The Indian Hobbyist Movement in Europe

The term “Indian hobbyist” describes a wide range of nonprofessional interests in North American Indians displayed in European countries. Although the term “hobbyist” is useful, it is generally disliked by most of the individuals to whom it is applied; and just as in North America, it is rejected by many who feel that the interest cannot be equated to other leisure activities, since it usually involves a very deep commitment. The description “American Indianist” has gained some acceptance.

The interest of a committed hobbyist generally begins at an early age, manifesting itself in activities such as costume making and powwows. The powwows form an important activity of a typical hobbyist group and involve dressing up and dancing and singing, frequently in public. Such involvement and exposure clearly demands considerable knowledge of the subject and many hobbyists, often after much study, display unusual expertise in these fields. As the interest develops, individuals often choose to emphasize one or more activities, such as craftwork, collecting, camping (generally in tepees), joining political support groups in aid of American Indians, lecturing, researching, or writing.

Most individuals have a somewhat romanticized view of Indian life, and an interest in Plains Indian culture is often dominant. Although hobbyists are from many occupations, they are primarily blue-collar workers. Hobbyism is male dominated, but it is not uncommon to find wives and children participating.

Few hobbyists have had the formal training in American anthropology enjoyed by their professional colleagues, but their acquisition of knowledge and methodology has often followed very similar paths. Their interest generally leads to a life-long commitment and a life-style that frequently determines friendships and social activities.

United Kingdom

There has long been a fascination for American Indians in Europe (fig. 1), which began soon after the discovery of America, and “the allegorical symbol of the Americas in European art was the Figure of an ‘Indian’ female wearing a feathered crown and skirt” (Howard 1978:33). A major influence in the United Kingdom was the

acclaim in Great Britain as Catlin’s, there were a number of nineteenth-century British writers who maintained and stimulated the interest in North American Indians, for example, Ballantyne (1893), W. A. Bell (1869), and Butler (1875, Hansaburg 1987). The writings of Ernest Thompson Seton, particularly Two Little Savages (1903), became readily available. In his Book of Woodcraft and Indian Lore, Seton (1912:vi) wrote: “when I was a boy, I hungered beyond expression for just such information as I have tried herein to impart.” Such sentiments were subsequently to be recognized by several English hobbyists.

Archibald Belaney (b. 1889, d. 1938), better known as Grey Owl, apparently inspired by the visits of Buffalo Bill (William F. Cody) to England at the turn of the twentieth century, wrote a number of widely read books on the great outdoors, wild animals, and Indians. His name became a household word, and he personally pleaded the cause of the American Indian to King George VI in 1937 (Dickson 1939). A Grey Owl Society was formed in Hastings, Sussex, in spring 1982 (Foot 1983:6).

One of the earliest British amateurs to pursue the study of American Indians in a really systematic way was the London businessman, William Blackmore (b. 1827, d. 1878). In December 1868 he exhibited and discussed his collection of Indian photographs at the invitation of the American Ethnological Society in New York and in April 1872 spent “a pleasant evening discussing Indians and the West” with President and Mrs. Ulysses Grant at the White House (Bray 1949:1). In September 1867, Blackmore founded a museum in Salisbury, Wiltshire, where he housed a collection of books (about 1,000 on the American Indian), photographs (at least 2,000), ethnological material, and data on the bison (C. F. Taylor 1980:15). He became a recognized authority on the Plains Indian. He donated many hundreds of negatives of Indian subjects to the Smithsonian Institution in 1872. W. Blackmore’s (1868-1869) amateur but scholarly contribution to American Indian ethology was important in both its direct and indirect influence on subsequent generations of ethnologists, and others, who also took up the study of the American Indian as a hobby (C. F. Taylor 1980).

Unrelated to William Blackmore, Edward H. Blackmore (d. 1983) of Eastbourne, Sussex (fig. 2), gained recognition as an authority and lecturer on the North American Indian. Once described “as more Sioux than the Sioux themselves” (T. Clarke 1939), Blackmore commenced lecturing in the 1930s to a wide audience of natural history and archeological societies, schools, and youth organizations. A true romantic, he nevertheless combined as sound scientific knowledge with a schoolboy’s enthusiasm and presented his subject in a popular and highly interesting way. Friends of Blackmore influenced considerably, Philip Goodall (1938), who emigrated to Canada in 1903 to work for the Hudson’s

Bay Company, was a friend of many Blackfoot, Assiniboine, and Cree Indians, photographs of whom he sent to Blackmore, 1940-1961. Another friend was the Mohawk singer, Osekonto, who took the role of Hiawatha, performing at the Royal Albert Hall, London, 1913-1945. It was Osekonto who obtained for Blackmore raw materials for craftwork, such as tanned buckskin, eagle feathers, and beads. Clare Sheridan, an enthusiast for American Indian studies but better known as a sculptor and writer, had visited the Blackfoot Indians in Canada and the United States where she modeled six heads from life. She recalled Edward Blackmore as “the most convincing instance of reincarnation that I have ever met . . . who can transform himself at will into the most perfect and finest type of Redskin Indian . . . who has a Redskin soul and a Redskin heart, Redskin wisdom and knowledge, and all the finer Redskin traits” (in E.H. Blackmore 1950:2). Ernest Thompson Seton invited Blackmore to visit his College of Indian Wisdom at Santa
cousins, British Boy Scouts and Girl Guides never
developed Indian lore in their activities to any great
extent. There is nothing, for example, comparable to the
American Scout's Order of the Arrow. Although Sir
Robert Baden-Powell frequently referred to the North
American Indian in his Scout handbook (Baden-Powell
1909) and also expressed the hope that the Indian sign
language might be adopted by Scouts throughout the
world (Tomkins 1926), his firsthand experience with
native groups in British colonies in Africa and India
tended to direct attention away from North America.
However, the Indians of America were represented at
the Boy Scouts' Jamboree at Olympia, London, in 1920
(Salomon 1928), and again at Birkenhead, England, in
1929. During World War II, at least one scout studied
with J.F. Barshers of the La Junta, Colorado, Boy Scout
troop who called themselves Koshare Indians.
Although such contacts created some activity in Indian
lore it was not until the formation of the English
Westeners' Society in 1954 with its affiliated Brand Book
and Tally Sheet that organized groups of hobbyists
emerged. The American Indian Hobbiest magazine was
founded in America in 1954, but it appears that the
Westeners' publications were more influential in the
United Kingdom for at least a decade. North American
Indians were interpreted by the ethnological group of the
Westeners' Society not only through their research
papers published in the Brand Book but also by exhibi-
tions, the first of which was held at Orpington, Kent, in
May 1960 (M.T. West 1961:12). Founder members of this
group, such as E.H. Blackmore, Ian M. West, and Colin
F. Taylor, together with Russell Robinson from the Tower
of London (fig. 3) combined their collections of artifacts.
For more than a decade, exhibitions were regularly
organized for Scout groups (both British and American),
youth clubs, historical societies, and museums, in particu-
lar the American Museum in Britain at Claverton Manor,
Bath, which was for a number of years host to the
Westerners' Society (Dallett 1965). By invitation small
teenage groups gave displays of Indian dancing. A particu-
larly active group in this respect was that run by S.H.
Walker, who had in 1960 organized a Scout group in
Birmingham with interests oriented toward American
Indian dancing. The American Indian exhibitions were
held annually at Bath.
C.F. Taylor's (1971:1984) surveys indicated that there
were initially four hobbiest groups in Great Britain
consisting of 10-35 members, all in southern England.
While dancing was a prominent activity, collecting,
an interest in art, research, and craftsmanship were all considered
important facets of the hobby. In 1965, the Sioux Indian Dancers' Club was formed by
Maurice Oakeshott, a former scoutmaster, with Edward
H. Blackmore as president. This group of about 15
members was initially strongly influenced by the older
members of the Westerners' Society and combined ethnol-
ogy with Indian dancing. Because of their association with
a stable organization where they had the opportunity of
meeting visiting U.S. Americanists such as the ethnologist
J.C. Ewers and the "superhobbyist" Sam Cahoon, and
because of Blackmore's reputation, they grew rapidly.
The Westerners' Society continues and ethnological
interests are still significant, primarily in the so-called
American Indian Study series, which was initiated in 1981
in response to a growing need for comparatively rapid distribu-
tion of research carried out by Society members contribut-
ing to knowledge in the field of North American Indian
studies. Topics covered in extended essays have been as
diverse and specialized as an analysis of the political
history of the Oglala Sioux to a reconsideration of the so-
called Wannata costume in the Royal Scottish Museum,
Edinburgh. However, former members more oriented
toward American Indian song and dance, craftsmanship,
and artwork have largely reorganized independently.
A myriad of groups often cater to specialized interests.
For example, the Native American and Pre-Columbian
Arts Movement put emphasis on producing copies of
American Indian arts and crafts; a support group of the
North West Indian Women's circle, which seeks to draw
attention to the problems and issues affecting all Indian
women, formed in London. Other groups identified in
1985 included the Shifffield American Indian Circle; the
White Eagle Dance Team, and the North American
Historical Society, both in Birmingham; the Mother Earth
Dance in Leighton Buzzard, Bedford; the East Anglian
American Indian Eagle Dance Team from Ipswich,
Suffolk; Four Directions, run by David Meanwell of
Heathfield; and the American Indian Movement in
Yorkshire.
Some groups have disbanded. For example, the
Sioux Indian Dancers' Club ceased in 1975, several of its
founder members forming the Black Crow Dancers in
1979. Together with the Earth Lodge Singers (fig. 4) and
generally accompanied by others, they form a mainstay at
any powwow. Members of the Earth Lodge Singers have
made teppees and a full-sized earth lodge, and many are
outstanding craftsmen. One enthusiast made a fully
beaded Crow-style cradle for her baby son.

Fig. 3. Founding, and other, members of the North American Indian group of the English Westerners' Society at one of the group's early exhibitions. Left to right: Charles Clayton, John Dalen, Ian West, Edward H. Blackmore, Ann Robinson, Fiona Robinson, and Colin Taylor. All the members wore central or northern Plains style garments. Photograph by Russell Robinson, Woldingham, England, 1966.

Fig. 4. Hobbiest groups in England, left, Black Crow Dancers and White Shield Dancers, left to right, Charlin Clayton, Keith Lord, John Powell, and John Kirby at Scotia Centre Hall, Norwood, London. Photograph by Colin Taylor, 1983. Right, Members of the Earth Lodge Singers at a wedding powwow. The Cockerton family—Paul, Jennifer, Samuel Joseph, and Penny—are dressed in garments of traditional Blackfoot and Sioux design, all made by themselves or another English hobbyist. Photograph by Michael Hopkinson, Uckfield, Sussex, April 1984.
Despite these activities, several expressed a wish to be independent of club or group type organization. They preferred a looser knit expression of mutual interest with other individuals in the form of correspondence and ad hoc meetings and generally avoided publicity or close involvement with the mainstream. Several supported the protests of the Canadian Indians who lobbied Parliament regarding treaty obligations (C.F. Taylor 1979). In common with a number of their American counterparts, some individuals (such as Fraser Pake, who joined the Nakoda Institute, Morley, Alberta) turned professional in the field of American ethnology, while others, although still amateurs in the field, have been acknowledged as making genuine contributions to Native American studies (Howard 1978:42; Wood and Liberty 1980:120, Pakes 1983).

Hobbyists often emphasize the spirituality of their identification with Indians. They hold what others may consider an idealized image of the North American Indian, encompassing a concern for the despoliation of the environment (a sentiment expressed by Grey Owl in the 1930s), cultural survival of minority groups, and a quest for spiritual awareness.

Sentiments of this type were apparent in the middle 1970s with the foundation of the Onaway Trust of Leeds, Yorkshire. A registered charity, its trustees believe that Europeans and White Americans have lost the ability to live in harmony with the natural world. Along with traditional Indians, through its projects and magazines, the Trust seeks to help Western man "to rediscover this vital balance and harmony and oneness with nature" (James Bradley, personal communication 1994). The Trust predominantly funds projects conceived and staffed by Native Americans themselves. American journalists acting as observers initially when funding is requested. Donations to the Yellow Thunder Camp, the Dakota Indian Movement in the Black Hills, South Dakota; Akwesasne Freedom School on the Mohawk reservation, New York; the Buffalo Robe project in Alberta, and a lecture tour in England for Russell Means have been made. By 1984 over $600,000 for Indian-related projects had been raised. Important to the success of Onaway is the support of the various English hobbyist groups and individuals, many of whom donate proceeds of powwows, exhibitions, and the like to the Onaway fund.

The Continent

Parallel interests have developed in a number of other European countries, particularly where historical, early contacts were widespread during the discovery of America. In Sweden, for example, awareness of the colony of New Sweden on the Delaware River influenced the founding of Indiaklubben, which was formed in 1959 by Ole Norbeck, a retired banker, whose main interest was centered on the Delaware, Mohogan, and Mahican and their descendants. The club consisted of 30-35 members who met several times a year to discuss Indians and books, to show films, and to exhibit photographs. It published a yearbook containing articles on North American Indians written by members of the club and translated three books on Indians into Swedish, including Catin (1841). Erik Englund, a longstanding member of the club, who popularized the North American Indian in Sweden, wrote a book in Danish for schools (1971), while the poet Einar Møller published scholarly works on Indian chiefs, such as Sitting Bull (1970). Another Indian club in Stockholm, called Svensk-indianska forbundet (The Swedish Indian League), printed an occasional periodical called Indian-Bulletin, which was concerned with voicing the wrongs committed against the contemporary Indian. They have also been active in collecting money and clothes for Indians. In contrast to American, British, and other European hobbyists, powwow activities and craftsmanship seem to have found little expression in Sweden. Swedish contributions to North American Indian studies have been described by Hultkrantz (1984).

In Germany there is a long tradition of interest in North American Indians. In the closing years of the nineteenth century, the writer Karl May (b. 1842, d. 1912), composed a series of magazine articles on Amer- Indian Indians, later expanded (1893). The May publications continued in the twentieth century to be a significant influence on the continent. It also seems probable that early Western traveling shows, such as Buffalo Bill's, exerted considerable influence on the development of some German hobbyism (Conrad 1987).

At Radebeul, near Dresden, German Democratic Republic, is the Indianer Museum that was founded by the publishers of the May books. They developed a smaller one after 1945 in Bamberg, Upper Franconia, Federal Republic of Germany. May himself did not collect American Indian material, and the majority of specimens in the Radebeul Museum, renamed Karl May Museum, were assembled partly by exchange and loans from German museum collections by Patty Frank (b.1876, d.1959), who was active in Buffalo Bill's show around 1900. In 1965 there were 21 hobbyist groups in the German Democratic Republic, including traditional hobbyist groups such as the Interessenkreis Mandan- Indianer of Taucha, who have their annual tepee camp near Triptis (with participation from other Eastern European countries) and more political groups such as the AG Völkerkunde/Indiastik am Jugendklub Haus Walter Barth in Leipzig.

The earliest documented regular instance where Ger- mans dressed as Indians was at the annual Taucha market in a suburb of Leipzig in the late nineteenth century, which remained popular until it was officially discouraged in the 1940s. Hobbyist groups in Germany, some appar- ently as early as the 1910s, were founded in Dresden, Frankfurt, and Munich (Conrad 1987). These early activities led to the first "Indian Council" in Germany, which was held in Karlsthe, Baden-Württemberg, in 1951. Traditionally, the Council met each year with 50-60 tepees pitched and some 100 participants. Some 60-70 Indian clubs existed in Germany in 1972 although the interest of many club members was often both fleeting and superficial; nevertheless, as in the United Kingdom, there were a number of individuals whose interests put them in the category of amateur scholars with the major emphasis on research and collecting. The activities of these clubs varied, and in most cases there was considerable emphasis on social events with a carnival-like atmosphere. The competitions of rooping, whip-handling, and square danc- ing among the cowboy factions of such clubs are paralleled by archery and knife and tomahawk throwing of the "Indians." A gathering in Nidda, about 60 kilometers from Frankfurt am Main, Hesse, in June 1981 may be taken as typical of the annual events of group hobbyism in Germany. It was attended by some 5,000 Western fans who represented wide-ranging interests, cowboys, moun- tain men, North West Mounted Police, and soldiers of the Union and Confederate armies. However, the Indian village dominated, having almost 200 tepees with partici- pants "dressed in their finest elaborately beaded or quilled buckskins, 1840 to 1870 style." In their efforts to obtain authentic costumes, these enthusiasts imported entire North American porcupine hides in order to get the quills. The council was officially opened "with the re-enactment of a Wyoming treaty signing" (Hoddeki 1981:10). Such three-day functions are attended by groups from all over Germany, Belgium, France, and England. Con- tacts have been made with Indians in North America, a number of whom have attended the event.

The activities of the German Indianist groups have been addressed over the years by a variety of publications; among the earliest was Der Dakota Scout, which gave rise to Karthaus, which was founded in 1969. Since then other publications such as Amerind und Deutsch Indi- anischer Kreis have been concerned with contemporary Indian affairs, while Magazin für Amerikanistik, published in Braunschweig, focuses mainly on romantic and
Western literature. The society, Arbeiterkreis für Nordamerikanische Studien, launched the journal *Indianeriehe* in the late 1960s and attempted to direct traditional German interest in Indians toward contemporary Indian problems and politics. Its function was then taken over by DANA (Deutscher Arbeitskreis für Nordamerikanische Indianier), which was succeeded in 1984 by Informationsdienst-Indianeriehe published in Berlin with the main aim being "to inform the public of the real situation of the Native Americans and to support them through letter and people campaigns, donation-drives etc." (R.S. Kelly 1984:14).

In Holland, "Jack" Heynink founded *De Kru" in May 1964 and published it six times a year. This group brought together a number of individuals who had pursued the study of American Indians as a hobby for many years (fig. 5). In 1972 there were 600 members of the club with about two powwows held each year, while a few individuals were concerned with craftwork and Indian dancing, the orientation of interest was broadly scientific and the powwows often took on the aspect of a scientific congress. An important activity of the group was the financial and moral help its members gave to the contemporary Indian. For example, in 1971 the cause of the Nisqualli Indians concerning their fishing rights was taken up by some *De Kru" subscribers who were lawyers in an attempt to get the Indian case before the International Court of Justice at The Hague. In 1985, with the new name of Werkgroep Nord Amerikaanse Indianen in Nederland en België, Dutch members became members of the group in Belgium in the popular tepee camps with supporting powwows. Activities in support of the American Indian have been extended, including an annual scholarship and also donations to Indian projects.

Another particularly active support group in Holland is NANAI (Nederland Actiegroep Nord Amerikaanse Indianen), which was founded in 1973. Its objectives have been to support Indian tribes in their political struggles, by giving information to the Dutch people about the contemporary situation in North America through lectures to schools and other organizations. Members have also mounted a photographic exhibition and written protest letters to North American governments (Bolhuis 1983:22). NANAI published a monthly newspaper, *NANAI Notes*, which was mailed to 1,600 supporters, and in addition produced brochures on Canadian and U.S. Indians as well as more specialized subjects such as Indian camping and the prophecies and problems of the Hopi Indians.

In Belgium, WAIA (Werkgroep Actiegroep IndiÃ¨n Amerika) was founded in response to the killing of numbers of Indians in the Brazilian rain forests and to the confrontations at Alcatraz and Wounded Knee. A major aim of WAIA was to keep Dutch-speaking Belgians informed about the political situation of Native Americans, which is done through the production of brochures, posters, and exhibitions of past and present American Indian culture (Bruggerman 1985).

In France, the interest in American Indians was mainly centered in the magazine *Western Gazette*, which was founded in 1964, and which was strongly biased toward other facets of the American West (D. DuRoss 1976: Gunhold 1966). Although no coherent Indian dance groups existed in France, exhibitions of American Indian life and customs were organized by one of France's best known hobbyists and collectors, Maurice Dürumaux. French enthusiasts traveled to Germany to participate in the annual Indian councils (Hochdrke 1981).

Sociones Incomindos, the Italian hobbyist group with explicit political goals, published a magazine, *Toppe*. A number of Italian hobbyists have firm contacts with similarly oriented friends in Czechoslovakia (Milan Ekestein, personal communication 1983). An Italian who pioneered in American Indian research was Giacomo Costantinio Beltrami (b. 1779, d. 1855) who explored the Upper Mississippi region in 1823; his collection of Indian objects is in the Museo Civico "E. Caffi," Bergamo, Italy (Marino 1986).

Several individuals in Switzerland with hobbyist interests have achieved wide recognition as deeply involved in American Indian studies. Among the earliest of these was Rudolph F. Kurz (b. 1818, d. 1871), who collected Indian weapons, decorations, and apparel. His collections and those of the businessman and enthusiast Lorenz Altmann Schoch are in the Berne Historical Museum (J. Thompson 1977). Gottfried Hotz, a Zurich schoolteacher, formed a large collection of Indian artifacts (Hotz 1974), which is maintained by Hans Läng (1983). Joseph Balmer (fig. 6) "taught himself to read and write in the Dakota (Sioux) language, and formerly conducted an extensive correspondence with old-timers on reservations in North and South Dakota" (Howard 1978:41).

In Czechoslovakia there were several committed hobbyists who made their own costumes and camped in tepees (Zelva 1983:11). Some also wrote for the magazine *Vesuvius*, which contains articles by both professional and amateur scholars of the North American Indian and has further references to the development of Czech hobbyism (Kandert 1982).

In Finland, Finnicomindo produces a magazine concerned with American Indian cultural history.

In Poland, the Polski Ruch Przyjaciol Indian (Polish Movement of Friends of the American Indian) was formalized in 1981, with hobbyism and scholarly research as goals. The Polish movement is discussed in detail by Nowicka (1987).

In the Soviet Union, the largest and best organized group is in Leningrad, which acts through the Inter-Union House of Creative Activities. Called the Leningrad Indian Club, it was formed in the late 1970s; it influenced other groups, organizing annual powwows generally held near Leningrad. The powwows were strongly biased toward other facets of the American West, and were strongly biased toward other facets of the American West and were strongly biased toward other facets of the American West.

Fig. 6. Joseph Balmer in garments of Sioux Indian design, obtained from the Red Cloud family at Pine Ridge, S. Dak. Photograph by Renz Grooth, Switzerland, 1962.
other groups, organizing annual powwows generally held near Leningrad. The total number of participants at such powwows is generally about 60, and in 1984 there were 20 tepees pitched. The major activities and goals of the Soviet groups were “to study and promote true knowledge of North American Indian cultures, to practice scouting and forestry and woodsmanship; to imitate Indian art, compose songs on the American Indian theme and in solidarity with their ideals and rights” (Alexandr Vashchenko, personal communication 1985). Connections with European hobbyists seemed mainly limited to similar organizations in the German Democratic Republic with whom there were exchange visits.

There were at least three different hobbyist groups in Hungary, one of the earliest being founded in the 1930s by the anthropologist Ervin Baktay (Richman 1967). One of the largest groups was developed in Budapest in 1963, when four boys about the age of 16 started to play at being Indian. These were joined by others with more ethnologically based interests who shared the founders’ views about “Indianness” as a habit of life, and the “game” gradually changed into a more faithful imitation of the life of the Northern Plains Indians (George Gereby, personal communication 1985). The group had no common name but consisted of six “tribes” in four camps, every member identifying himself by the tribal name. The major and unique activity of the group, which took place during a two-week summer camp generally in the forests of the Bakony Hills, was the “warpath” or “hunt.” The Hungarian hobbyists’ war game was complex and highly symbolic where participants counted coup, symbolically captured horses, and sought to accomplish the four major coups to become a recognized (Crow) pipe-holder. Although the war game activity gave coherence to the whole group, craftwork, singing, dancing, sweat-bathing, feasting, and making ceremonies were also listed as important activities (Tibor Balazs, personal communication 1985). For the majority of the group, their inspiration was spiritual; those that participated felt that they shared an inborn, natural quest for the hardships, freedom, and glory of the idealized warrior life of the North American Plains Indian.