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Tactile Vision and Othering: Ethnographic Engagements and Racial Differentiations in 19th Century Travelogues

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Abstract

The transmission, emergence, and dissemination of features of racial differentiation are based on the interplay of different sensory perceptions, as this contribution will illustrate. For this purpose, examples from ethnographic travelogues from German East Africa and from the time of German colonial rule were selected to examine the functioning of tactile perception by means of the descriptions of skin colors and skin decorations. The source material reveals multisensuality in the form of synesthesia of the sense of sight with the sense of touch, in that the perception of tactile stimuli is determined less by direct touch and more by the visual representation of haptic properties.

Keywords: sensory studies; multisensuality; sense of sight; sense of touch; history of 19th century; history of colonialism; history of racism; ethnographic travelogues

1. Introduction: Perceiving, Describing and Creating the Other through Multisensuality

The skin is the largest sense organ, but it has the least differentiated perception in comparison to the other senses, which are limited to the interaction of individual organs (Smith, 2007a, p. 94). The perception of tactile stimuli is closely linked to the sense of sight, both in individual experience and in terms of sociocultural meanings: Attributions are made through the observation of another's skin, classifying visual representations of cultural symbols such as age, gender, or social status (Smith, 2007a, p. 94; Le Breton, 2017, p. 97). The examination of

an object and the attribution of qualitative properties via contour and structure are initially done through the sense of sight, but through touch, these preliminary classifications are verified (Le Breton, 2017, p. 97, 100). A hierarchical gradation of non-Western cultures has also been inferred through the sense of touch, supposed differences in the meaning of touch, and qualitative properties of skin to be distinguished between Black people and Whites (Smith, 2007a, p. 109). The construction of 'races' and racial differentiators through properties of the skin such as color was not solely determined by visual perception, but like gender and social status, is a visual representation of bodily and thus tactile perceptions (Smith, 2007a, p. 97, 109). Similarly, contact with African cultures and populations during colonialism is not based solely on auditory and visual representations of the Other, rather the perception of bodies from the first moment of meeting is the essence of touch and feeling (Smith, 2007a, p. 110).

This paper will demonstrate the multisensuality in the perception of tactile, haptic features of the skin through the sense of sight by examining travelogues of German travelers to German East Africa from the second half of the Long 19th Century. It will also be shown that the construction of characteristics of racial differentiation is based on the interplay of several sensory perceptions. Sensory perceptions can and must first be seen as a central aspect of the colonial encounter, and often exist in written sources as an essentialization of individually and culturally shaped perception. The exploration of cultures and populations in sub-Saharan Africa at the height of European colonialism between 1870 and 1920 was also accompanied by a peak period of intercultural contact and exchange (Hall, 1997, p. 239). Here, knowledge about flora, fauna, or geography was gained, and knowledge circulated between Europe and Africa (Przyrembel, 2011, p. 32). This also applies to cultures and populations, and the "spectacle of the others" (Hall, 1997) gains particular significance for a history of the senses in colonialism. The observations of African travelers written down in travelogues usually contain several levels of attribution of meaning and classification: since a gaze is followed by an attempt at appropriate attributions and only then by linguistic expression or writing down, the travelers' dscripttions in their accounts are already encoded several times (Le Breton, 2017, p. 44).[1]

Since the sense of touch is neither present in the vocabulary nor in the descriptions of the travelers, it is necessary to transfer the evaluation of tactile qualities and bodily features from the visual perception of bodies. A first example of the descriptions of tactile qualities is offered by the most diverse skin adornments as a deliberate alteration of the openly worn, bodily features. In the classification of these bodily features, the cultural imprint of the adornments in local populations is contrasted with the perception by European travelers as

[1] All translations of the source material used here by the author.

a representation of foreignness. With a second example, the classification of skin colors is elaborated as a transfer of distinctive cultural features into the attributions of the observation of the foreign (Smith, 2007a, p. 94). This also addresses one of the oldest racist differentiation features since the early colonial encounters with the demarcation mechanisms of black and white skin color in travelogues.

2. Bodies and 0rnaments: Cultural Expressions in the Descriptions of the “undressed savages”

When observing skin and bodies, sight serves as a form of contact in which the imagination influenced by social norms replaces touch (Le Breton, 2017, p. 36). By observing an Other, a constant process of differentiation occurs, where vision extends the self and one's connection to the world, establishing a distinct boundary (Le Breton, 2017, p. 37). A pre-selection of possible inscriptions is made via the traveler’s expectations and enables the classification of people even without exact verification through further senses and especially touch (Le Breton, 2017, p. 44). The attributions of meaning are constantly shifting between the sighted and the viewed (Le Breton, 2017, p. 45). While the sense of sight can recognize skin and its ornamentation superficially, it is only the sense of touch that allows classification—and even without touch, tactile qualities are transmitted in the visual perception of skin and skin colors (Diaconu, 2005, p. 145). The perception and classification of superficial qualities are initially done by the sense of sight, which, however, at the same time forms an idea of the haptic properties and tactile stimuli of an object—and in this forms a superimposition or synesthesia of the sense of touch with the sense of sight (Diaconu, 2005, p. 66). This functioning of the interplay of seeing and touching, which can also be called multisensuality, will be examined in the following using the example of the observation of haptic properties of bodies and body ornaments, and its theory will first be explored for this purpose.

In the perception of travelers, the bodies of the local populations form a fundamental object of cultural representation and often represent an essentialization of the European imaginary worlds in the descriptions (Höpflinger, 2016, p. 175). While bodies and the expression of bodily features are individually different, bodily practices as well as clothing and adornments of the skin are considered a communal expression of a cultural bond (Höpflinger, 2016, p. 175). In the travelers’ accounts, the bodies of African populations become the projection surface and the object of negotiation of European imaginary worlds of 'foreign' bodies and 'other' cultures (Höpflinger, 2016, p. 175). The Western imaginary worlds of the bodies of the 'savages' thereby developed in dependence on the conceptions of their own bodies and bodily features (Höpflinger, 2016, p. 176). The perception of skin adornments as bodily practices and representations of 'foreign' cultures is not only based a priori on imaginative worlds (Höpflinger,

2016, pp. 176-178)—perception creates these imaginations via attributions of meaning and equally leads to a continuous regulation of the evaluation of a bodily difference. With the descriptions of African bodies, the representation of the 'other' becomes visible as an ongoing process of forming these imaginary worlds (Höpflinger, 2016, p. 176; Ratschiller & Weichlein, 2016, p. 24). The identification of a physical difference is fundamental for the perception of individuality as well as cultural identity; thus, it is also an instinctive feature of demarcation that ascribes a negative meaning to 'others' to counter a threat to the self (Höpflinger, 2016, p. 181). Perception is thus used to negotiate belonging and otherness, which in Western imaginary worlds are provided with opposing attribute attributions: Between the pre-modern 'primitive peoples' of Africa and the modern civilizations of Europe, as well as between people with black and white skin color (Höpflinger, 2016, pp. 181-182). This reflects a clear hierarchy, which is transferred to the mindset of the European travelers, and thus to the evaluation of the perceptions of bodily differentiation features in their reports (Höpflinger, 2016, p. 182). With contact with African populations and the travelers' accounts, knowledge about African bodies spread, fueling scholarly interest and speculation around racial differentiations alike (Ratschiller & Weichlein, 2016, p. 24). Moreover, the detailed recordings of the 'foreign bodies' in all their dimensions and apparent characteristics do not only indicate an anthropological interest (Ratschiller & Weichlein, 2016, p. 24). Through categories such as gender and 'race', the body has increasingly determined the discourses and imaginaries of an individual, social, and cultural difference since the 18th and 19th centuries (Ratschiller & Weichlein, 2016, pp. 30-31). As an object of negotiation of social processes, bodies form a surface of projection for conflicts, as well as for contact between European travelers and the local populations of German East Africa (Ratschiller & Weichlein, 2016, p. 33).

An essentialization of bodies and bodily practices also goes back to the limitation of linguistic communication with the diverse cultures, language families, and dialects of the local populations (Höpflinger, 2016, p. 185). For the travelers, as especially for all early actors of colonialism in 19th century inner sub-Saharan Africa, the exchange about and interpretation of bodily practices constituted a central aspect of communication (Höpflinger, 2016, p. 185). For this purpose, the sense of sight performs essential functions of tactile perception of bodily modifications and characteristics. The body thus becomes the medium of multisensory communication, but at the same time stands in the polarized field of tension between one's own familiarity and the strangeness of the counterpart (Höpflinger, 2016, p. 185). The devaluation of the sense of touch in European history is also associated with a restriction of accepted touch as a social practice, and language, as well as non-verbal communication via gestures and facial expressions, replace touch and physical proximity (Le Breton, 2017, p. 123). Accordingly, a shift of the communicative properties of the sense of touch into the sphere of the private took place, and touching by outsiders has

since been undesirable (Le Breton, 2017, p. 123). If it was still necessary to protect the private sphere from the outside, and if intruders counted as a threat, this was akin to touching the skin, which described a boundary between the inner self and the outer world (Le Breton, 2017, p. 123). For European travelers, the touch of a Black person, as conversely the touch of a white person by a person of black skin, was a threat of demarcation from one another (Smith, 2006, p. 84). Not only did such touch inform the culturally shaped patterns of perception or the racist attributions of their perceptions of bodily differentiating characteristics, and a resulting pejorative attitude of the counterpart (Smith, 2006, p. 84). There were also reservations about direct contact for fear of a transfer of the qualitative and thus at the same time moral characteristics (Smith, 2006, p. 84).

However, the multisensuality of the visual perception of tactile qualities also shaped the notion of the African 'other', which includes observations of skin adornments and colors, as well as descriptions of the tactile perception patterns of local African populations (Carayon, 2017, p. 66). Although the accounts do not include descriptions of touch or tactile perceptions, numerous observations of skin adornments attest to the cultural representation of the body and the attributions of meaning by the travelers. Ornaments and artificial changes to the skin are shaped by social or cultural ritualizations and standardizations (Höpflinger, 2016, p. 175). Also, any skin adornment affects the self-image of the wearer in a variety of ways: as an expression of religious or social commitment and position, but also as an enhancement of aesthetic or psychological aspects (Diaconu, 2005, p. 140-141). From painting the body to creating patterns from scarring, to tattooing with colored stitches under the skin, the cultural techniques go back to cultures outside Europe, although there are also models in European history (Diaconu, 2005, pp. 140-141). Body painting is scarcely described in ethnographic records, and the German ethnologist Karl Weule mentions having little information on the subject and "only ever seen them in cases of illness and for medical purposes" (Weule, 1908, p. 14), except for ceremonies. Tattoos, too, are rarely mentioned in the European travelers' descriptions of African bodies, but never described and contextualized in detail. In the descriptions and representations of African populations, skin adornments have occupied a fundamental part of the display of 'savagery' for the "spectacle of others" (Hall, 1997) since the 18th century (Diaconu, 2005, p. 142). A wider public became aware of these supposedly distinct features of 'primitive peoples' through the literature on voyages and New Worlds, but also through the ethnological shows in Europe, in which the strangeness of the 'others' was staged (Diaconu, 2005, p. 142). At the end of the long 19th century, people with tattoos were therefore mostly considered dubious in European perception and associated with less civilized ways of life (Diaconu, 2005, p. 142). The stigmatization of permanent skin adornments in Europe can also be derived from a contradiction in the creation of identity through a tattoo, which is not compatible with the contemporary concept of an imprint of the personality through the soul (Diaconu,

2005, p. 143). In this respect, a change in tactile patterns of perception also took place through the acceptance of skin adornments (Diaconu, 2005, p. 144)—and tattoos in the habit do not represent a special focus for European travelers in their observation and description of the foreign.

On the contrary, Europeans were fascinated by the numerous skin decorations, and Weule does not provide information about the tattoos of the indigenous communities, "but how much the tattoos, ear, lip and nose ornaments [merged] into one another" (Weule, 1908, p. 14). The prevalent mode of embellishment noted in the ethnographic accounts among the people of German East Africa is the use of jewelry worn in the ears, lips, or nose. According to travel reports, the common practice of inserting wooden discs or stakes was widely observed (Weule, 1909, pp. 272-278), described after Weule by locals as "chipinis" (Weule, 1909, p. 272) or "kipinis" (Weule, 1908, p. 14). These chipinis might have become popular as a trend originating from the Jao, "with their progressive tendencies are authoritative for coastal culture" (Weule, 1909, p. 68). The wooden inlays became a fashionable trend in various cultures across German East Africa and underwent their distinct cultural influence. Among the Chagga people on Kilimanjaro, the inlaid wooden pieces were typically of different sizes compared to those among the Maasai (Widenmann, 1899, pp. 52-53), but they remained a widely embraced trend: "Very usually, men wear spirals of iron wire in their earlobes in the Maasai style, from which iron chains hang down" (Widenmann, 1899, p. 53). According to Weule, among the Makua, women are known to adorn themselves with notably large chipinis:

> And it really seems a miracle to me that these delicate lips can carry such enormous masses of heavy wood: huge, a hand's breadth in height, the monstrosity of block [...] clamps itself into the narrow, tightly stretched hem of the so cruelly pierced lip. (Weule, 1909, p. 436)

Within his account, there are abundant illustrations and explanations of the lip discs (Weule, 1909, pp. 436-439) showcasing the German ethnologist's amazement at the custom of the "so cruelly pierced lip" (Weule, 1909, p. 436). However, the Matonde and Matambwe were also known to insert "immense masses of heavy wood" (Weule, 1909, p. 436) into both their separated upper lips and their pierced earlobes (Weule, 1909, pp. 436-439). Nevertheless, in order to wear larger chipinis, African communities would start adorning themselves from a young age and progressively add larger wooden discs or stakes as they grew. Conversely, among the Wajao in Chingulungulu (Weule, 1908, p. v), Weule's observations imply that the incorporation of chipinis is more than just a trend. The Wajao traditionally adorned themselves with wooden inserts, particularly in their noses, starting from childhood. The inclusion of chipinis, however, was associated with a social initiation process: following the initial "manhood lessons," men received an ebony chipini with pewter inlays, while women were presented with a gleaming chipini after their first unyago or

"womanhood festival" (Weule, 1908, p. 27). The use of chipinis extends well beyond mere fashion embellishment. Weule contends that the insertion of wooden discs or stakes into the modified body brings about a "shift in the sense of shame" (Weule, 1908, p. 6). This is evident as he endeavors to detach the chipinis from the local populations in order to add them to his personal collection (Weule, 1909, p. 35). In this context, the significant role of visual perception in influencing the impact of skin modifications becomes evident, where the sense of shame is shaped by the outward-directed symbolic power. According to Weule, the Jao people play an "authoritative" role in establishing a fashion trend related to skin ornaments (Weule, 1909, p. 68). However, aside from chipinis, the Jao themselves typically do not engage in body painting, and ornamental scars are rare—instead, it was customary to amputate individual finger joints or file the incisors into sharp points (Weule, 1908, p. 27). As per August Widenmann's account, a German traveler to Africa and subsequently a staff physician of the Deutsche Schutztruppe, tooth and skin ornaments are observed even among the youngest members of the Chagga (Widenmann, 1899, p. 45), on whose bodies the influence of the "coastal culture" (Weule, 1909, p. 68) is particularly noticeable. Furthermore, Carl Claus von Decken, another German traveler to Africa, mentions that filing teeth was a prevalent practice among the Wapars, undertaken as a means of enhancing their bodily appearance (Decken, 1869, p. 251).

Adornments are placed on the skin as the largest sensory organ of humans, which stands between the self and the outside world (Diaconu, 2005, p. 145). An openly worn skin adornment or alteration represents a conscious connection of the wearer to a culture and, moreover, the conscious highlighting of a cultural feature (Diaconu, 2005, pp. 150-151). Accordingly, the adornments of the populations of German East Africa also affect travelers and the classification of their visual perceptions of the "undressed savages" (Diaconu, 2005, p. 147, 152). Ornaments, exemplified by their role in initiation rites into adulthood, also function as markers for visual perception. The multisensory aspect of alterations in the haptic properties of the skin, discerned through the sense of sight, becomes more evident in the subsequent example of artificial scarring.

As per Weule's observations, aside from the practice of inserting pins or discs in the ears, lips, or nose, another form of skin adornment is the intentional scarring of the body, referred to as "body disfigurements" (Weule, 1908, p. 6). In African cultures, artificial scarring of the skin mostly served purely aesthetic purposes (Diaconu, 2005, p. 147). In response to Weule's inquiries, he was informed that the practice of scar ornamentation was exclusively an expression of aesthetics (Weule, 1909, p. 441): "With this reference to personal taste we have indeed the flawless solution for the scar ornamentation itself, then also for the choice of patterns" (Weule, 1909, p. 441). However, scarring as ornamentation complements the clothing via a culturally coded inscription of the visible skin (Diaconu, 2005, p. 152). In accordance with Weule, it is stated that "none

of these patterns [...] can be considered a real tribal insignia today" (Weule, 1909, p. 440), however, simultaneously, these patterns serve as palpable remnants of a historical tradition. Consequently, the undecorated body can also be considered unclothed in the perception of cultures where painting, scarring, and tattooing are an integral part of life (Diaconu, 2005, p. 152). To this understanding, skin adornments appear as clothing that can equally envelop the body and protect it from external, cultural influences (Diaconu, 2005, pp. 152-153)—similar to the diverse self-depictions by travelers regarding their attire, meant to convey a sense of cultural superiority in contrast to how others describe them, the practice of adorning the skin with inserted wooden discs or pegs, and the intentional scarring, functions as a visible form of marking. Furthermore, the scarring represents a modification of the tactile characteristics of the skin, engaging a multisensory system involving both the sense of sight and touch, influencing both external and self-perception.

The dissociation of European modernity from local populations and their cultures through the accounts of travelers culminates in the numerous descriptions and images of naked bodies (Höpflinger, 2016, p. 182). Since 17th and 18th century literature on travel and the foreign, descriptions of nudity have constituted an essential component in the construction and spectacle of the 'other' (Le Breton, 2017, p. 110). Between enticement to touch and defense against a harmful influence, scantily clad and exposed bodies represent a feature of cultural distinction and therefore provide a surface for the inscription of pejorative meanings (Le Breton, 2017, p. 110). The recurring descriptions of scantily clad populations initially reinforce the counter-image of the European who is always well or appropriately dressed (Höpflinger, 2016, p. 182). However, skin adornment can also highlight an area of the body in the eyes of the person looking at it, thus increasing the eroticizing effect of the entire body (Diaconu, 2005, pp. 146-147). As evident from ethnographic accounts, European travelers not only document the practice of head shaving but, as per Weule, also note the widespread occurrence of pubic hair shaving among women in various cultures of German East Africa (Weule, 1909, p. 386). He also discusses scar ornaments among the Makua and Makonde, suggesting that, in his interpretation, these ornaments likely function to heighten the erotic sense of touch by being strategically placed on the skin of specific body parts (Weule, 1908, p. 84). Weule also details instances in German East Africa where the tradition of female circumcision was replaced by a practice referred to as "lengthening of the labia" (Weule, 1908, p. 32) by consistently stretching the labia (Weule, 1908, pp. 31-32). According to Weule's observations, both the Makua and the Wajao engaged in this practice with the aim of enhancing the erotic experience for men (Weule, 1908, p. 32; 1909, pp. 370-371). In the European travelers' descriptions of skin changes in the pubic area and an eroticizing effect of these external body features, bodily desire as a component of "colonial fantasies" (Fuhrmann, 2013, p. 56) becomes clear (Fuhrmann, 2013, p. 56).

The difference between the local cultures of German East Africa and those of Europe was also constructed in the 19th century through physical characteristics (Höpflinger, 2016, p. 182). Often, the attribution of opposing attributes is made based on physical differentiating features alone, and the bodies of African populations are essentialized via the evaluation of perceptions (Höpflinger, 2016, p. 182). An elevation of white travelers over Black populations consequently also took place via a hierarchical categorization of perceived distinguishing characteristics (Höpflinger, 2016, p. 182). The difference in bodies determines the associated structures of a social and political hierarchy between Black populations and white actors of colonialism (Höpflinger, 2016, p. 182). This includes an assessment of 'culture heights', which include the perception of the body as an object of foreignness in addition to culturally shaped, bodily practices (Höpflinger, 2016, p. 182): Ornaments of the skin, like bodily practices, are mostly described in a negative sense and with pejorative comparisons in ethnographic travel accounts (Höpflinger, 2016, p. 182). Moreover, the negative attributions of meaning to bodily distinguishing features are rarely overwritten by positive evaluations, and the demarcation of 'race' like that of gender is considered particularly fixed categorizations of the 'other' (Höpflinger, 2016, p. 183).

3. Skin Colors: Construction of Racist Demarcation and Ideas of Inferiorism

In the European discourses around a hierarchization of living beings, the perception of physical differentiating features is a basis for distinguishing animals from humans (Classen, 2012, pp. 103-104). In addition to an upright gait and the development of extremities such as the hands, features such as hairiness and skin color are also considered criteria that have been associated with opposing attributions: The upright gait is contrasted with a posture close to the ground and the inferiorization of other living beings as a sign of higher development of biological, spiritual, and mental abilities (Classen, 2012, p. 104). While discourses around the demarcation between humans and animals were at their peak in the 18th century, the uncertainty in the interpretation of bodily differentiating features also affected 19th century phenomena and social practices such as slavery and the devaluation of Black people (Classen, 2012, p. 108). Since the 16th century and an increasing transcontinental exchange of goods, knowledge, and cultures, the discourses around distinctive bodily features were extended by another dimension with contact to New Worlds and 'foreign' populations (Classen, 2012, p. 108). A classification of the populations of America, Africa, and Asia as a lower developmental stage of European white man was always controversial and was especially proclaimed by proponents of slavery as a supposed evolutionary stage between humans and animals to be able to exploit their labor power (Classen, 2012, p. 108). According to their ascribed stage of development, the slaves used for labor were mostly judged like animals according to their labor power and subjected to the will of their white masters

(Classen, 2012, p. 109). As a result of an increasing mixing of black and white skin color with the end of slavery in America as formerly distinct features of differentiation, advocates of slavery in the 19th century increasingly used multisensory reasoning (Smith, 2006, pp. 40-41). The characteristics of racial differentiation were no longer derived from sight alone; rather, Black people could also be identified beyond doubt through the senses of taste, smell, and touch (Smith, 2006, p. 67). Since the 18th and increasingly the 19th century, the treatment of the 'others', people demarcated by physical characteristics, has been increasingly questioned by the anti-slavery movement, but also by scholars (Classen, 2012, p. 109). By the mid-19th century, the characteristics of bodily difference, like those of reason, were called into question by Charles Darwin's theory of evolution (Classen, 2012, p. 109). While racial differentiation characteristics were mostly related to physical differences, the difference between humans and animals was mainly determined by the ability to reason (Classen, 2012, p. 109). According to this, all humans bear the same characteristics of development from animals, from the development of the hand from claws and paws to the skin, the origin of which was seen in the hairy skins of animals (Classen, 2012, p. 110).

In contact with local populations, European travelers first perceived people's bodies with their gazes, and the recognition of black skin represents a major focus of European perceptual patterns in the discovery of foreignness (Smith, 2006, p. 11). The perception of objects such as bodies and their characteristics such as skin colors includes an evaluation or classification of tactile properties with the viewing (Sekimoto & Brown, 2020, p. 61). With the travelers' descriptions of the skin colors of the populations of German East Africa, the evaluations concluded from visual perception therefore provided insight into functions of the sense of touch (Sekimoto & Brown, 2020, p. 61). While vision allows an examination of objects by using the 'optical eye' from a distance, closer examination always involves one of the near senses of smelling, tasting, and touching in the attribution of meanings and evaluations (Sekimoto & Brown, 2020, pp. 60-61). However, if this distance to a body as an object to be examined is bridged, a deeper contextualization of optical information occurs via the 'haptic eye' (Sekimoto & Brown, 2020, p. 61), as in the determination of skin colors and features of bodily difference. And as in the observation of skin ornamentation, the sense of sight forms an overlay or multisensuality with the sense of touch, allowing vision to perceive haptic qualities. However, as the following examples of the observation of skin colors will make clear, these multisensory perceptions are strongly connected to the imaginary worlds and racist prejudices of European travelers to Africa.

In the description of skin colors and other physical characteristics, local populations become colonized subjects and the categorical description and treatment as objects already constitute a form of racist differentiation (Sekimoto & Brown, 2020, p. 61). Local populations are also denied comparable perceptual

capacities in European imaginaries (Sekimoto & Brown, 2020, p. 61), as the senses of less developed, colonized objects could not perceive the world like their 'white masters'. The assertion of a biologically based, natural inferiority of Black people also includes a devaluation of their sensory perceptions, which, although more pronounced due to their proximity to animals, could not compete with the perceptual patterns of European modernity (Sekimoto & Brown, 2020, pp. 29-30). Not only would the cultures of Africa have shaped a different sound world, but their natural, stronger body odor, like the tactile properties of the skin that are to be distinguished, are inalienable characteristics of a difference (Sekimoto & Brown, 2020, p. 30). In contrast to the qualitative characteristics of black skin, this line of reasoning presented that of white people as both a higher development and a general standard (Smith, 2006, p. 46). According to the imaginary worlds shaped by racist stereotypes, Black people have a specific smell, their own sound worlds, and, due to thicker skin, a sense of touch that is not shaped according to Western standards (Smith, 2006, p. 8). Black people with their own sense of perception were also said to have limited sensitivity to aesthetics, and it was emphasized that African cultures had not been able to develop a perception for the sounds, tastes, and other advantages of European culture (Sekimoto & Brown, 2020, p. 30). Accordingly, the superiority of the West in contrast to the inferiority of the 'others' was determined through dichotomous attributions of meaning via supposedly distinguishable patterns of perception (Sekimoto & Brown, 2020, p. 30). Furthermore, the categories of 'race' have thus also emerged through sensory perceptions and cannot be seen solely as a social construction (Sekimoto & Brown, 2020, p. 30).

The social construction of 'race' has also produced the recognition of features of racial differentiation such as skin colors as a phenomenon of visual perception (Smith, 2006, p. 2). Cultural identification and social demarcation are also continuously constructed through a distinctive perception of African, 'foreign' bodies from one's own, European bodies via the difference in skin colors (Höpflinger, 2016, p. 176). A tool commonly employed by European travelers in the late 19th century, including Weule, was "a [...] color chart according to Felix von Luschan for determining skin nuances" (Weule, 1908, p. 3). In his research on African populations, Luschan contributed by conducting measurements on over forty different body features (Luschan, 1897, p. 40). In German East Africa, he examined sixteen individuals, both women and men of the Maasai, specifically from Moschi, located south of Kilimanjaro in present-day Tanzania (Luschan, 1897, p. 32). These sixteen individuals were not only subject to meticulous measurements but also underwent additional visual categorizations conducted by the Austrian anthropologist: "No. 7. Kassiúi, [male], from Moscho, about 30 years: very tall, strong, well nourished. Dark reddish brown. Face and hands somewhat lighter, lips quite dark [...]" (Luschan, 1897, p. 35). Alongside personal and statistical details such as names, ages, heights, and physical conditions, the comprehensive descriptions of each individual also encompass the classification of skin color, and this classification serves as the initial point in

the subsequent discussion of distinctive features of the Maasai and variations from other population groups (Luschan, 1897, pp. 32-39). Additional depictions of the Maasai from Moschi span from "Dark olive-brown" (Luschan, 1897, p. 34) to "Body very dark reddish-brown" (Luschan, 1897, p. 34). Weule frequently describes the outcomes of the "color chart" (Weule, 1908, p. 3), however, he often expresses surprise at the reddish rather than intensely black skin coloration observed in various populations in German East Africa (Weule, 1909, p. 72): "Other travelers before me have already reported on the strangely light skin color tones of the Wamuera in particular; if it were not for the typical Negro face, one might have mistaken these almost copper-red figures for Indians" (Weule, 1908, pp. 16-17). The European explorers August Widenmann and Gustav Adolf Graf von Götzen meticulously observe skin colors, providing detailed descriptions of various "skin nuances" (Weule, 1908, p. 3) among Black individuals (Widenmann, 1899, pp. 7-10; Götzen, 1895, p.180). Their travel reports serve the dual purpose of differentiating populations based on both skin color and their distinct observations. In the accounts provided by Richard Kandt, a German explorer who later became the Resident of the Rwanda district under German colonial rule, he details his observations of "race signs" (Kandt, 1904, p. 228). According to Kandt, some local populations or social classes perceive skin colors as an ideal of beauty (Kandt, 1904, pp. 236-237):

> I should like to mention that in this respect the Negro is perhaps influenced by the fact that light coloring is the mark of the noble, dark coloring (caused by the influence of the sun's rays on generations of field workers) the mark of the lowly, and that consequently the social ideal has rubbed off on the aesthetic one. (Kandt, 1904, p. 237)

Here, the working classes' darker skin tone was contrasted with the "royal skin" (Kandt, 1904, p. 228) of the upper classes, turning skin color into a comparable marker of social distinction in African cultures, similar to how clothing served this purpose in European history. In various populations across German East Africa, skin color was, according to the reports, perceived as a feature indicative of social affiliation, as seen in the Waganda saying: "Black is nice, say the Waganda, but as black as this X., which is no longer nice" (Kandt, 1904, p. 228).

Black skin was said to be more resistant, but its wearers were said to have a lower perception of sensual-aesthetic qualities—and thus the African populations represented the appropriate labor force for hard, but also particularly dirty and odor-intensive activities, for which white people, by implication, declared themselves unsuitable (Smith, 2006, pp. 94-95). Protected by their thick skin, Black people would be more adept at harvesting the sharp stalks of cotton (Smith, 2007a, p. 109), while at the same time explaining the relentless use of African populations for plantation work and other heavy, physically demanding work, often under direct sunlight and intense heat (Sekimoto & Brown, 2020, p. 30; Smith, 2007a, p. 109). Due to their supposedly lower sensory perceptions or a sense of touch that is only animalistic, as well as their supposedly

backward cultural development, Black people were mainly used to working with their hands rather than with specialized tools during colonialism and slavery (Smith, 2006, pp. 84-85). Black people's skin, often compared to rough leather, as well as a less developed nervous system compared to white people, were cited by proponents of slavery to justify the harsh living and working conditions of slaves as well as their brutal treatment (Smith, 2006, p. 84; Le Breton, 2017, p. 109). Ethnographic accounts reveal racist differentiation as the basis of hegemonic structures that were justified by the declared insensitivity of Black people or black skin in contrast to European distinct patterns of perception (Sekimoto & Brown, 2020, p. 31). A transfer of perceptual patterns to be differentiated into physical distinguishing features simultaneously reinforced the argumentation of a hierarchical devaluation of Black people (Sekimoto & Brown, 2020, p. 30). The demarcation of black and white is associated with a devaluation of black bodies and at the same time the elevation of white bodies (Höpflinger, 2016, p. 178): The thick skin of the Black person was contrasted with the particularly sensitive skin of the white person, with which one attributed to oneself a heightened sensitivity to pain (Sekimoto & Brown, 2020, p. 30). Conversely, this justified the violent treatment of African populations, the often particularly brutal beatings that were widespread in the history of American slavery as well as in the colonies of the 19th and 20th centuries (Sekimoto & Brown, 2020, p. 30). In this respect, African populations as colonial subjects were denied their own culturally shaped sensory perceptions and thus declared to objects over whose little human senses and emotions white Europeans had to determine (Sekimoto & Brown, 2020, p. 30). A racist differentiation and culturalist representation of the populations in the colonies thus also takes place through the attribution by white people of their own patterns of perception of Black people (Sekimoto & Brown, 2020, p. 30).

4. Conclusion: Seeing the Tactile—The African Body as a Cultural Representational Surface

The accounts of the German travelers to Africa examined here do not include direct perceptions of the sense of touch and count touching as taboo out of demarcation and concern about transferring moral characteristics. However, with the foreign descriptions of bodies and tactile properties of the skin, it was possible to show through the visual representations of inscribed cultural traits that bodies in ethnographic observation represent objects of inalienable difference of a social category of 'race'. Furthermore, the observation of skin and bodies represents a form of contact and leads to the demarcation between self and counterpart. In this process, bodies become objects of contemplation and visual representation in which European imaginary worlds of backward cultures are united, and the descriptions form an essentialization of cultural difference. This was first made visible in the skin ornaments, which are subject to cultural norms and ritualization, and can therefore be considered features of

cultural belonging. Reports mostly describe scarring and inserts of wooden discs in the ear, lip, and mouth; tattoos and paintings, on the other hand, were already more familiar in Europe, and consequently a less obvious feature of cultural distinction and display of the foreignness of African populations. Through descriptions of erotic skin adornments and the repeated remarks about scantily clad bodies, bodily desire also became clear as a component of "colonial fantasies" (Fuhrmann, 2013, p. 56).

Furthermore, the observation of skin colors could show how much the travelers and the attributions of meaning to their perceptions were influenced by contemporary discourses around bodily differentiations and hierarchization of living beings. A devaluation of African populations was already associated with the perception of black skin color. The classification of skin color goes back to moral attributions, which in turn are based on imaginary worlds, but also on personal attitudes towards culture. According to this study, a pejorative description of skin color is based on ideas of cultural backwardness and physical difference, but also an inferior, animalistic pattern of perception. The contemporary claim that black and supposedly thicker skin was better suited for heavy work also suggested a lower sensitivity to tactile stimuli and pain, which was seen as a justification for the brutality in the treatment of Black people in slavery and colonialism. Accordingly, 'race' initially appears as a fictional, visual category to separate whiteness from blackness, which is not solely a social construction (Sekimoto & Brown, 2020, p. 30). However, the racist demarcation and devaluation according to skin color were not conducted solely through the sense of sight (Sekimoto & Brown, 2020, pp. 29-30), rather this work was able to show how transference of visual perception serves to evaluate tactile characteristics and even replaces them entirely in the accounts. If skin and skin color as a biological and social physical characteristic serve to demarcate Black and white people, a racist characterization of the pejorative attributions is also evident in the travelogues. The attributions were already shaped since the early colonial exchange and slavery, repeated in the ethnographic travelogues, and confirmed via the local populations of Africa as visual objects of difference with descriptions of skin adornments and the classification of skin colors.

The added value of a history of the senses, however, lies in the consideration of all the senses involved and their interaction in a phenomenon under investigation, and in this way, innovative approaches and insights can be gained (Smith, 2007b, pp. 841-842). This paper has used the perceptions of European travelers to Africa to show how the sense of sight forms synesthesia in ethnographic observation, in that sight alone conveys the qualities of touch. As in the examples discussed here, the African travelers do not report perceptions of direct touch and are descriptions of haptic or tactile qualities of the various populations in German East Africa entirely transferred from visual perception. While the reasons for the travelers' reluctance to touch are closely related to the interpretation of ethnographic observations as that of a backward African culture, which

is widespread for Europeans, the examples discussed here are also characterized by features of cultural and racial differentiation and hierarchization. The transmission of the tactile properties of both an object and a subject, on the other hand, is rooted in the functioning of the senses of vision and touch. It is true that the sense of sight depends on contextualization by other senses for perception (Smith, 2007a, pp. 20-21), and that the recognition of objects in proximity is intricately linked to the sense of touch (Le Breton, 2017, p. 35). However, for the multisensory nature of the perception of tactile properties or qualities, the perception of the optical and haptic eye must be emphasized: While the optical eye already transmits the information of other senses from the experience and cultural imprint of the observer at a distance, this information is refined and thus confirmed or refuted by the haptic eye at close range. Even before the involvement of perception through the so-called close-up senses of smelling, tasting, and touching, the observations of bodies, skin changes, or skin ornamentation, and skin colors are thus contextualized more precisely at close range. As could be demonstrated, the examples discussed here are based on the synesthesia of seeing and touching in the function of a haptic eye.

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