warfare. While doing scouting or chasing, we painted our faces in the American Indian style and there was a rational grain to it. When an enemy saw a painted muzzle (*rozha*) in a green bandana with feathers on the head, he was scared or at least disoriented. In such a disguise, it was hard to take us for a Russian special force group. We often worked at night and, with a paint on our faces, we entirely blurred with the environment: our shiny noses would not capture sight any more. Finally, we all thought that a face paint is something magical and mysterious that helps us win some more time and survive. Chechens feared us, "Indians", more than they feared Basayev. When we entered their villages in paint and feathers, they kneeled begging for mercy.

It is worth pointing out that, in the context of a military confrontation when, obviously, uninterrupted discrimination between "us" and "them" constitutes the most elementary strategy of survival, Indian imagery formed the only surface manifestation of the Wolf Wind platoon's sovereign Russianness or Christianness. Indianness as a form of local Europeanness reappears in a response given by a Polish Indianist of Japanese descent to my question about his startling lack of interest in traditional Japanese martial culture contrasted with a deep immersion in the warrior ethos of the Plains Indians. "I live in Poland, my mother is Polish, that's why I like Indians."

In the 15th-16th centuries, the discovery of America gave Europe a tremendous economic and cultural advantage over the Orient that until then had successfully resisted

European direct religious and military encroachments (see Dussel 1998). In the last decade of the 20th century, “Indian play” gave Christianity and Russianness unexpected superiority over Islam and Chechenness (or Christians and Russians a feeling of superiority over Moslems and Chechens) by suggesting a means for violent mobilization against an enemy that did not require any rethinking or modification of the Christian doctrine itself but instead *used the Other as a medium, and not an object, of aggression*. Under the Indian guise, Christians can wage a holy war against Moslems in a manner of *borrowing* it from Islam and not as a commitment intrinsic to their own religion. “Indian” knowledge yielded spontaneity to the otherwise state-driven military organization, consolidated domains of human activity (like ritual, *communitas* or work) otherwise kept separate (see Henricks 1999) into an autonomous practice and created a highly mobile and cohesive unit of Russian messianism compatible in strength and structure with the informal principle of Chechen social and military order. Wolf Wind’s platoon combined “primitive” and “civilized” modes of warfare that are considered to be the cornerstone of the Chechen successes during the First Russian-Chechen War (Lieven 1998, 325).

They were indeed Indians caught in the cross-fire of Russian military corruption (see Lieven 1998, 212; Politkovskaia 2002) and Chechen bullets, gone native without ever becoming traitors, remaining loyal without ever surrendering to the demoralizing practices of the Russian military machine, rooting themselves in an alien terrain, cross-dressing in order to dodge hypocrisy, denuding their bodies to shield their scanty weaponry⁹. In a world of primeval alienation, all commonsensical variables and relationships are inverted, distorted, twisted around, wrapped tightly into a knot (comp. the Morganian “Gordian Knot”), and human agency comes precisely through an individual’s

imitation of the possibility of the Hobbesian “war of all against all.” The imitation of the possibility of such an all-destructive war constitutes Christian love as simultaneously containing violence and sealing it off from the world, eliminating otherness and reviving the Other in the form of a totally new and unheard-of “Self”¹⁰.

The “intrinsic nature of reality” that has become a philosophical by-word does not exist or, more exactly, has not yet come about due only to human efforts to avoid it through incessant imitation in the course of their struggle for survival. Wolf Wind follows Lone Wolf, his predecessor in the office of the chief of the Russian Dog Soldiers, in believing in the power of that special social category among the Plains Indians known by the Lakota word *Heyoka* and proclaiming himself to be such a “contrary person”, who takes on responsibility for containing violence, attracting violence and forcefully disposing people of their violence. The characteristic feature of the Heyoka, or the sacred clown, is illogical, unnatural and paradoxical behavior (see Wissler 1912b). European Indianism as such can be seen as a Heyoka-type of behavior for a sole reason that it allows the voluntary conflation of the images of a Heyoka and a Dog Soldier in one personality unthinkable in traditional Native American contexts. The chief of Bulgarian Indianists, White Horse, found the theme of Indianism as an inverted type of behavior institutionalized in many native societies appealing and explanatory. It allowed him to comprehend his own passion for Indian cultures from a perspective derived from these very cultures.

Even the most self-critically oriented Indianists, who believe that Indianism is an illusionary and stereotypical construction of an unreal Other, tend to retain the idea that Native Americans (or at least certain tribes like Plains Indians) possess inherent powers

and abilities for resistance to domination/colonization and for stoic survival in dire conditions. As the editor-in-chief of the Polish magazine *Tawacin*, Marek Maciołek, put it,

Probably among the things that Europeans can learn from Native Americans is the latter's dazzling ability to stand for their land. A European peasant should have the same attitude toward his property – no outsider can possibly expropriate it from me and this is it" (with his fist, he gave an expressive sign of determination not to let anybody into his private terrain).

While being vociferously disapproving of Polish hobbyists known as the *Takinis* (Lakota *takini* "survivor"), Maciołek acknowledged their success in creating tight interpersonal bonds through the recreation of Plains Indian warrior societies and regular engagement in rough military games in their open-air encampments.

At the Dawn of the Image of the Indian as a Warrior and the First Attempts of Non-Natives to Emulate Him

The annals of history have preserved another case when a Russian military detachment turned into "Indians." During the World War II, Nazi Germany deployed in the Balkans a special corps composed of the children of Russian immigrants to West Europe. One day, a group of young draftees initiated a sham battle in their soldier house. In response to an officer's call for order, they explained that they were "playing Indian" and that their pillows were in fact "tomahawks." The officer was thoroughly entranced and soon the group was known in the regiment as "Indians." When a battalion was formed, the youngest soldiers were detailed in a special company also called "Indians." In the Indian company, all soldiers bore nicknames such as Sparrow, Woodpecker, Cock Head, etc. and their commander was referred to as "Chief" or Leather Stocking

(*Kozhanaia Portianka*). They had a strong liking for shooting birds, stray cats and chicken eggs and in real combat became famous for their shooting skills and reckless bravery. They were known to always collect guns and ammunition from the enemy. Their residence rooms were ornamented with drawings from Indian life, i.e. the head of an Indian with feathers, tomahawk, wigwam, the head of a wolf, etc. The walls and beds were covered with the feathers of the birds (sparrows, crows, magpies, hens and geese) they used to kill. One of the “Indians” called Hawk’s Eye had 14 feathers stuck to the wall above his bed (see Boldyrev 1963). Among other troops, “the wild Indian tribe” of the Russian Corps was famous not only for its reckless bravery in combat but also for flamboyant symbolic work that went beyond the Indian lore and stirred up the images of the Russian monarchy downtrodden by the Bolsheviks. For instance, the Indians painted the walls with the portraits of the great Russian commanders of the past such as Suvorov, Kutuzov, Peter the Great, etc., placed the double-headed eagle, the symbol of Tsarist Russia, on a map of the Russian Empire, erected a post in front of their soldier house and hoisted the Russian national flag every morning. But the front door in their room was invariably marked with a befeathered head of the Indian (Markov 1999, 124). The Indians did not hesitate to parade their nationalistic feelings in front of Nazi commanders. When a German colonel visited the Russian Corps with regular inspection, the Indians showed him their room and guided through the wall portraits and the old map of the Russian Empire. They insisted on their continuing loyalty to pre-socialist Russia, their willingness to win Russia back from the Bolsheviks and restore the sovereignty of Russia within its traditional borders. Instead of anticipated resentment, the Nazi colonel is said to have expressed his appreciation of the Russians’ sincerity and determination and to have

exchanged handshakes with the Indians (Markov 1999, 126). An excerpt from the reminiscences of one of the ex-Indians demonstrates the type of Indianesque rhetoric that was used by these Russian Indians: “For half of a month Indians were grinding their young teeth off the military science... But, alas, the soldier’s part is such that he does not stay long in one place. So, we, Indians, too had to quit our “wigwams” and to pass them down to our “pale-faced” brothers – the Cossacks of the Guard of a Hundred (*Gvardeiskoi sotni*). We abandoned our rich “pastures” and “hunts” and, on March 18, set out to the places indicated by the “supreme chief.” After having arrived in Loznitsa, we set up a temporary “encampment” (*bivak*). We, Indians, the children of nature, did not inhale the urban air for much longer. As early as March 26 we were again on the move the goal of which was the town of Liubovia (Markov 1999, 119). There is no doubt that these “Indians” drew inspiration from the novels of James Fenimore Cooper and early Wild West shows as the names of Leather Stocking and Hawk’s Eye straightforwardly suggest. It is also possible that they were familiar with the Boy Scout Indian lore.

Tribal Being and Tribal Nothing: American Indians in the American Army

Apart from the Wild West shows (see Chapter II), the image of the Indian as a natural-born warrior was used and cultivated by the United States during the World War I and World War II resulting in another version of Indians playing Indian and whites appropriating Indian cultural and material resources (see Bernstein 1990; Hale 1992; Britten 1997; Franco 1999; Townsend 2000). For instance, during the World War I, some American military officials, to demoralize suggested that a limited number of night raids be conducted using men camouflaged as Indians in full regalia (Britten 1997, 109). Germans were terrified by the news of the presence of their beloved literary heroes in the

enemy army and on one occasion an order was issued that additional snipers be detailed specifically to kill Indian soldiers (Britten 1997, 109).

During the current campaign on the part of American Indian activists and critical scholars to fight against the pervasive use of Indians as mascots in sports, it has been persistently overlooked that the Navaho code talkers¹¹, who are glamorized as both American patriots and Native American heroes, were nothing else but highly efficient mascots. Using the Lacanian terminology, in sports, Indians function as *imaginary* mascots; code talkers were mascots in the domain of the *symbolic*. Their duties were restricted to communicational support that required immediacy and high speed, they were kept away from actual combat, carefully protected by regular soldiers and officers, exposed to tremendous jeopardy being literally hunted after by the Japanese and were supposed to be sacrificed in the case of unavoidable captivity following a logic “Kill the Indian, save the code” reminiscent of Pratt’s acculturation dictum “Kill the Indian, save the man.” Due to their remarkable efficiency and exclusivity, code talkers were mythologized by both whites and Indians as exemplified by the following statement of a Yankton Sioux veteran of the World War I:

That World War was ended by the Indian boys who were in the service. They were eventually put up to the front...in the communication system, and they talked in Indian...and the war came to an end (Britten 1997, 107).

Persecuted for speaking their native tongue at home, in the front Navaho code talkers were suddenly given an opportunity to Indianize military concepts and Pacific geography through the application of two coding methods.¹² The first method rested on a “words for alphabet” system. Certain terms, particularly proper names, could not easily

be given a specific code word. Consequently, each of the 26 letters of the English alphabet were represented by an Indian term. For example, the island Tarawa would be translated as “turkey-ant-rabbit-ant-weasel-ant”. In Navaho, the words would be pronounced “Than-zie, wol-la-chee, gah, wol-la-chee, gloe-ih, wol-la-chee.” To avoid repetition, which would make the code penetrable, letters carried multiple terms. A second method rested on a prearranged term to identify an individual geographic location, military weapon, or directive. Stereotyped images dictated the terms for nations and states: “braided hair” (cehyehsbesi) for China; “slant-eye” (behnaalitsoisi) for Japan; “iron hat” (beshbechahe) for Germany; and “out mother” (nehemah) for the United States. Symbolic words and expressions represented military weapons and orders: “bird” (tsidi) for airplane; “hummingbird” for fighterplane; “bird shooter” (tsisi-be-wol-doni) for anti-aircraft gun; “tortoise-shooter” (chaytagahibe-wol-doni) for anti-tank gun; “cliff dwelling” (annasozi) for fortification; and, “horsemen” (linyeanaldaihi) for cavalry (Townsend 2000, 146-147). The contributions of Native American soldiers to the victory of the anti-Nazi coalition in West Europe was acknowledged by Belgium Indianists. On December 17, 1994, at the 50th anniversary of the historic Battle of Ardennes, a granite *monument indienne* featuring the head of an Indian in a war-bonnet was opened in the Ardennes Forest next to the *Museum of Lakota Culture* and *La Ferme de Bison* in Bastogne. The plaque read: “Our Allies: The American Indians” (Nos alliés: Les Indiens d’Amérique)” and offered statistics as to the numbers of Native Americans participating in the American army campaigns on the territory of Belgium during the two world wars of the 20th century. Five Native American veterans, including a Lakota treaty chief, John Looking Cloud, a descendant of American Horse, were present at the opening ceremony. Some 100-200 Indi-

ans killed during the World War II in Belgium were commemorated¹³. No other American racial group was similarly credited by the Belgians for participation in the liberation of Belgium.

Throughout the 20th century, the overseas military campaigns of the U.S. government provided opportunities for Native American males to either continue or restore connections to their warrior ancestors and to secure respect in their home communities. While it is tragically ironic that Chechen rebels had to face not only the Russian military machine but also a platoon in which the imagery of one colonized ethnic group (Native Americans) was used against another colonized group (Chechens), the active participation of Native Americans themselves in the Vietnam war (see Holm 1996), in the interventions in Grenada, Panama and Somalia or in the recent wars in the Middle East suggests that (neo)colonialism reproduces itself not only through self-mystification by means of *strategic relativism* – which is ultimately a marginal phenomenon exemplified by the grass-root Indianization of a single Russian special forces platoon – but, more importantly, through the self-conscious practices of identity construction and community preservation on the part of colonized and oppressed minorities. Their seemingly legitimate and uplifting efforts at exercising local power easily converge, join force and strengthen the global projects of aggression, invasion and domination. The criticism of the “Weekend Warriors” in Germany and the Men’s Movement in the United States by a group of Native Americans activists led by Ward Churchill as contributing to “what both Adolf Hitler and George Bush called the New World Order”, and thus yielding “a negative but somewhat indirect effect upon native people in North America” (Churchill 1996, 380-381) seems to be more applicable to the

readiness of Native Americans to pursue tribal continuity by means of rendering physical support to the aggressive foreign policy of the United States. The collaboration of Indian tribes with the U.S. government in fighting against their “common enemies” has a long history that goes back to the very War for the Independence of American colonies.

Shortly after the last remnants of native tribes were incarcerated on reservation, more than 12,000 American Indians, who were not recognized as American citizens until 1924, enlisted in the American army to fight in the World War I. During the World War II, more than 44,000 Indians, out of a total Native American population of less than 350,000, served with distinction in both European and Pacific theaters of war. Over 42,000 Native Americans, more than 90 percent of them volunteers, fought in Vietnam in total disregard of the liberatory struggle of blacks, women and youth against American foreign and domestic policy at that time. The disproportionate number of Native American draftees in the U.S. army as compared to other American minorities can be explained only as the process of “abduction” by native communities of American national interests for the sake of the perpetuation of tribal power, the repossession of the American national identity and the Indianization of the American state. In full accordance with the premodern forms of social cohesion, as described above for the Chechens of Russia, in times of peace, Native American communities engage in endless *symbolic* feuds with the American state; in times of war, they provide the American state with unconditional *physical* support.

The recent American military assault on Iraq was idealized through the emphasis of the media on the fact that one of the first casualties of the U.S. troops was a Hopi woman, Private Lori Ann Piestewa, who served with the 507th Maintenance Company from Fort Bliss, Texas, and was found killed near the southern Iraqi town of Nasiriyah on

March 23, 2003. The Piestewa family has been a faithful supporter of the U.S. military efforts in the 20th century: Lori's grandfather served in the World War II and her father – in the Vietnam War. The Hopi constitute one of most traditional and conservative native community in North America, with a highly elaborate, all-penetrating and well-functioning religious system, but this fact did not stop them from contributing 46 soldiers to the U.S. troops fighting against Iraq under President George W. Bush's Protestant rhetoric. While in times of peace American Protestantism is *described* as the deadliest enemy of tribal spirituality and the most powerful vehicle of the imperialist destruction of native social structure (see, e.g., Tinker 1993; Craig 1997), in times of war these religious ideas are *practiced* together in violent confrontation with a third party, namely Islam.

While Euro-Americans treat Indian cultures as a set of images and thus transmogrify living Native Americans into objects of European representation, Native Americans fall prey of an opposite fallacy: their cultures as allegedly “living realities” are attached to external political projects and alien imagery with the resulting distortion of the cultural potential inherent in traditional tribal heritage and reduction of tribal Being to tribal Nothingness. In the former case, Euro-Americans turn native cultures into something else; in the latter case, Native Americans Indianize something which is not native. The two tendencies conform not to the two cosmic forms recognized by the *Western metaphysics*, namely static, infinite space, on the one hand, and kinetic uniform time but to the cosmic forces – subjective and manifesting and objective and manifested, respectively – comprising what sometimes is referred to as *aboriginal temporality*. Most native languages are tenseless, and, for instance in the Hopi language, the objective cosmic force includes “all that is or has been accessible to the senses, the historical

physical universe, in fact, with no attempt to distinguish between present and past, but excluding everything that we call future”; while the subjective cosmic force encompasses everything we call future plus “equally and indistinguishably all that we call mental – everything that appears or exists in the mind” (Whorf 1975, 123-124). The formal incompatibility of the Euro-American and native strategies of power manipulation – as expressed in D.H. Lawrence’s dictum that “the Indian way of consciousness is different from and fatal to our way of consciousness; our way of consciousness is different from and fatal to the Indian” (Lawrence 1927, 104) – is however grounded in their profound ontological co-dependence and complementarity.

In the planetary “varna” system, Euro-Americans continue to objectify native peoples (the so-called Fourth World), while native peoples as citizens of powerful nation-states, in their turn, continue to subjectify, naturalize and legitimate the structures of Euro-American domination over the Third World. They do so by refusing to make a distinction between fighting for their national interests and supporting the interests of their colonizers on the international arena. While one should not forget that dire conditions of life on many an Indian reservation literally force young natives into the American military, the political opportunism of tribal governments and tribal public opinion – at least that is how it appears to Western sensibilities – is invariably couched in terms of sustaining the enduring validity of tribal lifeways and their purported capacity to transcend the vicissitudes of the modern world of global capital and mass destructions (see Lake 1991).

An oppressed minority tends to reproduce itself by means of alliances with the majority and not through point-to-point coordination with other minorities around the

world. Not surprisingly, the history of North America produced over 500 treaties *between* “independent” Native American nations and the U.S. government and not a single treaty between, say, the Crows and the Sioux or the Shoshones and the Blackfoot *against* the U.S. government. While the transculturation of a group of Russians in Chechnya had strictly individual basis and the socialization of Native Americans soldiers in Vietnam was grounded in community values, both practices contributed to the reproduction of the social structures of eliminating differences. The Levinasian ideal of liberatory Infinity as opposed to destructive Totality seems not to have a basis or a precedent in social reality.

¹ Russian soldiers fighting in Chechnya are commonly called *chechentsy* “Chechens.” Similarly, Soviet veterans of the Afghanistan war are known as *afgantsy* “Afgans.”

² Indianists sometimes refer to people who are attracted to Indianist gatherings for personal reasons but do not share Indianist passion for Indians as “white men” or “white women.”

³ The First Russian-Chechen War to which Wolf Wind’s Indian exploits belong lasted between December 1994 and August 1996.

⁴ This transition from the imitation of Chechens to the imitation of Indians can be compared to the change from interest in ancient Greece to interest in Indian antiquities initiated by Lewis H. Morgan. No matter whether Indians are local or distant Others, they always come as an innovation and a replacement of more conventional mimetic attachments.

⁵ A similar episode appears in the recent movie *Windtalkers* (dir. John Woo, 2002) in which Navaho code-talkers are observed by their white comrades during their performance of a traditional ceremony.

⁶ Several important elements of Chechen and other North Caucasian cultures were appropriated by Cossacks (whose very name is originally a Caucasian or a Central Asian ethnonym that does not preclude their viewing themselves as more Russian than other Russians) and the Russian Empire after the colonization of the Caucasus in the early 19th century, including horsemanship parades (*djigitovka*), the term *djigit* meaning “hero”, raiding tactics, steel weapons and a shaggy sheep- or lambskin *papakha* hat. The latter, together with a long black or white robe decorated with a row of narrow pockets for carrying ammunition (*gazyri*), was used by the Russian Tsar as a costume for festive occasions (Smith S. 1998, 37). The North Caucasian warrior as a noble savage is portrayed in Leo Tolstoy’s novel *Haji Murat*, which in 1990s was reclaimed by Chechens from the Soviet school curriculum as an icon of their national pride regardless of the fact that the leading character of the novel was ethnically Avar and not Chechen. Among all the nations that fell under the Russian imperial dominion, the role of Chechens as cultural

icons comes most closely to the image of American Indians in the United States. Despite multiple similarities between Chechens and Indians, Russian Indianists tend to suppress them and align with the official propaganda in seeing Chechens in a negative or dispassionate light. In Wapiti's succinct formulation given in response to my question about the relevance of an internal Other to Indianist concerns, "Chechens are totally different from Indians, do not put them together."

⁷ The rites of passage receive strong attention from the so called Men's Movement in the United States led by poet and writer Robert Bly. Men's Movement appropriated many stereotypical ideas of Indian (and black African) masculinity and militancy in an attempt to suture the perceived gap in the civilized upbringing of boys (see Torgovnick 1997, 156). Notably enough, many men in the movement, who are aged in around 40, suffer from not having been drafted in the army during the Vietnam era due to their having been college and professional school students (Torgovnick 1997, 159). As Torgovnick's witty observation goes, "as used by the mythopoetic men's movement, the metaphor of initiation more nearly makes men into boys rather than boys into men" (Torgovnick 1997, 163).

⁸ This is the case of what might be called *shuttle translation*, since Wolf Wind used the Russian word *koldovstvo* "magic, sorcery", which often functions among Indianists as a possible but rather confusing rendering of the proverbial Native American concept of *medicine*.

⁹ As Wolf Wind described his platoon's hijacking a Chechen APC in an attempt to break through an encirclement: "We were rushing headlong like birds covering the armor with our bodies, with feathers flapping on our bandanas and automatic guns."

¹⁰ In the words of Louis Cortambert, "L'homme sauvage et l'homme civilisé sont l'homme complet." As contrasted with the Christian perspective on survival, the Judaic concept of the role of the Other, as exemplified in the philosophical academia by the works of Emmanuel Levinas, emphasizes, on the one hand, the respect for otherness as a divine and systematically dualizing attribute of the universe; and on the other, the eternal deferral of the totality of the self. Structuralism of Claude Lévi-Strauss contains the same idea as one of its major tenets: "I believe the ultimate goal of the human sciences is not to constitute, but to dissolve man" (Lévi-Strauss 1966, 247). A specific pattern of interaction between the Self and the Other that I attribute to Christianity is identical to the method of translation of foreign literature as outlined by Arthur Parker for Indian literature and by Humboldt for literature writ large (see Chapter II).

¹¹ Indian code talking was practiced during the World War I as well. Military officials used Choctaws, Comanches, Osages, Cheyennes and Sioux as telephone operators (Britten 1997, 107).

¹² This grim irony of imaginary and real otherness continues the ironic copresence of boarding schools for Indian kids and the Woodcraft Indian groups for white kids in the early 20th century as was noted in Chapter I.

¹³ This event was covered in *L'Avenir du Luxembourg*, December 14, 1994; and *The Stars and Stripes* 53, no. 242 (December 16, 1994).