

Picturing Difference: Writing the Races in the 1896 Berlin Trade Exposition's Souvenir Album

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This essay examines messages sent by Berlin's business community about Germany, colonized peoples of Africa and the Pacific, and Muslims—paradigmatic examples of constitutive outsides—at the time Germany was solidifying itself as a nation-state and its hold on imperial possessions. Berlin ruled a colonial empire for just 25 years, but an imperialist imagination was embedded in German culture long before and after this period.¹ Beginning as the German Empire emerged from the Wars of Unification in the 1870s, pressure groups and political realities persuaded rulers to adapt a program of colonization.² From the 1871 founding of the Empire to the 1885 Berlin conference and the taking of colonies around 1890, numerous steps swiftly moved imperialism from the realm of imagination to grounded political-economic reality. In this same time period (the *Grunderzeit*), Germany's industry, urban structure, labor, banks and insurance pacts were established. While it was becoming capital of an empire, Berlin's explosive growth, industrialization and apparent lack of sophistication had earned it the nickname "Chicago on the Spree." Europe's most dynamic metropolis, it was criticized for its labor conditions, the grime of industrialization, the crime and frenetic pace of the modern city, and its awkward aesthetics even while it was admired for its dynamism.³ These rapid changes required changes in identity. This paper examines elite discourse on this change as it is recorded in the written record of a popular didactic mechanism of its day, the grand exposition/world's fair/*exposition universelle*. Late-nineteenth century Berlin bears numerous similarities to Berlin today. Economic expansion, new industries, growing financial markets, and optimism about the future characterize them both, as does increased global interaction.

Beyond their commercial capacities, Victorian-era grand expositions and world's fairs were designed to bring to life the abstraction of "empire" and to make it comprehensible at a human scale. "They were at the same time global and local, reducing complex sets of economic, scientific and cultural interactions to one vast display."⁴ Such events were designed by elite and business classes to convey scientific

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ideas, including ideas about race, to broader publics.⁵ Like many similar events held in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,⁶ the Berlin Trade Exposition included subjugated peoples as a counterpoint to the modernity, beneficence, civilization, and power of the metropole. In the German empire, consolidation of a single, unified German race from “A Nation of Provincials”⁷ required a constitutive outside. In this paper I analyze the construction of a matrix of German, colonial and Cairo male and female identities in the program of the Berlin Exposition as three distinct steps on the evolutionary ladder. Muslims were constructed as more advanced than members of African or Pacific Island races yet unable to obtain European levels of civilization. Displays of individuals representing these civilizations at expositions encapsulated the scientific and cultural narratives of these various levels of evolution. I argue that the display of subjects and Oriental “outsiders” shaped the abstract, imagined empire, and therefore the lived experience of its citizens.

The official photographic record of the exposition, the *Pracht-Album photographischer Aufnahmen der Berliner Gewerbe-Ausstellung 1896: und der Sehenswürdigkeiten Berlins und des Treptower Parks: Alt-Berlin, Kolonial-Ausstellung, Kairo, etc.* (literally: “Proud display album of photographic recordings of the Berlin Trade Show 1896, and the things to see in Berlin and Treptow Park: old Berlin, colonial exhibit, Cairo, etc.,” colloquially: souvenir program) was printed directly next to the exposition grounds in Treptow. It was sold as both a guidebook and a souvenir of the exposition. Its author, Paul Lindenberg, was well suited to elucidate Berlin’s relationship to non-Europeans through text and images. He had previously published works of fiction, edited a volume of Otto Schütt’s travel diaries and sketches from the Congo, and published a book entitled *Berlin in Words and Pictures* one year before the exposition. The souvenir program coalesces pro-colonial arguments, Berlin boosterism, and German nationalism into a tutorial for the general public. It is an excellent source to reveal quasi-governmental discourses creating Berlin as the capital of an empire, colonized natives as subjects of that empire, and the near Orient as the constitutive outside to the imperial project. It does not, however, represent the opinions, resistance, or agency of the individuals it describes; indeed, it does not record specific events or individuals’ words at all. It therefore does not permit analysis of the logics or agency of the colonial subjects and Cairoans brought to perform in the exposition. Nor can one read in it these actors’ reflections upon, negotiation with, appropriation of or resistance to the narrative scripted in the program. The responses and resistance of these individuals to the discursive constructions I unpack here have been ably described elsewhere.⁸ My focus is on the narration of German Empire and the scripting of roles for citizens, subjects, and others.

From Spanish conquistadors motivated by God, gold and glory through the role of missionaries in the colonization of Africa, Western colonialism has always been associated with Christianity. German national identities have, of course, included Christianity at least since the First Empire under Charlemagne. German writers leading

up to and during the Second Empire, including Goethe and Karl May, discuss Islamic philosophies and religion in their writing. Only within the past 15 years of growth in colonial German studies, from the preliminary work of demarcating the field to a thriving subdiscipline, has analysis of these works highlighted their colonial component.⁹ Few works on German colonialism were published prior to the 1990s, perhaps because of German Studies' overriding focus on the Holocaust.¹⁰ Since the mid-1990s, German postcolonial studies has arisen as a virtually new field of academic research, frequently focusing on connections between race and nation.¹¹ Anti-Islamic animus has been shown to be a motivating factor behind colonial transportation, labor, social, and education policies in German East Africa.¹² This essay follows the souvenir program in considering Muslims as a race of people, not tracing out literary or legal ideas about religion. I consider the racialization of Muslims at the exposition, and the use of that construction in shaping German identity.

I read this record in the contexts of Berlin as a major Western city and center of empire, and against photographic essays of the colonies and the tropics appearing elsewhere. I deconstruct the program's message as it was likely to have been understood in its context and how it may have influenced the shape of Berlin as a rising imperial city. The first section after this introduction explains the methodology deployed in this paper. Next, the paper's focus shifts to the exhibit itself, and to the Cairo and colonial exhibits, read through the souvenir program. I describe the development of the Exposition and trace out its philosophy in the physical layout. The following section examines how the guidebook uses the colonial and Cairo exhibits to construct a German national identity against colonial subjects, via colonial power and against what it presented as degenerate Islam. The conclusion brings together these various constitutive outsides, discussing their impact on developing Berlin and German identities.

Methodology

In making the announcement that Berlin had arrived as an international power, the exposition used a syntax developed by the five French world fairs in the late nineteenth century. "Under French stewardship, world's fairs became identified with cosmopolitanism and...with the rise of the modern city."¹³ Exhibits of "exotic" peoples were a standard part of these grand expositions. International expositions generally included not only the host nation's colonies, dominions, and protectorates, but those of visiting nations as well, beginning with the London Great Exposition of 1851. As in the discourse of alterity that tourism to Hawaii is based on, "bodily difference parallels and functions as authenticating evidence of cultural difference."¹⁴ Critics of these exhibits pointed out that they displayed a wealth of goods taken from colonies, but distorted the actual living conditions for subjects under colonization. In presenting visual "evidence" of the evolution of humanity, "native villages" generally featured peoples assumed to

be the least evolved, while foreign “streets” were used for races assumed to be higher up the evolutionary ladder. Cairo was a favorite “destination” at fairs. Some national governments also sponsored exhibits to highlight parts of their countries. Such “white villages” represented tradition and stability, not backwardness or indolence.¹⁵ At the time of the Berlin Trade Exposition, grand-scale fairs and expos were no longer settings for communication between experts. These events had become crucial sites where elites educated the general population about technological, socio-cultural and economic change, generally presented as evolutionary improvements in the existing order. The form in which this information was delivered was in the process of changing from lectures and displays to “infotainment” requiring less and less reading. The primary mode of instruction was visual, without reading.¹⁶

The souvenir program was designed to guide visitors’ corporeal “field” experience at the exposition to match the role that Berlin’s elites saw the broader population playing in the empire: the program thus functioned as the script for Germans learning their new role. Images in the program illustrate various approaches to this role; all of them are “correct” roles of colonial domination, because all of them are performed by people who are already colonial masters. Citizen, subject, and Oriental outsider all took up the roles in which they were constituted in relation to empire, that is, they performed the roles that they occupied even before coming to the exposition. Unlike Butler’s experience of foregrounding being a lesbian when she gives a speech, the exposition experience not only replicates these roles through their repetition, but is designed consciously and strategically to displace earlier identities that are not so clearly tied to empire.¹⁷ The role of the exposition was to create these differences.

This study uses Martin’s corporeal approach to nationality, which emphasizes the materiality of place, the mutually constitutive relationship between bodies and spaces, and therefore of a nationalist sense of place.¹⁸ Arguing against Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* of far-flung empires, she defines a nationalist sense of place as “the establishment of a coherence of meaning between the abstract, imagined nation, images of local and regional landscapes, and lived experience in particular locales.”¹⁹ Citing Foucault, Martin writes that “sexuality, the nation and nationalism are discursively linked, and as sexuality is regulated through a myriad of discursive practices that constitute, discipline and inscribe bodies, I suggest that the space of the nation is also constituted through, and is simultaneous with, the emergence of particular corporealities.”²⁰ All practice is thus representational, as bodies are both material and metaphor simultaneously. Spaces at the exposition were deliberately designed to inscribe bodies with their relationship to nation, reshaping both in the process.

The Berlin Trade Exposition, as a whole, made sense of changes in social roles that had come with the rapid industrialization and concomitant growth of systems of finance, insurance, social welfare and employment contracts and enabled visitors to corporally experience Berlin as the center of a modern German empire. The colonial and Cairo exhibits, more specifically, attempted to produce specific types of German

men and women. This required several things which, though interrelated, can be teased out: creating the “truth” of superiority over other races, rooted in the bodies on display; presenting “other” gender roles; teaching German visitors the guidelines within which to perform the role of citizen of a colonizing power. Meeting these needs, however, required constant policing of the border between citizen and not-citizen from Cairo or the colonies.

To the Exposition

Approximately 7.5 million visitors attended the Berlin Trade Exposition during its 5.5 month run from May 1 through October 15, 1896. Although the exposition was initially intended as a world’s fair, similar to the nationally-unifying world’s fairs in Chicago, London, and Paris, German politicians were still uneasy promoting national identity. Neither the newly-founded empire nor the city of Berlin agreed to sponsor an exposition in Berlin, despite numerous requests by leading industrialists and investors. Instead, members of the business community put on the exposition themselves. They described this decision somewhat defiantly in the main official catalog:

[W]e would rather see a German exhibit than a Berlin exhibit....By ourselves we can only invite Berlin industry and Berlin businesses, but in this the frame can be stretched so far that also every firm that is somehow represented in Berlin will find room. Anything beyond that is not possible without the cooperation of the Imperial government. Yet we believe that **the Berlin Trade Exposition** on the basis we have given **will hardly be distinguishable from a German exposition in anything but its name** [emphasis added].²¹

The exposition thus became a promotion for Berlin itself.²² The exposition marked the former fishing village’s transformation from a big city to a world city and was “the coronation of Berlin as a metropolis.”²³

Because of these global-scale ambitions, research on World’s Fairs and similar spectacles can be used to frame this study of a local trade fair.²⁴ Benjamin’s famous comment on the world exposition as “the sites of pilgrimages to the commodity fetish” is cited frequently in these studies. His brief chapter “Grandville, or World Expositions” describes the fetishization of commodities and the alienation of people from themselves and others.²⁵ Other commentators consider fair organizers’ didactic intent to make the world comprehensible.²⁶ Massive changes in technologies of production and social structures of reproduction around the turn of the century meant this organizing of the world was welcomed by the 100 million Americans who attended international expositions from 1876 to 1916. Because of their scientific underpinnings, World’s Fairs were more authoritative than minstrel shows, Wild West Shows, circuses, and other entertainment forms that featured difference as prime attractions.²⁷ The popularity of ex-

positions, the world-as-exhibition in general, can be seen in the length of the list of competitors the Berlin Trade Exposition faced for visitors from Germany and abroad. Expositions were also held that year in Nürnberg, Stuttgart, Dresden, Kiel, Budapest, Nishni-Nowgorod in Russia, and Geneva.²⁸

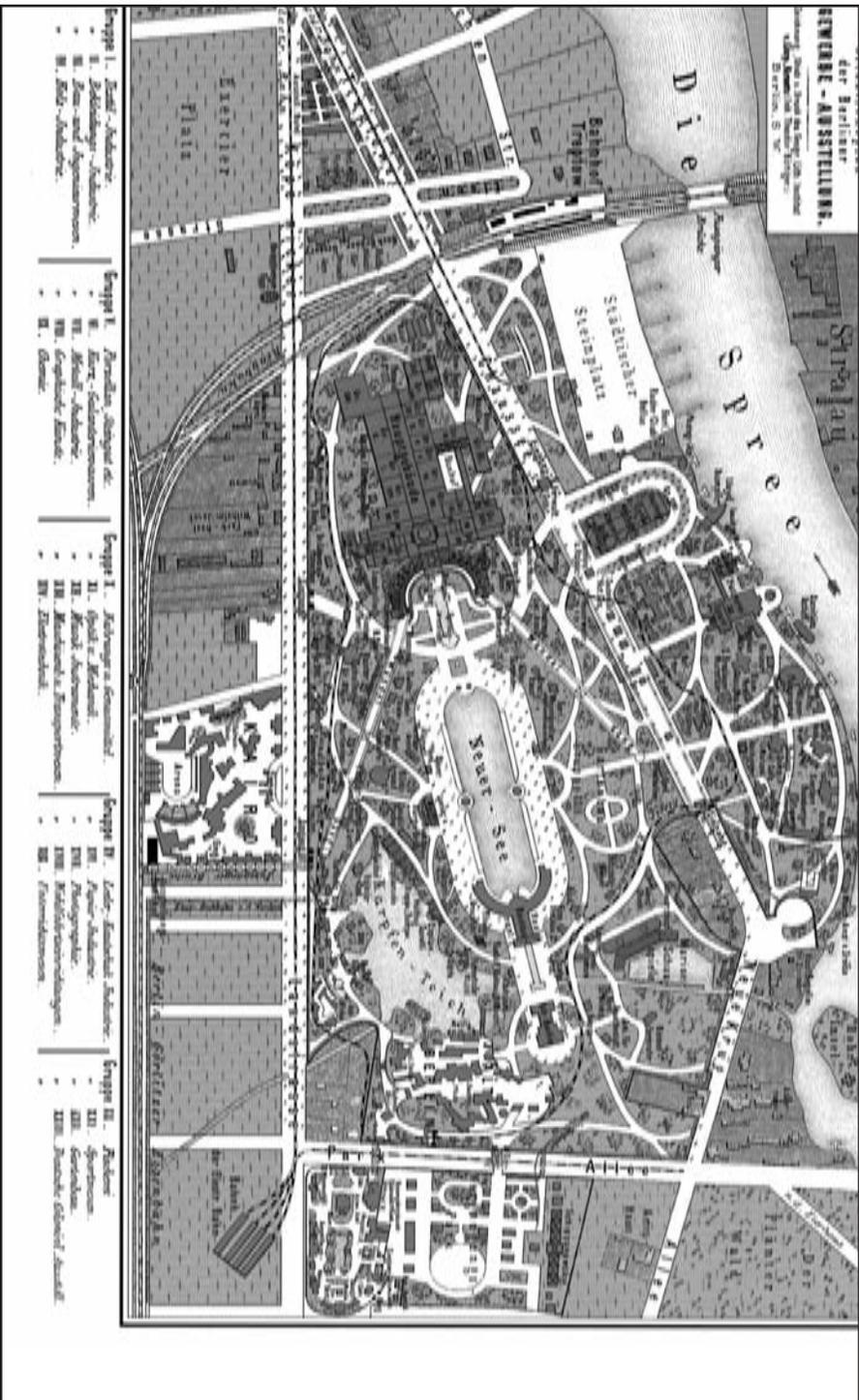
Despite initial government refusal to sponsor it, the exposition grew nearer to the state. The colonial and naval exhibitions were agreed upon as attractions to draw greater crowds to the exposition, and the Kaiser reviewed the opening of the naval exhibit with great pomp. The functions of the overall exposition: a celebration of military might, display of exotica different from daily life, and education were also fulfilled by the colonial and Cairo exhibits. The colonial exhibit served scientific purposes as the colonial subjects were observed and measured by anthropologists.²⁹ It also gave the general public both “objective” knowledge about and visceral experiences of tropical places as scripted by the exposition’s organizers.³⁰ They provided a basic foundation and repository of the “truth” of the imperial narrative told by these exhibitions.³¹ Describing other “bodies on display” elsewhere, Desmond explains that functions filled by shows which highlight corporeality include making (literal) contact with difference possible, while replacing both narrative and the possibility of historical reflection. “The social, political, and economic histories which brought performers and spectators together in the same space are either entirely absent, re-presented as nostalgia, or recoded as cultural or natural conservation.”³² This removal of the power relations that had brought the actors to Berlin was accentuated by the removal of the colonial government and commercial interests to the buildings across the road. As in other similar displays, the need for “authenticity” and “difference” from the everyday excluded any modern or Western artifacts from the exhibits, even in the case of the Polynesians, who were so unfamiliar with the building and tools they were to use in the exhibit that they had to be instructed by a German anthropologist.³³ These removals—of colonial power structures and of modern objects—naturalized colonial domination. The result was a copy so real as to convince viewers of the existence of an “original” elsewhere.³⁴

The exposition’s layout embodied its worldview. Other grand exhibits of its day also invariably took a pedagogic approach to the use of space.³⁵ The main hall sat at the convergence of straight paths, which stretched out from it like rays, precisely balanced around a formal pool. At the other end of the pool lay the main restaurant. Exhibits in the main hall and display buildings included construction and architecture, the chemical industry, scientific instruments, mechanical engineering, transportation and electronics. Other buildings on the fairgrounds featured textile and domestic arts. A Siemens’ prototype tram traveled a winding circuit through the fairgrounds. To the northeast of the formal pool was a pond in which naval maneuvers were demonstrated. To the southeast of the formal pool was another body of water, a simple fishpond. Just as the Columbian Exposition in Chicago had separated the formality of the White City and its Court of Honor from the Midway’s amusements, including non-Western peoples,³⁶ the colonial exhibit at the Berlin exposition was located in its own section of the

fairgrounds. Separated from the main hall by the formal lake and the fishpond but inside the tramline, the colonial “village” included elaborate copies of far-away places and presented Berlin’s might—and aspiration—as the center of empire. Approximately 100 contract workers from the German colonies of East Africa (today’s mainland Tanzania), Southwest Africa (Namibia), Togo, Cameroon, and Papua New Guinea performed there. Some of its buildings were crowded up against a representation of a different “other” against which modern Berlin defined itself in the exposition: the reconstructed “Old Berlin.” This placement emphasized the idea of progress, whether of races of humanity overall, or of the city of Berlin. It was not incidental. “[T]he point of an exhibition was to indicate civilization was advancing in some known direction. Especially for the host nation, the exhibition would invariably be a celebration of the past as a preparation for a better future.”³⁷ Stepping over the exposition’s tramline and crossing a major street and another tramline, one reached the buildings of the Foreign Office’s Colonial Department and commercial bodies associated with the corporatist state. Across a different street and rail line to the South of the main exposition grounds lay the re-enactment of Cairo with people from Egypt performing various “native” roles. This location reflected the fact that Cairo was not a part of the German Empire. Its inclusion in the Exposition may demonstrate Germany’s aspirations to play an important role in the Orient.

Nearly one-half the colonial performers were Swahili and therefore probably Muslim,³⁸ yet Islam was not represented in the enactments of colonized cultures beside the fishpond. Instead, it was represented in the “Cairo” exhibit, beyond the exposition proper, outside the modern German empire. Lindenberg describes the Cairo exhibit as a fleeting Oriental illusion, magical, a “miracle city,” a dream from the East. Actually none of the exposition, with the exception of the giant telescope, was permanent; many of the buildings were on loan from Holland and the contract with the city required the grounds to be returned to their original condition within weeks of the end of the exposition. This was typical of grand expositions of the Victorian Eras. They were generally dismantled in their entirety, with only a few of their structures (such as the Crystal Palace from the 1851 Great Exposition in London) remaining.³⁹ In the exhibit, “everything the Orient has to offer [was] for sale and often loudly.” Antiques were available “in suspiciously large quantities.” Throughout the exhibit, one can hear “the Muezzim calling the faithful to prayer with a monotone complaining voice.”⁴⁰ While the colonial exhibit represented black subjects as living in rustic villages (although the building styles drawn from the many cities along the Swahili coast could have suggested otherwise), the Cairo exhibit was laid out as a city with several streets. Besides a mosque with tall minaret, “Cairo” also included temples, pyramids and pharaohs’ tombs. The souvenir album assures the visitor of the authenticity of the ancient buildings, some of which had been cut off from structures in Cairo and transported to the exposition. Islam was presented as one part of an ancient scene, not in the modern world, not moving from its ancient moorings. The Cairo exhibit was divided into two parts: Pharaoh’s

Figure 1: The exposition grounds on the bank of the Spree River (Source: Bezirksamt Treptow von Berlin, ed., Die Verhinderte Weltausstellung: 100 Jahre Berliner Gewerbeausstellung 1896 (Berlin: Lüdertiz und Bauer, 1996).)



Egypt and the “Caliph’s city” (which is also referred to in the program as “modern” although the last caliphate had ended over half a millennium before the exposition). In contrast to the images of the colonial world, pictures of the Cairo exhibit are populous, with many people, Egyptians and Europeans, in each frame.

The colonial exhibit could not meet the requirement to display only products made by firms located in Berlin. Nevertheless, exposition organizers “did not want to let the opportunity to show the world the uniqueness and the products of the young overseas Germany in a comprehensive manner pass by.”⁴¹ The colonial exposition was a magnet attracting visitors to the overall exposition. Lindenberg writes:

Interesting tribes from all parts of the earth have already been displayed elsewhere in Berlin often. The presence of a series of African natives in itself would not be a particular attraction. What gives the wild ones (*Wilden*) a high interest is the fact that they have been particularly sought out by the colonial governments of the various German overseas protectorates and can completely be seen as representative of tribes that do not offer themselves for show as a profession.⁴²

The colonial exhibit was located in the Southeast corner of the exposition. Its two parts, a “native village” and a scientific/commercial section, were designed to reflect indigenous spaces and colonial logic. A footbridge over the Park Allee connected them, but they would have been experienced as two separate spaces. This reflected a growing dualism in grand expositions and fairs of the era, which were characterized by organization focused on work and production (The poster for the Berlin Trade Exposition featured a muscular forearm raising a hammer, bursting out of the ground) and exhibits aimed at consumption.⁴³ Whereas the majority of the exhibits in the exposition were arrayed around an oval pond, “New Pond,” frequently lined up along straight roads, the “village” could be found behind a freeform “Carp Pond.” This location, close to “nature” (the fishpond) and without the geometric layout of the rest of the exposition, positioned colonized subjects close to nature. This absence of formal logic in the layout could lead visitors to expect that the people found there were close to nature culturally and intellectually as well as physically. The “native village,” made up of vernacular styles from the colonies, housed the colonial contingent. It was squeezed into an admittedly narrow space, not unlike the situation of native quarters later described in Fanon’s memorable contrast of “settler towns” and “native towns.” This enabled the crowded conditions to be understood as part of colonized cultures, not as an outcome of the power structures represented across the footbridge. Buildings in the scientific/commercial section emulated East African styles: “the home of a wealthy Indian merchant in Zanzibar” (this architectural style could be found throughout the Swahili towns), the ancient Kilwa mosque (Kilwa was the most powerful and wealthiest Swahili town until it was sacked and looted by the Portuguese in 1505), and a tropical house

of the type built by the government for colonial governors—"elegant and able to withstand tropical climates." These well-made and attractive buildings housed colonial associations and businesses, shipping firms and missions in the Colonial Hall/Swahili house, materials on the "history, development, and nature of all German colonies" in the Scientific Hall/mosque, and German colonial products and finished wares in the Tropical House.⁴⁴

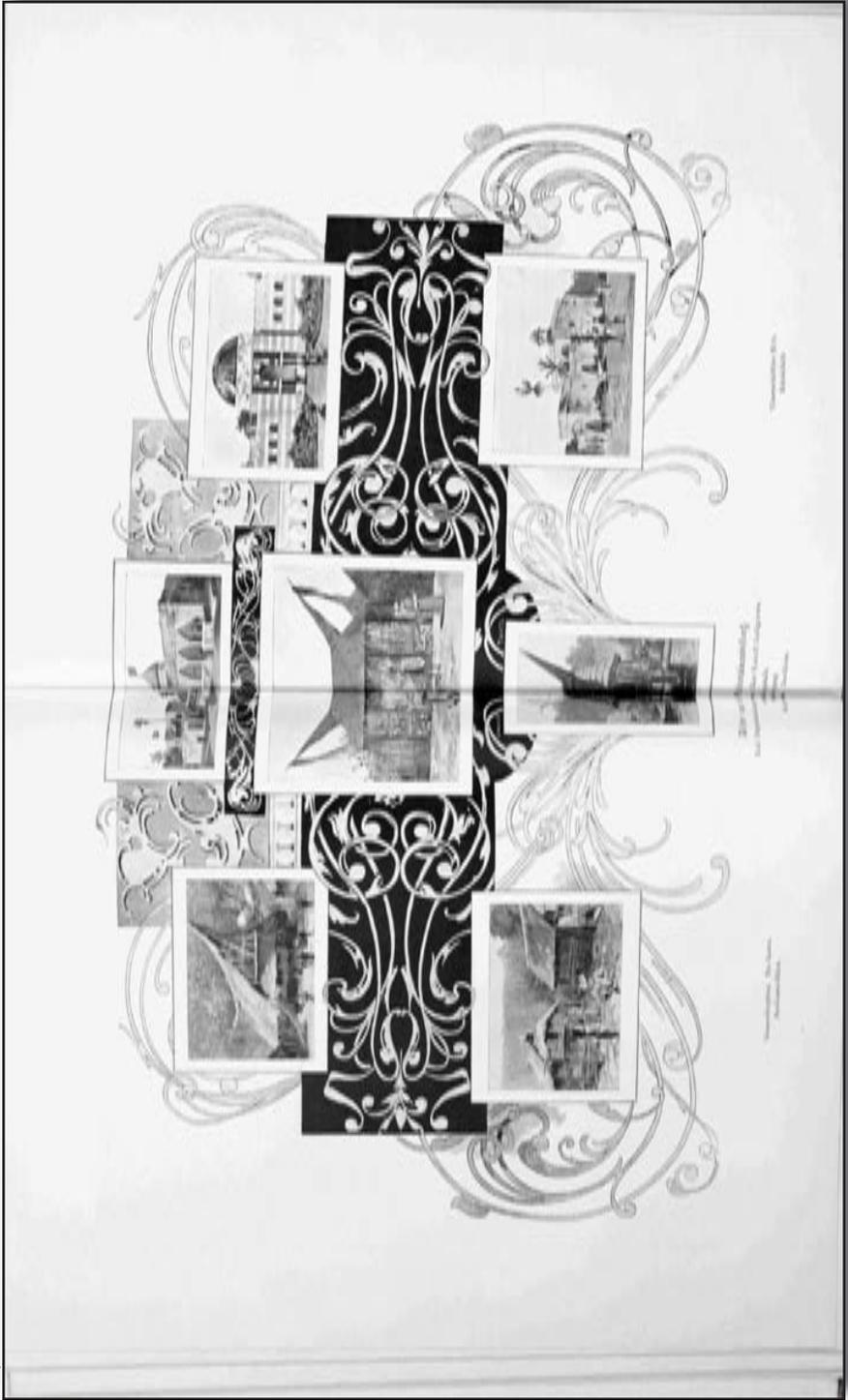
Whereas the "village" by the pond presented colonial subjects, the other half of the colonial exhibit displayed the methods of subjugation. Images of the scientific/commercial portion of the colonial exhibit in the souvenir album include a visual ode to Herrmann von Wissmann, an exhibit of the means of production and consumption of coffee, and the exterior of the governor's house (with a European man and woman conversing at one side of the frame). The only human form in the album's representation of exhibits in the colonial hall ("so many that even a casual viewing require days to take them all in") is a statue of Wissmann.⁴⁵ No (living) people are present in Wissmann exhibit or coffee plantation.

The souvenir album offers subtle support for the argument that colonies were particularly close to nature in a montage of pictures of the exhibition set against a *Jugendstil* backdrop. It includes the main entrance to the colonial exhibit in the center of the page, the three buildings in the scientific/commercial portion of the exhibit, and three buildings from Papua New Guinea in the "village." The plant-like forms curl across the pages like branches of a bush, sprouting colonial images. These stylized renderings combine modernity and "nature" in a highly fashionable form and also declare the newness of Germany's colonial project as the *Jugendstil*/art nouveau movement declared a break with past artistic form and the founding of a new tradition rooted in nature itself. The use of Roman type font rather than Germanic *fraktur* throughout the album also declares the cosmopolitan modernity of the exposition's host.

Creating Genders

Considering the attractive powers attributed to the colonial subjects and the effort expended in bringing them to Berlin for the exhibit, they are noticeably absent from images in the souvenir program. Its illustrations of the colonial "village" feature Europeans. This erasure and concomitant presentation of space free for the taking is a first step of colonization. Black women were among the "natives" brought to perform at the exposition, but are nowhere depicted in the souvenir program. The only two non-Europeans depicted in the colonial exhibit are a black man "guarding" the entrance to the exhibit and another man who stands in front of the Colonial Hall, dressed in costume and carelessly holding a spear while speaking with a white man. A woman in Western dress appears to be using binoculars to peer away from the conversation. This removal of African women from the scene contrasts with trends in the arts and

Figure 2: Pictures from the Colonial Exhibit. (Source: Lindenberg, Pracht-Album Photographischer Aufnahmen der Berliner Gewerbe-Ausstellung 1896; und der Sehwürdigkeiten Berlins und des Treptower Parks (Berlin: Lüderitz und Bauer, 1896.): 40-41.)



politics. During the nineteenth century, black women's sexuality had moved from the margins of European art; by the century's end African women were featured centrally in European high art and popular culture as exciting sexual beings, at once dangerous and enticing. Pieterse traces out the correspondence between descriptions of Africans and descriptions of animals, criminals, and prostitutes in European social sciences.⁴⁶ In other realms, African women were represented as pathologically sexual.⁴⁷ In contrast to representations of African women as sexualized and dangerous, European women were represented as so civilized that their presence could both "uplift" Africans and prevent European men from the dangers of "going native."

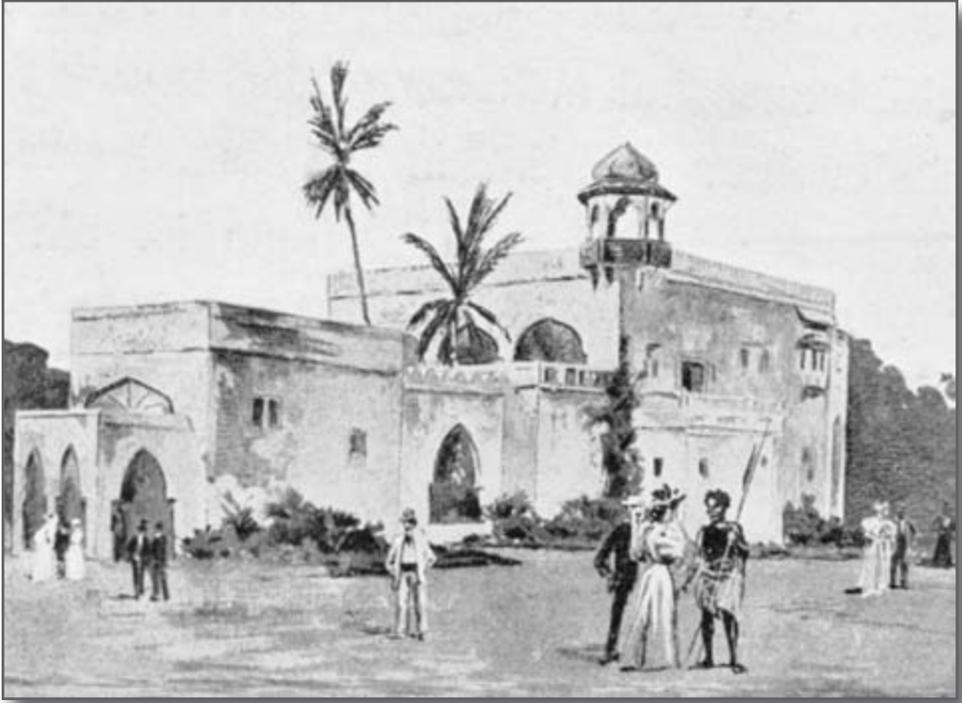
White men used racial difference to discipline women of their own race and class by constructing racialized sexual identities in which white women represent chastity and women of color, promiscuity. These representations operate to ensure the sexual control of white women while justifying the sexual exploitation of women of color by white men.⁴⁸

Non-European women's gender roles were thus important in establishing and maintaining both racial hierarchy in the colony and gender roles in Germany, but could not be represented in a guidebook designed to educate and lift lower classes.

Exaggerated sexuality was projected onto black men differently than onto black women. African men are not entirely absent from the program. They are represented as possessing lethal weapons that they do not use. The casual conversation mentioned above and the European men and women strolling nonchalantly past the exhibit entrance suggest that there is nothing to fear: the guard and his weapons are benign. The costumes of African men at the exhibit are much more revealing than European clothing. Several members of the African retinue donned European attire, some of them refusing to be photographed in anything else. These attempts at hybridity were rejected by the anthropologists working at the exposition.⁴⁹ They interfered with the presentation of primitive (partially-dressed) men. The souvenir program's images show that the men's potency was derived from their physical qualities and from inferior weapons, which had been quelled by colonialism. The absence of the power mechanisms of colonization and those keeping the colonial subjects at the fairgrounds naturalized the colonial situation.

The inclusion of Hermann von Wissmann in the exhibit points to a specific colonial program, which was tied to a specific type of German masculinity. Wildenthal describes how men's and women's changing gender roles in Germany led to different platforms for colonization. She writes that German men and women took different perspectives on African women: whereas German women privileged "race" in their thought on African women, seeing little commonality between themselves and African women, German men prioritized gender, and saw women, whether German or African,

Figure 3: In front of the colonial hall. (Source: Lindenbergh, *Prachtalbum*, 41.)



as sharing a common essence. In the colonies, “imperial patriarchs” gained power by learning a regional *lingua franca* and taking part in local power relations, including relationships with women from powerful families. The brutality through which these relationships with African women were enforced raised the question in observers’ minds of whether colonialism was a “civilizing mission” or whether German men were liable to succumb to less-than-civilized behavior in these “unruly” places.⁵⁰ These colonial questions of race, gender, and sexuality reverberated in Germany.

Direct colonial power—the crushing military power that backed up any threat or promise made by colonial rulers—was represented in the Wissmann exhibit. Hermann von Wissmann (1853-1905), the first governor of German East Africa, who ruled as the representative of a private company, was a paradigmatic “colonial patriarch.” After his term as governor, Wissmann continued to influence German colonial East Africa. The movements of his expedition were regularly reported in the *Kolonialblätter*. His “punishing” military raids destroyed entire villages for the slightest of reasons and sought to bring fear and obedience in areas far from the centers of colonial power. The exposition’s statue of Wissmann is framed by an elephant tusk arch and is surrounded by palms and flowers. The walls all around are covered floor to ceiling with hunting trophies, spears and other sanguinary artifacts. The danger of colonies and the crushing power of colonial forces could not be clearer. This exhibit is not of

colonies or of colonizing civilization: it presents savagery of the colonial exercise. It clearly marks the colonies as a dangerous and masculine sphere. In 1896 (the year of the Exposition), the governor of Southwest Africa implored the DKG (*Deutsche Kolonial Gesellschaft*: German Colonial Society) to send German women to the colonies, because of miscegenation.⁵¹ German women could use their femininity for the good of the nation by becoming colonial wives in this masculine space.

German diplomats were stationed in Cairo, Baghdad, Ankara, and other major Muslim cities, but Germany was never in a position to dominate any of these cities. Pictures of the “Arab city” belie this fact. What Germany was not able to accomplish in the world, the Berlin Trade Exposition accomplished in simulation. Stretching across the palm-lined street, European “tourists” with umbrellas (as against the Egyptian sun or contra the drizzling rain in that wet summer?) line up for a taste of a creamy treat. Lindenberg’s caption supports this impression as it erroneously locates the “Arab city” within the colonial exhibit: suggesting that Cairo was a German colony, which it was not. France and Great Britain had long battled one another in their attempts to influence Cairo, but Germany, despite its interests in the near East, did not play a major role there.

Lindenberg’s text on “Berlin’s Cairo” begins with a list of what was lacking at the “Cairo” exhibit in the Parisian World’s Fair in 1889, then goes on to state that although pieces of the city which are actually far apart are displayed together, “people

Figure 4: Wissmann Exhibit. (Source: Lindenberg, *Prachtalbum*, 187.)



Figure 5: Arab city—Colonial Exhibit (Source: Lindenberg, *Prachtalbum*, 187.)



who know Egypt exactly find the most exciting part of this exhibit to be that, at every step, they meet the people and things of Cairo they know best. Nothing is missing.”⁵² In other words, the Berlin Trade Exposition improved on the world it represented to its public.

The exhibit prepared visitors to play the role of tourist in Egypt:

The frequent contact with the humorous, good-hearted, alert natives belongs to the thrills (*Reizen*) of the winter stay in Egypt. Even the naïve pressing of the street vendors and the constant begging usually do not arouse bad moods in the tourists on the Nile, but pleasure (*Heiterkeit*). Who can remain serious when he, suddenly overtaken by passing Fellachen, is begged, as they, too lazy to even speak the word ‘Bakshish’ only mechanically call ‘sheesh, sheesh, sheesh!’ In Berlin’s Cairo, one can make the same observation.⁵³

The beggars’ “laziness” naturalizes the superior economic position of European visitors, and with it, suggests European civilizational superiority. Apart from the pleasure of being repeatedly reminded of their more fortunate position in the world, and the rightness of this position (after all, the begging “natives” were “humorous” and “good-hearted,” not angry or threatening), visitors to the exposition had the opportunity to observe the producers of famous Oriental goods and to purchase their wares. The ex-

hibit also reassured future tourists that the comforts of home would not be absent in their winter holiday on the Nile. After many exotic wonders, the exhibit visitor “at last encounters the favorite pub of the German on the Nile, Gorff’s Bierstube” which was completely accurately reproduced in the exhibition.⁵⁴

Whereas colonial “natives” were separated from formal buildings and located near simpler thatch structures and a fish pond in order to emphasize their primitiveness and closeness to nature, the Cairo exhibit featured many buildings. This formed a unified image of a single people who had occupied the Nile Delta since the time of the pharaohs. Referring to mosques as part of a caliphate suggested that Orientals, though they approached the level of European civilization, were stagnated in history 500 years past. The souvenir program includes two views of the Cairo exhibit’s Moschee Kait-Bey, modeled after the famous Egyptian mosque. Both are filled with Europeans chatting, looking, and enjoying. These correspond to two European views of Islam. Page 35 depicts the front of the faux mosque, with minaret tower, a dome covered in intricate designs, arched windows and other architectural details from the marvelous Orient. The scene, complete with camel and rider, is exotic and splendid. This was “high” Islamic civilization, able to approach (but not reach) the European niveau. The following illustration, on page 37, shows a crowded scene in which some Europeans appear to be queuing, while others stand and chat. This scene is behind the mosque, and another European view of Islam. In this view, a group of “natives” huddles in a circle on the ground, and the shining dome overlooks a crowded, confusing collection of roofs, overhanging windows, and awnings. This is likely the setting of a story in the text of a gathering

[O]n the steps of a dome-crowned temple a story-teller squats, young and old—Bedouins, whose white Burnus are hung over their long-shafted shoes, dervishes in torn garments, donkey drivers who hold their beasts on the line, mummified women and half-naked children—listen to him in a thick circle...

...until the crowd breaks apart because of a “caravan of many camels,” likely belonging to a “powerful one.”⁵⁵

This is denigrated Islam—inequality, represented by the contrast between dome and minaret on one hand and the crowded assemblage in the lower half the frame, as inscrutable as the lack of clear sightline between the buildings in the image, stagnant and fearsome. These two views are of the same mosque, and the two European views of Islam they represent are parts of the same whole, fearing Islam as a “worthy opponent,” valorous and full of honor, and simultaneously representing Islamic civilization as a fearsome foe, a monolithic, oppressive institution ruled by a privileged few Arabs to the detriment of the masses, who are kept from developing in any way.

Gender roles in this Oriental fantasy on the Spree offered exposition visitors

Figure 6: Keit-Bey mosque, front view. (Source: Lindenberg, *Prachtalbum*, 35.)



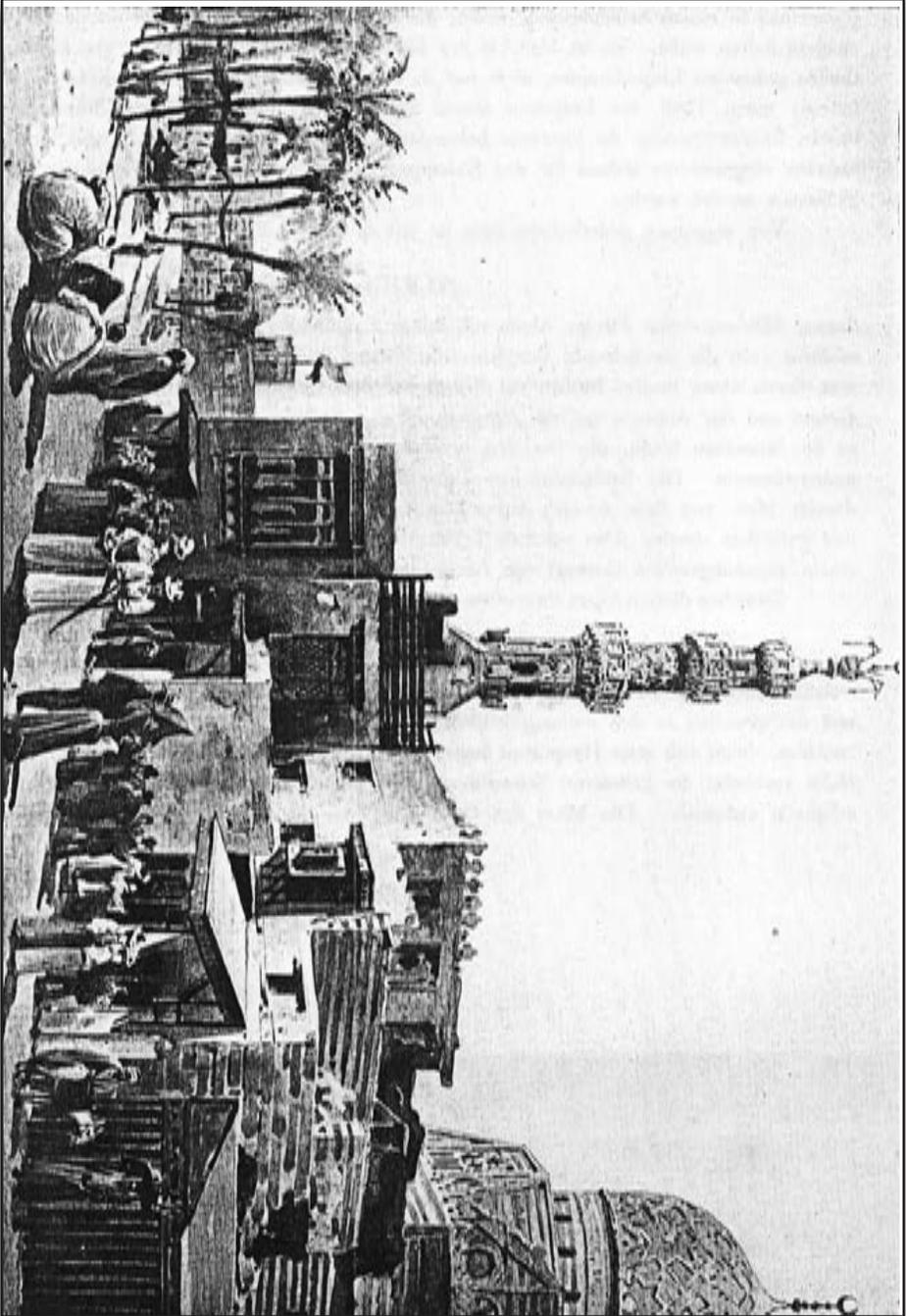


Figure 7: Kelt-Bey mosque, rear view. (Source: Lindenberg, *Prachtalbum*, 37.)

the opportunity to reconsider their own ideas about gender. Lindenberg presents two types of Oriental men and two types of Oriental women who could be observed in the Cairo exhibit.

[T]he men of which lie around in sweet do-nothingness, while the women fetch water in fat-tummied clay pitchers from a nearby ponds, on the sides of which water buffalo lay, and prepare the sparse meal on a fire glowing between some stones; not far away, on the steps of a dome-crowned temple, a story-teller squats, young and old—Bedouins, whose white Burnus are hung over their long-shafted shoes, dervishes in torn garments, donkey drivers who hold their beasts on the line, mummified women and half-naked children—listen to him in a thick circle; but now the crowd breaks apart, a train of camels comes trotting up, on their backs are small fabric-covered tents which sway back and forth, behind the light fabrics blowing in the wind dark female eyes look out curiously, respectable ladies, from the harem of one of the powerful ones, it may be, as fantastically attired knights on precious white Arabian mounts accompany the cavalcade, which disappears into one of the narrow bazaar side streets.⁵⁶

The social inequality highlighted at the mosque continues here with two roles for men and for women. Men are either residents of a fantasy village where palm trees cast shade on tents and earthen huts, who “lie around in sweet do-nothingness” or fantastically attired knights on precious white Arabian mounts who ride in cavalcade of an unseen “powerful one.” Women either are hard-working servants of lazy men (who, perhaps, brutalize the women to keep them in this role) “fetch[ing] water in fat-tummied clay jugs” and “prepar[ing] sparse meals over a fire” or are well-kept noble women, proper ladies from “the harem of a powerful man,” whose “dark female eyes peer out curiously.”⁵⁷ The Islamic world was thus represented as a rich sensual experience, with possibilities of extreme deprivation, extreme splendor, and leisure.

Such class-delineated gender roles certainly reverberated with class divisions in Germany. Industrialization had changed family relations in Germany by removing production from the domestic sphere. The effects of this change on proletarian and bourgeois women differed. Proletarian women sought social assistance, such as childcare, to help them in their double responsibilities of social reproduction in the home and paid employment elsewhere. Bourgeois women insisted on greater attention to the role of the mother as the centerpiece of civilized society and sought a strengthening of the nuclear family (*Kleinfamilie*) and increased responsibility for women within the family.⁵⁸ These roles could be used to discipline European women to take on a sheltered role, appearing publicly only with men, their presumed protectors. Alternately, they could be used counter-hegemonically if German women would recognize their common gender rather than focusing on “civilizational” difference based in religion and “race.”

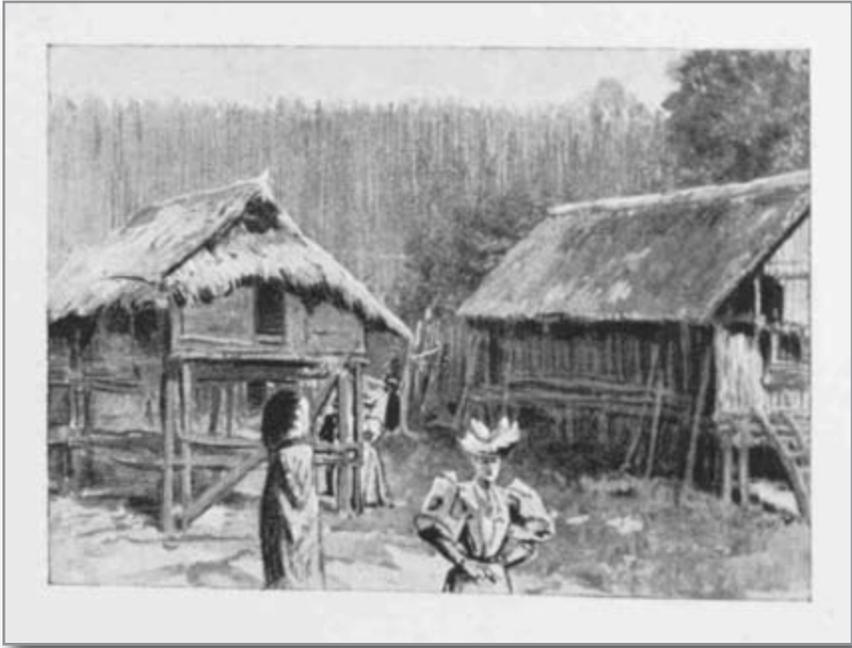
Figure 8: Holy house, New Guinea. (Source: Lindenberg, *Prachtalbum*, 40-41.)



The colonies provided opportunities for women to take on other roles as well. Nursing and missionary work had been major social roles of German colonial women for over a decade before the Berlin Exposition. These occupations drew on traditional maternal and familial roles, and provided respectable middle-class paid positions to unmarried women. Although the (men's) Colonial Society called for German women to be settlers' wives and raise German children in Africa, women's colonial activism prior to 1907 was nearly entirely channeled through the German Women's Association for Nursing in the Colonies.⁵⁹ The prospect of emigrating to the colonies opened up new vistas and new self-identities for German women, who were prohibited from study in German universities, attendance at political gatherings, and other aspects of public life.

In the colonial montage, the spirit hall is being visited by Europeans, various combinations of men and women alone and in pairs. European women inspect the Poly-

Figure 9: New Guinea huts. (Source: Lindenberg, *Prachtalbum*, 40-41.)



nesian holy house, peering and pointing freely. In another image of the Polynesian buildings, a solitary figure, a white woman alone in the “tropics,” looks directly at the viewer, arms akimbo, solid and fearless. Were the women depicted alone, in pairs, and in the company of men, investigating the grounds, the performers, and the buildings up-close taking their first step towards becoming nurses or teachers in the colonies? Perhaps. This colonial identity allowed women economic freedom far beyond most roles for women in Germany.

At the time of the exposition, gender roles in Germany were in flux, and limits on the rights of (European) women in Germany were under attack, from proletarian and bourgeois women’s movements to the feminist radical nationalism of the colonial author Frieda Freiin von Bülow.⁶⁰ German women’s movements had begun in earnest several years prior to the founding of the empire, at the 1865 *Frauenkonferenz* in Leipzig, at which the *Allgemeinen Deutschen Frauenverein* (General German Women’s Association) was founded. Such movements sought women’s suffrage, among other goals. It was achieved shortly after World War I, in Germany as well as in many other countries across Europe. The Imperial Law of Association (*Vereinsgesetz*), which forbade women to gather for political reasons or take part in public meetings of a political nature, was lifted in 1908.⁶¹

Another possible shift in understanding the “self” and the “other” occurred as men in the colonial exhibit became sexual curiosities for fair attendees. The *Deutsche*

Kolonialzeitung reported in 1909 that a “shameful memory of the Colonial Exposition” was that “white women and girls ran after such negroes from Cameroon and other colonies” (quoted by German Historical Museum) and that packages intended for him were sent by German women for years after his return from Berlin.⁶² Such sexualization of the relationship with subjugated others would have upset the balance of power between sexes in Germany.

Conclusions

This brief study of an official record of the Berlin Trade Exposition examines the relationship between Germanness and racial and religious sexual “outsides.” The Berlin Trade Exposition announced the city’s arrival as a scientific, industrial and imperial power. Construction, architecture, chemistry, engineering, transportation, electronics, textile and domestic exhibits were clearly “about” the city’s industriousness. The colonial and Cairo exhibits, however, were also “about” Berlin’s population, as evidenced by illustrations and text in the souvenir album. Race and religion are not directly addressed in the souvenir album; they are seen and represented as indicators of civilization. Not only did these exhibits demonstrate the empire’s power in far-away lands, they also spoke to changes in gender relations taking place within Berlin itself. Exposition planners used bodies on display and the physical layout of the paths the viewing public would take in order to connect bodies and national identity. Whereas the rising liberal nationalist view saw colonialism as a chance to create an idealized nation where the rule of law would govern all (Europeans) equally, giving none an unfair advantage, Lindenberg’s presentation of the colonial and Cairo exhibits argues for older imperial patriarchs approach. Men could rule according to their might, women’s role overseas would be to support their husbands there, and less powerful individuals would find themselves in roles of servitude.

From other literature of the time, however, we can see that women may have used the exhibits to invent quite different roles for themselves in the colonies, whether as teachers, nurses, or partners with native men. Visitors could observe colonized peoples in conditions clearly inferior to Berliners’ living conditions, without any visible exercise of power to keep them in this situation. Although the text refers to the exotic appeal of “wild ones,” the likes of which had never been seen in Europe, the strategy of including but few images of non-Europeans, all of whom are clearly not dangerous, in the program, allows exposition visitors to re-imaginine themselves and Germany as colonial rulers. Depictions of people already living in colonies or African cities at the exposition would have blocked the possibility of such colonial imagining. Not representing either cities or peoples in the souvenir program enables their relationship to European men and women to be constructed around European projections onto the colonies. Furthermore, it enabled the colonies to be imagined as empty spaces, await-

ing colonists' arrival and development.

Examination of the guidebook which was both tool and record of these spaces reveals the design of bourgeois gender roles as well as the potential for these spaces to give rise to alternate gender forms. Exposition organizers attempted to articulate and embody a modern, unified German identity via walkways, buildings, and lay-outs of the exposition enabling citizens to practice the otherwise global abstraction of empire. Unlike the compact nation of Ireland, the German empire encompassed peoples who in recent generations had been adversaries in the wars of unification as well as various African and Pacific peoples. Cultural spaces defined as belonging to colonized peoples or Muslims from Cairo enabled fair-goers to walk through their new roles as masters of empire. A coherent set of masculine and feminine identities was constructed via these spaces of identity. Learning to be a metropolitan citizen of a colonizing empire enabled German women to rethink their gender positions.

Finally, the Berlin Trade Exposition added to Germany's non-European population at a time that is generally not recognized as having a non-European population. This is important for the founding of "Afro-German" identities today, as it enables non-ethnic Germans to look to their home rather than to the United States or elsewhere for a model of black identities in the West.⁶³ This deconstruction of what it means to be German—via displays of "not-German"—destabilizes German identity, creating an opening for new definitions of "German." Greater understanding of the construction of race and identity can give greater insight into how racism and similar systems of religion-based animus can be combated.

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