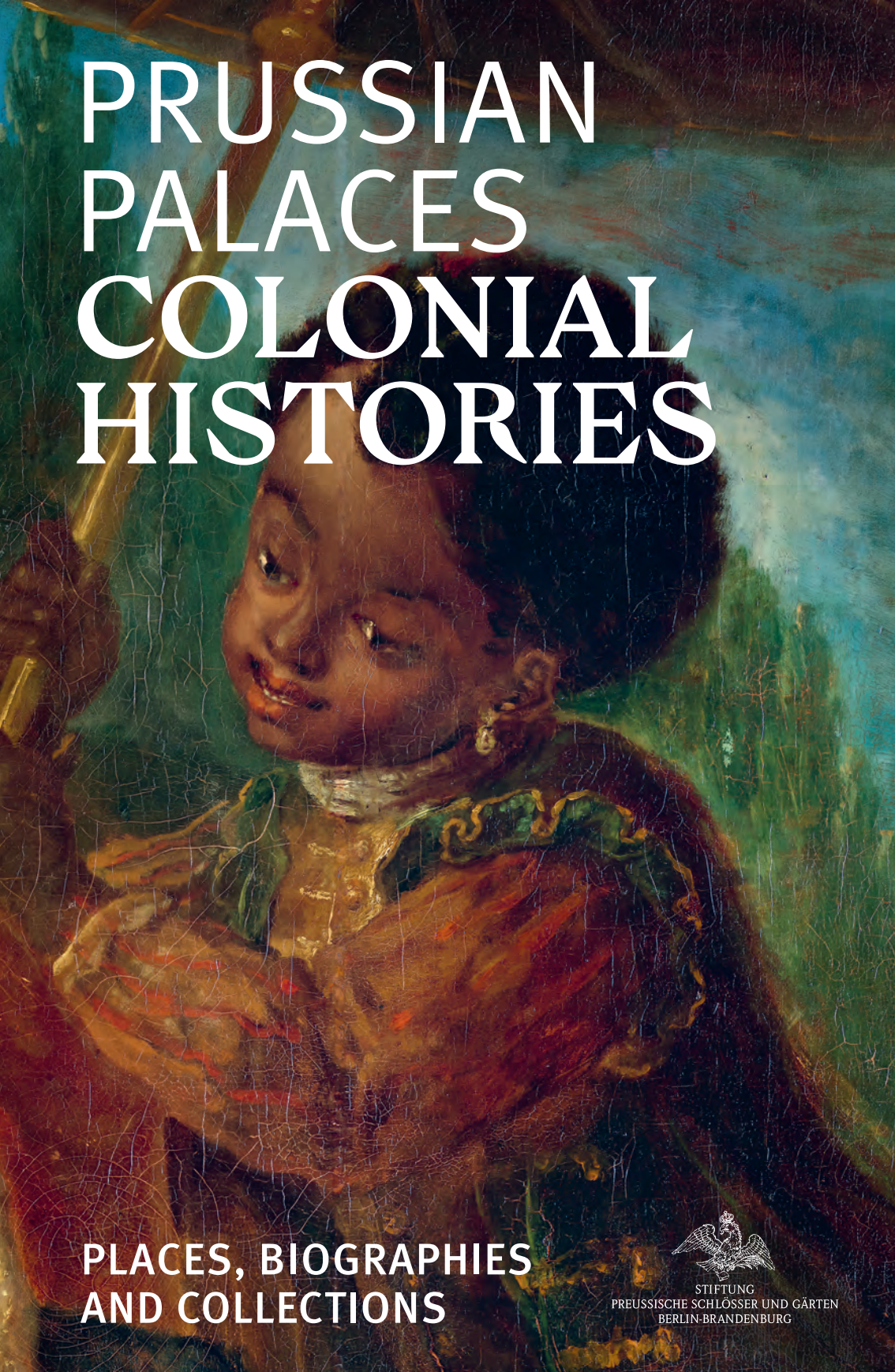

PRUSSIAN PALACES COLONIAL HISTORIES

PLACES, BIOGRAPHIES AND COLLECTIONS

STIFTUNG
PREUSSISCHE SCHLÖSSER UND GÄRTEN
BERLIN-BRANDENBURG

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Edited on behalf of the
General Director of the Prussian Palaces and
Gardens Foundation Berlin-Brandenburg

SANDSTEIN

Prussian Palaces. Colonial Histories.

The Prussian Palaces and Gardens Foundation Berlin-Brandenburg looks after buildings, parks, and collections that form an internationally significant heritage, a heritage that is rich in cultural value and ambivalent in its meaning. Time and again, Prussia's historical and political legacy triggers debates over its role in history and that of its once-ruling family. It is our task to preserve this heritage for our and future generations and to discuss it from today's perspective.

Current debates necessarily challenge our understanding of history. New issues and topics force us to look back in time. Where have we come from, where are we now? How do we assess history from today's perspective? Which historical knowledge is lacking in order to understand our own time better?

At present we witness an intense debate about Germany's role in Europe and the world that also involves the country's future role on the international stage. For a long time, the important question of Germany's colonial past and today's racism has hardly been discussed. We can be grateful that new debates and political discourses in society have finally put this issue on today's agenda. German colonialism was based on brutal practices and led to enslavement and genocide—and colonialism lives on today in the form of racism, claiming victims even now.

Our foundation is taking on the challenge. As a cultural organisation, we want to play a productive role in society and its current debates. Once we ask the first questions and research has begun, the traces of colonialism at the Prussian court and in the former electoral and royal palaces are unmistakable. We have just begun to open up our collections to this enquiry and to share more information with our visitors. Our first goal has been achieved in 2023 with the exhibition *Prussian Palaces. Colonial Histories*, where we put the current state of our questions and knowledge up for discussion. We did not want to embark on this route alone, because the white gaze has for a long time perpetuated blindness on these issues. Right now, it must be complemented by a vital exchange with those who have not yet had their say, and also by an attentive perspective from the outside. We want to tread cautiously so as not to repeat our own former mistakes. Much remains to be researched and understood. And much needs to be negotiated where the most diverse judgements and experiences meet. Just like the entire country, the Foundation still has a long way to go. We know too little, and we also have to change as an institution. Our activities in education and inclusion should put the topics of colonialism and racism in a more central place—and the organisation itself should take a conscious look at its own structures and mindsets. This requires effort—but the goal of a more just society and a more equitable presentation of history is worth any effort.

This publication invites you down this path with us—to neglected and hidden chapters of Prussian history, to previously unknown biographies and to artworks and their messages in the service of the rulers. You will get to know Prussian palaces and gardens in a new way. Welcome!

| CHRISTOPH MARTIN VOGTHERR

Brandenburg-Prussia has a colonial past with a long history. Time and again, the palaces and gardens were stages for colonial activity and thinking. Court society was both directly and indirectly involved in this system. Even into the 19th century, trafficked people were working at the Prussian court. This colonial context can be discerned in numerous artworks in the palaces.

As obvious as these statements may sound to many, there are still so few details known about the backgrounds, narratives, and biographies. Until now, the architectural and art historical features of the palaces and collections were first and foremost seen from a European view and presented to visitors from this perspective. In the face of a pluralistic society, social change, cultural and societal globalisation as well as the beginning discussion of German and Prussian colonial history, it is important and necessary to expand this narrative and to add previously overlooked or neglected perspectives. Initially, each of the 24 objects, groups of works or buildings presented here will be examined with a conventional art historical approach. An additional text regarding the same object will then cover the gaps in the story or will convey a parallel history that focuses on aspects of colonial history, the problems of existing narratives or information excluded from the established contexts. Among other topics, we can read that the coloured glass beads manufactured on Peacock Island were used as currency in the slave trade in West Africa. We also learn on what paths the biographies of Black servants at court could be partially reconstructed and that allegedly Chinese motifs in applied art mostly reflected European notions of China. With this perspective, this guide represents the beginning of a process of a critical reappraisal of colonial contexts in these palaces and gardens. The necessary external view is cast initially on two especially critically discussed objects: the busts of the First Rondel in Sanssouci Park (chapter 5) and the so-called Tip of Kilimanjaro in the New Palace (chapter 24).

Again and again, the problem of the lack of unevenly administered historical sources is apparent. Hardly any sources in the palaces have survived that were not written from the perspective of the rulers. The existing historical evidence has left gaps since it only tells half the story. These cannot always be closed, because often there is simply a lack of information. This publication makes a contribution towards evincing an image of the wealth and pluralism of perspectives and narratives to expand our insights and to initiate further research. The texts do not present a complete picture, but they are to be regarded as a first approach.

All those interested in colonial contexts can use this guide to visit specific palaces, parks, and collections in and around Berlin and Potsdam to learn more about the previously untold history of certain artworks, objects, or spaces. It also is an invitation to all other visitors to expand their tour to include a focus on colonialism.

On terminology

The articles' authors have made an effort to use language sensitively. We do not want the texts to contain terms that some might find hurtful and discriminatory. We have therefore decided not to write out the terms M_ and Kammerm_ (translator's note: *Mohr* and *Kammermohr* are German words historically known as disparaging terms for Black people or Black servants, respectively) and to put the (German) historical designation *Kammertürke* (Turkish servant at courts of the 17th and 18th centuries) in italics. Also, the term 'exotic' will be used in this publication critically, since it plays a role in glorifying non-European people, plants and objects, implicitly applying positive racist preconceptions. The term Black is capitalised in this publication since it refers to socio-political identity and not a biological trait. Similarly, people of colour is a term of self-designation.

| CAROLIN ALFF SUSANNE EVERS HATEM HEGAB

PLACES

The Prussian palaces and gardens are places that represent power, beauty, and sometimes a romanticised longing for distant lands. They were shaped over generations by the reigning monarchs. To this day, the palaces of Potsdam and Berlin are fondly described as picturesque idylls. In doing so, the Eurocentric world view and the global claim to power, which found their expression in decorations and works of art, are often overlooked.

How should we approach these places? What stories do they tell us and what stories need to be added to understand their global historical significance? What kind of exhibition of the objects and works is possible or even necessary? Historical contexts require differentiated treatment since the meaning of places is not set in stone. Only the entire range of stories can do justice to these places and their significance.

1

EQUESTRIAN STATUE OF ELECTOR FREDERICK WILLIAM

Fig. 1 Figures in chains, part of the equestrian statue of Elector Frederick William

Fig. 2 Equestrian Statue of Elector Frederick William with four figures in chains, various sculptors, 1703–1709, bronze, SPSG, Charlottenburg Palace, Skulpt.slg. 5247

Claims to power in bronze

The monument, commissioned by Frederick III (later King Frederick I) shows Elector Frederick William riding a horse, looking into the distance. At his feet are four people in chains that probably symbolise his enemies Sweden, Poland, France, and the Ottoman Empire.[1] The equestrian statue was completed in 1703 and placed on the *Lange Brücke* in front of Berlin Palace. The four figures around the plinth were added in 1708–1709. The political meaning of these figures is still subject to discussion today.[2]

Prior French examples of such statues of enslaved or captive men are clearer in terms of their iconography. The plinth of the monument of King Henry IV on the Pont Neuf in Paris, destroyed during the French Revolution, was framed by four figures who portray enslaved men. One of them is depicted as an African.[3] The sculptures of slaves at the base of the monument to Louis XIV, destroyed in 1792, which stood on the Place de la Victoire in Paris, are similar in their design to the more generic figures around the equestrian statue of the elector.[4]

In both Paris and Berlin, the installation of the statues and the accompanying ceremonial programme was criticised and met with polemical responses. Critics focused on the veneration of monarchs, resembling idolatry, and the presumed subjugation of enemies, symbolised by the enslaved people.[5] In France, the monuments of monarchs were toppled during the French Revolution and the figures of the enslaved were kept separately, because the claim to power thus expressed was rejected during the revolution.

Colonial aspirations were definitely a part of the elector's and his successor's pretensions to power. On the Latin inscription on the plinth of the monument, written by the scholar Johann Georg Wachter, who was responsible for the iconography, the monarch is described as a 'hero' who stood for the 'love of the world' and was considered the 'terror of his enemies'.[6] By 1700, the monarch's imperial ambitions extended to the west coast of Africa and beyond. At the end of the 19th century, the importance of these aspirations was championed. After acquiring colonies, Emperor William I is purported to have proudly stated that he could now step before the equestrian statue with a clear conscience, since he had 'taken up and expanded' the elector's colonial project.[7]

| CAROLIN ALFF

Memorials and the meaning assigned to them

Under Elector Frederick William, Brandenburg constructed Fort Gross Friedrichsburg on the Gold Coast in present-day Ghana. After the establishment of the *Brandenburg-African Company* (*BAC*) in 1682, the fort enabled Prussia to extract gold, ivory, and—most notably—slaves. As a stark reminder of Prussian colonial history, Charlottenburg's equestrian statue only commemorates part of this historical narrative on site.

Realisation: Andreas Schlüter (sculptor), Johann Jacobi (caster), Gottlieb Herfert (sculptor), Johann Samuel Nahl (sculptor), Cornelius Heintzy (sculptor), Johann Hermann Backer (sculptor), 1703–1709, bronze
Provenance: equestrian statue placed on the 'Lange Brücke' in 1703; dedication on the birthday of King Friedrich I; 1708–1709, the figures, the side reliefs and the inscription plate are added to the plinth; 1943 relocation to Ketzin due to the war; 1947–1948 sunk in Lake Tegel; 1951 placed in the Court of Honour of Charlottenburg Palace; 1952 plinth is added.

Fig. 3 Figures in chains on the plinth of the equestrian statue

Throughout the 17th century, between 17,000 and 30,000 Africans were abducted and enslaved by the *BAC*. After the death of King Frederick I in 1713, control over the fort was eventually transferred to Dutch colonists. However, Brandenburg had already accumulated prestige and financial gains through its colonial endeavours at the particular expense of thousands of Africans.

The elector is commemorated in the equestrian statue, whose motifs euphemise Prussia's power and suzerainty over state enemies. However, only part of this narrative comes to the front, as there is no mention of the *BAC* or its role in the slave trade. Thus, how does this statue function as a memorial? What narratives are preserved, and which are left out of history?

In his book *Deutsch sein und Schwarz dazu*, Theodor Michael opens with the quotation: 'One: "Yes, it happened exactly as it happened." The Other: "But that is not exactly how it happened".'[8] What Michael points to here is how history is presented to us 'exactly as it happened'. He suggests that the narrative of this past is not complete, and there is more to tell.

With regard to the equestrian statue, the historical narrative contained in the memorial can be stretched to tell a more complete narrative of the history of colonialism. Since 2020, and earlier elsewhere, conversations about memorials to colonial histories and racist figures have come into question. In Germany, this conversation has already discussed street names in Berlin's African Quarter and the M_Street in Berlin-Mitte. Unlike streets, however, renaming the memorial would not serve the same function of *correcting* historical narratives.

A memorial, after all, does not represent history itself. Rather, memorials contain a narrative of the past that individuals assign.[9] Accordingly, the equestrian statue only speaks of the portion of Prussian history that has been vested in the memorial. The historical narrative hitherto is incomplete. It is thus the task of historians, artists, and restorers to correct this narrative. Interventions in memorials, such as additions, modifications, or removals, could be a way forward. In this light, the narrative of the past contained in the equestrian statue can be rewritten to contain a past that is not told solely from the perspective of the powerful.

| HATEM HEGAB

| 1 Cf. Frank 2001. – Ziegler 2010. | 2 Frank 2001, p. 351, n. 31. | 3 Cf. Frank 2001, p. 342. – McGrath 2012. | 4 Cf. Ziegler 2010, p. 132. | 5 Cf. Frank 2001. | 6 Epigraph quoted in Frank 2001, p. 344, according to Ladendorf 1961. | 7 Schmidt 1893, p. 450. | 8 Michael 2013, p. 8. | 9 See Catterall 2020.

3

CHINESE HOUSE IN SANSSOUCI PARK

Fig. 1 Entrance to Chinese House at Sanssouci Park

A pavilion of Prussian chinoiserie

The Chinese House in Sanssouci Park was a place where guests were received and subjected to an illusion. The pavilion was built in the style of Prussian chinoiserie. The architect Johann Gottfried Büring drafted the building after a sketch by Friedrich II.[1] The clover-leaf layout was inspired by *Trèfle* pavilion in Lunéville Park. In 1752, the Prussian king acquired engravings of this pavilion.[2] William Halfpenny's work *Rural Architecture in the Chinese Taste* of 1750 – 1752 also could have been a template.[3] It contains temples à la chinoise with a round layout, scaled columns and bells on the cornice, all of which could have inspired the architect of the Potsdam pavilion.

The outdoor area is constructed with gilded columns in the shape of palm trees and ornamented with figures making music and drinking tea. The clothing and instruments of the statues, created by Johann Peter Benkert and Johann Gottlieb Heymüller, are designed as fanciful costumes rather than authentic Chinese clothing. The male figure on the roof was constructed after a draft by Benjamin Giese.

Fig. 2 Johann Gottfried Büring
Chinese House at Sanssouci Park
1754 – 1764

Fig. 3 Chinese House
interior

It holds a caduceus, the staff that Mercury received from Apollo in gratitude for the invention of the flute, which is certainly a reference to Friedrich II's favourite instrument.[4]

The painting in the interior was made according to sketches by the French artist Blaise Nicolas Le Sueur and executed by Thomas Huber in 1756.[5] Above the cornice, a balustrade was painted, where boisterous company looks into the hall. The supposedly Chinese clothing as well as the parrots, monkeys and decorations surrounding it are characterised by the fashion of 'exoticism' of the time.

The design of the pavilion satisfies Friedrich II's contradictory demands for both stately representation and intimacy.[6] The relationship between Friedrich II and Voltaire had a formative influence on the king's image of China and the design of the Chinese house. The French writer came from Lunéville to the Prussian court in 1750 for three years. During this time, he was occupied with the history and culture of China and documented this in his *Essay on Universal History*. In his essay, Voltaire describes China as a peaceful utopian state with a centralist system of rule over which the church had no influence.[7]

| CONSTANTIJN JOHANNES LELIVELD

‘Exoticism’, not Authenticity

As early as 1789, a few years after the completion of the pavilion, contemporaries were critical of the building. Manger regretted that Büring did not have the books of William Chambers available, who studied the country’s architecture and garden design during several stays in China.[8] With the publication of his book *Designs of Chinese Buildings, Furniture, Dresses, Machines, and Utensils* in 1757, a desire for authenticity arose.[9] This influence can be seen in later chinoiserie structures in the park. The Chinese Bridge, which was planned for Sanssouci Park but never built, is based on drawings ordered from Chambers’ himself.[10] The Dragon House was built by Carl von Gontard in 1770 after a draft attributed to Büring. This building clearly refers to Chambers sketches.[11] Halfpenny’s work *Rural Architecture in the Chinese Taste*, which probably served as inspiration for the pavilion, provided little authenticity with its arched roof cornices, dragons and bells, but features all the elements of chinoiserie architecture in Germany.[12] From the perspective of East Asian art history, this

Fig. 4 Ceiling Painting at the Chinese House (detail from fig. 3)

Fig. 5 Athanasius Kircher *Matteo Ricci and Paul Xu Guanggi* copper engraving, from *China Illustrata* (French edition), Amsterdam 1670, p. 201

Potsdam pavilion is reminiscent of the Altar of Heaven (Chinese: 天壇) in Beijing because of its basic form. This was built in 1420 by the Yongle Emperor and served emperors as a place to perform harvest rituals. It is astonishing how few Chinese elements can be found in the construction and design of the pavilion, since Chinese export porcelain, which was collected in large quantities by the Prussians, would have offered excellent models for the design of figures, costumes, or instruments. A possible model for the winged pickaxe hood of a figure on the ceiling painting is the Chinese official hat Futou (Chinese: 幞頭, fig. 4). This is depicted in the *China illustrata* (1667) by the Jesuit Athanasius Kircher and may have inspired the Prussian version (fig. 5).

The structure shows which elements of China interested the monarchs. It was an ‘exotic’ idyll mostly associated with the consumption of fine exported goods such as tea or coffee. For China itself is not shown here, but rather the constructor’s own idealised notions of China and its treasures.

| CONSTANTIJN JOHANNES LELIVELD

| 1 Cf. Manger 1789, p. 238. | 2 Cf. Wilhelm 2005, p. 206. | 3 Cf. Tack 1993, p. 44. | 4 Cf. Hüneke 1993, p. 60. | 5 Cf. Komander 1993, p. 74. | 6 Cf. Wilhelm 2005, pp. 196 f. | 7 Cf. Song 2014, p. 20. | 8 Cf. Manger 1789, pp. 237 f. | 9 Cf. Tack 1993, p. 44. | 10 Cf. Harksen 1993, p. 51. | 11 Cf. Tack 1993, p. 45. | 12 Cf. Tack 1993, p. 44.

The palaces and gardens provide insights into the political work and life of the monarchs, their governmental practices, and their promotion of the arts. In most cases, the rulers, their families, and court life are the focus of the narratives. But it is also worth taking a look behind the scenes at people who were not at the centre of attention. Research has confirmed what can be seen in many paintings – numerous people had been trafficked to the Prussian court over the centuries. Since the 17th century, these mainly included Black people and People of Colour, who have been part of Prussian and subsequently German society ever since. Their biographies testify to their dependence and courtly constraints, but also to their resistance to the courtly system.

BIOGRAPHIES

9

OTTO FRIEDRICH VON DER GROEBEN

Detail from fig. 1

Otto Friedrich von der Groeben on the West Coast of Africa

Fig. 1 H. Verwiebe after unknown artist (around 1701)
Portrait of Otto Friedrich von der Groeben (1656–1728)
19th Century, oil on canvas, 84 × 66 cm
SPSG, GK I 9302, Oranienburg Palace

This portrait shows Otto Friedrich, Count von der Groeben, who became renowned as the founder of the fortress of Gross Friedrichsburg, located in today's Ghana. The half-length portrait depicts him in armour and with Electoral Brandenburg's Order *'de la Générosité'*.

Von der Groeben had entered the service of Elector Frederick William of Brandenburg in 1681, who entrusted him with leading Brandenburg's expedition to Africa in May 1682.[1] The aim was to establish Brandenburg alongside England, the Netherlands, and Spain as an overseas trading power. To this end, trading posts were to be set up in Africa. He set off with two ships towards Africa and the flag of Electoral Brandenburg was hoisted on African soil on 1 January 1683. Soon after, construction of the fortress Gross Friedrichsburg began on the West African coast. Since 1682, the *Brandenburgisch-Afrikanische Compagnie* was involved in trading with gold, ivory, rubber, but also the slave trade.[2] In the expectation of great profits, Brandenburg-Prussia shipped between 10,000 and 30,000 enslaved Africans in the following decades.[3]

Various elements in the portrait refer to von der Groeben's work for the elector. He is holding a floor plan of the fortress Gross Friedrichsburg in his right hand and is handing it to an African man. The inscription on the floor plan refers to the confiscation of African territory in the name of the elector on 1 January 1683 and the establishment of the fortress. A treaty signed that January between Brandenburg and the African population stated, among other things, that the fort was to offer them protection to ward off attacks by other trading nations or other African ethnic groups.[4] In return, they promised the Electorate of Brandenburg exclusive trading rights. The portrait is understood to depict this transaction as well. Von der Groeben hands over the floor plan of the fortress as a symbol of the alleged protection that Brandenburg assured the Africans upon the establishment of the fortress. In contrast to von der Groeben, the African man in the picture does not show any personal features, so he cannot be recognised as an individual. In the picture, he represents the African population on the territory where Brandenburg founded its trading post.

| ALEXANDRA NINA BAUER

Detail from fig. 1

Jan Conny's resistance

Contrary to Otto Friedrich von der Groeben, no portrait of Jan Conny is known today. The historical figure, a merchant indigenous to what is today Ghana, played a significant role in Prussia's colonial endeavours. Conny's given name differs across British, French, German, and Dutch historical accounts. The details of his life, like the dates of his birth and death and his birth name, are largely unknown in historical records. Usually, his role in Brandenburg's colonial presence in Ghana's Gold Coast has a particular historical focus. In non-European records, especially in the Caribbean, Conny's life is commemorated during the annual *Junkanoo* festival. However, Conny played a larger role in Prussia's colonial history than has been narrated hitherto.

Also called 'Conny the Great', Jan Conny encountered Brandenburg's colonists when they arrived on the Gold Coast to establish Gross Friedrichsburg in what is today Ghana. This marked the beginning of Brandenburg's (later Prussia's) colonial endeavours in Africa.[5] Once there, representatives of the *BAC* signed an agreement with 'three African princes', which allowed for the establishment of a fort and three exclusive trading ports.[6] The Berlin Court hoped the fort would enable it to export gold, one of Ghana's most sought-after resources.

In German historical records, Conny is seen as the primary agent of Brandenburg. However, the reality of the matter was that Brandenburg, like the Netherlands and the British Empire, threatened the livelihood, land and resources of the indigenous people. When the colonists from Brandenburg arrived, many tribes had already been fending off the Dutch and British, which had been extracting their resources for decades.

These tribes hoped that the establishment of a colony by the Brandenburgers would help weaken the Dutch colonial stronghold in the area. Thus, their alignment with the colonists, a mission taken on by Conny, is portrayed here as a form of resistance against European colonialism. Although Conny facilitated Brandenburg's colonial activity, neither his nor his tribe's resistance to European colonialism is presented as part of Brandenburg and Prussian history.

Although Prussia sold Gross Friedrichsburg to the Dutch in 1718, Conny rejected this handover. Instead, he was adamant on preventing the Dutch from strengthening their presence in the area.[7] With an army of 20,000 soldiers, Conny attempted to fight the Dutch for four years until they were forced to surrender in 1724.

| HATEM HEGAB

| 1 Cf. Schück 1889, vol. 2, pp. 133 f. | 2 Cf. van der Heyden 1993 and Weindl 2001. | 3 Lately Leschke 2019, p. 7. | 4 Cf. Schück 1889, vol. 2, pp. 155–157. | 5 Cf. Zaugg 2018, p. 43. | 6 Peters 1986, p. 9. | 7 Cf. von Mallinckrodt 2016, p. 114.

14

ALEXANDER VON HUMBOLDT AT CHIMBORAZO

Detail from fig. 1

Fig. 1 Friedrich Georg Weitsch
Alexander von Humboldt and Aimé Bonpland at the foot of Chimborazo, 1806 – 1807
oil on canvas, 161 × 226 cm
SPSG, GK I 4145, Charlottenburg Palace

Humboldt's expedition as a Prussian project

The explorer Alexander von Humboldt and his French colleague Aimé Bonpland have set up camp on a high plateau in the Andes. In the foreground, Humboldt is wearing European clothing and taking a sextant from an indigenous companion. Aimé Bonpland sits in the right corner with a vasculum and bent over a herbarium under a tarpaulin. Next to him lies a dead condor. On the left, a group of indigenous attendants of the expedition are making a fire to cook potatoes and another is taking care of the pack animals. The background of the painting is dominated by the snow-capped volcano Chimborazo, located in today's Ecuador. The inscription on the expedition crates between Humboldt and Bonpland reads 'Expe[dition] Prussiana Hist[oriae] natur[alis]'. Recent research has shown that the painting was not commissioned by the Prussian king, as previously assumed, but by the Prussian Academy of Sciences. It was purchased after completion by King Frederick William III.[1]

During Humboldt's trip to America from 1799 to 1804, the expedition group spent several days at Chimborazo, as we know from his travel diary and numerous sketches. Although the expedition to the twenty-thousand-foot mountain failed to reach the summit, the group reached a height never achieved before.[2]

Court painter Friedrich Wilhelm Weitsch created the painting after instructions and sketches provided by Alexander von Humboldt. The researcher held the painter in high regard and commissioned him with a portrait as well as scientific depictions of animals for his travelogue immediately upon his return from America. Only the inscription on the crates was probably added by the painter later and without Humboldt's knowledge. The entire research trip to the Spanish colonies, which took place with the permission and under the protection of the Spanish government, is thus declared a Prussian project. As such, the inscription offered the Prussian King Frederick William III the opportunity to subsequently take part in the fame of the expedition. According to contemporary reports, Humboldt as a German scholar and subject of the king had set a monument not only to science but also to the nation.[3]

| SUSANNE EVERS

Alexander von Humboldt and José de la Cruz

Detail from fig. 1 Alexander von Humboldt and José de la Cruz

Who is Humboldt's indigenous companion standing next to him and handing him a sextant in Weitsch's painting? In the previous art historical descriptions of the painting, this person is usually not mentioned at all.[4] One searches in vain for his name and his story. Obviously, he has the important task of taking care of the scientific instruments, since he is still holding the case of the sextant so proudly displayed by Humboldt. He is just as tall as the European researcher, and despite his slightly submissive gaze, he is the focus of the painting together with Humboldt.

The scientific instruments that Humboldt and Bonpland carried with them were the keys to the success of their research and were indispensable to their travels.[5] Therefore, the guardian of the instruments had a prominent position, which is evident in the painting.

In August 1799, immediately after their arrival in South America, Humboldt and Bonpland met José de la Cruz, probably the son of a Spaniard and a slave, in Cumaná.[6] He accompanied the two throughout their entire journey as a servant.[7] In the travel journal and in Humboldt's letters, he is referred to several times as a servant, but also as a carrier.[8] On the whole, Humboldt rarely mentions the indigenous inhabitants of the regions he travels to in the extensive publications on his journey to South America. For his European contemporaries and for posterity, an image of the Europeans Humboldt and Bonpland emerged, who entered deserted areas and explored nature there.[9]

The painting by Friedrich Georg Weitsch proves that this did not reflect the reality by any means. The display of José de la Cruz in the centre of the painting next to Humboldt even emphasises how much Humboldt was indeed dependent on the support of locals. The disregard for José de la Cruz in the title and in the reception of the picture, on the other hand, shows that this went unnoticed in Europe.

| SUSANNE EVERS

| 1 Cf. Männl 2020, pp. 45–58. – Differently: Lacher 2003, pp. 147–154, 304 f. | 2 Cf. Humboldt 2006, pp. 79–103. | 3 Cf. Männl 2020, p. 55, n. 32. | 4 Krätz 1997, p. 71 ('On this painting by F. G. Weitsch from 1810, he [Humboldt] can be seen dressed in the European fashion, on the high plateau of the Andes in 1802 handling a sextant.'). – Lacher 2003, p. 304, cat. no. W348 ('Humboldt in the right foreground with sextant and Bonpland with herbarium.'). – Thanks to Laia Ribera Cañénguez for inspiration on the following research. | 5 Cf. Faak 2003, p. 152. – Wolf 2016, pp. 112 f. | 6 Cf. Schaper 2018, p. 105. | 7 Cf. Faak 2003, p. 85. | 8 Cf. Biermann/Schwarz 2007, p. 87. – Pelizaeus 2018, pp. 88–92. | 9 Cf. Zantop 1999, pp. 191–197.

COLLECTIONS

The collections of the palaces are rich in objects and works of art that showcase the magnificence, power, and international standing of the monarchs and their courts. It is precisely these objects that are often an expression of Eurocentric claims and colonial or Orientalist ideas. Some objects would not have ended up in Prussia's palaces and gardens without colonial exploitation. Worldwide trade in colonial goods and coveted luxury items was often associated with the slave trade. These colonial entanglements will be demonstrated using several pieces from the collections as examples. Research on this topic will continue in future, since the SPSG is obliged to guarantee access to the collections and to make all findings and information available to the public.

17

CABINET OF CURIOSITIES

Detail from fig. 1

Beauty within one's grasp

Fig. 1 Georg Hainz
Cabinet of Curiosities, around/after 1666
oil on canvas, 128 × 102 cm
SPSG, GK I 3002, Caputh House

The painting *Cabinet of Curiosities* was created by Hamburg still life painter Georg Hainz around 1666. Valuable objects made of many precious materials are displayed on shelves with 15 compartments. Treasures made of cut semi-precious stones, such as the carafe made of agate, are shown here. Pearls and coral necklaces are ingeniously draped in the picture to create more depth. Two pistols are also hung in front of the shelves to produce the same effect. Shells, trophies, and statuettes seem like separate art works in this picture. In the lower compartments, natural objects such as seashells are rendered in exact detail.

In the middle of the shelves is a great ivory trophy with a lid, which is a work by Joachim Henne, one of the most eminent ivory carvers of the Baroque era. From ca. 1663 to 1665, he worked in Hamburg at the same time as Hainz.[1] Scenes of a putti bacchanalia, meaning putti at a feast of the wine god Bacchus, are depicted on the trophy. The painter rendered the scene from the reverse side of the trophy on the ivory stein in the compartment on the left. Here, the inebriated Bacchus is being supported by putti.

Due to the deceptively real rendering, the picture seems to have depth behind the frame. This painting technique is called *trompe l'oeil*, French for 'deceive the eye'. Georg Hainz uses the shelves as a virtual space to bring the objects close to the picture's surface. The resulting realism of the objects could give rise to the assumption that they are from a specific collection. However, this has not yet been proven.[2]

Many of the objects depicted on the cabinet's shelves are vanitas, i.e. symbols of human transience. This pictorial language typical of the Baroque period represents the tension between the aphorisms *carpe diem* (seize the day) and *memento mori* (remember that you shall die). This duality can also be found on the shelves in the cabinet of curiosities. The playing putti and drinking receptacles as elements of worldly pleasures are contrasted with skulls and pocket watches as symbols of transience.

The actual cabinet of curiosities of Elector Frederick William of Brandenburg had characteristics similar to the one shown in this painting. The cabinet of curiosities' inventory of 1688 was the inventory made upon the Elector's death. The 'carved and turned art objects', also called *artificialia*, form the majority of the collection, followed by the *naturalia*, rare objects of natural history.[3]

| CONSTANTIJN JOHANNES LELIVELD

No splendour without colonialism

The objects in this picture would also be categorised as *naturalia* and *artificalia*. The jewellery box below the ivory cup is made of tortoise shell inlaid with lapis lazuli, which originates from what is today Afghanistan. In the 17th century, the carapace of tortoises native to tropical waters was used to veneer furniture. Those seen here are probably from the Red Sea or the Indian Ocean. The mussels depicted are also from tropical waters. A nautilus shell, native to the western Pacific Ocean, is seen to the left of the jewellery box. The shell to the right could be that of a queen conch.

Detail from fig. 1

Collecting for a cabinet of curiosities was motivated by secular rulers' pretensions of status. The macrocosms of the world were to be collected and owned in the microcosm of the cabinet of curiosities. Thus, such cabinets were images of the temporal power of their owners. The goal of trade expeditions of the major European powers was to obtain non-European goods. In 1682, Elector Frederick William founded the *Brandenburgisch-Afrikanische Compagnie* in an effort to gain direct access to these materials. The slave trade was a practice of colonialism to increase profits through unpaid labour. Many of the materials in Hainz's painting show links to colonialism or were even used in the slave trade.

For example, cowrie shells, bottom centre, were used in Bengal as a means of payment in the slave trade.[4] The Dutch East India Company sold cowrie shells from the Maldives to the Dutch West India Company, which in turn used them in the enslavement trade on the coast of West Africa.[5] Red coral from Italy in the form of chains was also used.[6] After the violent invasion of South America by the Spanish, pearls were shipped from there to Europe. On the north coast of present-day Venezuela, especially near the island of Margarita, the rich oyster beds caused the Spanish to rush in.[7] Later, the Dutch began to fish pearls on the southwest coast of India, the so-called Coromandel Coast, which led to violent clashes with the local population.[8]

Thus, the *Cabinet of Curiosities* tell at least two stories. One shows a monarch's wealth and claim to power; the other shows how these objects and materials came to Europe through the colonial practices of European trading companies.

| CONSTANTIJN JOHANNES LELIVELD

| 1 Exh. cat. Hamburg 2010, p. 104. | 2 Cf. Segelken 2009, p. 38. | 3 Segelken 2009, p. 144. | 4 Cf. Hogendorn/Johnson 1986, pp. 14 f. | 5 Cf. exh. cat. Amsterdam 2021, p. 11. | 6 Cf. Raveaux 2020. | 7 Cf. Warsh 2018, pp. 32 f. | 8 Cf. Ravichandran 2012, p. 320.

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THE IMPRISONED SULTAN BAYAZET BEFORE TAMERLANE

Detail from fig. 1

The Triumph of General Tamerlane

The Venetian painter Andrea Celesti depicted the triumph of General Tamerlane over Sultan Bayazet in this monumental painting. The historical background is the Battle of Ankara in 1402, in which the army of the Turco-Mongol emir Tamerlane (Timur Lenk or Timur-i Lang) defeated the troops of the Ottoman sultan 'Bayezit I'. During the battle, the sultan was captured—he died in captivity. This defeat of the Ottoman Empire is considered one of the most serious in its history.

In the 17th and early 18th centuries, the event provided material for a series of plays and operas. The story spread perhaps through the imaginatively embellished musical drama by Giulio Cesare Corradi *Il gran Tamerlano* (The Great Tamerlane), which was performed in Venice in 1689.[1] Various motifs from the piece can be found in Celesti's painting. He took up Corradi's description of the triumphal procession to the victorious Tamerlane, who is sitting on a throne; as well as the 'amusing sight' offered by Bayazet in the iron cage that the Sultan actually had intended for Tamerlane.[2] Furious, Bayazet threatens the emir because he humiliates him by allowing him to be served by his half-naked wife Zelida.[3] The figure behind Zelida is probably Emireno, Tamerlane's son, with a turban and a pointed attachment. Emireno reaches for his cloak to protect his beloved Zelida from prying eyes. Celesti tries to give as diverse a picture as possible of the various

Fig. 1 Andrea Celesti
The imprisoned Sultan Bayazet before Tamerlane
around 1700, oil on canvas, 369 × 800 cm
SPSG, GK I 5033, Potsdam, New Palace

Detail from fig. 1

peoples involved in wars with the Ottoman Empire. These include Mongols, Persians, Poles, and Africans.

In addition to the aesthetic appeal offered by the story thus presented, the conflict behind it was of great interest to the Republic of Venice, as it was also an adversary of the Ottoman Empire. At the time of the painting's creation, the issues of the day included the supremacy of the Peloponnese and Crete, among other places. Presumably, the Dondi dell'Orologio family commissioned the painting.[4] They greatly supported the Republic of Venice in this struggle.

The Prussian King Frederick II acquired the work through Bonomo Algarotti for the decor of a guest apartment of the New Palace.[5] Not only was it considered one of Celesti's masterpieces, whose coloration was praised, the rendering of the ruler's behaviour was also a subject of interest. According to the opinion of the time, both commanders violate the code of honour regarded as binding for princes, according to which defeated opponents should be able to keep their dignity.

| FRANZISKA WINDT

Negative images of 'Oriental' rulers

In his painting, which was created at a time when the Ottoman Empire was considered a threat, Andrea Celesti expressed orientalised notions of historical figures and their clothing. In the triumphal procession of the victorious Turco-Mongol commander Tamerlane, we see warriors, Janissaries with *keçe* on their heads, warriors in training (*Acemi Oğlan*) with pointed hats, Black musicians and enslaved and captured warriors of the defeated Ottoman Sultan Bayazet with turbans as headgear.[6] The painting emphasises the half-naked female figure, the wife of the prisoner, as well as the undignified and degrading depiction of Bayazet in the cage.[7]

The depiction of the rulers Tamerlane and Bayazet was intended to create a negative image of 'Oriental' rulers for the European public.[8] Frederick II, who described Tamerlane 'as a passion-driven ruler of a barbaric and violent people' and Bayazet as 'an uncontrolled prisoner', also held this view.[9] The brutality of the 'Oriental' ruler was contrasted with the supposed neutrality and balance of the ancient and—as its successor—the European legal order.

Detail from fig. 1 Tamerlane and Zelida

Detail from fig. 1

The negative assessment of the Turco-Mongol ruler Tamerlane was partially expurgated by individual authors in the 18th century. Voltaire, for example, critically examined various European sources on the historical events of the imprisonment of Bayazet. However, he also considered the hymns of praise for Tamerlane in 'Oriental' sources to be exaggerated.[10]

There are numerous primary sources and retellings of the capture of Bayazet by Tamerlane in various languages including Persian, Arabic, Turkish, and several European languages.[11] All sources would have to be considered to approach the true essence of the story. However, Celesti's historical painting focuses on aspects of history that are one-sidedly based on European sources and display no knowledge of Turkish or Persian writings. The prejudiced images of rulers of this episode in history, which emphasise brutality, sexuality and lack of self-control, were later politically instrumentalised to legitimise the colonisation of the 'Orient' and still serve as models for racism against Muslims today.

| CAROLIN ALFF

| 1 Corradi 1689. | 2 Corradi 1689, p. 49. | 3 Corradi 1689, p. 51. | 4 Mucchi/Croce/Morassi 1954, p. 131. | 5 Cf. Krellig 2010, p. 20. | 6 Cf. Stichel 1990/91. | 7 Cf. Milwright/Baboula 2011, p. 242. | 8 Cf. Windt 2009. | 9 Windt 2009, quoted after Friedrich der Große 1913, pp. 194 f. | 10 Cf. Milwright/Baboula 2011, pp. 250 f. | 11 Cf. Milwright/Baboula 2011.

Traces of colonialism in the palaces in Berlin and Brandenburg are evident. This guidebook presents 24 places, biographies and works of art with colonial references. Notes on the art and cultural-historical context are complemented by a perspective that focuses on aspects of colonial history, problems of existing narratives or information hitherto ignored.

When visiting the palaces and parks, this guidebook enables all those interested in colonial contexts to discover stories previously untold. But it also invites all other visitors to broaden the thematic context of their tour.

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