



Christian Huck, Stefan Bauernschmidt (eds.)

# TRAVELLING GOODS, TRAVELLING MOODS

*Varieties of Cultural Appropriation (1850–1950)*

campus

Travelling Goods, Travelling Moods

*Christian Huck* is Professor for English and American Cultural and Media Studies at the University of Kiel, Germany. *Stefan Bauernschmidt* is an associated member at the University of Bayreuth, Germany (Chair of Sociology of Culture and Religion).

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# Travelling Goods, Travelling Moods

Varieties of Cultural Appropriation (1850–1950)

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# Preface

We wake up in Swedish beds and Bangladeshi pajamas, shave using American razors and put on French perfume; we eat Danish pastry for breakfast, drink coffee from Ethiopia or sip tee from India; we put on Italian clothes and drive to work in Japanese cars; we communicate using Finnish cell phones, work on American computers and eat lunch at a Mexican restaurant; when we come home we have Thai take-away and an Australian Chardonnay for dinner before we read a Norwegian crime novel, listen to British pop music and return to our Swedish beds. *Does this sound familiar to you?* One of the most immediate and directly felt effects of globalization—at least in the West—can be experienced in our daily encounters with consumer goods. Supermarkets, warehouses and online shops offer consumer goods from all over the globe: one click, and products once thought of as foreign, exotic and almost impossible to obtain are now delivered straight to our doorstep. Today, goods seem to travel light, and it appears to be easy to make the foreign our own.

However, not all of these ‘travelling goods’ travel the same way, and not all are foreign in the same way. Ikea’s Swedish designed beds are mostly produced in China; Honda’s Japanese cars are manufactured in plants all around the world, and some ingredients of French Chanel No. 5 are fabricated in Bitterfeld, once the capital of the chemical industry in East Germany. Whereas tee and coffee are indeed grown in their respective countries of origin, our Danish pastry has been made at our local bakery, though according to a recipe created in Vienna, Austria. While the Italian origin of our suit and the Britishness of our music might be of specific importance to our personal identity, the fact that our smart phone is a Finnish product seems less relevant. At the same time, while we all know that our computers and shelves most likely have been produced in China, their American or Swedish provenance matters to us nonetheless.

Why does it matter where things come from—even when they do not *actually* come from there? Goods partake in specific networks: they are

conceived by certain people in certain places, they are produced from specific materials using specific techniques and machineries, they are used by certain people in certain ways and they are named and described in relation to similar, familiar things. In short, they are embedded within a specific culture, part of a specific, albeit contingent, fabric of meaning, practice and materiality. Apparently, things are nothing without a context, and by their association with context they are attuned to a certain mood, a certain disposition. When we encounter goods we cannot but react to these moods.

The questions that this volume asks seem simple: what happens to the mood of a good once it travels from one culture to another? What happens to the original mood of a good within a new culture? Is it maintained, dismissed or transformed? Does this process change the good? Does it affect the cultures involved? The process that decides what place a thing shall have within a culture, and at the same time decides on the mood of a good, is what we term (*trans-*)*cultural appropriation*. What happens when a culture makes an alien good its own?

To answer these questions we examine an historical period (1850–1950) when processes of globalization and the consequent presence of foreign goods on local markets were not as widespread as today, but when this presence was all the more heavily and controversially discussed. The goods we concentrate on in this edited volume fall into three categories: food, books and machines. These represent anthropological necessities (*food*), key cultural products (*books*) and technologies central to modern civilizations (*machines*). Each section comprises three essays preceded by a short introduction outlining the general characteristics of the good in question and the particular perspective of each individual contribution. The volume opens with an introduction to the concept of cultural appropriation by one of its foremost theorists, the ethnologist Hans Peter Hahn. The closing text, by the editors of this volume, revisits the theory of cultural appropriation, taking into consideration what the case studies assembled here can contribute to the understanding of the concept.

In order to comprehend assorted processes of cultural appropriation, research into it must not only be transcultural, but also transdisciplinary. We therefore bring together researchers from anthropology, ethnology, history, media studies, sociology, and from American, Asian, English, German and Scandinavian studies. Accordingly, the different contributions display a wide assortment of approaches to the phenomena in question. We hope this melee of cultures, disciplines and approaches does not confuse readers but inspires

them to scrutinize processes of cultural appropriation from a multiplicity of angles. We hope the varieties of cultural appropriation we present here open new perspectives on such travelling goods and travelling moods as readers may encounter them in their research and everyday life.

The editors would like to thank Meltem Gökdemir and Alexander Joachimsmeier for their meticulous work in copy editing the manuscript, as well as John Foulks for his thorough proofreading and his willingness to engage with the manifold arguments presented in each individual article; any remaining errors are the responsibility of the editors. Also, we would like to thank Andreas Walter, Benjamin Frahm and Beke Hansen for their help in setting up the conference that laid the foundations for this book. Furthermore, we would like to thank all participants in the conference for their interesting and most valuable contributions. Most importantly, we would like to thank Nicola Dropmann and Sonja Weishaupt, our fellow members of the Emmy Noether-research group “Travelling Goods // Travelling Moods: A Transcultural Study of the Acculturation of Consumer Goods, 1918–1933,” as well as Susanne Scholz, Ulfried Reichardt, Doris Feldmann, Michael Lackner, Anja Schwanhäuser, Angelika C. Messner, Jutta Zimmermann and Felix Konrad for discussing various aspects of cultural appropriation with us. Finally, we would like to thank the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (DFG), without whose generous financial support the production of this edited volume and the research its findings are based on would not have been possible.

*Stefan Bauernschmidt and Christian Huck, Erlangen and Kiel, May 2012*



Theory



# Cultural Appropriation: Power, Transformation, and Tradition

*Hans Peter Hahn*

Like a parable, the scene of the tea ceremony among the Tuareg reveals several key features of the concept of cultural appropriation. The precious moment, when tea is poured into small glass cups and people start sipping the sweet hot drink, is never missing from any travel report about the Western Sahara. Tea, here, is simultaneously an archetypical 'global good' and a cornerstone of local traditions. The preparation of tea among the Tuareg and the principles of sharing and drinking it while engaging in conversation are among the activities most typically associated with this desert people's traditions. The ceremony has become more than just a tradition; it has gained the status of an image attracting people from elsewhere, that is: tourists. Guided tours in Northern Niger, for example, almost always include such a tea ceremony. The Tuareg tea ceremony conveys an idealized image of African traditions and values. In short, it has achieved the status of an emblematic cultural feature; as such its perception extends far beyond the Western Sahara. The tea ceremony of the Tuareg—like many other cultural traditions—reveals how cultural appropriation deals with the impact of globalization; it shows how a 'global good' can be used to articulate local culture and redefine traditions. The concept of cultural appropriation provides arguments that explain why researchers in history, culture and literature do not believe in cultural homogenization as a necessary consequence of the forceful promotion of uniform cultures worldwide.

This article not only discusses phenomena of cultural appropriation, but also deals with the origins of the concept and some relevant perspectives in current debates about it. Sources from several disciplines will be consulted in order to properly describe the roots of the concept. They all provide case studies of cultural appropriation, sometimes without labeling it explicitly as such. The sweep of different approaches is astonishingly wide. It includes art history and media studies, law and—last but not least—cultural anthropology.



This article also presents some fields of empirical research. Although media studies have contributed substantially to the definition of cultural appropriation, the majority of examples are based in ethnography.<sup>1</sup> More so than other research fields, ethnography highlights the transformation and redefinition of local cultural phenomena through cultural appropriation. Possible approaches to researching cultural appropriation will be explained in more detail.

The final section of this article deals with the legitimacy of cultural appropriation and with unequal power relations. The question of power is crucial to any understanding of the current interest in the concept of cultural appropriation; more than other approaches to cultural transformation, cultural appropriation highlights unequal power relations and the actions of the 'weak.' In general, the appropriation by some powerful actors of (some aspect of) another people's culture has been widely criticized as illegitimate. The extended meaning of appropriation, which can have connotations of theft, has recently gained currency in a heated debate about commodities and cultural objects from American Indian and Aboriginal Arts, among others.<sup>2</sup> Appropriation is shown to be a multidirectional process. For example, European societies throughout history have been appropriating Japanese culture as much as the Japanese were appropriating Western culture.

## Transdisciplinary Perspectives

Cultural appropriation is a notion shared among several disciplines. The clearest and most intensely considered use of the term is to be found in art history. Robert Nelson points to the Quadriga of Venice to reveal the importance of actors in the process of cultural appropriation (2003). The bronze monument on a facade of the Basilica of San Marco in Venice depicts a four-horsed chariot; it is the only surviving antique quadriga and had been displayed in Venice since the thirteenth century. In 1797, at a particular historical moment, this famous object was physically appropriated by the French military, i.e. Napoleon's troops carried it off to Paris. (It was returned about fifteen years later.) This forcible act of appropriation shows the usurping and violent dimension of this phenomenon. However, in many places around the world (Berlin, Paris, London), the monument has been appropriated in that it has been copied and adapted to a new setting. In the terminology of art history,

this could be labeled a process of ‘borrowing’ or ‘influencing.’ However, neither of these terms reflects the relevance of the actor in such processes (Nelson 2003, 172). Actors in processes of appropriation are both those who, for example, physically take the Venetian Quadriga with them and those who reproduce it. It is fair to say that much of art production, worldwide and throughout history, is intentional appropriation of preexisting models (Schneider 2003; Schneider 2006).

Following Nelson (2003, 163), the act of appropriation can be related to Roland Barthes’ *Mythologies* (1957). In Nelson’s reading, Barthes’ ‘myths of everyday life’ describe precisely these processes of appropriation. In Barthes’ theory, the idea of a particular model, concept or technique appears attractive or convincing to such a degree that someone other than the idea’s originator is motivated to engage in particular activities that result from accepting the idea. For example, accepting the idea that a good is particularly advanced technologically might lead to the acquisition of a specific product. This process can be interpreted as one of Barthes’ everyday myths—a convincing story—or a moment of appropriation. Something to be appropriated is not simply a thing, but a thing desirable and associated with superior value that motivates the act of appropriation. None of the more recent quadrigas is identical to the Venetian original; the eighteenth or nineteenth century artists would insist that their reconfigured quadrigas were even more powerful and impressive than the original. Therefore a myth—an object or a story carrying strong connotative meaning—can be said to lie at the beginning of the appropriation process. However, instances of appropriation are not just symbolic achievements or cognitive activities; they are concrete actions. Typically, such actions take time, they can be partial (fragmented), and they can fail. Consequently, one might compare appropriation to distortion, but one should not equate it with influencing or borrowing. The moment a cultural trait is appropriated, it may become fragmented; subsequently, it can be reestablished in a different form and in a different context.

Currently, the debate about the role of appropriation in the world of art continues. Crucial, but unresolved, questions address the relationship between authenticity and cultural appropriation (Young 2008). Can an object of art be authentic if it is based on models originating elsewhere? Further unanswered questions concern the relationship between the ‘original author’ and the appropriators. Is appropriation an offensive act (Young 2005)? Do artists need particular strategies to legitimize their practices of appropriating (Schneider 2006)? Recently, the concept of ‘Appropriation Art’ has been

acknowledged as an important trend. ‘Appropriation Art’ refers to artworks that *explicitly* use or exploit other artists’ work (Blume Huttenlauch 2010).

For many art historians, cultural appropriation as a concept is still provocative because it dismisses the idea that an object autonomously moves from one place to another or from one cultural context to another. It is never just an object or a motive or a technology that ‘diffuses’ among cultures and epochs, but always human agents who act in favor of such changes and actively promote a specific contextualization. Who appropriates something? And what are the motives for such an action?

However, a transdisciplinary approach should abandon the concerns of art historians concerning authorship and legitimacy of shifting objects and ideas. Of a more general interest are the cultural transformations leading to new understandings and contextualizations of particular objects or ideas. ‘Cultural appropriation’ deals with how new social, shared meanings emerge and how ‘newness’ is perceived and evaluated.

The most convincing concept of cultural appropriation, when seen as innovation, comes from the French historian Michel de Certeau. In his seminal book *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), he describes how ordinary people appropriate things (and ideas or institutions) even without knowing much about them. De Certeau’s argument is based on a distinction he draws between *strategies* and *tactics*. Whereas ‘strategy’ applies, for example, to armies in war, the notion of ‘tactics’ designates a way of acting when there is no clearly defined goal and no precise knowledge about the matter concerned. Tactics would appear to be the resort of the weak, but since they require very little structure, they may be more powerful in the long run.

When introducing a new product, institution or regulation, a company or governmental organization usually follows a ‘strategy.’ This means a particular product, institution or idea has to perform predefined tasks; such things result from a powerful structure promoting their future place in society. But—and this is the central tenet of de Certeau’s approach—things are very often not adopted as intended, or they attain a meaning in everyday life quite different than intended.<sup>3</sup> These modifications or transformations are ‘tactics of everyday acting.’ Through their actions, people redefine the product, institution or idea and counter hegemonic structures with everyday routines and—sometimes—by intentionally neglecting rules. Ben Highmore calls the basis of such ‘tactics of everyday acting’ “situated knowledge” (2007, 16). The unplanned, pragmatic and often spontaneous transformations of products, institutions or ideas are the core of cultural appropriation. The historian

Marian Füssel has put this elegantly with his description of the “art of the weak.” (2006, 7)<sup>4</sup>

De Certeau’s approach has, of course, been criticized. It has been argued that he takes an anti-essentialist position, neglecting the real power of the powerful, i.e. of the state, corporations, institutions, etc. (Bogue 1986). For many, de Certeau’s celebration of the agency of everyday activities seems limited. In this context, Rebekka Mallinckrodt (2004) points out that de Certeau has resonated much more in the US than in Britain or France. In the latter countries, his concept has been criticized much more directly, for not sufficiently addressing questions of power and justice.

In the development of the concept of ‘cultural appropriation,’ art history and social history are complemented by medieval history, which has provided some of the most provocative arguments. Following Denise Cuthbert (1998), appropriation can be everything between borrowing and stealing.<sup>5</sup> Ashley and Plesch (2002, 7) insist that appropriation is always about cultural relations in the context of an unequal distribution of power. In such a context, appropriation can be a form of ‘cannibalizing’ culture and may even lead to the vanishing of a culture.

Within cultural anthropology, the notion of cultural appropriation has gained particular relevance in debates about globalization. Anthropology has dealt with the notion of ‘vanishing cultures’ since its foundation as a discipline. In the nineteenth century, colonialism and modernity were blamed for the destruction of local cultures. Cultures were taken as isolated and autonomous units existing under homeostatic conditions; every influence from outside seemed to have devastating effects. A good example of this idea of homeostasis is Richard Salisbury’s book *From Stone to Steel* (1962). Salisbury claims that the introduction of metal tools in New Guinea led to the dissolution of traditional knowledge and social structures. New consumer goods create new and threatening dependencies, forcing the members of the local culture to abandon inherited values. The advent of global goods was equated with the end of ‘traditional cultures.’ However, history teaches something different; today Salisbury’s ideas have been found to be mistaken. Local cultures—including those of Papua New Guinea—have survived, and anthropology has had to learn that the idea of ‘vanishing cultures’ was an early stereotype within the discipline.

With the advent of globalization, the prophets of doom gained momentum, and many believed that, due to the worldwide impact of globally homogenous cultural traits, anthropology as the study of cultural diversity

must come to an end. Faced with globalization, anthropology had to take the task of explaining cultural differences seriously. Anthropological research no longer limited itself to descriptions of different cultures, but began asking why cultures did not vanish and why cultural diversity did not decrease. In the wake of such reasoning anthropology reinvented itself as a discipline and focused on how societies maintain a distinctive identity and simultaneously transform their culture. One important way to do so was by appropriating global consumer goods. The anthropologists' key to highlighting these processes was to investigate forms of transformation and the assignment of distinctive meanings to otherwise globally uniform things (Appadurai 1986a, 1986b; Ferguson 1988). Today, authors with a background in anthropology like Arjun Appadurai, Homi Bhabha, Jonathan Friedman and others are among the leading figures in globalization theory. They explain how globalization transforms local cultures. Resistance is replaced by appropriation, which allows members of a culture to articulate a distinctive identity self-consciously. Anthropology has adopted several terms suited to the task of explaining transformations. 'Cultural appropriation' is one of them. Other terms with a similar meaning are 'domestication,' 'creolization,' 'nostrification' and 'hybridization.' The differences in meaning among them will not be discussed here in detail. For the moment, suffice it to underscore that they all contribute to explaining cultural differences in the context of globally uniform cultural trends.

To clarify the usefulness of these terms for explaining cultural diversity, it may be worthwhile to point out some concepts that assume a totally different understanding of cultural change. A prominent example is *McDonaldization* (Ritzer 1993). This concept suggests that the rationality of modern organizational principles bears substantially on all processes of producing and handling things, on the ways services are executed, and also on politics. Rationality is seen here as a powerful driving force which will erase cultural diversity in the long run. Another example comes from the history of consumption; here, a 'civilizing mission of consumption' is proclaimed, and consumer goods are presumed to have a political impact—that they inevitably influence societies toward higher cultural uniformity (Trentmann 2007). Thus, awareness has grown of cultural appropriation within the ongoing debate about globalization and its apparent homogenizing consequences, as has awareness of domestication, creolization, nostrification and hybridization. Of these concepts 'cultural appropriation' has the particular capacity to reveal something about individual actors and the agency of those who redesign

contexts and re-establish meanings of specific things. Furthermore, in contrast to the other terms, appropriation focuses additionally on the transformation of cultures. Cultural appropriation can be a spontaneous process, or it can remain ephemeral, or it can fail. As many historical examples reveal, this process takes time and requires someone's particular effort. It is appropriate, therefore, to speak of the "work of appropriation," as James Carrier (1996, 128) has done in his studies of consumption.

These preliminaries should suffice to give a first impression of the origins of 'cultural appropriation' as a concept. It is time now to turn to more practical aspects of how to design research using the concept of cultural appropriation.

## Fields of Research

Beyond its background in the disciplines of history and art history, the concept of cultural appropriation has achieved its widest recognition as a working tool in the field of cultural studies. This can be explained by the particular influence of de Certeau in this field of research. As cultural studies looks for culture in the transient and volatile aspects of a society (and not in its canonical and normative articulations), the notion of cultural appropriation as a 'tactic' of everyday life seems a good fit (Hall 1992). More recently, in light of globalization, appropriation has been widely accepted in media studies as well. Media studies comprise both the study of the reception of media and the analysis of the active use of media in order to give voice to local cultural articulations. Media studies from a more specifically anthropological perspective deal with such different contexts as the consumption of American soap operas in Upper Egypt, Brazilian telenovelas in Trinidad or the production of videos in West Africa (Abu-Lughod 1995; Miller 1992b; Larkin 2008). The list could easily be extended. In all cases, media are not simply 'consumed'; rather, they are thoroughly transformed.

Roger Silverstone has provided a model for how media studies can make particular use of the concept of cultural appropriation. In his seminal book *Consuming Technologies* (1992), he elucidates the concept of appropriation in the way people acquire and subsequently use new technologies on an everyday basis. His approach not only addresses media consumption, but also asks how media are transformed in usage and how societies are transformed by

them. In doing so, Silverstone integrates the content side of media with its material aspects. Radios, TV-sets and mobile phones are objects appearing in specific contexts in households and requiring resources in terms of time and awareness. The material side of such objects is closely associated with their transformation. Thus, cultural appropriation describes the transformation of a publicly available commodity into a specifiable object that is part of someone's personal belongings.

Silverstone identifies four empirical fields as possible venues for studying cultural appropriation, not only for media, but for any object perceived at first as strange, foreign or simply innovative, but which then gradually becomes more familiar. These four fields are not successive phases or stages, but possible points of entry for studying cultural appropriation. They can guide a more differentiated research design. These fields describe the mutual changes that the objects and the people dealing with them undergo. The four aspects are 1) material appropriation, 2) objectification, 3) incorporation, and, last 4) transformation. Each aspect is explained in more detail in the following.

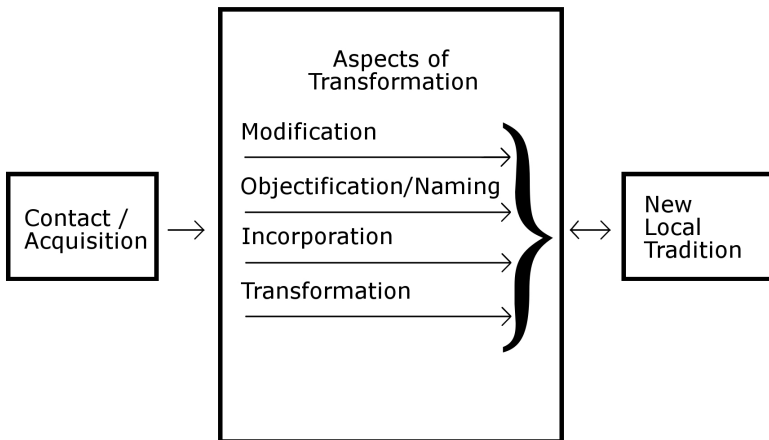


Fig. 1: *Aspects of Cultural Appropriation* (source: Hahn 2005a, 99)

1. *Material Appropriation and Modification.* Appropriation at the material level is the transition from formal economy (= a commodity has a certain price) to moral economy (= an object has a 'personal' value). Thus, an anonymous commodity becomes the personal possession of individuals and part of the material inventory of a society. This process may also include changes in the (material) form of an item. Examples of modification would be changing the decoration of a bicycle, an alteration of the screen of a mobile phone or

the reverse engineering of a simlock (Hahn and Kibora 2008). In many cases, however, the material appropriation consists solely of some form of internalization, of producing ‘familiarity’ with something that was previously an external, unknown entity. Material modifications are of particular relevance when it comes to such ‘familiarization.’ The idea of intentional enhancement is not limited to the “do-it-yourself-practitioners” producing “moded computers” or individually designed bicycles (Knorr 2009). A closer look at everyday routines reveals that the perceived value of many things is not highest when these are acquired, but only after they are used for some time. When someone’s laptop is scratched or when the owner knows the idiosyncrasies of its software, the perceived value of this object is even higher. Thus, material appropriation is furthered by material modification.

2. *Objectification and Naming.* All items of material culture are submitted to classification, and only thereby do they come to belong to a cultural category of objects. New things acquire a particular place in the local ‘universe of things.’ Only then do they enter into contexts that define a culturally specific set of properties and purposes. Contexts, in this case, are fields of meaning that define proximity to or distance from other items. Who is allowed to use the object? Is the object seen as an individual possession or as something shared by several people? What is its role in everyday life? In short, novel objects are categorized and classified according to the same or similar categories as those applied to known objects. The outcome of this process is a reliable and permanent relationship between the object of appropriation and other things. Through this process, for example, an item may become a gendered object, suitable only for men, only for women, or for both sexes (Kirkham 1996).

Evidently, global goods have to be objectified in a culture-specific way. When for example young people acquire new, previously unknown things they consider fashionable, they are seeking to articulate distinction. In Arnould and Wilk’s (1984) study, it is only for young people that jeans and tennis shoes are prestigious objects forming a distinctive style and expressing autonomy. For others, these things are not necessarily alluring. Still others ignore the objects completely or reject them because they are unwieldy to use (Hahn 2005b). Such differing or even conflicting evaluations express social differentiation; any objectification of a particular good is the outcome of negotiations.

Objectification also takes into account the naming of things and the ways people talk about them. In some regions of West Africa, for example, bicycles are called ‘iron horses.’ The naming reveals the way the respective society



evaluates the object in question: the bicycle's association in name with horses indicates its high value, something beyond the economic means of most households in rural West Africa (Hahn 2004b). This differs profoundly from the bicycle's German nickname *Drahtesel*, which literally means 'wire donkey.' Another example of locally specific objectification is the German term for a mobile phone, *Handy*. The term *Handy* is an entirely local creation, but it thrives on its linguistic affinity to the Anglophone world. It associates the mobile phone with the ideology of globalism, because English is equated with the globalized world. At the same time *Handy* alludes to something practical, smart, readily at hand; this is apparently what makes the term a good fit for German-speaking mobile phone users (Burkart 2007).

As the examples suggest, material appropriation and objectification are important aspects of cultural appropriation. Becoming familiar with an object and naming it are core elements of appropriation. But they do not suffice to make something a part of one's identity. The following two aspects are of equal importance:

3. *Incorporation*. This term refers to the development of practical routines of use. Often, everyday modes of dealing with things are of habitual character. There is a 'correct way' of holding a pen with the fingers and a proper way of sitting on a bicycle in order to ride safely. Along with objectification, specific modes of habitual usage and corporeal interaction between user and object emerge. The intuitive ways of touching and handling an object establish norms of interacting with these things. The item itself, its operation, impacts people's bodies and thereby the time people spend with it in their immediate physical vicinity. Simultaneously, using the item changes the way people perceive their own bodies.

Again, the bicycle in Africa is a good example. Incorporation includes the physical fitness required to ride a bicycle. Furthermore, as a result of the physical disassembling of bicycles—nearly all removable parts quickly disappear—and of the particulars of their use there, a rider's ability to stop without brakes or balance heavy loads also comes into play. Because brakes often have been removed, the ability to stop a moving bicycle in Africa is quite special, even while it is fairly common for their riders to be carrying loads of up to 100 kilograms.

More directly than the other aspects of cultural appropriation, incorporation refers to processes of appropriation that are by no means strictly or intentionally controlled. The appropriator's body is a partner in a 'dialogue without words' aimed at finding routines to deal with a new object.<sup>6</sup> This is

particularly evident in the case of complex technological objects like the bicycle and the mobile phone. For example, the harmfulness of electromagnetic radiation from mobile phones was debated extensively at a particular moment after the introduction of this new device. The result was the widely accepted advice that one should not sleep with one's mobile beside the bed or carry it too close to one's body.

Other pertinent examples refer to the history of certain beverages. In Europe, coffee had been appropriated with a mode of drinking it in cups, preferably of porcelain. The advent of Italian coffee specialties was marked by the distinction of drinking coffee from glasses. The day people are no longer familiar with drinking coffee from a porcelain cup will be the day the incorporation of 'coffee Italian style' is completed. Thus cultural appropriation also explains why innovations do not lead so much to substitution as to an expansion of another way of doing something.

Whereas objectification is primarily relevant with regard to meaning, naming and categorization, incorporation describes more direct forms of interaction with things as well as people, and the corresponding consequences for actors' perceptions. But it should be emphasized that both objectification and incorporation are important at either level, the individual and the social: both focus on human agency, and on social expectations.

4. *Transformation.* Appropriation is a process that leads in some cases—but not in all cases—to irreversible transformations. What initially is an imported commodity gradually becomes part of the local life-world and comes into individual or collective possession. The appropriated object acquires local meanings; it is no longer considered 'foreign.' Appropriation does not, however, always result in the obfuscation of provenance. In some cases, people accept the paradox of knowing about a good's global provenance, yet simultaneously considering it their own.

A closer examination of regional differences between distinct pathways of appropriation can help one understand how spaces of meaning become available, and what motivates the appropriation of new things into particular contexts. A case in point, again with reference to the bicycle, is classification according to gender. In some areas, bicycles would be considered exclusively male objects, whereas elsewhere both men and women ride them. The history of the introduction of bicycles in Germany exemplifies both. Bicycles were initially part of the male domain, and later became an object common to both sexes. In Germany around 1900, the sporting, masculine dimension boosted

the vehicle's adoption; its transport and mobility dimension were not yet as relevant as they would become later on (Ebert 2010).

The term 'transformation' underscores that classifications of this kind represent definite processes which are difficult to reverse. 'Transformation' emphasizes the accomplishment of making a thing into something different, new and locally defined, regardless whether or not its (material) form has changed. Transformation also assigns particular relevance to the creation of new traditions. The Tuareg example of drinking tea shows perfectly how appropriation and tradition mutually legitimize each other. Daniel Miller puts this more polemically when he speaks of the 'authenticity' of imported goods (1992a). The establishment of a local tradition combining the appropriated object with a specific story or myth is an integral part of transformation. This is what Robert Nelson refers to in his reading of Roland Barthes' *Mythologies*.

All four aspects explained here—(1) material acquisition and modification, (2) objectification, (3) incorporation and (4) transformation—can be considered as partial processes of cultural appropriation. It is, however, difficult to speak of a 'complete' or definitive appropriation, because the status of an object, institution or idea in any culture remains negotiable. Nothing is immune to redefinition and re-contextualization. Cultural appropriation is therefore related in particular to the status of being in-between, of negotiating specific local meanings for a global good, sometimes for a limited period only. Simultaneously, every appropriated object also constitutes a link to another world, and this link explains the object's particular relevance in a culture's specific and distinctive identity.

## Similarity and Diversity

It might be useful to explain why cultural appropriation has only recently been acknowledged as a relevant concept of cultural change. In the history of European thought, the first modern usage of the term 'culture' by Samuel von Pufendorff (Pagden 1995; Stagl 1981, 55), and subsequently by Gottfried Herder (Böhme, Matussek and Müller 2000, 38), designates something uniform and shared by all members of a society. This then dominant concept of culture refers to those phenomena recognized by all members of a society as carriers of this culture. In short, this dominant line of thought is based on