DEUTSCHER KOLONIALISMUS

FRAGMENTE SEINER GESCHICHTE UND GEGENWART

GERMAN COLONIALISM
Fragments Past and Present
German Colonialism
Fragments Past and Present

14 October 2016 to 14 May 2017

For the first time the Deutsches Historisches Museum is presenting a major exhibition, with some 500 objects, dealing with various aspects of German colonialism. On display from 14 October 2016 to 14 May 2017, the exhibition focuses on a topic that has increasingly found its way into the public discourse.

Although the German Empire was one of the main European colonial powers from 1884 until the end of the First World War, it is only in the past few years that Germany’s colonial past has substantially entered public consciousness. The current debates about the recognition of the genocide of the Herero and Nama peoples have not least of all contributed to this renewed interest. The exhibition in the Deutsches Historisches Museum explores the underlying European colonial ideology, which was marked by a feeling of superiority towards the colonial peoples. For this reason the General Act of the Berlin Conference on Africa from 25 February 1885 is found at the very beginning of the exhibition, thus placing German colonialism in its pan-European context. At the conference, representatives of 14 nations did not actually conclude contracts and draw up boundaries to carve up Africa among themselves, but this meeting, under exclusion of African representatives, is now seen as a prime example of imperialist arrogance and a key element in the remembrance of German and European colonialism.

The exhibition shows the multifarious power relations in the colonies, ranging from locally-based alliances to the daily exercise of violence and the wars against the Herero and Nama, culminating in genocide. Even in times of peace the military forces employed the Maxim machinegun to reinforce their rule and bring home the superiority of the Europeans to the colonised peoples. The machinegun was sometimes used to decimate whole groves of trees in a short period of time to engender fear and respect and to leave behind a lasting impression.

Equally complex were the relations between the colonies and the German Empire. The African, Asian-Pacific and German players pursued their own aims and explored their own options for taking action. The exhibition sheds light on the motives of the missionaries, administrators, military forces, settlers and merchants on the German side as well as the interests of the colonised people. It examines the question of whether and to what degree the perspectives of the colonised have been taken into account in the historical tradition and to what extent this stands in contradiction to the huge body of collections and archives that were established during the colonial period and that reinforced the power structures. Studies explored in the exhibition – Robert Koch’s research, for example, or the introduction of economic reforms in the cultivation of cotton as well as discussions about the ban on mixed marriages – all help to illustrate the scope of action available to the local players with their sometimes divergent interests.
The unmitigated colonial consciousness did not disappear after 1919, although Germany was forced to surrender its colonies as a result of the defeat in the First World War and the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles. The exhibition devotes considerable room to this controversial remembrance of the colonial past, while artistic and societal perspectives provide insight into the present state and legacy of German colonialism in the territories that were affected by it and in present-day Germany.

In addition to texts in German and English, the exhibition offers most of the information in Braille, Easy Language and video sign language. So-called “Inclusive Communication Stations” (ICS) invite visitors to participate in the process of taking in the different thematic areas of the exhibition.
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Exhibition Texts

Germany was one of the leading European colonial powers from 1884 until the end of the First World War in 1918. Beyond the temporal and spatial borders of the colonial empire, German colonialism was part of a history of global entanglements that still have an impact today. The role of colonialism, which has been relatively minor in Germany’s culture of remembrance up to now, is now being critically re-examined.

Colonialism as a form of violent foreign rule was legitimized by a racist ideology of European superiority. In practice, it gave rise to diverse relationships of domination. Equally diverse were the colonial encounters within which actors from Africa, the Pacific region and Germany pursued their own goals and motives and explored options for action. These interactions ranged from friendly approaches to strict separation, and were influenced by the relationships between the colony and the German Empire.

From today’s perspective, the documentation of colonialism shows sharp contrast between the missing perspectives of the colonized peoples and the sheer volume of collections and archives that were generated by colonial power and bolstered or administered it. This exhibition highlights the categories and perceptions behind such collections, uncovering fault lines and different histories.

German Colonialism in a Global Context

German colonialism developed against the background of rapidly accelerating global interconnections. This phenomenon, now considered one of the first major steps in globalization, helped to intensify competition among European colonial powers from around 1880. Acquisition of territory in Africa (not yet colonized at the time) and on other continents was viewed as a proactive means of securing raw materials and markets.

In Africa, far-reaching political changes had been taking place long before colonization. Some changes were linked to this early stage of globalization, but others occurred independently. Merchants, scientists, travellers and missionaries from Europe were active in Africa and the Pacific throughout the 19th century, and were also involved in local politics. Such relationships gave rise to most of the ‘protection treaties’ on which the colonial powers based their claims to rule. The official start of colonial rule was therefore just one station in a process of entanglement whose outcome remained open for a long time. Germans also served other powers, and their activities extended beyond the German colonial empire.

Colonial Worldviews and Colonial Rule

European colonialism was based on the assumption that Europe was a fundamentally superior civilization. This led to the idea of a ‘civilizing mission’,
backed by scientific theories and a racist ideology, that aimed to justify the domination of other societies. These concepts of European racial and cultural superiority influenced the thought and action of the colonial rulers, but colonial practice was just as strongly defined by the colonized people themselves.

The forms of domination in German colonial rule were very diverse. In many cases it was impossible to extend military and administrative control throughout the colonies. In reality, governance was usually possible only through cooperation with local rulers and the population, who used such cooperation to pursue their own interests and goals. But the colonial authorities also encountered opposition. When violent resistance threatened colonial rule – for example in the colonial wars on the territory that now belongs to Namibia and Tanzania – the reaction was brutal. Violence exercised by Europeans was a constant feature of life in the colonies.

**Negotiations in Colonial Daily Life**

Daily life in the colonies was a continual process of negotiating the various participants' scope for action, even though unequal power relations defined the framework. Both within the colonies and in relations between the colonies and the mother country, widely differing interests clashed and had to be reconciled.

A complex web of interests existed in such different areas as trade, administration, science, and language policy, cutting across all the various groups. The colonized societies were socially differentiated and did not form a unified entity. Likewise, the colonizers came from different social classes and political persuasions, and their actions were not always restricted to particular roles as administrators, traders, missionaries, or settlers. Moreover, the colonizers often lacked resources and knowledge of local conditions, so they could only achieve their goals through negotiation. This also led to exchange and cooperation between the various colonial powers.

**Drawing and Transcending Boundaries in the Colonial Context**

Colonialism demanded clarity, and drew sharp boundaries between people, spaces and societies. The purpose of creating boundaries was to arrange an alien, complicated world according to the rulers' own categories and make it governable. Scientists classified humans according to 'races' and 'tribes', authorizing the concept of European superiority. Different spheres of life in the colonies were kept separate. For example, marriages between German men and African women were prohibited in several 'protectorates'.

By endeavouring to set and implement a clear line between the rulers and the ruled, the colonizers continually reasserted their own identity. That identity was always under threat in colonial society, where Europeans were in the minority. But
the colonial rulers were never completely successful in upholding the boundaries, which were constantly undermined. The colonial order was challenged by members of colonized societies who went to Germany and built a life there. And Germans who wanted to realize their dream of an alternative way of life in the colonies transcended the boundaries of their own society.

**Colonial Collections, Colonial Gaze**

Colonial expansion brought natural history specimens, everyday objects and anthropological collections into circulation. Museum stocks grew rapidly, guided by ideas of completeness and authenticity. Colonial administrations, the military, traders and missions supported the collection process on the ground. Gifts from local elites or war booty reveal the connections between collecting and domination. Today, museum depots contain immense colonial collections, but the ways they arrived there are mostly invisible. The names and knowledge of local producers or informants have been lost. Today, questions of ownership and acquisition contexts are leading to a reappraisal of colonial collections. Practices that were accepted in the days of colonialism are now being freshly evaluated.

The world of colonial images in the German Empire shows that visual relationships are also power relationships. Photographs, consumer goods and advertising all transmitted themes of colonial conquest and racist stereotypes. Through such images of themselves and of others, consumers and viewers learned colonialisit patterns of interpretation that have retained their potency to this day.

**Colonialism without Colonies (1919–1945)**

As a result of its defeat in the First World War, Germany was stripped of all its colonies under the 1919 Treaty of Versailles. Many Germans were angered by the justification given by the victorious powers – that, due to the extreme violence that had reigned in the colonies, Germany was incapable of their governance. A colonial revisionist movement emerged. Emphasizing the supposedly excellent relations between Germans and the indigenous population, it called for a return of the colonies.

The colonial issue had little priority in foreign policy. German foreign policy experts were realistic enough to realize that the colonies would never be restored. For this reason, after 1933, the colonial movement pinned its hopes on the Nazi leadership. Although Nazi leaders repeatedly fanned such hopes, Adolf Hitler left no doubt as to his main objective, which was the conquest of Lebensraum in the East.

**Decolonization and Divided Remembrance**

More than a hundred countries worldwide gained independence in the period of decolonization after 1945. The changes were marked by both wars and peaceful transitions. In the ‘African year’ of 1960, 17 new nation states emerged on the
continent. Their political options were conditioned by colonial structures and the Cold War ideology of blocs. At the same time, the 'Third World' seemed to offer an image of the new world order.

Decolonization impacted on the politics and self-image of both East and West Germany. They competed for diplomatic recognition in the growing international community. ‘Anti-imperialist solidarity’ was a key issue for East Germany. Socialist liberation movements received material and ideological aid from the state. The proclaimed support for a globalized class struggle drew in the country’s own population.

In West Germany, left-wing groups and the student movement initiated solidarity with the anti-colonial movement, linking this to criticism of their own country’s politics. In the mid-1980s, the New Black Movement began demanding recognition as a network of the African diaspora within German society.

Post-colonial Present?
The colonial past is still present today and is still contested across national and social boundaries, causing confrontations between historiography, remembrance and amnesia. The debate on the German genocide against the Herero and the Nama is currently raising public awareness about colonial crimes. This has led to a widespread reappraisal of the status of colonialism in German society and memory culture.

But colonial relationships cover a wider range of issues than the actual period of colonial rule, and they have changed Europe permanently. Aside from academic research, alternative historiographies are also coming to the fore, as civil society groups demand a redefinition of Germany as a post-colonial society.

Globalization reveals structural inequalities in which colonial power relations still have an impact today. The colonial legacy in the widest sense is controversial. It is subject to claims and challenges, establishes relationships, and requires appropriate responses to a history that is both divided and shared.
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Film programme in the Zeughauskino

Accompanying the exhibition “German Colonialism. Fragments Past and Present” is a retrospective film series of the same name in the Zeughauskino. After an opening programme with film scenes from the time of German colonialism that illustrate the cinematic appropriation of the colonial territories up until 1916, the series shows films that were made after the First World War and the surrender of the German colonies. For the time of the Weimar Republic, the film programme includes examples of the broad spectrum of tales, fantasies and ideologies that played a role in depicting the former German colonies, whereby propagandistic interests, economic considerations and the need for entertainment are often equally on hand. Two feature films have been chosen from the large body of productions from the period of the “Third Reich”: the adventure movie “Die Reiter von Deutsch-Ostafrika” (The Riders of German East Africa) was made in the “colonial memorial year” 1934, and the anti-British propaganda film “Germanin” was produced during the Second World War.

The period of German colonialism did not play a prominent role in the film production of East or West Germany until the end of the 1980s. Important exceptions are Ralph Giordano’s TV film “Heia Safari” and the three-part feature film “Morenga” as well as the East German television production “Der lachende Mann” (The Laughing Man). The fact that Germany’s colonial past, its history and consequences have meanwhile been taken up in African productions is confirmed by films from Namibia and Cameroon in which Africans play the central role and the repercussions of colonialism in post-colonial present-day Africa are questioned.

Further information about the film series can be found under www.dhm.de/zeughauskino
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Accompanying programme

Accompanying the exhibition “German Colonialism. Fragments Past and Present” is an extensive programme of information and education including panel discussions, tours for all ages, children’s and holiday programmes as well as history and film workshops.

Lectures and panel discussions

Monday, 28 November 2016, 6 pm
Panel discussion:
Decolonisation and the Struggle for Independence: Solidarity with Africa in the Federal Republic and in the GDR from the 1960s to the 1980s.
With Prof. em. Dr. Helmut Bley, Leibniz University Hanover
Dr. Hans-Georg Schleicher, historian, former ambassador of the GDR
Prof. em. Dr. Reinhart Kössler, sociologist, University of Freiburg
Moderator: John A. Kantara, journalist, Berlin
Zeughauskino

In the rivalry of the systems, East and West Germany took different stands. While the GDR saw relations with the newly established states primarily as an opportunity to break out of its diplomatic isolation, for the Federal Republic, above all for the New Left, social movements and church alliances, the African independence movements were central points of reference. Helmut Bley, Reinhart Kössler and Hans-Georg Schleicher will discuss with John A. Kantara about solidarity movements in East and West Germany from the 1960s to the 1980s.

Wednesday, 22 February 2017, 6 pm
Lecture with tour through the exhibition:
“The ethnographic museums swelled up like pregnant hippopotami” (L. Frobenius). Colonialism and Museums.
Dr. Larissa Förster, Centre for Anthropological Research on Museums and Heritage, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin
Auditorium

Monday, 6 March 2017, 6 pm
Panel discussion:
The Cultural Heritage of Colonialism in Museums and Collections
With Neil MacGregor, Humboldt-Forum Berlin
Paul Spies, Stiftung Stadtmuseum Berlin
Prof. Dr. Klaus Schneider, Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum, Cologne
Zeughauskino
Wednesday, 8 March 2017, 6 pm  
**Lecture:**  
*Gender, “Race” and Class – The construction of colonial order*  
With Katja Kaiser, historian, Berlin  
Auditorium

Wednesday, 22 March 2017, 6 pm  
**Lecture:**  
*The Exploration of the Colonies. Expeditions and the colonial culture of knowledge of German geographers 1884–1919.*  
In cooperation with the Gesellschaft für Erdkunde zu Berlin (Berlin Geographical Society)  
Auditorium

**Tours**

Wednesday, 19 October 2016, 6 pm  
**Tour through the exhibition with the curator**  
With Dr. Arnulf Scriba, Deutsches Historisches Museum  
Exhibition Hall

Wednesday, 16 November 2016, 6 pm  
**Tour with the curator:**  
*Photography in the colonial context*  
With Heike Hartmann, Deutsches Historisches Museum  
Exhibition Hall

Wednesday, 30 November 2016, 6 pm  
**Dialogical tour:**  
*Seeing with the Blind*  
Friedrun Portele-Anyangbe, contributor Deutsches Historisches Museum, in conversation with Anja Winter, communicator of art and culture for the blind and visually impaired  
Exhibition Hall

Wednesday, 25 January 2017, 6 pm  
**Tour through the exhibition with the curator**  
With Sebastian Gottschalk, Deutsches Historisches Museum  
Exhibition Hall
Guided Tour

This guided tour tells the history of German colonialism by focusing on a selection of objects. It deals with the ideologies and motivations of the colonizers and the colonized. In addition, the tour examines the after-effects of colonialism in the present: for example, the continuity of neo-colonial economic structures, the practice of naming streets after colonial actors, or the story of a black German family.

60 minutes, 4€ plus admission, meeting point: Exhibition Hall

Registration:
+49 30 20304-750/-751
E-Mail: Fuehrung@dhm.de
All tours are freely bookable.
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Inclusive programmes

The exhibition "German Colonialism. Fragments Past and Present" is barrier-free and designed inclusively. At the core of the inclusive concept are the “Inclusive Communication Stations” (ICS). There, texts are available on an equal footing in German, English, Easy Language, Braille as well as with German video sign language and audio descriptions, bringing the exhibition closer to many different people. Each of the 16 stations presents an object or topic in a way that addresses different senses, thus helping to communicate a greater understanding of the history of German colonialism for all. All of the Inclusive Communication Stations are found along a tactile guide system on the floor that starts at the entrance of the Exhibition Hall and leads to the ticket office, the counter with the audio devices and the exhibition itself.

At the entrance to the exhibition there is a tactile layout plan that helps you to find your orientation in the exhibition. The layout plan is described in German Braille, German and English normal print, and as an audio description. All stations have a special holder for white and walking canes. The audio guide offers further information about the communication stations and selected objects in the exhibition. There is also a special inclusive audio guide programme.

Further information about the inclusive audio guide can be found under www.dhm.de/bildung-vermittlung/
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Facts and Dates
Venue
Deutsches Historisches Museum
Exhibition Hall

Duration
14 October 2016 to 14 May 2017

Opening Hours
Daily 10 am to 6 pm

Admission
Admission free up to 18 years
Day ticket 8 €, reduced 4 €

Informationen
Deutsches Historisches Museum
Unter den Linden 2 | 10117 Berlin
Tel. +49 30 20304-0 | E-Mail: info@dhm.de
www.dhm.de

Exhibition Space
1000 sqm, Exhibition Hall, Basement

Size of Exhibition
Ca. 500 objects

Texts
Heike Hartmann, Sebastian Gottschalk,
Arnulf Scriba

Overall Direction
Ulrike Kretzschmar

Curators
Heike Hartmann, Sebastian Gottschalk

Curators-in-Residence
Memory Biwa, Flower Manase Msuya

Project Management
Arnulf Scriba

Exhibition Direction
Ulrike Kretzschmar

Exhibition architecture
Nadine Rasche, Werner Schulte, Mara Spieth

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PRESS PHOTOS

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1  German Empire colonial clock, around 1905
   © Deutsches Historisches Museum

2  German imperial flag on an African spear, 1982
   © Deutsches Historisches Museum

3  Geographical mosaic, P. Eitner (engraver), C. Flemming (publisher), Glogau, around 1860
   © Deutsches Historisches Museum

4  Washed-out railway embankment between Keetmanshoop and Lüderitz, photograph, around 1910
   © Deutsches Historisches Museum

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5 Exhibition Samoa. Our new countrymen, Germany, 1900/01
© Stiftung Stadtmuseum Berlin

6 Robert Koch’s microscopic slide preparations from his sleeping sickness expedition to German and British colonies in East Africa (now Tanzania and Uganda), 1906/07
© Deutsches Historisches Museum/Foto: Thomas Bruns

7 Chinese bowl with handles, Qing dynasty, China, 18th century
© Deutsches Historisches Museum/Foto: Sebastian Ahlers

8 Minister President Patrice Lumumba murdered!, poster, 1961 (GDR)
© Deutsches Historisches Museum

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Colon figure: Missionary, N.D.
© GRASSI Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

Sugar bowl (spice jar) with African woman, Germany, around 1740
© Königliche Porzellan Fabrik Meißen

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