Staged Otherness

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Published by Central European University Press


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“When Winter Arrives, the Sinhalese Go Back to Ceylon and Their Elephants Go to Hamburg”: Hagenbeck’s Sinhalese Caravans and Ethnographic Imagery in the Polish Press during the Partition Era

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Displays of ethnic Others, known in German-speaking regions as *Völkerschauen*, constituted a flourishing branch of the entertainment industry in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century. Among many entrepreneurs and impresarios employed in the business, there is one figure of particular importance: Carl Hagenbeck (1844–1913). Starting out as the son of a humble Hamburg-based fishmonger, not only did Carl Hagenbeck build a thriving animal trading company but he also developed an impressive showbusiness enterprise specialized in touring exhibitions of non-European people. What has been called Carl Hagenbeck’s empire of entertainments (Ames 2008) constitutes a well-established subject of academic investigation. Research conducted so far has shed light on how Hagenbeck’s business was organized; on the network of recruiters, impresarios, and managers; on exhibiting practices and structures of the shows; on the intermingling of Europeans with ethnic Others; and finally on how the shows were perceived by various groups of hosting communities (Ames 2008; Ciarlo 2011, 77–81; Rothfels 2002, 82–142; Thode-Arora 1989, 2008; see also Thode-Arora in this volume).

There are still, however, relatively uncharted chapters in Hagenbeck’s business odyssey. One that has emerged in recent years is the company’s presence in Eastern and Central Europe (Czarnecka 2018; Demski 2018a, 2018b; Kurek and Mayer 2017). This chapter will investigate this issue by focusing on the anthropological and zoological exhibitions of the Sinhalese in Warsaw and Łódź.1

1 Research for this study was carried out as a part of the project “Staged Otherness: Human Oddities in Central Europe, 1850–1939” (project no. 2015/19/B/HS3/02143) granted by the National Science Center, Poland.
Between 1888 and 1891, the Hagenbeck company traveled with at least three groups of Sinhalese through the lands of the Russian Empire and the region of Galicia, which was under the Habsburg monarchy. Along their way, which started in Hamburg and concluded in Riga (in the case of the 1888 show) or Saint Petersburg or Moscow (the 1889 and 1891 exhibitions), the troupes performed dozens of shows in numerous towns including Warsaw, Łódź, Kraków, Lviv, Vilnius, and Riga (on ethnic shows in Riga see Boldāne-Zeļenkova 2020). There are also claims that the company visited Odessa and Kiev. Announced as “caravans” or “anthropological and zoological exhibitions,” these shows offered a spectacular form of entertainment dedicated to and consumed by the masses. Drawing on “exoticism,” claims of ethnographic “authenticity,” and captivating programs of performances, these exhibitions constituted institutionalized and strongly commercialized presentations of otherness. Not only did the shows present an ethnic Other but, first and foremost, they created his or her image and disseminated cultural and racial stereotypes that fed the common imagination. There were multiple agents to inform this image, including impresarios, host institutions, and performers themselves.

I focus on a short period of Sinhalese shows in this part of Europe—a sequence of three exhibits that took place between 1888 and 1891. The performances I discuss took place in the towns of the Kingdom of Poland, which then, in political and economic terms, constituted part of the Russian Empire. Judging by press accounts, the shows offered, to some extent, similar programs; and some actors who performed in the first show came back with the following year’s troupe. These displays seem to have constituted a coherent sequence of events arranged, financed, and driven by Polish, first and foremost Warsaw-based, hosts. Moreover, it seems that these shows were separated by at least a decade from the subsequent shows given in the former Polish lands—in Kraków and Poznań (Ger. Posen) in 1901. What also sets

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2 The political and historical geography of the regions mentioned needs a word of explanation. In the period under discussion, the Russian Empire encompassed part of the land that used to be the Polish and Lithuanian Commonwealth, which had been partitioned by Russia, Austria (which annexed the region later named as Galicia), and Prussia between 1772 and 1795. Poland did not gain independence, control over its territory, and statehood until 1918.

3 This data is based on press notes, which often provided readers with troupes’ itineraries (see references throughout the text).

4 The shows in Poznań were discussed by Krzysztof Kurek and Mateusz Mayer (2017) and Dagnosław Demski (2018a, 2018b). Those in Kraków have not been examined yet.
these late 1880s shows apart from the exhibitions in the early 1900s are the political, social, and cultural milieux that provided the context. The situation in the Russian partition, with the politics of imposing Russian culture on the locals, differed from the one in Galicia (part of Austria-Hungary), which enjoyed relative political and cultural autonomy, and from the Prussian partition, where strong processes of Germanization were run by Prussian authorities. These three parts of former Poland differed immensely in terms of almost all areas of social, political, and cultural life—in fact, they constituted parts of different cultural and political entities.

A series of exhibitions the Hagenbeck company organized in Eastern and Central Europe and Russia stemmed from the success of the 1886 shows of the Ceylonese in Berlin and Paris. These shows exemplified a seminal change in both the structure and the nature of ethnographic exhibitions. They differed from the early 1870s shows, when usually a small group of non-Europeans was on display (Ames 2008, 80, 85). Caravans and anthropological and zoological exhibitions of the mid-1880s and 1890s reached sometimes enormous dimensions in terms of scenography and the number of performers and offered a rich program of distractions, including jugglers, acrobats, and animal races, as well as ceremonial processions that could still be perceived as “ethnic” peculiarities. The shows were “democratic” events, attracting people from various social strata. The organizers—both the Hagenbeck company and host institutions—were very flexible as to the requirements of the audiences: the organizers were prepared to reduce prices and to offer private viewings for women, schoolchildren, and scientists. However, the more flamboyant and the more “circus-like” the shows became, the less interesting they were in academic circles (Schneider 2008, 145–46). Contrary to the 1883 show of the Sinhalese (les Cinghalais) in Paris, when anthropologists, pathologists, and naturalists flocked to the Paris zoological garden to investigate the newcomers, the 1886 show aroused little or no scientific interest among French scholars (Schneider 2008, 146). Similar processes have been identified in cases of German anthropologists’ endorsement of Völkerschauen. The support of ethnic shows provided by such figures as Rudolf Virchow reached its peak around the mid-1890s and at the turn of the century scholars distanced themselves from events that drew on “commercial ethnography” (Bruckner 2003, 140, 143). This shift in the perception and, first and foremost, nature of Hagenbeckian ethnographic exhibitions seems to be of importance with
respect to shows performed in the Polish towns under discussion. The audience there faced colorful parades of foreigners reenacting customs and occupations whose ethnographic purity was sometimes even mocked (e.g., see *Kurier Świąteczny* [*Holiday Courier*], April 26 [May 8], 1890,5 front cover). Judging by press notes, commercial and entertaining factors outweighed the exhibitions’ ethnographic value.

The first exhibition of the Sinhalese in Warsaw in 1888 coincided with the establishment in 1887 of the first Polish ethnographic journal—*Wisła* (*Vistula*)—and the consolidation of ethnographic, folklorist, and anthropological milieu around the Warsaw zoological garden and ethnographic museum. It seems, however, that Warsaw ethnographers, those working and researching in situ, due to the political and cultural reasons elaborated below, were relatively uninterested in ethnic shows. Their place was taken over by journalists and reviewers for illustrated magazines, who usually commented on “exotic” visitors and the country of their origin.

The present study has several goals. The first is to outline, in terms of both geography and chronology, the itineraries that the three groups of Sinhalese followed in Eastern and Central Europe and Russia. The data at my disposal comes mainly from the Polish-language press published in the towns of the former Polish and Lithuanian Commonwealth that Hagenbeck’s troupes visited. Contemporary periodicals provide much information on the journeys made by the Sinhalese. I hope that extracting this information will facilitate other scholarly research on exhibitions in Russian- and German-speaking milieux—that is, the towns of Kiev, Odessa, Vilnius, Riga, Saint Petersburg, and Moscow.

Secondly, reviews and articles in the press usually give an insight into the everyday lives of “exotic” guests in the places they visited. Such mundane commentary can reveal a lot about the temporary status of non-Europeans in the host communities—on intermixing with the people, direct encounters, and exchanges of gifts. My aim is to peek inside this mundane aspect of Sinhalese shows as it seems crucial to the image of the visitors—namely, their status of Others.

5 In the case of the press titles published in the Russian partition, the dates of the issues are given as in the original. The first date is given according to the Julian calendar (so-called Old Style date); the second date is according to the Gregorian calendar (New Style date).
Finally, drawing on press articles, this chapter will consider the relationship between the presentation of non-Europeans on stage and the development of popular ethnography. Utilizing Hagenbeck’s Ceylonese caravans as a case study, I will focus on how the journalists described, pictured, and interpreted “exotic” visitors from South Asia. These texts contributed to the production of ready-to-use ideas on non-Europeans that informed the collective imagery of Polish citizens in the Russian partition.

**Carl Hagenbeck’s Enterprise and the Exhibition of the Sinhalese**

The business machine of Carl Hagenbeck Jr.’s enterprise started operating in 1874 when a group of six Sami people arrived in Hamburg to demonstrate the daily life of Laplanders for a German audience. Hagenbeck immediately received support from Heinrich Leutemann, a friend and illustrator, who authored an account of a Sami show published in *Die Gartenlaube* (*Gazebo*; Leutemann 1875), a middlebrow illustrated magazine devoted to culture, science, and art. Leutemann stressed the Sami shows’ “authenticity” and presented Hagenbeck as an authority on ethnic shows.

It has been estimated that Carl Hagenbeck organized around seventy shows between 1874 and 1932 (Thode-Arora 2008, 167). What differentiated Hagenbeckian shows from previous exhibitions of human oddities, even those conceived in ethnic terms, was that they were deprived of an air of sideshow presentation of freaks. Hagenbeck paid particular attention to ethnographic “authenticity” and produced elaborately directed shows—anthropological and zoological exhibitions—that had the immense power of captivating the public. The performers themselves were instructed in how to behave—reenacting the acts of “natural” life or performing according to a program. The displays were set up on elaborate, ethnically appropriate outdoor stages furnished with huts, shrines, and workshops that were meant to evoke the “exotic” and present the life of non-Europeans (Ames 2008, 54–55).

How this postulate of authenticity was fulfilled is explained by many press reviews of the shows. *Bluszcz* (Ivy), a Warsaw-based weekly targeting a female audience, offered its readers an account of the 1884 exhibition of the Sinhalese in the Viennese Prater (June 20 [July 2], 1884). As the reporter remarked, “Hagenbeck brought the island of Ceylon . . . and installed it in Prater.” The exhibition began with an exposition of indigenous “arts” and
crafts and naturalia: “Plaited baskets, clay vessels covered with colorful glazes and ornaments, specimens of the skins of snakes and gigantic lizards, several species of coffee beans.” Later on, in the rotunda, the visitor encountered bamboo huts covered with mats made of coconut-palm leaves. Near the huts were people engaged in everyday work. The reviewer saw the caravan as an engaging spectacle constituting a possibility of studies for anthropologists. What Hagenbeck actually offered was a “living habitat” representing a particular geographical area or ethnic group displaced for the sake of entertainment (Ames 2008, 63).

The character, structure, and programs of ethnic shows changed over time given the shifting possibilities of recruitment abroad, the increasing professionalization of non-Europeans who earned a living by displaying themselves in Europe, and the public’s expectations. Early shows usually focused on displaying families, or rather small but gender-differentiated groups of people. As time passed, “families” evolved into huge troupes of dozens of actors usually termed “caravans” (Ames 2008, 80, 85). The repertoire developed as well, and alongside displays of native work began to include folk customs and circus-like performances.

The exhibitions of the Ceylonese stemmed from the elephant trade (Ames 2008, 30–31) and Hagenbeck’s success in selling animals in the United States. The decision to invest in Ceylon and its indigenous inhabitants was dictated by several concerns, one of which was of a political nature. Ceylon became an attractive target due to turbulence in the colonial politics in Africa where Hagenbeck was well rooted and where a network of his employees was well organized (see Warsame in this volume). In Ceylon, Hagenbeck was represented by three agents: his nephew Johannes Castens, his half-brother John Hagenbeck, and a traveler, Eduard Gehring (Ames 2008, 31).

The first group of Sinhalese arrived in Europe in 1883. Managed by Johannes Castens, the group was shown in Paris in the Jardin d’Acclimatation (zoological garden) and then in the Berlin zoo (Ames 2008, 84). It consisted of twenty-one individuals—thirteen men, five women, and three children—both ordinary Ceylonese and professional performers. In 1884 John Hagenbeck brought to Europe another Ceylon caravan of over forty people. The troupe traveled around Germany visiting Düsseldorf, Frankfurt, and Dresden (Hagenbeck 1909, 99). They also headed for Vienna, where they entertained the public of Prater (Bluszcz, June 20 [July 2], 1884). In the fol-
lowing years, 1885 and 1886, Hagenbeck presented what was advertised as “Carl Hagenbeck’s 1885 Ceylon Expedition.” The group, recruited by John Hagenbeck, comprised sixty-seven indigenous inhabitants of Ceylon accompanied by twenty-five elephants. It visited Germany and Switzerland and set out for Vienna and London. The tour culminated in Paris, where the Sinhalese were displayed in the Jardin d’Acclimatation in 1886. It was recorded that over a million guests came to admire les Cinghalais and browse around the living districts (Ames 2008, 67). This touring troupe was probably one of the first itinerant shows of Asians to constitute an advanced logistical and financial enterprise. Several dozen actors, dozens of animals, and an extensive village and ethnic props contributed to a spectacular show, which clearly extended beyond the borders of the “ethnographic.” As it was recalled by John Hagenbeck, among the Sinhalese participating in the 1885–86 European tour were elephant drivers, snake charmers, dancers, contortionists, magicians, and other figures he found typical of Indian folk life (quoted in Ames 2008, 43).

Starting from the mid-1880s, the relations between ethnic show and circus performance became closer and more complicated, and borders between the two blurred. In 1887, Carl Hagenbeck entered the circus business, mounting “Carl Hagenbeck’s International Circus and Sinhalese Caravan.” This new formula proved unsuccessful due to severe accidents during the shows in Munich in 1888. The Ceylonese troupe split from the circus and reorganized as an ethnic show again. Some of them performed in France and Belgium with Eduard Gehring as their impresario (Ames 2008, 257, note 42). Others must have stayed with John Hagenbeck. These individuals probably constituted the group that arrived in Warsaw in 1888.

John Hagenbeck and his son John George specialized in exhibiting people from India and Ceylon, drawing mainly on the exploitation of native work and animals as well as “circus-like” presentations, if on a smaller scale. As I have already indicated, the entrepreneurs continued to recruit people from South Asia for at least the next four decades.

The Sinhalese at the Eastern Borderlands of Europe, 1888 to 1891

The first group of Sinhalese to reach Warsaw and then head eastward was a caravan of both professional performers and “ordinary” Ceylonese recruited and managed by John Hagenbeck. Warsaw saw their arrival in the last
week of August 1888. The first performance took place on August 24 and the shows continued for over two weeks (until September 11). The troupe was invited by the Warsaw zoological garden and its owner, the respectable lawyer and publicist Jan Maurycy Kamiński. The board of the zoo covered all expenses related to the journey, lodging, and food for both people and animals. It seems that an agreement between the board of the zoo and the Hagenbeck company guaranteed that the Sinhalese would not accept invitations from other entertainment venues (Kurier Warszawski, August 20 [September 1], 1888). The modest premises of the zoo, located in the park of Bagatela, were adapted for the sake of a series of performances. The Sinhalese occupied a pavilion dedicated to their needs and a special set and temporary amphitheater to house an audience were constructed. The guests themselves were to build huts surrounded by the greenery taken from garden glasshouses (Kurier Warszawski, August 10 [August 22], 1888). A special booklet with information related to the “exotic” guests and the island of Ceylon was released by the board of the garden.

It was by no means the first encounter between the zoo and the Hagenbeck company. The Warsaw zoological garden was one of many similar institutions around the world that Hagenbeck provided with wild animals. Before the Sinhalese arrived, there were at least five transports of exotic animals from Hamburg, in 1884, 1885, and 1886 (Woliński 1994, 276, 282). The invitation of the Ceylonese was dictated by financial concerns as the economic condition of the zoo was rather poor. Displays of “exotic” people were expected to bring considerable profits and repair the finances of the garden. The whole year 1888 abounded in visits and presentations of non-European guests. Apart from the Sinhalese, the Warsaw zoo hosted the Dahomey, the Hottentots, and undefined “Indians” (Woliński 1994, 285).

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6 Information given by Warsaw-based dailies allows the researcher to determine precisely how long each of the groups stayed in the town. The 1888 caravan arrived on August 23 and left for Łódź on September 11 (Kurier Warszawski [Warsaw Courier], August 10 [August 22] and 24 [September 5], 1888).

7 Gazeta Polska (Polish Gazette), August 24 (September 5), 1888; Kurier Warszawski, August 24 (September 5), 1888. Travel expenses amounted to 1,142 silver rubles and the daily food allowance for the whole group was forty silver rubles.

8 Library and archive queries conducted in search of this booklet proved unsuccessful.

9 Zbigniew Woliński mentions the Dahomey among the ethnic groups who visited Warsaw in 1888 (Woliński 1994, 285). However, Dominika Czarnecka claims that the Dahomey visited Warsaw for the first time in 1889; see Czarnecka 2020.
Hagenbeck’s Sinhalese Caravans and Ethnographic Imagery

The 1888 caravan traveling around Eastern Europe was considerably smaller than its 1886 predecessor. According to press notes the caravan consisted of twenty-seven performers—twenty-two men and five women (Kurier Warszawski, August 10 [August 22], 1888). They were accompanied by five elephants—which arrived separately—zebu, and snakes. Articles in the press covering their nearly three-week-long stay in Warsaw give some details concerning members of the caravan. Among the actors were two dwarves who constituted a particular curiosity (Kurier Warszawski, August 25 [September 6], 1888). They were probably the same people who participated in the 1886 Paris and Berlin exhibitions and acted as main characters in a Sinhalese comedy (Fulbert-Dumonteil 1886, 10–11). Financial success on both sides of the enterprise probably attracted them to Europe again. Their presence, however, is another mark of the carnival-like nature of the “later” Hagenbeckian shows. Paying particular attention to “authenticity” and participating in French anthropology’s search for an “ethnic type” (Topinard 1883, 576), Hagenbeck was reluctant to show “abnormalities” (Thode-Arora 2008, 168). Dwarves, whose names Veruma and Cornelis Appo were announced by one of the dailies published in Łódź (where the troupe set out to perform), constituted a freak sideshow whose aim was to attract curious spectators and to generate more money through greater attendance.

The Ceylonese visitors were by no means anonymous to the Warsaw audience. The daily press informed the public about their stay in the town, so readers could find out about the Ceylonese visit to the botanic garden and the royal park of Łazienki (Kurier Warszawski, August 25 [September 6], 1888) and about their elephants walking on the streets between the Bagatela park and the nearby Pole Mokotowskie (Kurier Warszawski, August 26 [September 7], 1888). Journalists usually mentioned crowds accompanying them and direct contact that occurred, such as exchanges of greetings and kisses given by the Ceylonese to the people. This shows that encounters between the visitors and their audience were not limited to the actual exhibition or the show. It seems that the Sinhalese moved quite freely around the town and their behavior was not strictly controlled by their impresario. The practice of intermingling with the audience or wandering freely around the town was by no means restricted to the Ceylonese. It was a common pattern of behavior among many itinerant ethnic troupes displaying themselves in front of a European public (e.g., the Ashanti in Warsaw in January 1888).
Similar comportment was observed during the exhibition of the Dahomey in Passage-Panopticon in Berlin in 1894 (Reymont 1894). It was part of a promotional strategy targeted at prospective visitors—a constant presence of the visitors in public allowed subsequent presentations given in the zoo to be perceived as part of an ongoing show. It is also possible, however, that the presence of these groups was part of the performance and that the groups were to some extent acquainted with the public and oriented toward financial profits.\(^{10}\)

Three pieces of information related to the shows are of particular interest. During their stay in Warsaw the Sinhalese were reported to have been visited by the painter Pantaleon Szyndler. During this visit Szyndler was to paint the portraits of a woman called Pinkama and a man, described as “typical,” called Seleman Maradano.\(^{11}\) In 1889, a painting representing a man, entitled *Syngalez (A Sinhalese Man)*, was exhibited at Aleksander Krywult’s salon (Płażewska 1966, 409).\(^{12}\) Its counterpart, a portrait of a Sinhalese woman (fig. 11.1; present whereabouts unknown) was reproduced in the popular magazine *Wędrowiec* (*Wanderer, May 13* [May 26], 1900). It has already been noticed by art historians that a portrait of a Sinhalese woman constituted an exceptional piece in the orientalist oeuvre of a painter (Wójcik 2015). Szyndler, inspired by nineteenth-century photography and images of “exotic types,” produced doz-

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10. Recall that the first group of the Sinhalese to visit Europe, the 1883 troupe performing in the Jardin d’Acclimatation in Paris, was reluctant to leave their premises in the Bois de Boulogne and to visit the city (de Rialle 1883, 234).

11. The fact that Pantaleon Szyndler executed two paintings representing the Sinhalese was mentioned in the work of Daranowska-Łukaszewska and Wójcik (2015, 317–19) and Demski (2018a, 307).

12. This painting was one of many to be won at an annual lottery organized by Towarzystwo Zachęty Sztuk Pięknych (the Society for the Promotion of Fine Arts) in Warsaw. It went to a certain Kazimierz Wolski (*Kurier Warszawski*, December 19 [December 31], 1888).
ens of academic (classicist) images of oriental beauties with smooth, alabaster skin and shapely bodies, fulfilling the expectations of the salon audience and the requirements of academic tradition. The portrait of a Sinhalese definitely stands apart. The dark skin color of the woman and the depiction of her figure were inconsistent with academic ideas of beauty and would have resulted from a direct encounter between a painter and a Ceylonese performer.

In the context of the shows, one reporter recalled another Polish painter and watercolorist—Julian Falat. In 1885 Falat, invited by friend and painter Józef Simmler, embarked on a six-month-long journey around the world (Kołos 2018, 18–21; Malinowski 2000). Falat’s itinerary included Singapore, Hong Kong, China, Japan, and Ceylon. Both on the sea and in the places he visited Falat made dozens of sketches and watercolors. One of the images he captured on a ship was a portrait of a Sinhalese man (still extant in the National Museum in Warsaw), which was displayed during Falat’s solo exhibition at Aleksander Krywult’s salon in January 1888. An episode described by one reporter involving a Sinhalese man exhibited in the Warsaw zoo searching for a man he had befriended on a ship—“a white man who dyed the canvas” (Kurier Warszawski, August 12 [August 24], 1888)—must be counted among the anecdotes. This direct association between the Ceylonese caravan and a piece brought from an eastern journey demonstrates, however, that exoticism was of great appeal in both visual culture and the collective imagination of the citizens of Warsaw.

The Sinhalese were also visited by a local photographer (Kurier Warszawski, August 15 [August 27], 1888). It was common practice for photographers and photographic ateliers in Europe to visit itinerant exotic groups or freak performers and take photographs of them. The Warsaw-based journal Tygodnik Ilustrowany (Illustrated Weekly) published two photographs showing two groups of performers (figs. 11.2 and 11.3) signed by a photographic atelier “Rembrandt” (August 27 [September 8], 1888). It is difficult to ascertain whether these photographs are a result of a Warsaw photographer’s visit to the Ceylonese reported by a local daily (Kurier Warszawski). However, in terms of iconography, the images might be directly associated with the imagery produced in relation to the 1886 shows in Paris (compare: “Dr. Z.” 1886, 233).

The Sinhalese and their animals came to Warsaw by train from Wrocław (Ger. Breslau; Kurier Warszawski, August 24 [September 5], 1888) and then moved along by rail. After nearly three weeks of shows, the troupe left Warsaw for Łódź, an industrial town along the route of the Warsaw–Vienna Railway, situated slightly over 100km (60 miles) southwest of Warsaw. The Sinhalese spent a week in Łódź, from September 12 to September 19 (Dziennik Łódzki [Łódź Daily], August 30 [September 11], 1888; September 8 [September 20], 1888). They gave a series of performances, three times a day, at a restaurant owned by a certain Mr. Klukow located in the public garden “Paradyz” (Dziennik Łódzki, August 26 [September 7], 1888). It was Klukow who invited the Ceylonese (called in the press “a society”) to Łódź, financed their journey from and back to Warsaw, and provided accommodations (Dziennik Łódzki, September 4 [September 16], 1888). Their itinerary later led them from Łódź back to Warsaw, where they performed again, and then on to Riga from whence they were to return to Ceylon (Kurier Codzienny [Daily Courier], September 6 [September 18], 1888). As stated in one of the Warsaw-based newspapers, “The Sinhalese go back to Ceylon and their elephants go to Hamburg” (Gazeta Handlowa [Commercial Gazette], August 25 [September 6], 1888). At that time, nearly two decades before the founding of the zoo in Stellingen outside Hamburg in 1907, the animals stayed in Hagenbeck’s animal park in Neuer Pferdemarkt. It was common practice for the company to keep animals in Europe and send people back home in search of new recruits (Leutemann, quoted in Ames 2008, 84).

Encouraged by a successful tour in 1888, John Hagenbeck decided to visit Eastern Europe again (Kurier Warszawski, January 1 [January 13], 1889). And again a group of Sinhalese arrived in Warsaw, this time via the Warsaw–Bydgoszcz Railway. They started performing in the Warsaw zoo at the beginning of August and stayed in the town for more than a fortnight, August 2–18, 1889 (Kurier Warszawski, June 30 [July 12], 1889; July 21 [August 2], 1889). The group consisted of twenty men, four women, and four children (Kurier Warszawski, June 30 [July 12], 1889; Słowo [Word], July 1 [July 13], 1889), and only some of them, according to the newspapers, had visited Warsaw the previous year (Kurier Warszawski, July 20 [August 1], 1889). Among the visitors known from the 1888 shows, the papers mentioned a certain Manika, Kira, Tikirapanika, and three others (Kurier Warszawski, July 23 [August 4], 1889). Another personality famous from
the previous year’s exhibition was a dwarf woman, who citizens and journalists must have remembered. Her male counterpart was claimed to have been bored of the European tours and to have stayed in Ceylon (Gazeta Polska, July 26 [August 7], 1889). Members of the group were claimed to have been able to speak French, well enough to engage in a short exchange of words (Kurier Warszawski, July 22 [August 3], 1889). The papers announced that each day of the Sinhalese group’s stay in the town was a success. Their presentations concluded with a spectacular event, which was the wedding of a young Sinhalese couple (Biesiada Literacka [Literary Feast], August 11 [August 23], 1889). This part of the show, which was particularly attractive to the public, met with both interest and criticism and the ambivalent opinions of press reviewers (Gazeta Polska, August 5 [August 17], 1889).

Based on press announcements one may also trace the route of the caravan. They left Warsaw for Riga to head for Vilnius, Saint Petersburg (Zefeld 1890, 45), and Moscow (Gazeta Polska, July 15 [July 27], 1889; Kurier Warszawski, August 8 [August 20] and August 14 [August 26], 1889; Słowo, July 15 [July 27], 1889; concerning ethnic shows in Saint Petersburg and Moscow see Leskinnen in this volume).

The third visit of the Sinhalese to Warsaw took place nearly two years later—in 1891. This time, however, Hagenbeck’s main target was not the Kingdom of Poland under Russian rule but the region of Galicia under the auspices of the Habsburg monarchy. Before the Sinhalese entered the territory of the former Polish and Lithuanian Commonwealth, the troupe toured Austria, where they spent April, and probably entertained the public of Vienna (Kurier Warszawski, March 30 [April 11], 1891). The Warsaw dailies announced Sinhalese visits to both Warsaw and Kraków (Kurier Warszawski, March 29 [April 10], March 30 [April 11], and July 16 [July 28], 1891). According to the Kraków dailies, the Sinhalese entertained the public of the town only for a few days, starting on May 1, in Park Krakowski. The group consisted of forty people accompanied by elephants and zebu (Czas [Time], April 30, 1891). Within a week, some issues of Czas included ads recommending shows featuring “the primitive inhabitants of Ceylon” (Czas, May 6, 1891). At the same time a daily issued in Lviv, Gazeta Narodowa [National Gazette], started announcing the exhibition of the caravan of Sinhalese and Tamils. The first performance took place on May 12, 1891, and the last one occurred on May 24.
Research into the Warsaw press did not prove any particular interest in the 1891 caravan. It is known that its itinerary led to Vilnius. The troupe indeed performed several shows in Vilnius in the botanical garden under the aegis of an “anthropological and zoological exhibition.” The announcements say that the number of performers was the same in Kraków and in Lviv. In both towns, the press used the same formula—Sinhalese and Tamils—to differentiate the ethnic backgrounds of visitors (Vilnius Courier, August 10, 1891). The group was rumored to have moved to Odessa later on (Gazeta Narodowa, May 16, 1891); in mid-June it was to be presented in Kiev (Słowo, June 4 [June 16], 1891); and, as we may only presume, the group was to head for Saint Petersburg or Moscow. Kurier Warszawski, a daily paper that kept its readers updated concerning any events in the town, is almost silent on the 1891 visit of Hagenbeck’s enterprise. It is known that the group stayed not in the zoo, which had ceased to operate by the time of their arrival, but in the private garden in Aleje Ujazdowskie (which could have been the garden of Dolina Szwajcarska, a popular entertainment venue known to have hosted exhibitions of freaks and ethnic groups; Gazeta Handlowa, July 16 [July 28], 1891). The reason for this relative lack of interest in the caravan is impossible to explain. It is probable, however, that the public had become bored with the displays of the Ceylonese, which by that time had neither the air of the exotic nor of a novelty. It was already in 1888, after the first group of Sinhalese left Warsaw, that a reporter for the Kurier Warszawski listed “exotic” groups that had already visited or would visit the town: the Sioux “Indians,” Ashanti, Sinhalese, and some other, undefined people from Africa (August 29 [September 10], 1888). The program of urban entertainments addressed to Warsaw public seems indeed to have diversified.

“Neither Really Wild, Nor Too Civilized”: Images of the Sinhalese in the Press

The Sinhalese visited Warsaw with their performances at least three times within a very short time spanning the end of 1880s and the very beginning of the 1890s. In 1892, a Ceylonese caravan was reported to pass through Warsaw in winter on its way back from Saint Petersburg (Kurier Codzienny, November 24 [December 6], 1892) and it seems very possible that there could have been more such visits, without shows, on the way to or back from Russia. This short period was a stable one in terms of politics, economy, and
social order. Every time the Sinhalese arrived, they visited partitioned lands under Russian government and a community that had not undergone any significant change. Judging by comments in the press, it seems that neither the political situation nor economic factors affected the way the visitors were perceived. However, journalistic accounts offered their readers a little information and some ready-to-use ideas concerning Ceylon and the Ceylonese. So, how was the Other depicted in the Polish-language press? A close reading of press notes shows that the image of the Sinhalese was constructed, first and foremost, around the dichotomy of “barbarism” and “civilization.” Physical features, clothes, and religion, which long into the nineteenth century served as almost universal signs of otherness (Niewiara 2000), proved insignificant in the case of the conceptualization of the itinerant group of Ceylonese embedded in the entertainment industry.

The journalists and the public were well aware of the reasons for Sinhalese visits to Warsaw. Information on the troupes was usually published in a column in which other news was announced. Performances, arrival and departure dates, and details concerning the troupe were interlaced with information on theater events, entertainment in the public gardens, concerts, and art exhibitions. The Sinhalese constituted part of the entertainment offerings, and the air of institutionalized distraction definitely dominated any of unknown or ethnic otherness. The commercial aspect of the visits was also evident. Dailies regularly offered information on the logistics of the show, travel routes, and expenses covered by the hosting institutions. Also, details of agreements between John Hagenbeck and his actors were provided. It seems that there was not too much unknown and extraordinary in the later groups’ behavior. The lure of the exotic must also have lost some of its intensity and power. As might be discerned from press notes, especially those commenting on the second visit in 1889, reviewers felt somehow familiar with their Ceylonese guests. Journalists mention conversations with members of the groups. Moreover, Hagenbeck’s Ceylonese were not anonymous visitors: some of them were known and identified by name—whether real or invented (Kurier Warszawski, July 23 [August 4], 1889).

In both press notes and advertisements, the Ceylonese were described as “primitive people.” The press, however, was far from perceiving the Ceylonese as “barbarians” and their image was constantly construed as that of civilized or, rather, somewhat civilized. This was expressed directly by numerous com-
Hagenbeck’s Sinhalese Caravans and Ethnographic Imagery

mentators; for example: “The Sinhalese betray their wilderness only in their
dances full of passionate frenzy; in general they are very polite” (Gazeta Polska,
July 26 [August 7], 1889; see also Czarnecka in this volume). Primitivism, in
this case, was free of its usually derogatory meaning. It referred not to the
state of civilization but to the antiquity of the ethnic group. Sinhalese were
depicted as the indigenous inhabitants of Ceylon, whose history dated back
to at least 523 BCE. To confirm their ancient roots, the journalists referred to
the writings of Pliny, who mentioned four Ceylonese envoys’ arrival to Rome.
The fact that such an embassy had occurred was interpreted as a sign of “a
certain state of civilization proved by knowledge of shipbuilding” (Kurier
Codzienny, August 19 [August 31], 1888). The antiquity of the nation was a
factor that legitimized the non-Europeans in the eyes of inhabitants of the
Old Continent long into the nineteenth century. The fact that non-Euro-
pean societies possessed their history and ancient traditions located them
on the side of the “civilized.” Ancient chronicles and written tradition tes-
tified to the growth and progress of a society or nation and sometimes (as
exemplified by China) constituted a challenge to European historians and
theologians (Van Kley 1971). For centuries it was the case of China, India,
and Persia, which were often considered as “old civilizations” whose mer-
its did not diverge from that of Europe (Clarke 1998, 37–70). Journalists
underlined the “civilized” manners of the Sinhalese. It was stressed that they
could write and read in their own language and were even able to speak some
French and German (Kurier Warszawski, August 13 [August 25], 1888).
Their linguistic proficiency was another trait that deprived them of an air
of the “primitive/barbarian.” It was said that the Ceylonese possessed their
own literature, poetry, and religious scriptures (Kurier Codzienny, August
19 [August 31], 1888). The culture of writing and that of poetry, which still
held its strong position in the modern system of the arts, was definitely a trait
of the “civilized,” not of “barbarians.”

The image of the Sinhalese as civilized was also constructed in opposition
to the Vedda, a minority indigenous group who settled in the southeastern
mountain regions of Sri Lanka. Veddas were “the remnants of the primitive
tribe living in the forests. The Vedda do not till the soil, do not know money,
do not constitute any organized society, do not communicate with neigh-
boring tribes, and live on hunting.” The Sinhalese, by contrast, “dwelled [in]
the south, west, and the interior of the island. They constituted a majority.
It had been centuries since they got to know how to work with iron and weave textiles. To a certain degree they developed a kind of a self-constituent civilization” (Kurier Codzienny, August 19 [August 31], 1888). As has been observed by Hilke Thode-Arora (2008, 167–68), the Hagenbecks never managed to recruit the Vedda people. They were too strange in the eyes of the Old Continent and their contact with Europeans was infrequent, so they were not considered the best candidates for exhibition. The people themselves, however, were not completely unfamiliar to the European public. The French anthropologist Girard de Rialle (1883) devoted some space to them in a lengthy description of the island penned in relation to the 1883 exhibition of the Sinhalese in Paris. He presented them as savage inhabitants of the mountains, who differed considerably—by language, “black” skin, and shape of cranium—from the guests of the Jardin d’Acclimatation. The tendency to compare the two tribes was common in the European press and targeted toward constructing the Sinhalese as the noble representatives of the island who, by dealing with Europeans, embodied, at least to some extent, a civilizing mission of the Old Continent.

The physical constitution of the Sinhalese, as described by the Polish press, did not testify to their “wildness” either. As can be noted from the travel writing of the time and the first natural histories produced in Europe, skin color was one of the universal traits constituting difference. It was also one of the seminal factors, at least since the publication of David Hume’s Of National Characters (1748), that allowed an individual to determine moral qualities and to situate people within the dichotomies of civilized/barbarian, own/other, and polite/coarse manners, and within many other culturally constructed “locations” based on universal binaries (Popkin 1973, 245–62). The skin color of the Sinhalese was ambiguous. They were neither black nor Negro (original terms used in contemporary language) nor white. The majority of Polish journalists described them as the “cinnamon children of Ceylon,” or simply “brown,” which rendered well their status of “neither really barbarians, nor too civilized” (Kurier Warszawski, August 11 [August 23], 1888; similar statements are to be found in Biesiada Literacka, August 19 [August 31], 1888; September 9 [September 21], 1888; Kalenderz Illustrowany na rok 1891 [Illustrated Calendar for the Year 1891], 1890, 43).

The features of the Sinhalese were not widely commented on; their clothes did not attract much attention from journalists and did not really
serve as a determinant of strangeness. “In general, the faces of the Sinhalese strikingly resemble one another, and it is easy to take all the men for women,” commented a reviewer for *Kurier Warszawski* (July 23 [August 4], 1889). In the previous issue it was noted that the Sinhalese arrived barefoot and their clothes did not differ from those they had worn the previous year (July 22 [August 3], 1889).14

Press notes touching upon the overall look of the Ceylonese do not betray any meticulous observations by reviewers. However, the journalists’ friendly and positive attitude toward South Asian visitors found its reflection in the way they perceived the appearance of “exotic” guests:

[The Sinhalese] are distinguished by the unusual neatness, flexibility, and muscularity of the body, which they rub with coconut oil; even though they are not of pure Aryan origin and they are marked with traits of other races with which they must have interbred in distant times, it would be difficult to refuse their faces a certain kind of regularity; and, from a European point of view, among women there occur even very plausible faces. (*Dziennik Łódzki*, September 4 [September 16], 1888)

What some journalists did not fail to stress were the commercial transactions the Sinhalese were involved in. It was clearly stated that the show was an instrument for earning money. It was not unusual in the press to announce detailed sums of money earned by the Sinhalese during the shows (*Dziennik Łódzki*, September 7 [September 19], 1888). In satirical poems their earnings were even referred to as “Mammon,” which was to stress the Sinhalese’s particular greed for money (*Kurier Warszawski*, August 31 [September 12], 1888). The conservative press aimed particularly to overemphasize the Ceylonese appetite for money. An account penned by a reporter of *Biesiada Literacka* (September 9 [September 21], 1888) read:

14 This relative lack of interest in appearance and attire of the Ceylonese calls for comment. As has been indicated by Hilke Thode-Arora, the Sinhalese were one of the most popular groups among the European public due to their clothes and overall appearance (Thode-Arora in this volume). Their garments were considered picturesque, constituting a medium of exoticism, and determined an ethnic otherness. The scarcity of comments on the clothes in the Polish press escapes straightforward explanation. Was it due to the attitude of journalists who sought entertainment rather than lessons in ethnography? On the other hand, it might be also the result of the unintentional, selective nature of press notes.
Warsaw spent several thousand rubles for the brown amusements. The profits of Zwierzyniec [the zoo], however, were not considerable, as the board had to pay the entrepreneur. The public did not learn anything, having been offered only a low distraction. Instead of “types” it was shown moochers, begging and simpering. In the art of begging the Sinhalese outdid even the beggars of Częstochowa\(^\text{15}\)—they were that intrusive in offering their visiting cards and wheedling money in turn.

However, even these conservative deliberations were lacking overtly moral overtones. The critique was directed not toward the performing troupes themselves but toward the practice of showgoing. Journalists’ sensibilities were particularly concerned with children, whose participation in amusements organized by the zoo, including performances given by non-Europeans, they strongly opposed.

Another critique discernible from the press was highly gender-oriented and directly related to the sexualized image of the Sinhalese. Again, however, it was not directed toward the Sinhalese, but toward the female audience of the spectacles:

Beautiful young ladies prattled to the wild youngsters with a sisterly trust. Polite ladies acquainted themselves with a brown man, and while talking to him with syllables and gazes they almost leaned on the back and the arms of the beau . . . Mothers, observing the attractiveness of their daughters, only smiled mildly and were just about to kiss a gallant when he sent them a kiss with his hand or said “beautiful” or “good morning.” *(Biesiada Literacka*, September 9 [September 21], 1888)

Other commentators similarly mocked the women who attended the shows. A reviewer for *Kłosy* (*Ears*), another conservative weekly, ridiculed young ladies’ hunt for husbands and profitable marriages. In a well-known convention dating back to the very roots of pamphlets on women, the author pointed out women’s determination and their eagerness to accept someone

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\(^{15}\) The author refers here to the beggars gathering around the Jasna Góra Monastery in Częstochowa (today in Poland), a shrine to the Virgin Mary, the most significant pilgrimage site in the context of both the former and the contemporary territory of Poland.
of another skin color as an *epuże* (a candidate for husband). This polonized version of a French term, *un époux* (a consort), not only contained in its meaning a conventional attitude toward marriage as a social contract but also betrayed the mercenary intentions of a man. Not only did women resist the opposition to “a brown man” but they would also be eager to accept a dwarf, as evinced by the alleged interest that one member of a troupe aroused among women (*Kłosy*, August 18 [August 30], 1888; compare also August 17 [August 29], 1888).

The critique drew on a deeply rooted stereotype of the Other as sexually attractive. In European writings, this sexual appeal was commonly attributed to people of dark skin, first and foremost to the inhabitants of Africa. In the Polish context the idea of black men and women as figures of uncontrolled sexual drive was promulgated by popular encyclopedic publications (Negrowie 1901, 439). Within various European circles this stereotype was informed by different fears and prejudices (see e.g. Martichou 2015; Weston 1994; Szleszyński 2010). South Asians were also believed to be endowed with unlimited sexuality and, especially in the case of women, with alluring attractiveness (Mobilat 2006, 226, 228–31). The only nationality that escaped such a classification in European discourse was probably the Chinese, who were widely considered to be effeminate (Yang 2011, 32–74).

The image of the Sinhalese as a sexually attractive agent at the Warsaw “marriage market” was directly embraced by and visualized in the satirical press. Humorous illustrations dominate the iconography of the “cinnamon children of Ceylon.” During the Sinhalese stay in the city, every satirical magazine featured genre scenes with “exotic” guests coupled with short, tongue-in-cheek dialogues and comments (figs. 11.4–6). The majority of these illustrations, made after drawings by Stefan Mucharski, a prolific illustrator, who monopolized the market in satirical illustration, present the Sinhalese with “white” women. The tension between the “exotic” and European, dark and pale skin colors, and the skimpy clothes of men and conventional dresses of women tightly covering their bodies enhanced critical comments formulated in the press. The Sinhalese were depicted as objects of erotic attention, sexually attractive, and eager to respond, by no means selflessly, to these interests.
Figure 11.4. “A Chocolate Romeo and an Orange Julia.” Reproduction of a drawing by Stefan Mucharski. Kurier Świąteczny, August 21 (September 2), 1888. This caricatured rendering of a local woman and a Sinhalese man draws on their reciprocal poses, similar facial features, and manifest ugliness suggested by ungainly noses, the protruding mouth of the man, and warts on the woman’s face. The image of a non-European, far from the ideal of masculinity, serves as a tool to mock local women’s alleged propensity for the “exotic” Other. The scene refers to gender-determined tensions in local society and easily readable stereotypes of married and unmarried women.

Figure 11.5. Front cover of Kolce, August 12 (August 24), 1889. The intensity of eye contact and relations between the poses of a Sinhalese performer, a woman, and a man behind her seem crucial to the reading of the interplay of ethnic and gender stereotypes hidden in this genre scene. The straight, confident, and slightly provocative pose of the woman finds its counterpart in the similar body language of the “exotic” visitor. His muscular and half-naked body is juxtaposed with the slim and wimpy posture of a local elegant. The binaries of dressed/bare, civilized/uncivilized, self-constraint/undisciplined body are employed to create an eroticized situation which draws on a common idea of unconstrained sexuality of “exotic” Others.
As I have pointed out already, the educational aspect of ethnic shows was often brought up by organizers, who used it as legitimization for the practice of displaying living people. Education referred directly to geography and ethnography and, to a lesser extent, to physical anthropology (which required a more research- and academic-oriented audience), which were then emerging as autonomous disciplines. The scientific drive in ethnic shows was not, however, addressed only to academics. It was targeted, first and foremost, toward “ordinary” adults and children.

It seems that an educational aspect of the shows must have been put forward also by the board of the Warsaw zoological garden. Separate performances were even organized for schools and pupils of charitable societies.
both in Warsaw and Łódź (*Dziennik Łódzki*, September 7 [September 19], 1888). On several occasions exhibitions were even described or advertised as “informative lessons in ethnography” (e.g., *Dziennik Łódzki*, 26 August [September 7], 1888). But conservative critics claimed that exhibitions failed to fulfill this task. The reviewer for *Biesiada Literacka* complained that instead of “types” the audience was shown “begging and simpering moochers”:

> If this business of showing around various tribes is to be called speculation—we should not oppose as everyone is allowed to speculate. However, let none try to convince us that the youth will be familiarized with different races all around the world this way. Not only will the youths learn nothing, but they will also gain false imaginings about them [the races] and will forget all the sympathy they gained while reading missionary accounts. (September 9 [September 21], 1888)

Ethnographic “authenticity” was also questioned. Journalists shared the same doubts as French anthropologists several years before. Questions were commonly asked about European influence on the Sinhalese and their knowledge of European languages and manners (*Biesiada Literacka*, August 11 [August 23], 1889).

Drawing on the sources analyzed so far, it seems that anthropologists and ethnographers were rather indifferent to the exhibitions (at least of the Sinhalese) in Warsaw. The climax of ethnic shows in the late 1880s coincided with the consolidation of an ethnographic milieu, which was centered around the journal *Wisła* and an ethnographic museum then located on the premises of the Warsaw zoo. A group photograph of the Sinhalese and letters received by them were donated to the museum collection (*Kurier Warszawski*, August 27 [September 8], 1888).16 Interestingly, this collection was based on gifts from collectors and travelers and consisted mainly of non-European items (Bujak 1975, 55–56). The daily press did not comment on ethnographers’ presence at the shows of the Ceylonese; neither did it mention any private viewings organized for the sake of this circle. Similarly, my

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16 These objects are now lost. The museum and its collection, iconographic documents, and archives were completely destroyed in 1939 during the first days of World War II (Bujak 1975, 55).
research into the ethnographic press did not prove that Warsaw ethnographers responded to the exhibitions. Obviously, one cannot be sure that they did not visit ethnic shows. It does not seem, however, that the presence of non-European (or, at least, Sinhalese) visitors was treated as a chance for conducting research (as it was in Paris, Berlin, Wrocław, or Poznań), nor that it contributed to the development of this new area of study.

The political and cultural situation of Poles being deprived of their own state determined to a great extent the research fields in ethnography. Scholars focused on collecting data related to folk culture (Jan Czakanowski quoted in Jasiewicz 2018, 45), especially of peasants living in the neighborhood of Kraków and the mountaineers who had settled down in the region of the Tatra Mountains and the eastern Carpathians. These interests were manifested in the contents of Wisła. The first issue opened with an instruction for how to collect ethnographic data authored by Roman Zawiliński. What seems significant and fundamental is his statement that “The aim of Polish ethnography is to research the Polish nation in its entirety ... wherever Polish language is in use” (Zawiliński 1887, 3). Further, Zawiliński states that while peculiar physical features analyzed by anthropologists provide knowledge on races and tribes (concerning especially so-called “wild people”), language (speech) proves the unity of civilized nations.

The non-European cultures to which Polish ethnographers (especially those residing in the Russian partition) paid attention were mainly the cultures of Central Asia and the ethnic groups that dwelled in the ethnically diversified territories of the Russian Empire (Jasiewicz 2010, 42; 2018, 47). Africa and Asia also saw the arrival of numerous Polish travelers of various professions, including the expedition to Cameroon directed by Stefan Szolc-Rogoziński in 1882 (Zachorowska and Kamocki 1984) and Aleksander Jabłonowski’s travels in the Muslim East (Wrzesińska 2017). However, as has already been observed in case of explorations in Africa, numerous writings documenting travels were usually of a “non-professional” nature and ethnographic observations constituted one of many fields covered in these accounts (Ząbek 2007, 28). It also seems worth noting that most ethnographers and anthropologists of Polish origin, who contributed immensely to global knowledge of the non-European world, conducted their research on site. These include Jan Czakanowski in Africa (until 1913 he was affiliated in Zurich, Berlin, and Saint Petersburg), Benedykt Dybowski in
Izabela Kopania

Siberia (as an exile), and Jan Kubary (as a refugee) in Micronesia (mentioned in Jasiewicz 2018, 48). In 1888 and 1889, when the Sinhalese performed in Warsaw, Leopold Janikowski, a renowned traveler and explorer in Africa, a companion to Szolec-Rogoziński, and a generous donor to the Warsaw ethnographic museum stayed in politically and military perturbed Africa (Armon 1962–64).

It is difficult to judge definitely whether exhibitions of the Sinhalese deserved to be termed “illustrative lessons in ethnography.” The daily press commenting on shows in the Warsaw zoo did not provide much information that could be called “ethnographic” and that would be collected during exhibitions. It was only in 1889, when a series of shows concluded with a marriage ceremony probably arranged for the sake of the exhibition, that some journals included descriptions of the event. What attracted the attention of reviewers was the picturesque convention of showering newlyweds with rose petals and a speech given by a certain caravan’s leader. Nevertheless, the press treated this event as a “living ethnographic image” and at the same time expressed doubts about the ceremony’s authenticity and claimed it was, in part, a performance. Published images did not represent a more informative source. Neither did they provide any insight into the local interpreta-

Figure 11.7. A genre scene showing Sinhalese riding elephants and carts harnessed to zebus. Zorza, September 18 (October 10), 1889.
tion of “exotic” guests. A genre scene showing Sinhalese riding elephants and carts harnessed to zebus (fig. 11.7) published in Zorza (Aurora) (September 18 [October 10], 1889) was directly reproduced from a French journal, La Nature (“Dr. Z.,” 1886, 232). Similarly, press advertisements (figs. 11.8 and 11.9) and—we may presume—large posters pasted on the walls in the towns drew on a conventional image of an elephant lifting tree trunks invented by the lithographer Adolph Friedländer for promotion of the Ceylonese caravan in 1885–86 (the original poster was reproduced in Ames 2008, pl. 4).

Lessons in ethnography discernible from the Sinhalese shows are difficult to reconstruct. Nevertheless, these were shows and visits of non-European guests that stimulated Polish press to “peek into” the faraway corners of the globe. These were, first and foremost, popular magazines like

Figure 11.8. Advertisement. Czas, May 5, 1891.

Figure 11.9. Advertisement. Vilenskii Vestnik, August 10, 1891.
Wędrowiec, Tygodnik Ilustrowany, Biesiada Literacka, and Bluszcz (just to mention a few) that shaped the ethnographic imagery of visitors, at least those who were regular consumers of the press. Leafing through the subsequent yearbooks was comparable to a journey around the world, in both a textual and a visual sense, which must have provided readers with a set of internalized images of the faraway. A weekly, Wędrowiec, published in Warsaw, is particularly illustrative in this context. With its progressive program, criticizing positivist ideas and exploring new tendencies in visual arts and literature, it was led by unbiased editors open to new horizons and non-European worlds. It published articles on literature, philosophy, and visual arts, and serialized novels and travel diaries. Subsequent editors were, however, faithful to the first profile of the journal, which focused on geography, ethnography, and natural sciences. Most of the articles were reprinted and translated into Polish from French (especially after Le Tour du Monde: Nouveau journal des voyages; Kamisińska 2010, 102) and German newspapers and magazines. Similarly, the foreign press was the main source of illustrations depicting exotic places. In 1888, a year particularly abundant in “exotic” troupes visiting Warsaw, Wędrowiec published articles on the inhabitants of Fiji, the expedition to the Kingdom of Dahomey, anthropophagous peoples of the Rossel Island (Louisiade Archipelago), and Commodore Perry’s “civilizing” mission to Japan. With numerous woodcut images—it was estimated that in 1863 the journal published 492 woodcuts17 (Kamisińska 2010, 110)—the journal fully deserved the name “illustration” (meaning description) of the nineteenth century that it was given by its contemporaries (Okoń 2013). A close reading of articles touching on geography, ethnography, and anthropology must have left readers with a particular idea of the world. First and foremost, it was built around the dualism of Europe and the rest of the universe, with a figure of a European endowed with the civilizing mission of economic and scientific exploration of “exotic” lands and the dissemination of the superior, European culture (Okoń 2013, 144–45). To what extent, and in what way, this colonial and imperial message was embraced by Polish readers, who themselves were under “colonization,” still requires investigation.

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17 It must be admitted, however, that the number of illustrations successively decreased. For details, see Kamisińska 2010, 110–11.
Displays of the Sinhalese in the Warsaw zoo inspired numerous press notes which, along with the mostly practical information on the shows, included some details that referred to manners and the way of life of the “exotic” guests. Let us look at two longer accounts published in 1888 in the Warsaw-based Kurier Codzienny (August 19 [August 31], 1888) and in the Dziennik Łódzki (September 4 [September 16], 1888), in connection with the first stay of the Sinhalese in Warsaw. It seems that both accounts were based on the same, as yet unidentified source, which could have been a press article or a brochure released by the Warsaw zoo. Both authors provided their readers with details concerning the geographical location of the island and its land features, with mountains stretching across the middle of a heart-shaped surface. They praised the subtropical flora and termed Ceylon the most beautiful island, “the land of cinnamon,” and “the pearl of the Indian Ocean.”

The island’s wealth—found in pepper, cinnamon, cotton, and bread trees, for example—was attributed to natural conditions and not to the work of the people: the plants “grow without care, in wilderness, just as God sowed them in this soil, giving abundant crops three times a year” (Kurier Codzienny, August 19 [August 31], 1888). Similarly, the resources of metals such as copper and iron, as well as precious stones—another source of wealth—were stressed to have been of natural origin as well. Reports that the harvesting of pearls was monopolized by the British constituted the only hint of the islanders’ subordination to a colonial power.

Authors, especially a reviewer for Dziennik Łódzki, paid attention to the ethnic diversification on the island. Four main tribes inhabiting Ceylon were briefly described. They were presented in order of their presumed level of civilization from least civilized to most civilized: the Vedda people, living in the mountains and considered “half-barbarians”; the Malayali, indigenous inhabitants of the southwestern Malabar coast, who arrived in Ceylon as conquerors; the Muslim inhabitants of India, living off trade and usury, whose role in Ceylonese society was compared to that of Jews in Eastern Europe; and the Sinhalese, representing “a certain level of civilization” and “a certain level of intellectual and moral development,” “cultivating land, processing iron and gold” (September 4 [September 16], 1888).

The civilization of Ceylon was described as an ancient one. The reviewer mentioned an ancient capital of an island, a sacred city of Anarajapura established in 246 BCE, the center of Ceylonese Buddhism, praised by Ptolemy,
which gave the town additional legitimacy. Curiously, Buddhism was not perceived as a pagan religion testifying to the barbarian state of people. Contrary to the missionary tradition of the previous centuries, which treated Buddhism as idolatrous and deceptive worship of “Fo” (Mungello 1989, 68–70, 160–62; on Polish writings: Kopania 2012, 98–101), the written tradition of religion was stressed.

It seems that the image of Ceylon promulgated by the press accorded with the depiction of the Sinhalese. Both land as cultural entity and people were suspended between barbarian and truly civilized. However, it might be claimed that the overall, stereotyped representation of the Ceylonese tended toward perceiving them as civilized.

The first two series of shows in 1888–89 met with an enthusiastic response from both press and visitors. However, it seems clear that exhibitions of ethnic Others were not an unusual feature in the Warsaw entertainment market. The Sinhalese were among numerous groups—such as Dahomey, Hottentots, Ashanti, and North American “Indians”—who paraded in front of the citizens of Warsaw and Łódź.

Even though the exhibitions were sometimes referred to as “illustrative lessons in ethnography,” their usefulness as “learning instruments” was often questioned. As suggested by press announcements and reviews, journalists tended to see these shows more as entertainment (even as “circus-like,” with acrobats and demonstrations employing animals) than as ethnography-oriented displays. It is possible that in Łódź, in 1888, the traditional Perra Herra procession was included in the show’s program.18 This procession, however, picturesque and exotic on the one hand and rooted in religious traditions on the other, did not garner the attention of the press. The reviewer appreciated, first and foremost, the electric lightning and compared the whole parade to “the expedition for fights with an unknown enemy” (Dziennik Łódzki, September 4 [September 16], 1888).

Anthropologists and ethnographers working in Warsaw did not seem to show any particular interest in the Sinhalese performers. However, ethnographic information related to “exotic” visitors was delivered by both

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18 The reviewer does not state it clearly, nor does he mention the ceremony’s name. He writes, however, about the evening parade of the whole caravan with elephants, which might suggest a show-oriented version of the Perra Herra ceremony. On the Perra Herra ceremony, see Fuller 1882, 329–31.
the daily press and illustrated journals. Visits paid by inhabitants of South Asia inspired articles devoted to Ceylon and its inhabitants. The fact that the Sinhalese performances constituted part of the showbusiness industry, whose logistics and rules were no secret to the audience, contributed to the domestication of performers who were by no means “curiosities.” The performers, expecting financial profits, eagerly intermingled with the public, exchanging gazes, touch, and gifts.

The image of the Sinhalese was constructed around a civilized/uncivilized binary and the majority of information disseminated by the Warsaw press emphasized the civilized nature of the visitors. The antiquity of their ethnic group, its possession of a written language and poetry, and their agricultural knowledge supported this “civilized” narrative. It was also the reason why journalists were not decided as to the skin color of the performers and described it as brown and, most often, “cinnamon.” This image fitted with dominant European ideas on the Sinhalese, who were treated as “less ‘wild’ than the Araucanians, the Fuegians, or the Redskins . . . but inferior to the Kalmyks” (Isabelle Gala, quoted in Servan-Schreiber 2008, 199). Corresponding to the overall tendency to see “ethnic Others” as sexually attractive, the Sinhalese were eagerly eroticized, particularly by satirical weeklies.

One of the questions to ask concerns the regional specificity of the images of the Sinhalese. Did the political and cultural context of Polish lands subordinated to Russian rule determine the nature of images created and promulgated in the press? Who was the audience for the Sinhalese and who were the Sinhalese to their viewers? At least two separate research projects will be needed to answer these questions: first, an extensive comparative analysis of images of the Sinhalese in the European press, and second, a thorough reading of the memoirs, diaries, and other writings documenting the mentality and the everyday experience of Poles living in the nineteenth-century Russian partition. Although addressing these questions is beyond the scope of this chapter, I would like to offer some general remarks.

The Sinhalese and other non-Europeans on display visited a society that did not share the colonial experiences of Western empires and that, since the end of the eighteenth century, had been deprived of its own statehood and political identity. The Kingdom of Poland with Warsaw and Łódź constituted a part of imperial Russia which, on its own, controlled colonial politics.
Polish society itself was undergoing a particular form of colonization—with Russian authorities imposing on the Polish people Russia’s administration, educational system, and language. These impositions, however, were strongly resisted by Poles, whose collective identity was based on a strong sense of common and autonomous religion, language, and mentality that allowed them to reject the hegemon’s culture (Trześniowski 2010, 172–73). The Polish inhabitants of the Kingdom of Poland strongly identified as Europeans, with a high level of civilization and universal values. However, as part of the Russian Empire Poles felt backward in comparison to the West (Jerzy Jedlicki quoted in Niewiara 2000, 29–31). This did not however, prevent them from perceiving Russia as Asia (which was perceived to be uncivilized) and from othering Russians as uncivilized, primitive, and not really threatening to Polish identity (Trześniowski 2010; on stereotypes of Russians see Niewiara 2000, 130–47).

So what was the role here for the Sinhalese? Research into memoirs and diaries written by Poles from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries shows that the Ceylonese did not occupy any significant place in the collective imagination of Poles (there is no reference to Ceylon or the Sinhalese in Niewiara 2000). Drawing on previous inquiry does not seem to shed light on what ideas concerning Ceylon constructed by the press leaked into the mentality of the showgoers and newspaper readers, nor on what role these ideas played in the process of cultural/national identification.

Journalists’ opinions on the Sinhalese expressed in the Polish press seem parallel to the ideas promulgated by French journals and booklets published by the Jardin d’Acclimatation (Fulbert-Dumonteil 1886). This might be due to the enormous popularity of French journals among the Polish elite and the fact that a booklet published by the Warsaw zoo to accompany the 1888 show could have been modeled on some French publications. Descriptions of the Sinhalese published in French journals were more thorough: the authors provided readers with more details concerning the dress and physical attributes of the people and their customs and concerning the island itself. Judging by notes published in the Polish press, and quoted throughout, and by articles in La Nature, Revue d’anthropologie, Le Monde illustré,

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19 It was a practice among impresarios to use materials published for the sake of the first shows of a particular troupe and to distribute them (in various forms: shortened, improved, in translation) during subsequent events. This was the case of Julia Pastrana (Kopania 2019).
and *Journal des voyages et des aventures* (respectively: de Rialle, 1883 and “Dr. Z.”, 1886; Topinard 1886; Burdo 1886; October 24, 1886), one may conclude that conceptualization of the Sinhalese as Others tended not toward hostility but toward alterity based on difference that did not provoke immediate “defensive” responses.

It seems, however, that there is one other issue worth further study: the question of British colonialism in Ceylon and colonialism in general. Both the French and the Polish press were aware of Ceylon’s political situation as an island subordinated to the British. The question is to what extent both nations encompassed this colonial message. The Polish press titles analyzed for the sake of this study barely remarked upon the British presence in Ceylon (*Dziennik Łódzki*, September 4 [September 16], 1888), while French authors attributed to this presence a kind of a civilizing mission. In the booklet published in connection with the 1883 exhibition in Paris, Louis Jacolliot observed that it was the British who put an end to despotic rule in the island, and brought commercial prosperity and a certain system of social order (Jacolliot 1883, 20, 22). The question of whether this difference in discussions on colonialism resulted from the different cultural and political backgrounds of commentators—France, involved in its own colonial affairs, and partitioned Poland, whose society never accepted its condition of being “colonized”—requires further in-depth research.

Pamphleteers derided the Warsaw public for constituting a greater curiosity to the Sinhalese than the Sinhalese represented to their Warsaw audience. The Ceylonese impressions of Warsaw remain unknown. Research conducted so far has not provided any personal testimonies of showgoers documenting their encounters with “exotic” guests, either. However difficult it is to state how the images and conceptualizations of the Sinhalese examined here resonated in the common imagination and everyday ideas regarding non-European “cinnamon children of Ceylon,” one may assume that reporters or translators of foreign articles answered to the interests and expectations of their readers. Therefore, some of the ideas, prejudices, and misconceptions that appeared in the press could have been embraced on a large scale. This chapter offers a glimpse at just one episode in the Sinhalese adventures in East-Central Europe. Focusing on comments published in the Polish-language press in the Russian partition, I have attempted to show how ideas of the non-European world and images of its inhabitants resonated in a
society that was not involved in imperial conquest. Preconceived ideas of the ethnic and faraway Other, rooted in the collective imagination, gained new life during ethnic shows, such as the exhibitions of the Sinhalese, and contributed to the conceptualization of “exotic” visitors.

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Hagenbeck's Sinhalese Caravans and Ethnographic Imagery


Izabela Kopania


**PRESS**

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