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Fashioning an Imperial Metropolis at the 1896 *Berliner Gewerbeausstellung*

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Abstract

The 1896 *Berliner Gewerbeausstellung* was a transformative moment for city and nation alike. The exhibition announced Berlin's pre-eminence as a scientific and industrial city and bolstered an emergent German national identity. Including displays of Egypt and Germany's formal colonies also revealed Germany's competence as a colonial power. By illustrating its skill in both aggressive conquest and subtle intervention, city and nation thought themselves capable of competing with European rivals at home and abroad. However, the two visions of colonialism, cloaked in the guise of mass entertainment, have rarely been brought into conversation with one another. This article seeks to discuss this colonial–Oriental dichotomy by focusing on tensions between education and entertainment in display techniques, particularities of racial difference in ethnographic display, the use of advertising, and the insertion of new technologies. Contributing to a deeper understanding of race, empire, and modernity in the German context, the *Gewerbeausstellung* offers a jumping off point for further comparison to other local, regional, and international exhibitions and an avenue to explore how notions of modernity factored into formal and informal imperial arrangements. Ultimately, it sheds light on how an exhibition helped to fashion a global, imperial city at the turn of the twentieth century.

On 1 May 1896, the opening day of the *Berliner Gewerbeausstellung*, or Berlin Trade Exhibition, German theatre critic and essayist Alfred Kerr captured the excitement of that particular morning: 'at ten o'clock everyone was on their feet, taxis could hardly be found even in the most distant west; Berlin had only one thought and one pilgrimage: Treptow'.¹ Celebratory flags and garlands ornamented Unter den Linden, commemorative obelisks were positioned

¹ Alfred Kerr, *Wo liegt Berlin? Briefe aus der Reichshauptstadt 1895–1900*, ed. Günther Rühle (Berlin, 1997), p. 148.

at the gates of Berlin's bridges, all of which overflowed the length of the Spree as thousands of Berliners anxiously awaited the passage of the Kaiser and Kaiserin to the opening festivities. The royal couple embarked on a two-hour tour of the exhibition space, including two of the special exhibitions, the *Kolonialausstellung* and *Kairo*.²

In the *Kolonialausstellung*, they observed 'war dances' performed by African subjects in the 'native village' and admired ethnographic artefacts and commercial products brought directly from Germany's newly acquired colonies.³ Only ten years before, Germany entered the European race to acquire colonial territory at the 1884–5 Berlin Conference after years of pressure from pro-colonial groups, a prevalent rhetoric of 'national necessity', and the relatively large-scale participation of Germans in the wider European colonial project.⁴ This culminated in a declaration of protection over present-day Togo, Cameroon, Tanzania, and Namibia in Africa, and Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, and the Marshall Islands in the Pacific.⁵ In the final decade of the nineteenth century, Germany would add Kiaochow (known today as Jiaozhou) in the Shandong province of China, Samoa, and a few Pacific island chains to its roster of formal colonies.⁶ As the first official presentation of Germany's new possessions, the Kaiser expressed his desire that this exhibition would provide a stimulus for further acquisition of overseas territory and proudly exclaimed, 'gentlemen, you may congratulate yourselves. The *Kolonialausstellung* will be a main attraction.'⁷

Afterwards, the couple was welcomed into *Kairo* with a Bedouin parade, an Arab simulation where they interacted with Egyptians in the bazaars of Old Cairo and viewed mummies in the replica of the Cheops pyramid. Although Germany never possessed formal colonies in the Near East, scholars have responded to Edward Said's famous exclusion of Germany from his landmark *Orientalism*, debating whether Germany's intellectual and cultural investment

² *Kolonialausstellung* refers to the colonial exhibition and *Kairo* the Egyptian one. The German names will be used throughout the piece.

³ 'In der Kolonialausstellung', *Berliner Tageblatt*, 221, 1 May 1896, p. 3. From here, the *Berliner Tageblatt* will be abbreviated *BT* and I will omit the year.

⁴ David Ciarlo, *Advertising empire: race and visual culture in imperial Germany* (Cambridge, MA, 2011), pp. 39–40; Susanne Zantop, *Colonial fantasies: conquest, family, and nation in precolonial Germany, 1770–1870* (Durham, NC, 1997); and Sara Friedrichsmeyer, Sara Lennox, and Susanne Zantop, eds., *The imperialist imagination: German colonialism and its legacy* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1998); Birthe Kundrus, ed., *Phantasiereiche: Zur Kulturgeschichte des deutschen Kolonialismus* (Frankfurt a. M., 2003); Moritz von Brescius, *German science in the age of empire: enterprise, opportunity and the Schlagintweit brothers* (Cambridge, 2019).

⁵ Sebastian Conrad, *German colonialism: a short history* (Cambridge, 2008), ch. 4; Dominic Alessio, Katherine Arnold, and Patricia Ollé Tejero, 'Spain, Germany and the United States in the Marshall Islands: re-imagining the imperial in the Pacific', *Journal of New Zealand and Pacific Studies*, 4 (2016), pp. 115–36.

⁶ George Steinmetz, *The devil's handwriting: precoloniality and the German colonial state in Qingdao, Samoa, and Southwest Africa* (Chicago, IL, 2007).

⁷ 'Kleine Nachrichten', *BT*, 222, 2 May, p. 6; Paul Lindenberg, *Pracht-Album photographischer Aufnahmen der Berliner Gewerbe-Ausstellung 1896 und der Sehenswürdigkeiten Berlins und des Treptower Parks, Alt-Berlin, Kolonial-Ausstellung, Kairo etc.* (Berlin, 1896), p. 26.

in *Orientalistik* extended to include political and economic motives.⁸ While Suzanne Marchand has argued that although knowledge can indeed lead to power, German Orientalism was not ‘primordially or perpetually defined by imperialist relationships’.⁹ On the other hand, others contend that the Orient was the site upon which, and through which, German national and imperial visions were articulated.¹⁰ In Nina Berman’s view, Said’s dismissal of German Orientalism as ‘almost exclusively a scholarly pursuit’ rejects other forms of economic and political interdependence stretching back to the Crusades.¹¹ Thus, a case can be made for an ideological foundation of ‘non-occupational imperialism’ extant in the German states/Germany which found expression in its increasing intervention in the declining Ottoman Empire and Egypt in the late nineteenth century.¹² Niles Stefan Illich takes Berman’s argument a step further, claiming that Germany intentionally emphasized the extension of influence in the region without the establishment of formal colonies, which were seen as both a logistical and a financial burden.¹³ The Kaiser offered a comparable sentiment about *Kairo*, announcing that he would telegraph the Khedive with delight about the Cairo reproduction and communicate his satisfaction about the friendly relationship between Germany and Egypt.¹⁴ He continued, it ‘offers an admirable sight’ which ‘secures a continuing success for the exhibition’.¹⁵

As the largest exhibition staged in German-speaking lands until the Hannover Expo in 2000, the *Gewerbeausstellung* has understandably been the focus of many interdisciplinary studies, giving contemporary life to nineteenth-century references of ‘exhibition fatigue’.¹⁶ Yet, the special exhibitions of *Kairo* and the *Kolonialausstellung* have rarely been brought into conversation with one another in internalist readings, nor have they been assessed alongside comparable displays in other European or American exhibitions.¹⁷ Similarly,

⁸ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, NY, 1978).

⁹ Suzanne Marchand, *German Orientalism in the age of empire: religion, race, and scholarship* (Cambridge, 2009), p. xx; eadem, ‘German Orientalism and the decline of the West’, *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 145 (2001), pp. 465–73, at p. 465. See also eadem, ‘The end of Egyptomania: German scholarship and the banalization of Egypt, 1830–1914’, in Wilfried Seipel, ed., *Ägyptomanie, Europäische Ägyptenimagination von der Antike bis heute* (Vienna, 1994), pp. 125–33.

¹⁰ Jennifer Jenkins, ‘German Orientalism: introduction’, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 24 (2004), pp. 97–100, at p. 98.

¹¹ Nina Berman, ‘Orientalism, imperialism, and nationalism: Karl May’s *Orientzyklus*’, in Friedrichsmeyer, Lennox, and Zantop, eds., *The imperialist imagination*, pp. 52–3.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 60.

¹³ Niles Stefan Illich, ‘German imperialism in the Ottoman Empire: a comparative study’ (Ph.D. diss., Texas A&M University, 2007), pp. 4–5.

¹⁴ Lindenberg, *Pracht-Album*, p. 26; ‘Der Kaiser und der Ghedive’, *BT*, 229, 6 May, p. 5; ‘Die Sonderausstellung Kairo’, *Illustrierte Zeitung*, 2760, 23 May, p. 642. From here, the *Illustrierte Zeitung* will be abbreviated *IZ* and I will omit the year.

¹⁵ ‘Berliner Gewerbe-Ausstellung 1896’, *BT*, 243, 13 May, p. 4.

¹⁶ Alexander C. T. Geppert, *Fleeting cities: imperial expositions in fin-de-siècle Europe* (New York, NY, 2013), p. 33.

¹⁷ The exception to this is George Steinmetz, ‘Empire in three keys: forging the imperial imaginary at the 1896 Berlin Trade Exhibition’, *Thesis Eleven*, 139 (2017), pp. 46–68. For other imperial

as an ostensibly local undertaking, it has seldom been placed in dialogue with other regional German or central European exhibitions, barring David Ciarlo's examination of the 1890 Bremen Exhibition and Eike Reichardt's analyses of German displays of health, hygiene, and sanitation in relation to race and empire.¹⁸ The *Kolonialausstellung* has been fairly thoroughly evaluated, often deployed in deliberations on ethnographic displays and the rise of anthropology and ethnology as scientific disciplines.¹⁹ In other studies, the *Kolonialausstellung* is understood as a mechanism for popular imperialism or used as a counterpoint to explain shifting domestic roles and attitudes.²⁰ *Kairo* has been taken into account far less, despite scholarly interest and debate over the extent of Germany's imperial involvement in the Near East.²¹ These diverse approaches to the *Gewerbeausstellung* and its constituent parts have

displays, see Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral vistas: the Expositions Universelles, great exhibitions and world's fairs, 1851-1939* (Manchester, 1988); Robert W. Rydell, *All the world's a fair: visions of empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago, IL, 1987); Jeffrey A. Auerbach and Peter H. Hoffenberg, eds., *Britain, the empire, and the world at the Great Exhibition of 1851* (Aldershot, 2008); Peter H. Hoffenberg, *An empire on display: English, Indian, and Australian exhibitions from the Crystal Palace to the Great War* (Berkeley, CA, 2001).

¹⁸ Ciarlo, *Advertising empire*, pp. 28-36; Eike Reichardt, *Health, 'race' and empire: popular-scientific spectacles and national identity* (Lulu.com, 2008).

¹⁹ Sierra Bruckner, 'Spectacles of (human) nature: commercial ethnography between leisure, learning, and *Schaulust*', in H. Glenn Penny and Matti Bunzl, eds., *Worldly provincialism: German anthropology in the age of empire* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2003), pp. 127-55; Sierra Bruckner, 'The tangle of modernity: popular anthropology and the cultural politics of identity in imperial Germany' (Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 1999); Alexander Honold, 'Ausstellung des Fremden - Menschen- und Völkerschau um 1900. Zwischen Anpassung und Verfremdung der Exot und sein Publikum', in Sebastian Conrad and Jürgen Osterhammel, eds., *Das Kaiserreich transnational: Deutschland in der Welt, 1871-1914* (Göttingen, 2004), pp. 170-90; Eric Ames, *Carl Hagenbeck's empire of entertainments* (Seattle, WA, 2009); Hilde Thode-Arora, *Für fünfzig Pfennig um die Welt: Die Hagenbeckschen Völkerschauen* (Frankfurt a. M., 1989); Robert Debusmann and János Reisz, eds., *Kolonialausstellungen - Begegnungen mit Afrika?* (Frankfurt a. M., 1995); Anne Dreesbach, *Gezähmte Wilde: Die Zurschaustellung 'exotischer' Menschen in Deutschland, 1870-1940* (Frankfurt a. M., 2005); Andrew Zimmerman, *Anthropology and antihumanism in imperial Germany* (Chicago, IL, 2003), pp. 15-37; Raymond Corbey, 'Ethnographic showcases, 1870-1930', *Cultural Anthropology*, 8 (1993), pp. 338-69; H. Glenn Penny, *Objects of culture: ethnology and ethnographic museums in imperial Germany* (Durham, NC, 2003); Sadiyah Qureshi, *Peoples on parade: exhibitions, empire, and anthropology in nineteenth-century Britain* (Chicago, IL, 2011).

²⁰ John Phillip Short, *Magic lantern empire: colonialism and society in Germany* (Ithaca, NY, 2012); Jeff Bowersox, *Raising Germans in the age of empire: youth and colonial culture, 1871-1914* (Oxford, 2013); Oliver Simons and Alexander Honold, eds., *Kolonialismus als Kultur: Literatur, Medien, Wissenschaft in der deutschen Gründerzeit des Fremden* (Tübingen, 2002); Alexander Honold and Klaus R. Scherpe, *Mit Deutschland um die Welt: Eine Kulturgeschichte des Fremden in der Kolonialzeit* (Berlin, 2004); Andreas Daum, *Wissenschaftspopularisierung im 19. Jahrhundert: Bürgerliche Kultur, naturwissenschaftliche Bildung und die deutsche Öffentlichkeit, 1848-1914* (Munich, 1998).

²¹ Nana Badenberg, 'Zwischen Kairo und Alt-Berlin', in Honold and Scherpe, eds., *Mit Deutschland*, pp. 190-9; Ines Roman, 'Exotische Welten - Die Inszenierung Ägyptens in der Sonderausstellung "Kairo" der Berliner Gewerbe-Ausstellung von 1896' (MA, Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität, 2010). For Germany and the Middle East, see Nina Berman, *Orientalismus, Kolonialismus und Moderne: Zum Bild des Orients in der deutsch-sprachigen Kultur um 1900* (Stuttgart, 1997); Todd Kontje, *German Orientalisms* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2004); Sabine Mangold, *Eine weltbürgerliche Wissenschaft: Die deutsche Orientalistik im 19. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart, 2004); Andrea

no trouble agreeing that it was an essential moment in the construction of a German national and imperial identity and a transitional moment which helped to deliver a form of pre-Weimar modernity to Berlin.²²

Thus, this article aims to engage with some omissions in an otherwise dense field. It seeks to bring *Kairo* and the *Kolonialausstellung* into the same frame to discuss the German colonial–Oriental dichotomy and the application of ‘modern’ cultural forms within the exhibitions. By focusing on the tension between *Bildung* and *Schaulust* (education versus entertainment) in display techniques, on the particularities of racial difference in ethnographic display, the use of advertising, and the inclusion of new technologies, this article will contribute to a deeper understanding of race, empire, and modernity in the German context and offer a jumping off point for further comparison to other local, regional, and international exhibitions. For these reasons, it will become apparent that *Kairo* and the *Kolonialausstellung* generated different levels of enthusiasm, calling into question the place of colonialism and the limits of colonial excitement among the German public at the turn of the twentieth century. In placing these non-European exhibitions side-by-side, the German public comprehended, and rather preferred, the more subtle aspects of imperialism evident in *Kairo* as opposed to the aggressive conquest visible in the *Kolonialausstellung*. By highlighting the application of new ‘modern’ mediums within the exhibition spaces, the article also offers an avenue by which to understand how German ‘modernity’ factored into both official imperialism and the more nebulous nature of Orientalism. Finally, it will be maintained that *Kairo*’s sensationalist style helped to lay the groundwork for twentieth-century discontent about the intersection of colonialism, commercial ethnography, and the perceived threat of working-class culture. These factors will help illuminate the four-fold impact of the *Gewerbeausstellung* overall: it gave Berliners a renewed, hopeful local awareness; it presented an opportunity for Germans to express their collective national character; it suggested a new imperial identity based on Western racial arrangements; and it offered the prospect of a competitive, global consciousness.

A successful 1879 trade fair in Berlin-Moabit served as the initial inspiration for the *Gewerbeausstellung* at Treptow. Only eight years after the formation of the German nation-state, it yielded a considerable profit and proved exceedingly successful in boosting local self-confidence, especially for Berlin’s business community. Adjusting to its status as the capital of a recently established nation-state and colonial empire, criticisms of Berlin’s industrial

Polaschegg, *Der andere Orientalismus: Regeln deutsch-morgenländischer Imagination im 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 2005). For Egypt at world’s fairs, see Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Berkeley, CA, 1988).

²² Felix Driver and David Gilbert, eds., *Imperial cities: landscape, display and identity* (Manchester, 1999); Ulrich van der Heyden and Joachim Zeller, *Kolonialmetropole Berlin: Eine Spurensuche* (Berlin, 2002); Katherine Smits and Alix Jansen, ‘Staging the nation at expos and world’s fairs’, *National Identities*, 14 (2012), pp. 173–88.

grime and labour conditions, among other trappings of a 'modern' city, left many with a lingering sense of inferiority. Not quite the sophisticated equal of other cosmopolitan cities and long overshadowed by the Hanseatic trade ports of Hamburg and Bremen, it was often considered 'provincial and cut off from global cultural and economic affairs'.²³ However, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Berlin industry increasingly became the driving force in the economy of the German Reich, outpacing its maritime counterparts within the German state and offering a viable challenge to its European rivals. The *Berliner Tageblatt* judged this event as the 'certificate of competency' that could propel Berlin into admission within the circle of world capitals.²⁴ Although this is likely an overestimation fashioned by an excitable local newspaper, it did kickstart the *Ausstellungsfrage*: when, where, and how an international exposition could be held in Germany.²⁵ Scholars have discussed the machinations of this process at length elsewhere. Yet, in the struggle to discern a unified national identity in the wake of intensifying growth and social change, the failure of a world's fair to come to fruition in Germany, particularly in the 'backwater' capital of Berlin, proved a continuous source of anxiety.²⁶

While other countries had long been defining and consolidating their sense of nationhood through the exhibition medium, often viewed as an undisputable vehicle of nineteenth-century national identity by historians, over a decade of back-and-forth between Berlin's business community, the German government, and the Kaiser exacerbated these protracted insecurities.²⁷ The Kaiser's initial apathy resulted in a surprisingly modest claim that 'there is nothing in Berlin that can captivate the foreigner', unlike the great exhibition capital of Paris which he bitterly deemed 'the great whorehouse of the world'.²⁸ This coincides with the claim that the perceived provincialism of many nineteenth-century German cities made them unlikely pilgrimage sites for visitors from abroad.²⁹ Ultimately, the bid for the 1900 World's Fair went, in fact, to Paris, causing the *Verein Berliner Kaufleute und Industrieller* to shrink their expectations and focus instead on what could be accomplished at a local level.³⁰ Although there had been smaller, regional exhibitions held throughout the German-speaking lands, and a World's Fair in nearby Vienna

²³ Steinmetz, 'Three keys', p. 49; Jennifer Kopf, 'Picturing difference: writing the races in the 1896 Berlin Trade Exposition Souvenir Album', *Historical Geography*, 36 (2008), pp. 112–38, at p. 134.

²⁴ 'Ein Festtag für die Berliner Arbeit', *BT*, 220, 1 May, p. 1.

²⁵ Geppert, *Fleeting cities*, p. 17.

²⁶ Katja Zelljadt, 'Presenting and consuming the past: Old Berlin at the Industrial Exhibition of 1896', *Journal of Urban History*, 31 (2005), pp. 306–33, at p. 307. For a discussion of the *Ausstellungsfrage*, see Geppert, *Fleeting cities*, pp. 17–37; and Reichardt, *Health, 'race' and empire*, pp. 82–4.

²⁷ Zelljadt, 'Old Berlin', p. 307.

²⁸ 'Weltausstellung oder nicht?', *BT*, 221, 1 May, pp. 2–3; Dorothy Rowe, 'Georg Simmel and the Berlin Trade Exhibition of 1896', *Urban History*, 22 (1995), pp. 216–28, at p. 221.

²⁹ Ciarlo, *Advertising empire*, p. 27.

³⁰ The Association of Berlin Merchants and Industrialists; see Hermann Glaser, ed., *Die Metropole Berlin: Industriekultur in Berlin im 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 1986).

in 1873, the largely limited *Gewerbeausstellung* seemed to shatter this local and national feeling of mediocrity. Its arrival brought spectacle to Berlin – a vision of remarkable industrial power, a new negotiation between passive gaze and social participation, and a way to see and be seen in the new urban sphere.³¹ Equally, the grandiose adornment of Berlin's major thoroughfares leading to Treptow, and the exaggerated entrance of the Kaiser, suggest that the city itself had become a spectacle.³² The *Gewerbeausstellung* provided the proof that Berlin had ascended from provincial town to the status of *Weltstadt*, or world city, one 'to which the whole world sends its products'.³³

But the title of *Weltstadt* did not simply denote Berlin's newly developed naval and industrial strength, nor its position as a 'mecca for commodities'.³⁴ Through the exhibition of Egypt and Germany's colonies, the *Gewerbeausstellung* verified that Berlin could be seen as an *imperial* capital, one that was 'more than capable of projecting power into the farthest corners of the world'.³⁵ In what was otherwise a local, or arguably national, exhibition, the inclusion of *Kairo* and the *Kolonialausstellung* transcended the exhibition's restrictions by offering a veneer of 'internationality and cosmopolitanism' that would have otherwise been lacking.³⁶ Berlin's metropolitan identity could thus be based on its capacity to accommodate internationalism within a localized environment.³⁷ Demonstrations of manufacturing, maritime, and commercial capability were placed in juxtaposition with the two non-European exhibitions, revealing both Germany's cultural and intellectual investment in *Kairo* and its formal colonization of Africa and the Pacific in the *Kolonialausstellung*. Located outside of the main exhibition space, physical separation encouraged visitors to consider the figurative progression of human development from 'primitive' African, to 'semi-civilized' Arab, to 'enlightened' European in their tour of the grounds.³⁸ The accompanying souvenir programmes and promotional material were designed to enhance this difference, teaching ordinary Germans about their role in a world defined by imperial prerogatives. This

³¹ For more on the spectacle, see Kevin Fox Gotham and Daniel A. Krier, 'From the culture industry to the society of the spectacle: critical theory and the Situationist International', in Harry F. Dahms, ed., *No social science without critical theory* (Bingley, 2008), pp. 155–92; Richard L. Kaplan, 'Between mass society and revolutionary praxis: the contradictions of Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 15 (2012), pp. 457–78.

³² Vanessa Schwartz has suggested that the modern urban experience was constructed around the visual representation of reality as a spectacle. Vanessa Schwartz, *Spectacular realities: early mass culture in fin-de-siècle Paris* (Berkeley, CA, 1998), p. 6.

³³ Georg Simmel, 'The Berlin Trade Exhibition', *Theory Culture Society*, 8 (1991), pp. 119–23, at pp. 120–1. His original article: Georg Simmel, 'Berliner Gewerbeausstellung', *Die Zeit* (Vienna), VIII, 95 (1896), 59ff. See also Paul Thiel, 'Berlin präsentiert sich der Welt: Die Berliner Gewerbeausstellung 1896 in Treptow', in Glaser, ed., *Metropole Berlin*, pp. 16–27.

³⁴ Ciarlo, *Advertising empire*, p. 59.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Geppert, *Fleeting cities*, p. 49.

³⁷ Rowe, 'Georg Simmel', p. 223.

³⁸ Tony Bennett, 'The exhibitionary complex', in Nicholas B. Dirks, Geoff Eley, and Sherry B. Ortner, eds., *Culture/power/history: a reader in contemporary social theory* (Princeton, NJ, 1994), pp. 123–54, at p. 146.

included 'resource extraction, commodity and labor flows, exchange and competition on a new, global scale', as well as their responsibility as a citizen of a superior, colonizing power.³⁹ Enabling visitors to make sense of the changing social landscape within the nation-state, they could also 'corporeally experience' the abstraction of Berlin's position at the centre of a modern German empire.⁴⁰ Taken as a whole, the *Gewerbeausstellung* offered a unique representational space in which the symbolism of state and empire became intertwined.⁴¹

The *Kolonialausstellung* was publicized as the first official colonial exhibition in Germany, although there had been smaller predecessors in Bremen (1890) and Lübeck (1895).⁴² These exhibitions were the product of a new prioritization of colonialist displays across Western Europe and the United States due to the popularity of colonial prestige and ethnographic display at exhibitions like Amsterdam (1883) and London (1886). As a semi-official production, the Berlin example had its own separate organizing committee, admission fee, and promotional material. The blend of funding from the influential lobby-group, the *Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft*, and the German government reinforced the exhibition's autonomy in tone and character from the whole.⁴³ The Foreign Office temporarily moved its offices to the grounds, serving to further strengthen the exhibition's political nature. Together, they aimed to offer a tightly scripted education on the benefits of the colonies and an authentic representation of colonial life 'to awaken interest even in the most remote circles of society'.⁴⁴ This was also their chance to appease critics of the colonial cause and to document and display Germany's ambitions to become a great imperial nation.

The organization of the *Kolonialausstellung* mirrored the layout of contemporary colonial cities in Africa and Asia, meaning it was divided into two sections: one 'European' and one 'native'.⁴⁵ In the 'European' sector, colonial science and the economic value of the colonies were the central focus. In the Hall of Commerce, tropical agriculture, German industry for export, and missionary work were presented; in addition, the Hall of Science mounted displays on ethnology, geography, botany, zoology, and 'tropical hygiene'.⁴⁶ Yet, by 1896, the colonial economy was still relatively underdeveloped and only a meagre assortment of consumable goods, like Tanzanian coffee, Cameroonian cocoa, and New Guinea tobacco and cigars, could be seen or purchased.⁴⁷ Likewise, European colonial exhibitions of the previous decade

³⁹ Short, *Magic lantern*, p. 3; Kopf, 'Picturing difference', p. 116.

⁴⁰ Kopf, 'Picturing difference', p. 115.

⁴¹ Steinmetz, 'Three keys', p. 49.

⁴² Ciarlo, *Advertising empire*, p. 53. Many of the displays from the Bremen exhibition were simply repurposed for Lübeck. *Deutsche Kolonialzeitung* (1895), pp. 260–1.

⁴³ The German Colonial Society.

⁴⁴ Annette Ciré, *Temporäre Ausstellungsbauten für Kunst, Gewerbe und Industrie in Deutschland 1896–1915* (Frankfurt a. M., 1993), p. 141.

⁴⁵ Steinmetz, 'Three keys', p. 54.

⁴⁶ Ciarlo, *Advertising empire*, pp. 53–5.

⁴⁷ 'Sehenswürdigkeiten der Ausstellungen 1896', *Die Gartenlaube*, 26, 1896, p. 438.

had raised the stakes considerably in regard to displaying 'science', rendering maps, language-family charts, herbaria, and 'native' clothing lacklustre to fair-going audiences.⁴⁸ Recognizing this, the organizers applied a rather dishonest strategy in that they displayed goods that came from outside the limits of the German colonies. This came in the form, most notably, of a tower of ivory tusks displayed by Hamburg trader Heinrich Ad. Meyer extracted primarily from the Belgian Congo, but also foreign goods that were popularly considered 'colonial' (*Kolonialwaren*).⁴⁹ They hoped that ordinary Germans would be unable to distinguish *Kolonialwaren*, particularly those that were generally accepted as 'African', from their paltry showing of goods which came from within Germany's own territories.

As the 'self-proclaimed arbiters' of colonial knowledge, the strategy of displaying goods from territories outside German authority interfered with their insistence on an authentic rendering of the colonies.⁵⁰ The nineteenth-century middle-class stress on *Bildung*, the tradition of promoting education and philosophy as a means for self-improvement, meant that exhibitions in Germany remained heavily focused on erudition, even as new display practices developed elsewhere catering to wider audiences. Consequently, the organizers' emphasis on realism meant they relied on instructional or educational materials, likely comparable in style to the revered natural history museum. In this case, the old-fashioned method of presenting dioramas and photographs, traditional ethnographic objects, and maps of Germany's colonial possessions did not present a very successful visual image. Even the colonialists' own report confessed, 'dead collections alone are not able to attract the great masses of the people'.⁵¹ Thus, they enhanced their displays with what they could: tales by triumphant military officers and visits by scientific and pro-colonial groups, in the hope that their nationalistic message, so effective in rhetoric and print, would help to capture the attention of ordinary Germans.⁵² However, even this may not have had the intended effect. Alfred Kerr observed among his many visits to the *Kolonialausstellung*, 'here the type of officer in civilian clothes, the large, tanned gentleman with the affectionately maintained moustache is more frequent than elsewhere', maintaining that it 'teems from courageous masculinity and resolute nobility'.⁵³ The optics of the usual visitor was perhaps more evocative than the displays themselves. But the organizers of the *Kolonialausstellung* were there to sell ideas rather than products – 'it is clear that they had very few products to sell'.⁵⁴ Therefore the didactic focus was as much tactical as it was part of an ideology they were attempting to convey.

⁴⁸ Ciarlo, *Advertising empire*, p. 54.

⁴⁹ Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde, R1001/6332, 178–204 (1895); Gustav Meinecke, 'Die Kolonialausstellung II', *IZ*, 2770, 1 Aug., p. 136; Paul Lindenberg, *Pracht-Album*, p. 54; 'Die Berliner Gewerbe-Ausstellung 1896', *BT*, 242, 13 May, p. 4; Gustav Meinecke, *Deutschland und seine Kolonien im Jahre 1896: amtlicher Bericht über die erste Kolonial-Ausstellung* (Berlin, 1897), p. 335.

⁵⁰ Ciarlo, *Advertising empire*, p. 56.

⁵¹ Meinecke, *Deutschland*, p. 7.

⁵² 'Berliner Gewerbe-Ausstellung 1896', *BT*, 314, 23 June, p. 5.

⁵³ Kerr, *Berlin*, pp. 154–5.

⁵⁴ Bruckner, 'Tingle-tangle', p. 158.

The private enterprise of *Kairo*, on the other hand, offered an alternative view of imperial display at the *Gewerbeausstellung*, one which loosely adhered to *Bildung* (and, thus, authenticity) but also incorporated styles of theatrical ‘infotainment’.⁵⁵ As a semi-independent province struggling to detach itself from the Ottoman Empire, Egypt sent a grand display for its national pavilion to the 1867 Paris *Exposition Universelle* emphasizing its ‘national self-image and complex historical heritage’.⁵⁶ However, Zeynep Çelik argues that when Egypt submitted to British rule in 1882, the ‘scale, ambition, and character of its presence’ changed, a conversion detectable in the new depiction of Cairo as an entertainment zone.⁵⁷ Financed by individual entrepreneurs at the 1889 Paris *Exposition Universelle* and the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Egypt transformed into a commercial amusement strip with high-level entertainment value that had since proved a viable money-making venture. The *Gewerbeausstellung* staged an exhibition that was entertainment-based but also fundamentally political. Jennifer Kopf has posited that its inclusion may have been a demonstration of Germany’s aspirations to play an important role in the Orient.⁵⁸ The Kaiser’s pro-Islamic turn in the 1890s also very likely encouraged the inclusion of a *Kairo* exhibition, as he had by that time declared himself the protector of the world’s Muslims.⁵⁹ The organizers received not only the unofficial support of the German Foreign Office in Cairo, but also from the Khedive himself: he provided reductions in freight and customs duties by offering loans from Egypt’s public treasury.⁶⁰ In the spirit of authenticity, they likewise took several study trips to Egypt in order to plan and prepare the German example.⁶¹ Ultimately, they sought to reproduce a street of medieval Cairo while offering a ‘comparable, commercially oriented “best of” selection’ of Egypt in a loose adherence to the Parisian prototype.⁶²

While there were four main sections of *Kairo*, the old-classical section and the Old Cairo bazaar are of key interest in comparison to the scientific-commercial portion of the *Kolonialausstellung*. Old-classical Egypt contained a reproduction of the Horus Temple, with two giant shapes of the kings Horemheb and Ramses II, as well as a replica of the Cheops pyramid, within which visitors could view mummies, historical dioramas, and other artefacts from the time of the Pharaohs.⁶³ Yet, the increasing tension between the

⁵⁵ Pietre von Wesemael, *Architecture of instruction and delight* (Rotterdam, 2001), p. 49.

⁵⁶ Zeynep Çelik, *Displaying the Orient: architecture of Islam at nineteenth-century world’s fairs* (Berkeley, CA, 1992), p. 119.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Kopf, ‘Picturing difference’, p. 118.

⁵⁹ Steinmetz, ‘Three keys’, p. 62.

⁶⁰ Fritz Kühnemann, Heinrich Fränkel, and Albert Willner, eds., *Berlin und seine Arbeit: Amtlicher Bericht der Berliner Gewerbe-Ausstellung 1896* (Berlin, 1898), p. 869; Roman, ‘Exotische Welten’, p. 41.

⁶¹ Carl Krug, *Offizieller Führer durch KAIRO: Berliner Gewerbe-Ausstellung 1896* (Berlin, 1896), pp. 6–7; ‘Die Sonderausstellung Kairo’, *IZ*, 2760, 23 May, p. 642; Lindenberg, *Pracht-Album*, p. 43.

⁶² Geppert, *Fleeting cities*, p. 49.

⁶³ ‘Die Sonderausstellung Kairo’, *IZ*, 2760, 23 May, p. 642; Lindenberg, *Pracht-Album*, p. 43; ‘Der Paradeaufzug der Beduinen in der Specialausstellung Kairo’, *IZ*, 2768, 18 July, p. 72.; Julius Lessing, ‘Die Berliner Gewerbeausstellung’, *Deutsche Rundschau*, 88, July–Sept. 1896, p. 286.

necessity of *Bildung* and the ‘pervasive, creeping inclusion of the more spectacular, more sensationalist elements in exhibition displays’ meant *Bildung* was often invoked as a way to validate less educational leisure activities.⁶⁴ While this friction is perhaps more apparent elsewhere, it did not seem to impact *Kairo*, as the commercial sector of Old Cairo offered a blend of both education and entertainment. In the centre stood an elegant mosque, where visitors could be educated in the Islamic faith with instructions on the proper etiquette of a religious service. Meanwhile, donkeys and camels casually strolled by as visitors meandered through small, crowded streets where Arab hawkers would attempt to bargain with them for Oriental luxuries. These goods – ‘fruits and sweets, textiles and carpets, weapons and coins, cigarettes and nargilehs, flowers and jewelry’ – were all ‘displayed in suspicious quantity’, filling the space with colours, smells, and indulgences.⁶⁵ The goods available for purchase in Old Cairo were ‘indelibly imprinted (and pictorially prefigured)’ with an exotic encounter.⁶⁶ Whereas the *Kolonialausstellung* had nothing to gain from the display of its colonial products, *Kairo* thrived on the visitor experience of viewing and consuming foreign goods, almost as if they themselves were tourists in a distant land. A visit to *Kairo* was a space where ‘one left the usual cultivated Europe and entered another remote culture’.⁶⁷

II

Both the *Kolonialausstellung* and *Kairo* relied on *Völkerschauen*, or human shows, as fundamental to the exhibition of foreign worlds. There had been a history of ethnographic shows of this kind in the German context due to the success of Carl Hagenbeck, a merchant of wild animals who organized travelling exhibitions of non-European peoples from the 1870s.⁶⁸ The uneasy balance between education- and entertainment-based display apparent in the scientific and commercial sectors of the two exhibitions was, perhaps unsurprisingly, also essential to commercial ethnography. The educational part of this balance was profoundly intertwined with the development of anthropology as a scientific discipline.⁶⁹ German anthropologists proposed a new basis for understanding the European self through what Andrew Zimmerman terms ‘antihumanism’, wherein European *Kulturvölker*, societies defined by their history and civilization, began to study *Naturvölker*, societies supposedly lacking in said elements.⁷⁰ Yet, their theories often came into conflict with the realities

⁶⁴ David M. Ciarlo, ‘Consuming race, envisioning empire: colonialism and German mass culture, 1887–1914’ (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin–Madison, 2003), p. 24.

⁶⁵ Lindenberg, *Pracht-Album*, p. 43; Dreesbach, *Gezähmte Wilde*, p. 252.

⁶⁶ Ciarlo, *Advertising empire*, p. 52.

⁶⁷ Friedrich Naumann, *Ausstellungsbriefe Berlin/Paris/Dresden/Düsseldorf 1896–1906* (Berlin, 2007), pp. 34–5.

⁶⁸ For a chronological overview of commercial ethnographic exhibitions in Germany between 1870 and 1914, see Bruckner, ‘Tingle-tangle’, pp. 472–506.

⁶⁹ Alison Griffiths, *Wondrous difference: cinema, anthropology, & turn-of-the-century visual culture* (New York, NY, 2002).

⁷⁰ Zimmerman, *Antihumanism*, p. 3.

of the assumed *Naturvölker* and where they hypothetically ranked on the 'racial ladder'.⁷¹ Because they formed their methods around the bodies and everyday objects of non-European peoples, the performances offered a fleeting opportunity for scientific study.

While the co-operation of anthropologists was important in determining credibility and authenticity, legitimizing ethnographic shows in the name of *Bildung*, they required that performers satisfy both anthropologists and popular audiences.⁷² Therefore anthropology's roots in popular culture raised doubts about its scientific legitimacy.⁷³ Without doubt, *Völkerschauen* drew large audiences, providing an occasion to make money and impart ideology about foreign peoples and racial hierarchies simultaneously. But the expansion of a new middle-class public sphere in Wilhelmine Germany roused fears that the 'objective' way of seeing of the educated German *Bürger* began to give way to *Schaulust*, the 'untutored "lust to look" and undisciplined behavior of gawking spectators'.⁷⁴ While *Schaulust* is very much entangled in a shifting domestic class structure, the anxiety it created demonstrates the relative success of entertainment and popular spectacle as part and parcel of turn-of-the-century mass culture.

Across the bridge from the 'European' section of the *Kolonialausstellung* was the 'native village', which featured the ethnographic display of approximately one hundred Togoese, Duala (from Cameroon), Swahili, Massai (from East Africa), Herero (from South-West Africa), and New Guineans from Germany's colonies.⁷⁵ Meant to lend a visual (and popular) staging of the relatively dry material found in the scientific-commercial sector, it allowed Germans to piece together the physical and societal differences between themselves and their colonial subjects. Hoping to evoke a sense of authenticity about how their colonial counterparts lived, raw materials from the colonies were shipped to Berlin to construct realistic interpretations of local African environments. A strict order was enforced upon those in the 'native village', both as an implicit demonstration of imperial power and in part to counteract popular perceptions of Africa as a 'savage' land.⁷⁶ In displaying 'wild peoples' who were contained and controlled within a colonial village – and adjacent to exhibitions showcasing the latest military and medical technologies – the colonialists

⁷¹ Useful for this point in the analysis is the idea that Muslims did not belong to the *Naturvölker*. Because they were perceived as more culturally advanced, they were designated as *Halbkulturvölker* (half-cultured people).

⁷² Zimmerman, *Antihumanism*, p. 19.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁷⁴ Bruckner, 'Commercial ethnography', p. 129. An 'objective' way of seeing in the German context was arguably cultivated during the Enlightenment and the European voyages of discovery, particularly in the work of Reinhold and Georg Forster on James Cook's *Resolution* voyage (1772–5). Thinkers began to undertake the comparison of different societies and cultures, striving to observe such phenomena from an objective, detached perspective, training a critical eye even toward the societies to which they belonged. See John Gascoigne, *Science in the service of empire: Joseph Banks, the British state and the uses of science in the age of revolution* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 16–17.

⁷⁵ 'Die Berliner Gewerbe-Ausstellung 1896', *BT*, 242, 13 May, p. 4.

⁷⁶ Ciarlo, *Advertising empire*, p. 57.

strove to erode popular anxieties about the 'Dark Continent' by demonstrating a complete mastery over all of its known dangers. Conquest was also illustrated in the anthropological work conducted within the exhibition space, later printed in visitor material and pro-colonial organs, encouraging spectators toward an anthropological gaze teeming with racial science. Next to the bridge separating the 'European' section from the 'native village' sat the display of 'tropical hygiene' organized by the German Women's Association for Health Care in the Colonies. 'By inserting this addition of health at the site of the "cordon sanitaire"', the design of colonial cities is again visible with the separation of indigenous and European neighbourhoods, in order to 'prevent biological and cultural infection'.⁷⁷ These myriad tactics enforced clear boundaries between the colonizer and colonized. In neutralizing domestic anxieties about, and validating European authority over, Africa, the colonialists hoped to inspire Germans to invest in, and travel to, the colonies.

While in previous decades *Völkerschauen* featuring Africans had proved a popular draw for audiences, the ethnographic performances in the *Kolonialausstellung* arguably failed to impress in the manner the organizers had hoped. While watching one of the performances, Alfred Kerr seemed unfazed by what he experienced in the 'native village'. He observed that his colonial compatriots thought themselves very musical, 'but they are not that – by God no!'.⁷⁸ While continuing to survey them, he primarily commented on their 'howling and untiringly monotonous national dances'.⁷⁹ In descriptions of the *Kolonialausstellung*, much of the language used to describe the African performers is overwhelmingly critical. Throughout the literature, Africans are labelled as 'grotesque' – their performances, the accoutrements of their clothing, and the huts constructed in the village were all designated as such.⁸⁰ The *Berliner Tageblatt* noted that 'their grotesque movements and sound provoke to large amusement', insinuating that the gross and outlandish behaviour of Africans was what was most entertaining to the visitors.⁸¹ The continuous choice of this word is telling. It reveals that Germans certainly interpreted Africans as truly the base of the racial hierarchy, or at least desired to convey such a belief. Likewise, the experience of 'savagery' in the empire was not as attractive as when there were no strings attached, when it was merely a travelling show and not a political, economic, and social reality. Of course, the colonialists intended for the 'native village' to be the star of their exhibition. However, in Paul Lindenberg's souvenir album, he recalled Hagenbeck's ethnographic performances, stating that 'interesting clans of people from all continents were already often demonstrated in Berlin. The presence of African natives would thus present no special attraction'.⁸² The intended effect was in fact the opposite: the novelty of African display had

⁷⁷ Steinmetz, 'Three keys', p. 56.

⁷⁸ Kerr, *Berlin*, p. 156.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ 'In der Kolonialausstellung', *BT*, 221, 1 May, p. 3; 'Berliner Gewerbe-Ausstellung 1896', *BT*, 261, 24 May, p. 5; Kerr, *Berlin*, p. 156.

⁸¹ 'In der Kolonialausstellung', *BT*, 221, 1 May, p. 3.

⁸² Lindenberg, *Pracht-Album*, p. 181.

worn off and Germans began to question, rather than blindly support, Germany's colonial project.

In contrast, displaying and understanding the peoples of the Orient came with its own inherent ideologies and vernaculars in the German mind, resulting in rather different visitor experiences. Unlike the strict boundaries enforced in the *Kolonialausstellung*, the lines between observer and observed were much more fluid in the bazaars of Old Cairo; it represented a 'remarkable realism' that 'made the Orient into an object the visitor could almost touch'.⁸³ Although there was a *Riesenarena* where ethnographic scenes and special events like horse shows, belly dancing, and cavalry exercises could be viewed, visitors were actively encouraged to participate in Egyptian life within the space.⁸⁴ *Kairo's* official guidebook acknowledged this, citing that the 'traveller' to *Kairo* made acquaintances with the donkey boy, had 'frequent contact' with the 'funny, good-hearted...natives', and was excited by interactions with the 'street hawkers and eternal begging'.⁸⁵ The experience of *Kairo* was palpable; a place where the ethnographic performers played their roles so well that visitors never wanted to leave.⁸⁶ Thus, the organizers were largely able to play fast and loose with the obligations of *Bildung*, giving way to techniques that pandered to entertainment and *Schaulust*. Looking to Alfred Kerr again for insight, he described *Kairo* as 'an enormous honky-tonk entertainment. But one which suggests the fantasy of undreamt of measure'.⁸⁷ This matches the vocabulary attributed to *Kairo*, which was given the label 'strange' – the caravans, the colourful yet comfortable buildings of modern Cairo, the celebration of an Arab wedding, the charm of Oriental grandeur, and the ethnographic performances all received this mark.⁸⁸ Expressing such things as 'strange' connotes something familiar – not entirely negative and not wholly positive either – mirroring the intermediate position of the Orient in Western theories of civilization. In reading the physical and figurative distance which narrated the relationship between colonizer and colonized in the *Kolonialausstellung*, the indefinite boundaries of *Kairo* represent Germany's more informal relationship to the Near East, one that sometimes allowed for interaction and collaboration and one in which European control was less obvious.⁸⁹

III

In his unfinished work on the nineteenth-century arcades of Paris, Walter Benjamin placed the origins of modern advertising in exhibition culture. At

⁸³ Timothy Mitchell, 'Orientalism and the exhibitionary order', in Nicholas Mirzoeff, ed., *The visual culture reader* (London, 2013), pp. 495–505, at p. 502.

⁸⁴ 'Die Sonderausstellung Kairo', *IZ*, 2760, 23 May 1896, p. 642; Lindenberg, *Pracht-Album*, p. 43; 'Der Paradeaufzug der Beduinen in der Specialausstellung Kairo', *IZ*, 2768, 18 July 1896, p. 72; Lessing, 'Die Berliner Gewerbeausstellung', p. 286.

⁸⁵ Lindenberg, *Pracht-Album*, p. 184.

⁸⁶ Naumann, *Ausstellungsbriefe*, pp. 34–5.

⁸⁷ Kerr, *Berlin*, p. 151.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

⁸⁹ Steinmetz, 'Three keys', p. 64.

exhibitions around the globe audiences were conditioned to the principle of the advertisement, “look but don’t touch,” and taught to derive pleasure from the spectacle alone.⁹⁰ Much like exhibitions were a product of, and shaped by, an emerging consumer culture, new technologies, and a shifting urban sphere, the same factors were influencing the rise of visual commercial advertising.⁹¹ By the 1880s, British advertisers began to channel a more unusual optic to ‘seize attention and impel purchase’ – its empire.⁹² But as David Ciarlo argues, German advertisers turned to its new colonial empire not because of the success of Germany’s colonial economy, but rather because colonial imagery created visions of empire separate from political and economic motives.⁹³ A hint to *Kairo*’s success is the idea that these intentions were less noticeable in the exhibition, allowing for ‘visions of empire’ to take hold in the mind of the audience. However, while the *Kolonialausstellung* and *Kairo* were self-contained advertisements in themselves, they also made use of the new medium to enhance the promotion and attraction of their exhibitions. While it is difficult to ascertain the degrees of success achieved through the use of advertising, the circulation of advertisements showcasing special events and regular discounts was certainly cutting edge, a prototype for future exhibitions.

From the opening day of the *Gewerbeausstellung*, advertisements began to run for *Kairo*, explaining the price of entry, as well as a special condition that after seven o’clock a main exhibition ticket was no longer necessary for entrance.⁹⁴ This condition was likely one of many attempts to encourage participation after the end of the workday. The following day, a more intricate and detailed advertisement was published, describing various highlights within the exhibition and emphasizing, in particular, the weapons collection of the Khedive and objects loaned from the Egyptian state treasury.⁹⁵ It alerted potential visitors to the performance arena, noting that for fifty-Pfennig entry one could see Arabs, Fellachen, horses, camels, and much more.⁹⁶ Additionally, it signalled that children under ten years of age would receive half-off entry to the arena. These announcements typically had the word ‘**KAIRO**’ in characteristically large, bold letters, a very obvious technique to grab the reader’s attention as their eyes scrolled across the newspaper. *Kairo*

⁹⁰ Susan Buck-Morss, ‘Dream world of mass culture: Walter Benjamin’s theory of modernity and the dialectics of seeing’, in David Michael Levin, ed., *Modernity and the hegemony of vision* (Berkeley, CA, 1993), p. 309.

⁹¹ David Ciarlo, ‘Advertising and the optics of colonial power at the fin de siècle’, in Volker Langbehn, ed., *German colonialism, visual culture, and modern memory* (New York, NY, 2010), pp. 37–54, at pp. 38–9.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 38. See Thomas Richards, *The commodity culture of Victorian England: advertising and spectacle, 1851–1914* (London, 1990); John M. Mackenzie, *Propaganda and empire: the manipulation of British public opinion, 1880–1960* (Manchester, 1984); Anne McClintock, *Imperial leather: race, gender, and sexuality in the colonial contest* (New York, NY, 1995); Anandi Ramamurthy, *Imperial persuaders* (Manchester, 2003).

⁹³ Ciarlo, ‘Optics’, p. 38

⁹⁴ *BT*, 220, 1 May, p. 8.

⁹⁵ *BT*, 222, 2 May, p. 10.

⁹⁶ A pfennig is the German version of a cent, 1/100th of a Mark.

ran similar advertisements weekly, highlighting special announcements and attractions for the upcoming week. In the second full week of the exhibition, an advertisement offered the sale of a season ticket to *Kairo* for fifteen Marks.⁹⁷ These are only brief examples of the kind of marketing strategy that the organizers of *Kairo* employed in their attempt to ‘seize attention and impel purchase’. It continued almost daily in the *Berliner Tageblatt* for the duration of the *Gewerbeausstellung*.

While the use of advertising itself helped to highlight some of the more remarkable things that *Kairo* had to offer, using an innovative medium to convey messages of spectacle, difference, and modernity, the decision to host and subsequently advertise discounts and special events added to the allure of the exhibition. Often, special days were advertised wherein the price of entry also included free entry to the *Riesenarena* and exclusive concerts within the *Ghediveplatz*. These ‘combined’ days occurred once a week after 30 August and were held for the final days of the exhibition in October. However, not all discount days were necessarily advertised in the *Tageblatt*, pointing to the fact that they targeted specific publications depending on the nature of the event. On Sedan Day, commemorating the Prussian victory in the Battle of Sedan during the 1870–1 Franco-Prussian War, veterans received reduced admission.⁹⁸ The management held these ‘in the interest of the less well-off visitors’, in the hope of reaching Berlin’s working-class community.⁹⁹ Thus, the organizers made it clear that regardless of socio-economic status, all members of the public were welcome to experience *Kairo*. Although they ran fairly consistent information in their advertisements, there were distinctive announcements for other occasions, often large Oriental celebrations or educational events. For instance, the Arabs and Bedouins observed the beginning of the *hijra* (*hegira*), the migration of the Islamic prophet Muhammad and his followers from Medina to Mecca. The *Tageblatt* referred to this two-day festivity as a unique moment that embodied the educational spirit of the entire *Gewerbeausstellung*, solidifying *Kairo*’s commitment to *Bildung*.¹⁰⁰ The promotion of a range of special events and discounts gave *Kairo* a competitive edge against the *Kolonialausstellung*, which more than likely contributed to its high visitor count and overall visibility.

Eventually, the organizers of the *Kolonialausstellung* must have recognized the potential benefits of running a marketing campaign, as they did in due course run a small number of advertisements. However, the first exposure readers received arrived only in general promotions of the *Gewerbeausstellung*. Somewhat predictably packaged with *Kairo* as the two ‘exotic’ special exhibitions, this was the only publicity the *Kolonialausstellung* received until 10 June, when its organizing committee then decided to run separate advertisements much like *Kairo*.¹⁰¹ Their singular advertisement, which

⁹⁷ *BT*, 240, 12 May, p. 8; *BT*, 242, 13 May, p. 8; *BT*, 246, 16 May, p. 8.

⁹⁸ ‘Berliner Gewerbe-Ausstellung 1896’, *BT*, 446, 2 Sept., p. 5.

⁹⁹ ‘Berliner Gewerbe-Ausstellung 1896’, *BT*, 441, 30 Aug., p. 5.

¹⁰⁰ ‘Gemeinsames Entrée für Hauptausstellung und Spezial-Ausstellungen’, *BT*, 428, 23 Aug., p. 6.

¹⁰¹ *BT*, 290, 10 June, p. 8.

remained exactly the same throughout the course of the *Gewerbeausstellung*, highlighted the different ethnicities of the colonial subjects that peopled the exhibition, the ethnographic and scientific collections of well-known Africa explorers, and that there was a daily military concert. This promotion ran once a week, with the final appearing on 25 September. There was only one advertisement that differed from the usual weekly publicity, drawing attention to a musical contest occurring within the space and a special concert featuring the music of Beethoven, Mozart, and Wagner.¹⁰² The *Kolonialausstellung* did achieve one success in this regard: free admission for schoolchildren. While exhibition officials thought the fifty-Pfennig fee was already quite affordable, an intervention from the Kaiser ensured that schoolchildren would be able to visit the *Kolonialausstellung* at no extra charge for the final two months of the exhibition.¹⁰³

Although there is no direct evidence to suggest that advertising did or did not impact the public's perception toward, or impetus to visit, either exhibition, the fact that this evolving medium was even deployed is of interest. Flipping through the *Berliner Tageblatt*, the reader would view the word *Kairo* in its large, black letters much more often. Whether they chose to read the advertisement or not, the word continued to appear across the pages of the daily newspaper throughout the *Gewerbeausstellung*, sending a visual message to the reader. The fact that the *Kolonialausstellung* decided not to advertise in this way robbed it of the potential for an impactful impression and an increase in visitor numbers. It is possible that the organizers of the *Kolonialausstellung* purposely did not adopt some of the more emergent, 'modern' approaches because it was their belief that it was the duty of every German to support the colonial project regardless of flash or pizzazz.¹⁰⁴ It is clear that they adopted such an approach in their display of colonialism, strictly adhering to their vision of 'authenticity' to convey its messages. But, as has been maintained, the visual strategy of pro-colonial nationalism was not as successful as in rhetoric or print, implying that had they chosen to advertise, the evidence reveals that it may not have yielded the desired results.

IV

From the mid-nineteenth century, the development of new technologies accelerated at an unprecedented level, bringing Europe, the United States, and eventually the rest of the world into the 'modern'. Technology was harnessed in the presentation of the *Gewerbeausstellung* for this exact purpose, as a visual expression of globalization and to position Germany as a highly industrial nation in a technologically advancing world. In presenting one of the largest telescopes ever made to the first public demonstration of medical X-rays, as well as displays from industrial giants such as Siemens, AEG, and Borsig, the *Gewerbeausstellung* admirably demonstrated Berlin's ability to compete in the

¹⁰² 'Berliner Gewerbe-Ausstellung 1896', *BT*, 402, 9 Aug., p. 5; *BT*, 407, 12 Aug., p. 8.

¹⁰³ Bowersox, *Raising Germans*, p. 88.

¹⁰⁴ Ciarlo, *Advertising empire*, p. 56.

domains of science and technology.¹⁰⁵ Yet, electricity would prove to be the symbol of the *Gewerbeausstellung*, often interpreted as ‘the premier mass medium of the future’.¹⁰⁶ The majority of the space was outfitted with electrical lighting, as well as an electrical tramway, like the one seen in Chicago in 1893, which was installed to shuttle visitors within the main space and to the special exhibitions. Alexander C. T. Geppert has placed electricity and coloured illuminations, like the kind extant in the *Gewerbeausstellung*, as only being popularly introduced in 1900.¹⁰⁷ If we are to take this as a starting point, then Berlin surely serves as a prototype to twentieth-century exhibitions in featuring this kind of technology. Likewise, it has been argued by Bernhard Rieger that the response to technological change in Germany was predominantly positive and optimistic, meaning that Germans were perhaps primed to accept, and be drawn in by, new technologies at the *Gewerbeausstellung*.¹⁰⁸ Ultimately, the inclusion of new technologies helped to fashion Berlin as a modern metropolis, illustrating Germany’s command of a nascent modernity.

The addition of electric lighting into *Kairo* meant that the exhibition could remain open for longer; special events could sometimes carry on until nearly midnight. Within the first week of opening, the *Tageblatt* noted that *Kairo* had electric light shining ‘in the evenings of the fairy tale city’.¹⁰⁹ An advertisement for one of the Oriental celebrations called attention to the ‘magical electric lighting’ while another subsequent notice mentioned ‘fairy-like electric lighting’ in the streets and buildings of *Kairo*.¹¹⁰ Alfred Kerr observed one of these events, commenting on the replica pyramid and how it glowed in the red fire light, calling it ‘an illusion of complete and enormous enchanting strength’.¹¹¹ The electric lighting reflected in the waters of the artificial lake and ‘radiated in magical coloured brilliance’.¹¹² The ‘Oriental illumination’ seemed to make a ‘magical impression’ on visitors to *Kairo*, as they swam ‘in a sea of electric lights’.¹¹³ However, electric lighting was not the only technological spectacle to grace the grounds of *Kairo*. In 1880, German inventor Werner von Siemens first showcased his new product, the electric elevator, at the Mannheim–Pfalzgau exhibition, a product which would not come into regular use in Europe and the United States until the twentieth century. In *Kairo*, visitors were given the opportunity to ride thirty metres to the top of the Cheops pyramid by elevator, presenting ‘an unusually spectacular, panoramic view over site and city alike, thus offering a literal view of both’.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

¹⁰⁶ Carolyn Marvin, *When old technologies were new: thinking about electric communication in the late nineteenth century* (Oxford, 1988), p. 6.

¹⁰⁷ Geppert, *Fleeting cities*, p. 6.

¹⁰⁸ Bernhard Rieger, *Technology and the culture of modernity in Britain and Germany, 1890–1945* (Cambridge, 2005).

¹⁰⁹ ‘Der Kaiser und der Ghedive’, *BT*, 229, 6 May, p. 5.

¹¹⁰ *BT*, 292, 11 June, p. 8, and *BT*, 294, 12 June, p. 8; *BT*, 314, 23 June, p. 8, and *BT*, 316, 24 June, p. 8.

¹¹¹ ‘Berliner Gewerbe-Ausstellung 1896’, *BT*, 342, 8 July, p. 5.

¹¹² Kerr, *Berlin*, p. 162.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 162–3.

¹¹⁴ Geppert, *Fleeting cities*, p. 51.

This electric elevator could be taken for an extra thirty-Pfennig charge, granting visitors with the exceptional experience of viewing *Kairo*, the *Gewerbeausstellung*, and the city of Berlin from above, but also the chance to take part in one of the latest technologies Germany had to offer in 1896. Similar in its use of electric lighting, *Kairo* again acts as an antecedent in the introduction of new technologies into exhibition culture.

If the feeling of the public toward technology was generally positive, its inclusion in *Kairo* is particularly illuminating. The *Kolonialausstellung* rarely, if at all, is described as having employed any forms of new technology in its space. Again, this is perhaps purposeful, to insist on ‘authenticity’ and showcasing the ‘primitive’ nature of the African colonies against the industry of the main exhibition. Taken from this angle, the insertion of European technology in *Kairo* then identifies its place in the racial hierarchy, too. In European and American exhibition culture, Arab civilizations occupied an intermediate position, ‘either as having at one time been subject to development but subsequently denigrating into stasis or as embodying achievements of the standards set by Europe’.¹¹⁵ By including both electric lighting and an elevator, among other additions, *Kairo* was able to access that position in the Western mind by its compliance with European forms. The ancient (pyramid) and the modern (elevator) are unmistakably intertwined, demonstrating one of the many collaborations and interactions of Europe and the Near East in the exhibition space. On the other hand, the ‘Dark Continent’ on display in the *Kolonialausstellung* is, quite literally, left in the dark, while the rest of the *Gewerbeausstellung* was illuminated in the warm glow of electric light. The addition and exclusion of technology thus helped to place a visual marker on the nuances of racial difference and European modernity at play in the two exhibitions.

V

The curious afterlife of the *Kolonialausstellung* only serves to strengthen the argument that indifference marked the German public’s attitude toward its formal colonies. Paul Lindenberg noted that although the material in the *Kolonialausstellung* engaged with the history, development, and nature of the German colonies, it unfortunately required ‘a longer and more detailed study by the viewers who want to appreciate its contents completely’.¹¹⁶ Amusingly, his entire responsibility was to give the exhibition a long and detailed study, to use his words, but he continued that ‘to the superficial visitor, [the *Kolonialausstellung*] is rather suitably to confuse as to instruct’.¹¹⁷ Even Gustav Meinecke, editor of the *Deutsche Kolonialzeitung* whose hand can be seen across an array of pro-colonial publications distributed to the mainstream press, remarked on the first page of his official guide: ‘the attempt to demonstrate the essence of colonialism...is in itself meritorious, even when its

¹¹⁵ Bennett, ‘Complex’, p. 146.

¹¹⁶ Lindenberg, *Pracht-Album*, p. 182.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

implementation does not find the full success hoped for by German colonial enthusiasts'.¹¹⁸ Yet, the colonialists retreated into *Bildung* in the second iteration of the colonial exhibition, the German Colonial Museum.¹¹⁹ According to John Philip Short, this institution was not popular with the general public, as it 'musealized the empire, transmuting adventure into an object lesson in commerce, production, and geography'.¹²⁰ Much like the *Kolonialausstellung* had failed to incorporate the more popular aspects of empire into exhibition, the same mistake was again made with the Museum, illustrating the colonialists' fundamental misunderstanding of the gulf between colonial knowledge and the sensation of the fair.¹²¹ Because of its mixed reception, and as funds and attention began to be diverted to the outbreak of war, it was put up for sale in 1914.¹²²

Ethnographic performances, too, began to lose their appeal around the time of the *Gewerbeausstellung*, as professional and social distinctions between anthropologists and entertainment entrepreneurs magnified and middle-class critics increasingly characterized the shows' crowds as 'an uneducated, *schaustellige* proletariat'.¹²³ A debate emerged in 1899 which claimed that *Völkerschauen* had degenerated into an exotic sideshow that was no longer an adequate arena for the scientific community and thus no longer useful to promote *Bildung*.¹²⁴ One opponent likened the commercial character of these shows as 'purely a slave trade'.¹²⁵ By 1901, the appearance of Germany's colonial subjects in ethnographic shows had been prohibited. The DAMuKA 'Uprising' only served to confirm the discontent stirring on the subject of ethnographic shows. At the *Deutsche Armee-, Marine- und Kolonial-Ausstellung* in 1907, the performers in the 'Negro village', coincidentally populated primarily with people from the Sudan, Tunisia, and Morocco, 'escaped' from the exhibition enclosure.¹²⁶ The scene at DAMuKA exposed public anxieties about the collision of race, colonial politics, and the rights of African performers in the metropole, particularly in the raw aftershocks of the brute violence of the 1904 Herero-Nama genocide in South-West Africa and the 1905 Maji Maji Rebellion in East Africa.¹²⁷ Equally worrying, the fact that German women joined the performers in the streets of Berlin presented a new, gendered dimension in the criticism of *Völkerschauen*. Growing concerns about public behaviour and mass culture offered a site by which the middle classes could express their attitudes about social regulation, race relations, and sexuality.¹²⁸ It was here that colonialism and class collided in the modern city.

¹¹⁸ Ciarlo, *Advertising empire*, pp. 142–3; Meinecke, *Deutschland*, p. 1.

¹¹⁹ 'Berliner Gewerbe-Ausstellung 1896', *BT*, 5 Aug., p. 5; 'Lokal-Nachrichten und Vermisches', *BT*, 522, 13 Oct., p. 5; See also Bowersox, *Raising Germans*, pp. 97–107.

¹²⁰ Short, *Magic lantern*, p. 105.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² Penny, *Objects of culture*, pp. 42–3.

¹²³ Bruckner, 'Commercial ethnography', p. 140.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 144–5.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 147–8.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 144–52.

Yet, Germany's interest in, and connection to, the Orient was not without its troubles in the aftermath of *Kairo*. Both *Kairo* and the special section of Old Berlin were the only parts of the *Gewerbeausstellung* to turn a profit, signifying for Katja Zelljadt that the scientific pleasure of perusing the latest smelting techniques had 'given way to the consumptive pleasure of swilling beer in Old Berlin and gawking at belly dancers in Cairo'.¹²⁹ It could be argued that *Kairo*'s blurred boundaries and loose appeal to *Schaulust* acted as a turning point, facilitating the environment that made concerns about class and race more apparent in relation to German colonialism and commercial ethnography. Although the field of *Orientalistik* had seen continued interest in the early years of the twentieth century, the intellectual and cultural interest in Egypt and the wider Orient was impacted quite severely by the First World War: it spurned the loss of Germany's formal colonies, saw the collapse of its Ottoman ally in the Near East, and did serious damage to the 'institutional structures and academic traditions' that had been in place for nearly a century to promote the study of Orientalism.¹³⁰ Excavations, like that at Amarna led by the *Deutsche Orientgesellschaft*, which took place on the eve of the war and greatly expanded the Egyptian collection of the *Neues Museum* (including the famous Nefertiti bust), were suddenly terminated. The collapse of the German economy made it impossible to financially or logistically organize overseas projects, 'nor was there an open-handed Kaiser' who could be entreated to offer supplementary funds for archaeological digs or research trips.¹³¹ While the Third Reich did much more to dismantle the intellectual pursuit of German Orientalism in the 1930s, Nazi officials built on Germany's historical relationship with the Orient, pursuing a remarkably ambitious attempt to build an alliance with the Islamic World much like Kaiser Wilhelm II had done in the 1890s.¹³²

After the close of the *Gewerbeausstellung* on 15 October 1896, the transient spectacle was slowly disassembled, until there were no physical or material remnants of the exhibition left to be seen. Even today, there is not a single reminder in Treptow Park of what was (by contemporary commentators) and is today (by historians) considered such a momentous event for Berlin. Similarly, in the so thorough and comprehensive exhibitions of the *Deutsches Historisches Museum*, which claim to provide 'a unique overview of German history within its international context', there is no mention of '*die verhinderte Weltausstellung*', rendering it largely insignificant in present-day, public-facing narratives of Berlin and Germany's ascendancy in the international sphere.¹³³

¹²⁹ Zelljadt, 'Old Berlin', pp. 308–9.

¹³⁰ Marchand, *German Orientalism*, p. 475. For reflections on the field of *Orientalistik* in the twentieth century, see pp. 474–98.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 479; Jürgen Kloosterhuis, *'Friedliche Imperialisten': Deutsche Auslandsverein und auswärtige Kulturpolitik, 1906–1918* (Frankfurt a. M., 1994), p. 269.

¹³² David Motadel, *Islam and Nazi Germany's war* (Cambridge, MA, 2014).

¹³³ Perhaps this is to assert a narrative of continued 'progress' rather than focusing on the disappointment of not hosting a world's fair. 'Deutsches Historisches Museum – Exhibitions', www.dhm.de/en/exhibitions/our-exhibitions/, accessed 2 Feb. 2021; Hella Kaeselitz, ed., *Die verhinderte Weltausstellung: Beiträge zur Berliner Gewerbeausstellung 1896* (Berlin, 1996). Only since 2017 has

This begs the question of whether this was the turning point in which Berlin could claim to compete with metropolises such as Vienna, London, and, above all, Paris. In his visit to the *Gewerbeausstellung*, the incisive sociologist Georg Simmel claimed Berlin was certainly a ‘world city’ but categorically rejected the possibility that it truly ranked alongside its much-envied European capitals.¹³⁴ Instead, he praised the arrival of visual consumer culture, cosmopolitanism, and condensed urban space that were, for him, linked inextricably with modernity and which came to exemplify Berlin in the Weimar period.¹³⁵ However, it was at the *Gewerbeausstellung* that ‘Berlin consciously became aware of itself’ one souvenir album reflected, and for that reason an iota of permanence marks an otherwise ephemeral moment.¹³⁶

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there been a glimmer of recognition of the *Kolonialausstellung* in a permanent museum exhibition, organized by *Berlin Postkolonial* and the *Initiative Schwarze Menschen in Deutschland* at the District Museum Treptow-Köpenick. “‘lookingBACK” and the Question of Gaze’, <https://blog.uni-koeln.de/gssc-humboldt/en/translation->, accessed 6 Apr. 2021.

¹³⁴ Geppert, *Fleeting cities*, p. 58.

¹³⁵ Simmel, ‘Exhibition’, pp. 120–1.

¹³⁶ Geppert, *Fleeting cities*, p. 61.

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