PREFACE: THE LANGUAGE OF CONTINENT ALLEGORIES IN BAROQUE CENTRAL EUROPE

During the late Renaissance – around 1570 – humanists developed a new "shorthand" way of representing the world at a single glance: personifications of the four continents Europe, Asia, Africa and America. While the continent allegory as an iconic type had already been invented in antiquity, humanists and their artists adapted the concept by creating the four-continent scheme and standardized the attributes characterizing the continents. During the next 230 years until ca. 1800, this iconic scheme became a huge success story. All known media were employed to bring the four continent allegories into the public and into people's homes.

When the French Revolution eventually necessitated different iconographic priorities, the language of the four continent allegories fell nearly completely out of favour – although there remain examples of practical use like in South Tyrol. During the heyday of the World Exhibitions starting in the second half of the 19th century, the continent allegories experienced a renaissance which lasted until World War I or even thereafter. Various artists continued to work with the historical iconic scheme of the four continents, sometimes expanding it by portraying Australia as the fifth continent. Occasionally, as in the case of the Parisian Bourse de Commerce in the late 1880s, artists would depict as many characterizing details of the respective continents as they could fit. A recent study on the mental maps of schoolchildren shows that even today the allegoric representation of continents can still be an actively mastered skill.[1]

Within this prolonged history of personifications of the continents, the Late Baroque, and especially the 18th century, claims a special role for two reasons: The first is the large number of reproductions and applications during this period, the second is the multifaceted significance these allegories enjoyed. They could be inserted into religious and liturgical settings as well as into political language or that of the history of civilization and mankind. "Language" in this sense means that the continent allegories were less the object of an art historical interpretation than being considered a formative part of religious, liturgical, political, historical and other discourses. As a pictorial language they were interwoven with texts, dogmas, narratives and stereotypes. Thus we find ourselves asking: What did continent allegories *actually* mean to people living in the Baroque age?

---

1   Sandra Lehecka, "Das ambivalente Europabild der Gegenwart anhand von Schülerzeichnungen österreichischer Jugendlicher" (master's thesis, University of Vienna, 2015) (book forthcoming 2016), accessed March 26, 2016, http://ubdata.univie.ac.at/AC13003361.

Notably – though not exclusively – this question is the topic of a research project on continent allegories carried out by the editors of this volume.[2] The project team approached the subject in a new and systematic fashion: Firstly, a clearly defined geographic area consisting of the southern part of the Holy Roman Empire from Freiburg in the Breisgau to the eastern frontier of Lower Austria including Vienna was chosen. The northern limit of the study area is constituted by the Main River, the southern one by South Tyrol. Secondly, the project studied continent allegories in immovable media like fresco, stucco and sculptures within abbeys, palaces, parks and gardens, townhouses and – most importantly – in churches.[3] The introductory article presents the project's design, goals and results. Marion Romberg has completed a dissertation on the continent allegories in the prince-bishopric of Augsburg.[4] Her first article provides insights into her research, while her second focuses more closely on one of the most fascinating questions the project was able to raise: What role did continent allegories play in village churches? One of the most amazing quantitative results is that most continent allegories created during the 18th century are to be found in village churches. Josef Köstlbauer discusses the mediality of Baroque continent allegories, and Wolfgang Schmale links them with the literature on the history of mankind, asking to what extent the allegories as a pictorial language contributed to the enlightened history-of-mankind discourse.

The 14th International Congress for Eighteenth-Century Studies in Rotterdam, July 2015, provided an opportunity to increase the geographic area studied in the project. The team organized two sections dealing with continent allegories on a larger geographic scale – including Japan, access to which had been achieved by the Jesuits. In alphabetical order, Claudio Ferlan (Jesuit colleges at Gorizia and Klagenfurt), Oba Haruka (Japan), Britta Kägler (Baroque art and economy), and Katrin Sterba (Jesuits in Bohemia and other southern German provinces) thus contributed to the project.

Finally, two art historians in Warsaw/Poland joined the project group and contributed to the present volume: Christine Moisan-Jablonski and Katarzyna Ponińska. Their two articles provide an overview – as complete as factually feasi-

---

2   "A Discourse and Art Historical Analysis of the Allegories of the Four Continents in the South of the Holy Roman Empire and its Documentation in a Hypermedia Environment", 2012–2016, financed by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF).

3   For further details, see the introductory article by the three editors.

4   Marion Romberg laid the groundwork for the research project with her master's thesis, in which she took a closer look at the Austrian continent allegories and published two articles on them. "Die Welt in Österreich – Erdteilallegorien im Kontext barocker Frömmigkeit", *Wiener Zeitschrift zur Geschichte der Neuzeit* 10, no. 1, Wissenschaft ist jung I, ed. Wolfgang Schmale (2010): 28–47; "In hoc signo vinces! Die Erdteil-Allegorien in der Kirche des Augustiner-Chorherrenstifts Vorau", in *Multiple kulturelle Referenzen in der Habsburgermonarchie des 18. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Wolfgang Schmale, Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Gesellschaft zur Erforschung des Achtzehnten Jahrhunderts 24 (Bochum: Dr. Winkler Verlag, 2010), 75–102.

ble – of continent allegories in the historic province of Silesia, in Warsaw, and in central and eastern Poland.

The present volume can be considered the reverse of a coin whose averse is the seminal book written by Sabine Poeschel in 1985 and dealing with the typology of the continent allegories.[5] Poeschel established this typology by examining many examples from all over Europe, including the Holy Roman Empire, Italy, France, Spain, the Low Countries and England. Her typology is ultimately based on a qualitative catalogue of 112 continent allegories to be found throughout this vast area; additional examples could be mentioned for Denmark. We are immensely grateful to Sabine Poeschel. She took extensive interest in our project, attended our workshop in May 2014, and kindly served as co-supervisor for Marion Romberg's dissertation. Through her seminal work (and several other articles), she laid the groundwork for all further research on continent allegories.

We especially wish to thank Christine Engelke, who joined the project team as an ERASMUS-student in 2013 and continued working for us from Germany in the most loyal and constructive manner until the project end in 2016.

We are grateful to Stephan Stockinger, who undertook the complete English revision of all articles. And we are, of course, particularly grateful to all the co-authors of this volume.

Wolfgang Schmale   Marion Romberg   Josef Köstlbauer

Vienna, March 2016

---

5   Sabine Poeschel, *Studien zur Ikonographie der Erdteile in der Kunst des 16.–18. Jahrhunderts*, Beiträge zur Kunstwissenschaft 3 (Munich: scaneg, 1985)

I
FUNDAMENTALS

CONTINENT ALLEGORIES IN THE BAROQUE AGE:
AN INTRODUCTION

The database http://continentallegories.univie.ac.at was developed by the research project "A Discourse and Art Historical Analysis of the Allegories of the Four Continents in the South of the Holy Roman Empire and its Documentation in a Hypermedia Environment", which ran from 2012 to 2016 and was financed by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF).

The project studied continent allegories in immovable media like fresco, stucco and sculptures within abbeys, palaces, parks and gardens, townhouses and, most importantly, in churches. The systematic survey conducted by the project team identified 407 instances of continent allegories in the south of the Holy Roman Empire. Naturally, allegorical representations of the four continents can be found elsewhere in Europe as well, but their density and occurrence in such varied spatial contexts in the examined area are remarkable. Based on these findings, it can be confidently asserted that continent allegories are much more prevalent – and thus a much more significant source for historical inquiry – than hitherto presumed.[1] Methods of discourse analysis as practiced by proponents of the history of Europe in particular offer promising avenues of research.[2] Several essays in

---

1   For a review of existing or current research, see Marion Romberg "Die Welt im Dienst der Konfessionen: Erdteilallegorien in Dorfkirchen auf dem Gebiet des Fürstbistums Augsburg im 18. Jahrhundert" (PhD. diss., University of Vienna, 2015, book forthcoming 2016), 38–41.

2   See for example: Europabegriffe und Europavorstellungen im 17. Jh, last accessed Feb. 2016, http://www.univie.ac.at/igl.geschichte/europaquellen/; Wolfgang Schmale, "Europa – Die weibliche Form", *L'Homme* 11, no. 2 (2000): 211–233; ibid., "Europa als Topos der Geschichtsschreibung", in *Auf der Suche nach einem Phantom? Widerspiegelungen Europas in der Geschichtswissenschaft*, ed. Georg Michels (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2003), 45–67; ibid., Rolf Felbinger, Günter Kastner, and Josef Köstlbauer, *Studien zur europäischen Identität im 17. Jahrhundert*, Herausforderungen 15 (Bochum: Dr. Winkler, 2004); ibid., "Europa, Braut der Fürsten. Die politische Relevanz des Europamythos im 17. Jahrhundert", in *Europa im 17. Jahrhundert. Ein politischer Mythos und seine Bilder*, ed. Klaus Bußmann and Elke Anna Werner (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2004), 241–268; ibid. "Voltaire (François-Marie Arouet) (1694–1778)", in *Europa-Historiker. Ein biographisches Handbuch* 3, ed. Heinz Duchhardt, M. Morawiec, W. Schmale, and W. Schulze (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007) 29–41. For newer literature, refer to Michael Wintle, *The Image of Europe: Visualizing Europe in Cartography and Iconography through the Ages*. Cambridge Studies in Historical Geography 44 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). For older litera-

this volume provide examples of how these methods may be fruitfully applied in contextualizing the iconography of the four continents.

Two primary objectives were defined for the project: The first was to conduct a systematic survey of the prevalence of allegories of the four continents within the research area. To facilitate the systematic and detailed analysis of all identified instances of continent allegories, a database was developed. This database allows for using the collection of sources for various research interests: iconography and iconology, reception of aesthetics, cultural history, social history, history of identity, history of science, etc.

The second objective was to shed light onto the nature of the visual discourse on Europe and the world that becomes manifest in representations of the four continents. The numerically significant presence of continent allegories in the geographical area of research begs explanation.[3] Initially used almost exclusively as an element of manorial decoration programs, the iconography of the four continents began to flourish in the eighteenth century. By its very nature, visual discourse has the ability to reach a wider segment of society than a purely literary discourse. Allegories of the four continents were present in places frequented by people from diverse walks of life, and their iconographic context could be understood by members of all social strata. Contrary to other allegories, the iconography of the four continents permitted artists to toy with exotic and foreign artifacts, and therefore these representations – even though they were of undoubtedly stereotypical character – also transported learned knowledge about the flora and fauna, about people and regions of the world: knowledge that was separate from their genuine allegorical meanings.

BASIC FACTS CONCERNING THE WEBSITE AND DATABASE

The digital collection is open access (http://continentallegories.univie.ac.at), and there is no commercial interest involved. Data are physically stored on a server belonging to the University of Vienna, and long-term accessibility and permanence of links are thus guaranteed.

A hypermedia environment specifically developed for this project not only allows access to detailed descriptions of objects, but also makes it possible to visually mark image details and place comments within images. Each object contains information about its chronology, restauration of the respective artwork, primary sources pertaining to images or architecture, and bibliographical information. All objects are navigable via subject indexing and hyperlinks.

---

ture, refer to Klaus Malettke, ed., *Imaginer l'Europe* (Paris: Belin, 1998). For a visual discourse analytical approach, refer to Marion Romberg, "Die Welt im Dienst der Konfessionen", 80–83.

3   For a quantitative survey, see the essay "Data-based Analysis of the Continent Allegories in Southern Germany with Special Focus on the Prince-bishopric of Augsburg" by Marion Romberg in this volume.

TIME FRAME

The investigated time frame extends from the late sixteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century, with the mid-eighteenth century forming the key period. Both the earliest and the latest continent allegories included in the survey are to be found in South Tyrol: In 1583, the Italian artist Pietro Maria Bagnatore painted continent allegories in a room in Velthurns Castle, basing his work on a series of prints by Jan Sadeler the Elder from 1581. The youngest continent allegories included in the database date from 1858 and were painted in the presbytery of the parochial church at Albeins.

GEOGRAPHICAL AREA OF INVESTIGATION

The area of investigation comprises the southern and southeastern parts of the Holy Roman Empire, where a remarkable density of representations of the four continents, and baroque art in general, can be found. The northern limit of the study area is formed by the river Main, the Erzgebirge range and the Polish Trzebnickie Hills. The focus of research lay on modern Southern Germany, Austria and South Tyrol (Italy).

DEFINITION OF RESEARCH SUBJECT

Included in the survey were only those allegories of the four continents to be found in permanently fixated media like fresco, stucco, sculpture, tiles and paintings. Concerning the latter three media categories, only those examples were included that remain in their original location.[4] Allegories of the four continents are to be found in various types of places: Palaces, castles, abbeys, townhouses, gardens, public squares and all sorts of churches.

Not included were artifacts like faience, book illustrations, maps and atlases, prints, or terracotta figurines. Hardly ever have such artifacts remained at their original location or in the context they were intended for, and their provenance is therefore often difficult or impossible to reconstruct. This is quite different for allegories of the four continents in immovable media: It is more feasible in regard to such artworks to reconstruct the social and cultural contexts they originated in as well as the spatial and functional conditions governing the ways in which they were conceived, looked at, interpreted, and understood.

---

4   The two exceptions in Laudon and Haldenwang are frescos.

COLLECTION OF DATA

All instances of continent allegories identified in a preliminary survey were visited by members of the project team. Both the respective depictions of the four continents and the entire iconographic and architectural context they are situated in were thoroughly documented through digital photography and descriptions.

DATABASE STRUCTURE AND GUIDELINES FOR RECORD MANAGEMENT

There are three different categories of entries: continent allegories, locations, and persons.

– "Erdteilallegorien" (Continent allegories) contains all digital images, basic information, descriptions and analyses.
– "Orte" (Locations) contains basic information on the buildings and places where continent allegories are to be found. This includes an outline of the respective building's history, information on its historical and current political and administrative affiliation, and an outline of pilgrimage history where applicable.
– "Personen" (Persons) includes all artists and patrons involved in the production of the examined continent allegories.

The relation between these three categories is as follows: While each continent allegory is always assigned to exactly one fixed place, several continent allegories can be at the same location (e.g. Melk, Ottobeuren, Gabelbach, Würzburg). The connection between people and continent allegories is based on a "n:n" ratio: For each continent allegory, several artists as well as different principals can be involved at different degrees of intensity or significance (Screenshot 1).

Screenshot 1: The relations between the three categories Erdteilallgorien (Continent allegories), Orte (Locations),and Personen (Persons)

Four major graphical user interfaces provide access to the database: *Karte* (Map), *Zeitleiste* (Timeline), *Index* (Index), and an advanced search interface (*Suche*).

A spatial representation in form of an interactive **map** shows the political and administrative divisions of Europe during the 16th to the 19th century as well as in the present. The map can be navigated by means of the building icons on the map, a timeline and a search box for artists and places. The building icons on the map denote the sites of buildings: castles, palaces, abbeys, abbey churches, churches, chapels, and miscellaneous (Screenshot 2). To keep the number of different symbols small in order to improve visual clarity, more than one building type is subsumed under certain icons.

A separate interface is provided through the interactive **timeline** allowing for easy chronological navigation of the records. Here the entries are ordered according to the time of creation of the respective continent allegories (Screenshot 2).
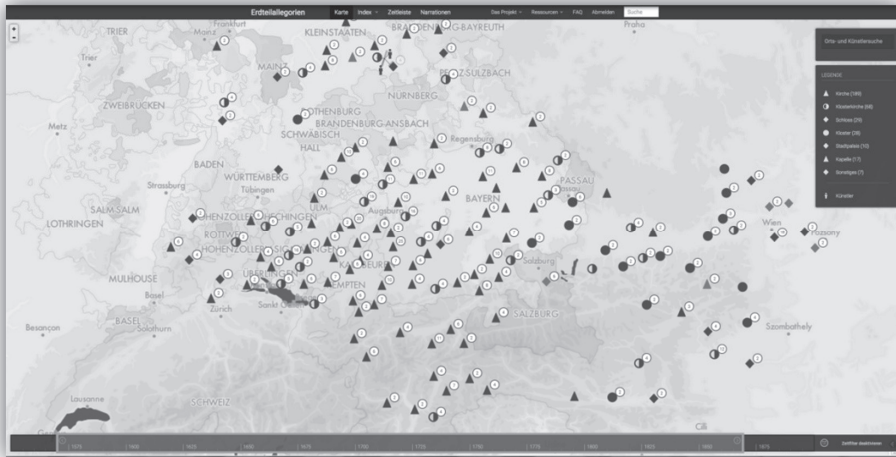
Screenshot 2: interactive map
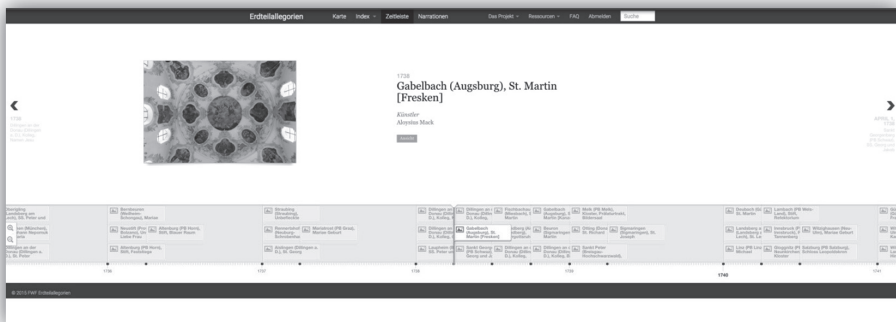
Screenshot 2: timeline interface

The **index interface** offers various alphabetical indices listing continent allegories, persons, places, annotated images, and taxonomies. Among the latter is the list of all *Iconclass* codes assigned within the database. The iconographic classification system ICONCLASS is intended for art historians to describe and classify pictorial data, and is used by institutions throughout the world as a standardized classification tool. First published in print by the Netherlands' Royal Academy of Arts and Sciences between 1973 and 1985, it is based on a hierarchical systems of codes referring to themes, persons, objects, ideas, and events depicted in images. On the one hand, the use of Iconclass facilitates easy comparison between image data contained in the database. On the other hand, it also permits usage of

the database independently of language and enables integration with other scientific databases or meta-databases. The Iconclass taxonomy is used to describe individual continent allegories and their elements as well as the entire iconographic context which the specific depictions are situated in. 1,400 Iconclass codes were applied a total of 13,400 times within the database.

The **search interface** allows the user to execute full text searches which can be specified and filtered as desired. The specifications are predefined by the included taxonomies in the three categories such as the positioning of the art work in the room, the type of building, or the historical diocese. Search results are listed by relevance and can be shown on the map as well.

Central to the database are the **photographs** of the continent allegories and their visual and architectural context. In all, the database contains more than 6,000 photographs selected from over 100,000. Each entry in the continent allegory category has a gallery of images attached, including detailed close-up shots as well as panoramic views of interiors and exteriors of the location. These images are always arranged in a standardized sequence so as to facilitate orientation. Artist signatures, if present, are shown separately in close-up shots. By browsing through such a gallery, users are provided with a comprehensive idea of a location as well as the significance and function of the continent allegories within that particular context. Annotations within the images explain motifs and link panoramic shots to close-up images or to photographs of other paintings, drawings or prints used as models (Screenshot 3).

Screenshot 3: Screenshot from the database showing the ceiling fresco in the rosary chapel of Ailingen