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If the “barbarian negro” is a European concept, then the “civilized white man” is an African idea:

Julius Lips’ reversal of perspective in ethnological art research.

In June 1931, L. Fritz Gruber, doctoral student of Julius Lips, took a photograph at the Cologne Museum of Arts and Crafts portraying Leo Frobenius accompanied by Julius and Eva Lips during the opening of the „Madsimu Dasangara“ exhibition which had previously been shown in Paris. Gruber describes the relationship between the Frankfurt and Cologne representatives of the “Kulturkreislehre” as collegial and friendly. What unites these otherwise highly different ethnologists beyond the fundamental theory of their profession is their independent thinking which stamps the self-taught Leo Frobenius as an outsider vis-à-vis the ethnological community, while from 1930 onward Lips in his Cologne posts is faced with eroding support.

Frobenius, involved in a leading position within the Doorn circle around the abdicated German emperor, and the Social Democrat Lips both set out from a common scientific starting point: the equivalence of cultures. As far as colonized Africa is concerned, Frobenius questions the general European view about Africa and the Africans, while Lips reverses the very perspective and poses the question, how the colonized view Europa and the Europeans.

Kulturgeschichte Afrikas, a cultural history of Africa by Frobenius appears in Zurich in 1933, at a time, when his postulate “the idea of the ‘barbarian negro’ being a European conception” might well be interpreted as a provocation against the racist foundations of National Socialist Germany. *The Savage Hits Back or The White Man through Native Eyes* by Lips is only published in Great Britain and the USA in 1937, a date well calculated to respond to Germany’s super power manners and German colonial revisionism articulated with increasing vehemence.

The question arises, whether Lips’ publication, abounding with more or less suggestively biting allusions to fascist Germany and immediately declared “undesirable writing”, may not have been a contributing factor in speeding up the

hasty opening on July 19, 1937 in Munich of the propagandistic touring exhibition “Degenerate Art” staged by Goebbels.

Thus the avant-garde of modern classical art stimulated since the turn of the century in its love of experimentation by the “discovery of `primitive´ art” in ethnological museums is being mocked as “morbid” and “foreign” and pilloried as “negro art”. In Germany this means the abrupt end of a development which had been able to foster the idea of Frobenius’ *Kulturgeschichte Afrikas* and Lips’ reversal of perspective in the first place. And yet, the books of both authors had a sustained influence: While the research on the cultural history of Africa by Frobenius inspired the founders of Négritude, *The Savage Hits Back* by Lips is published in its second edition in 1966, at the height of the Afro-American movement of emancipation in the USA.