

Preface and Acknowledgements

This book is the outcome of a multi-year journey that started at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) in 1999. Inspired by Professor Kurt Siehr and supervised by Professor Carole Goldberg, I first approached the question of Native American cultural property claims with a case study regarding the rights to a Lakota ghost dance shirt and the skull of an Arikara Indian, which are both in the possession of the North America Native Museum in Zurich.

Today, I am happy to present a work that applies a more abstract methodology and a broader perspective on international cultural property repatriation claims of indigenous peoples. This enabled me to extend the evaluation of the legal bases and to work out some general principles and suggestions as to how the international community and European states could better deal with indigenous peoples' cultural property repatriation claims. I hope that the insights will contribute to a positive development of research and practice in cultural property law.

This work is dedicated to the indigenous peoples. The multilayered meanings and purposes of their cultural objects in an indigenous context not only formed the grounds of this research; they equally influenced my thoughts and perceptions and fundamentally challenged my understanding of law. I am grateful for the lessons learned that allowed me to work on building bridges between indigenous and western world views.

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