

1.
20

Klugheit der Kinder Gottes/
Ausz der Epistel Jacobi 4 v.14.15.16.

Bey der Sepultur
Des Weyland Erbarn IV-
STI BER TR AM vom Killich-

hausen im Hertzogthumb Braunschweig bürtig / Churfürst-
lichen Brandenburgischen gewesen
Cammerknabens/

Welcher auff der Reise auß Preussen mit höchst-
gedachter Ihr Churf. Gn. biß naher Danzig kommen/daselbst
den 21. Junij lauffenden Jahres/ sein ende sanfft vnd selig geschlossen
hat : Vnd ist der verblichene Körper allhero ins Churfürstl. Hoffla-
ger bracht / hernach auff J. J. Churf. Gn. Gn. vnser Gnädigsten
Herrn/vnd Gnädigsten Frauen verordnung in der Churfürst-
lichen Stifftkirchen allhier den 21. Julij ehrlichen / bey
ansehnlicher frequentz , eingesenckt
worden.

Erkläret/

Vnd auff Ihre Churf. Gn. / meiner Gnädigsten
Frauen/gnädigstes anbeacren/in Druck gegeben/
Von

MARTINO FÜSSELIO S. Theol. Doctore,
vnd Churf. Brandenb. Diener am Wort Gottes
in der Kirchen daselbst.

Gedruckt zum Berlin durch George Kungen / Anno 1619.

THE WOODEN STATUES OF JUSTUS BERTRAM AND HIS SISTER: TRIBUTE OR OBJECTIFICATION?

On 21 July 1619, a funeral was held in Berlin Cathedral next to the palace [●Around 1600] in the presence of numerous spectators. Elector Johann Sigismund of Brandenburg and Anna of Prussia had arranged for the ceremony and were present in person (fig. 1).¹ The deceased was not a member of the nobility, but a “valet of Electoral Brandenburg”, an “attendant and servant” in the elector’s entourage.² His name was Justus Bertram, he came from a poor background, and he was a person of short stature.³

Other people with dwarfism with comparable positions at European courts were buried with similar honours.⁴ However, there was an additional reason why the valet Justus Bertram, who was just fourteen at the time of his death, remained part of the cultural memory of the Prussian court for centuries after his funeral ceremony. In written sources, two wooden statues – one of a relatively small man, the other of a diminutive woman – are closely associated with the life stories of Bertram and his sister. In the seventeenth century, these statues were displayed in the Berlin armoury; in the early eighteenth century, in the *Kunstkammer*. This essay will focus on these two real people living at a European court in the early modern period. At the same time, it will track the two wooden statues on their journey through electoral and royal collections, showing how perceptions of people with dwarfism changed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The methodological challenge lies in juxtaposing the biographies of people and statues without objectifying the historical figures. The concept of object biography, in particular, will make it possible to examine how changing cultural and scholarly contexts and diverse actors affect and redefine the perception of objects – and vice versa.

Justus Bertram and His Role at the Electoral Court of Brandenburg

Justus Bertram was born on 2 January 1604, the son of poor farmers in Rillichhausen in the duchy of Braunschweig.⁵ The surviving funeral sermon provides extensive information about his life and significance as a member of the court.⁶ The author, the court chaplain Martin Füssel, reports that from the age of seven, Bertram “remained quite small” and that his parents received “comfort from a distinguished person” regarding this matter.⁷ The person was Antonius von Alten, a member of the aristocratic von Alten family from the vicinity of Hanover, who took the boy in for a year and afterwards found employment for him at the court of Friedrich Ulrich of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel. Bertram spent around three years in the duke’s service and probably received courtly training from his staff. For four and a half years – the longest period of employment in his life – Bertram worked as a page for the Brandenburg elector Johann Sigismund.⁸ Bertram had a sister who was also of short stature, but all that is known about her is that she lived to the age of thirty-seven and served as a lady’s maid to Hedwig Sophie of Brandenburg at the court of Hesse-Kassel.⁹ Hedwig Sophie was the sister of Friedrich Wilhelm of Brandenburg, later known as the Great Elector. After

◀ 1 | Title page of funeral sermon for Justus Bertram, 1619.

- 1 See the surviving funeral sermon, Füssel 1619, fol. 1r.
- 2 *Ibid.*, fol. 2r.
- 3 Translator’s note: When referring to people of restricted growth, Little People of America and Little People UK recommend the terms “person of short stature”, “person with dwarfism”, and “little person” (see <https://www.prnewswire.co.uk/news-releases/warwick-davis-speaks-out-about-the-word-midget-257458151.html>). When translating the German term *kleinwüchsig*, I have followed these recommendations. I have only used the word “dwarf” when the corresponding German word *Zwerg* is cited in historical sources. For a discussion of the German term, see Seemann 2018, pp. 59–64. In 2021 Eva Seemann submitted a dissertation on so-called court dwarfs to the University of Zurich which will be published in 2023.
- 4 See the examples in Petrat 1998, pp. 6–7.
- 5 See Füssel 1619, fol. 14v. On the biography and role of Justus Bertram at the electoral court, see the extensive discussion in Schneider 2020a as well as Seemann 2022.
- 6 Funeral sermons were widespread from the Reformation to the first half of the eighteenth century, particularly in Protestant regions. They often included details of the deceased’s life (*personalia*) and death. See Kunze 2020, pp. 324–8, esp. p. 324.
- 7 Füssel 1619, fol. 14v.
- 8 See *ibid.*, fols. 16v–17r.



2 | Anonymous, *Court Dwarf*, c. 1680, Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin.

the death of her husband Landgrave Wilhelm VI in 1663, she reigned on behalf of her twelve-year-old son Wilhelm VII, who was under her guardianship. She was extensively involved in the selection of court staff, on whom she placed exacting demands.¹⁰ Due to the scarcity of sources about women in the early modern period, though, little is known about the fate of her lady's maid, Bertram's sister.

From the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, many people with dwarfism were hired as court staff in Europe,¹¹ for which reason they were also portrayed in the visual arts (figs. 2 and 3).¹² With their aura of the extraordinary, they symbolized the ruler's sophistication and power;¹³ they were considered exotic and enigmatic beings and were often perceived as "curiosities" or even as "demonic" (fig. 4).¹⁴ The court hired and put on display other unusual individuals, including "hirsutes" (sufferers of the rare disease of hypertrichosis), "giants", "moors", and "Turks" (the last group because of their non-Christian religion).¹⁵ The curiosity chambers of Europe, such as those in Ambras and St. Petersburg, include a number of paintings and artworks depicting members of these minorities, often grouped together (fig. 5). Even the well-known engraved image of the Museo Cospiiano in Bologna seems to allude to similar perceptual patterns: it presents Sebastiano Biavati, a person

of short stature, as a collection guide, looking like a living exhibit himself (fig. 6).¹⁶

The funeral sermon in honour of Justus Bertram addresses the subject of dwarfism in great detail. Füssel describes "giants" and "dwarfs" as divine creations whom God cares for in all his "wisdom" like human beings.¹⁷ As a rule, though, this meant an existence as a living curiosity, to which Füssel makes reference in his remark that people "marvel" at such "small creature[s]" in much the same way they do at small and subtle artworks.¹⁸

People with dwarfism usually held the office of valet or lady's maid at court. Contrary to popular belief, they were rarely employed as court jesters for the rulers' amusement. As body servants, they helped their masters and mistresses get dressed, attended on them, took part in ceremonies at their side, and accompanied them on hunts and journeys.¹⁹ However, a variety of court careers were open to little people. They were officially employed on a permanent basis as artists and artisans and were among the privileged and best provided-for members of the court.²⁰ Despite their special status as embodiments of the "other", they were a natural part of daily court life. As a valet, Justus Bertram also accompanied the electoral family on their many journeys, and one of these proved his downfall: on 22 June 1619, he died on the way from their Königsberg residence to the court's temporary quarters in Berlin-Cölln.²¹ In his funeral sermon, Füssel reports that the day before his death, the valet was offered a horse to purchase during a stopover in Danzig. While trying to mount it, he fell and then succumbed to his injuries.²²



3 | Unknown (French) wax sculptor, *Figure of Nicolas Ferry, Called Bébé*, eighteenth century, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Braunschweig.

During his short life, Bertram established a relatively close relationship with the electoral family, as is shown by the funeral ceremony and his interment in Berlin's main church, which served as the burial place of members of the Hohenzollern dynasty. Because the church was demolished in 1747, we can no longer verify the existence of his grave, but according to written sources it was

- 9 Ibid., fol. 15v: "It was said that the youngest sister, who was five, looked exactly like the deceased and also remained small." For more on Bertram's sister at the court of Hedwig Sophie, see Schwebel 1884, p. 484.
- 10 See Bues 1993, pp. 77–106, here pp. 87–8.
- 11 See Seemann 2018, Adelson 2005, and Petrat 1998.
- 12 On art objects depicting dwarfs at the court of the Medici, see Ghadessi 2011, pp. 272–3. On the pictorial representation of "court dwarfs", see Enderle/Unverfehrt 2007. See also Seemann 2018, pp. 56–7.
- 13 See Daston/Park 2001, p. 68.
- 14 See Petzoldt 1999, pp. 39–58, here p. 41. See also DWB, vol. 32 (1954), cols. 1095–6, "Zwerg"; and the extensive discussion in Daston/Park 2001 and Ghadessi 2018.
- 15 For the role of "Turks, Moors, and Tatars" at the Prussian court, see Theilig 2013; on people with hypertrichosis at the court of the Medicis, see Ghadessi 2011.
- 16 For more on this topic, see Ghadessi 2018, pp. 30–1.
- 17 Füssel 1619, fol. 15r.
- 18 Ibid., fol. 17r.
- 19 For the tasks assigned to court dwarfs, see Seemann 2018, pp. 64–71, and Seemann 2021, pp. 309–28.
- 20 See Seemann 2018, p. 58.
- 21 See Füssel 1619, fols. 1r, 2r.
- 22 See *ibid.*, fols. 5v–6r.



4 | Illustration of Sebastiano Biavati from Ulisse Androvandi, *Monstrorum historia*, 1642.

probably located in the cathedral itself.²³ His high wages and the planned purchase of a horse, mentioned in the funeral sermon, also point to the fact that appreciation for him was expressed financially as well.²⁴ In addition, the sermon emphasizes Bertram's intelligence, good judgement, and "honest heart."²⁵ Additional writings from the period stress just how much the electoral couple valued him.²⁶

In addition, Füssel mentions that the elector attended the funeral "with a saddened heart"²⁷ and that on his deathbed, Bertram spoke of the electoral princess Anna as "Frau Anuschen, whom I considered a mother."²⁸ This remark should be seen in the context of the widespread tendency in the early modern period to view people with dwarfism as the (foster) children of devoted, caring rulers.²⁹ At fourteen, Bertram had already entered adolescence, but in the sermon he is described as "childlike" and repeatedly referred to as a boy.³⁰ In any case, the explicit emphasis on the personal bond between Justus Bertram and the electoral couple, which the funeral sermon demonstrates through numerous rhetorical examples, shows that contemporaries also regarded their relationship as special.

The emphasis placed on Bertram's attractive appearance represents a further rhetorical pattern found in the funeral sermon and contemporaneous texts about him:

[Bertram], who is no more than two feet tall, was very handsome and did not have many wrinkles on his face: his limbs were well-proportioned and shapely (unusual for such dwarfs).³¹

Contemporaries regarded Bertram's attractive appearance as one of his distinguishing features and described it as extraordinary. It certainly increased his chances of obtaining a good position, as physical characteristics such as height, attractiveness, and uniform body proportions were a prerequisite for little people to be employed by the court.³² Füssel notes that if people with dwarfism were born "perfect" and with "shapely limbs", they had a good chance of making a living ("eating their bread").³³ However, education and social integration were also decisive to their further careers, as was true of all court servants.³⁴ Hence, even if Bertram had been employed by the elector because of his physical attractiveness, that feature alone did not explain the close personal bond or the goodwill he was shown; this, according to written sources, was mainly due to his good character.

The Statues as Sights at the Berlin Armoury

In view of Justus Bertram's close ties to the court, it is unlikely that the statue depicting him was initially created as a curiosity for collectors. Rather, the main purpose seems to have been the memoria of a highly regarded person, as with effigies of high-ranking figures (though without honouring Bertram as their equal) [■ Wax]. The statue was mentioned for the first time seven

23 See Cernitius 1626, p. 99, and Müller/Küster 1756, vol. 3, cols. 541–2.

24 See Füssel 1619, fol. 17r, as well as fols. 5v–6r. This was not at all unusual for court dwarfs. For Morgante's gifts, pay, landholdings, etc., see Ghadessi 2018, p. 77.

25 Füssel 1619, fols. 17r–18v.

26 See Praetorius 1666, pp. 355–66, here p. 356; also Misander 1698, pp. 100–1.



5 | Anonymous, *The Giant Anton Frank with the Dwarf Thomele*, late sixteenth century, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

27 Füssel 1619, fol. 6v.

28 *Ibid.*, fols. 18v–19r.

29 See Seemann 2018, p. 69, and Schneider 2020a, esp. pp. 6, 18–21, 28. On childhood and emotion, see Jarzebowski 2018, esp. the introduction, pp. 25–36, which discusses differences to current ideas.

30 See Füssel 1619, fols. 15r–v, 18r, and *passim*. For the history of childhood, see Ariès 1962 and Weber–Kellermann 1989.

31 Praetorius 1666, p. 356, and Misander 1698, pp. 100–1.

32 For a discussion of Renaissance ideas about the body, see Broomhall 2010, esp. pp. 90–4. Ghadessi and Seemann mention various sources in which princes are said to place particular emphasis on the “bodily proportions” of their “court dwarfs”, see Ghadessi 2011, p. 267, and Seemann 2018, pp. 72–4. Petrat points out that “attractive dwarfs”, in particular, were selected for court service, see Petrat 1998, p. 60.

33 Füssel 1619, fols. 15v–16r.

34 See Seemann 2018, p. 80.



6 | The collection of Ferdinand Cospi (r.) with the little person Sebastiano Biavati, illustration from Lorenzo Legati, *Museo Cospiano*, 1676.

years after the death of the elector Johann Sigismund, who passed away in December 1619, shortly after Bertram. In the history of the House of Hohenzollern printed in 1626, Johannes Cernitius reports on Bertram and his close relationship with the elector, noting that a statue and an image of him (*simulacrum ac effigies*) had survived.³⁵ It is unknown whether this means that there were in fact two artworks, both produced for Bertram’s funeral; wooden figures adorned the catafalques (raised biers) in Catholic funeral services, for example, and were part of processions featuring representations of saints and popular figures.³⁶ It is not documented to what extent such event-related statues played a role in funerals under Johann Sigismund, but we do know that similar figures were used in early modern funerals in Brandenburg-Prussia [■ Wax]. Another possibility is that the wooden statue (and a painted portrait?) were made during Bertram’s lifetime.

Later accounts state that around 1665, the statue of Justus Bertram was stored in the hall of the Marstall (i.e. in the new armoury), where it stood out among the many marvellous and valuable objects.³⁷ During a fire in the old armoury, many of these objects were damaged or destroyed.³⁸ According to historical accounts,³⁹ the statue of Justus Bertram had also been “singed”; however, it was evidently such an important attraction (and the damage so slight) that it was displayed in the new armoury in the Marstall, which was completed in 1670 [◆ Intact and Damaged].⁴⁰ One reason for exhibiting the figure in the elector’s collection of arms and militaria may have been that Bertram was a member of his entourage – though this does not explain the presence of the second figure of a woman. Because neither statue has survived, we must draw on written sources for descriptions of their appearance. A travel report from 1694 lists the statues among the exhibits in

the armoury: “Two dwarves, namely Jost und his sister, both life-size, in Dutch dress”.⁴¹ These figures were “carved from wood” and stood in an elevated position on a table at the end of a long gallery.⁴² They were more or less life-size – the estimates in the sources range from three spans (about 60 cm) to just under one cubit (about 114 cm). The subjects must have been clearly recognizable as people with dwarfism, since all the visitors describe them that way. Their Dutch clothing (figs. 7 and 8) was worn at many European courts in the seventeenth century.⁴³

The upper floor of the armoury had three galleries, and the statues apparently stood at the end of the central one. In this exhibition space, known as the “corridor”, there were many tables displaying weapons from various countries. Some had been captured, others presented as gifts. Among them were not only “Turkish arrows”, “Indian swords”, and numerous sabres, daggers, and pistols, but also timpani, other military equipment, and Friedrich Wilhelm’s personal weapons and regimental staff, as well as the electoral sceptre and swords.⁴⁴

Each of the three galleries in the armoury had its own thematic programme, based on the court’s military equipment.⁴⁵ However, the spatial presentation of the weaponry was interspersed with various curiosities and rare objects. At the entrance, visitors were greeted by a “large white stuffed horse” that carried a rider in a “Roman habit”. The rooms contained different specimens of exotic and domestic animals, a large number of artworks such as paintings and statues, and additional curiosities.⁴⁶ The first room in the Chamber of Art and Naturalia [■Cupid] presented a similar combination of objects from the various sections of the collection devoted to artefacts and natural objects. During the reorganization of the Chamber of Art and Naturalia under Elector Friedrich III, which began in 1688, some of the objects in the armoury were transferred to the *Kunstkammer* in order to centralize the collections [●1685/1688].⁴⁷ However, in the period around 1700, both institutions still followed a universal collection concept. The armoury in the Marstall existed alongside the Chamber of Art and Naturalia and the Cabinet of Antiquities and Medals in the Berlin Palace. Together with the library in the Apothecary Wing, they formed an ensemble of knowledge that reflected the elector’s passion for collecting.⁴⁸

From the Armoury to the *Kunstkammer*: Greater Appreciation or a Decline in Status?

It is not documented when and why the two wooden statues were transferred to the *Kunstkammer*. As late as 1706, they were still in the armoury,⁴⁹ but from 1718 on, the armoury was reorganized and a new inventory was drawn up, since it was “in the greatest disarray”.⁵⁰ The figures were probably moved to the *Kunstkammer* in the course of this reorganization, as indicated by the fact that during the reign of Friedrich Wilhelm I, visitors already described them as exhibits there [●Around 1740].⁵¹

In 1741 Johann Andreas Silbermann, one of the visitors to the *Kunstkammer*, noted in his travel diary: “Under a large mirror stood two dwarfs, a man and woman, neither of them three spans tall”. The two small statues apparently looked so lifelike that he mistook them for human specimens: “They are stuffed and wear their own clothes.” The explanation Silbermann was given on his tour of the collection seems to have reinforced his idea that the wooden statues were indeed preserved human bodies: “It is said they were married and lived around forty or fifty years ago,

35 Cernitius 1626, p. 99: “Habebat enim in deliciis suis Nanum quendam, nomine Justus Bertramum, cujus simulacrum ac effigies hodie adhuc asservatur...”

36 See Teixidó i Camí/Chicharro Santamera 2013, esp. pp. 16–19.

37 See Müller/Küster 1737, vol. 1, p. 291. On the statues and the historical figure of Justus Bertram, see also Müller/Küster 1756, vol. 3, cols. 541–52.

38 Neither of the statues is mentioned in an armoury register listing only the objects destroyed by the fire; see *GStA*, HA Rep. 36 Nr. 2053: Acta der Geheimen Kanzlei betreffend die Rüstkammer.

39 See Müller/Küster 1756, vol. 3, col. 541; see Ledebur 1833b, here p. 197–8.

40 See Müller/Küster 1756, vol. 3, col. 541.

41 Kohfeldt 1905, p. 46.

42 Hagelstange 1905, p. 211.

43 See Köhler 1925 and Pietsch 2012.

44 See the descriptions in Hagelstange 1905, pp. 209–11; and Kohfeldt 1905, p. 45.

45 On the history of the armoury, see Ledebur 1833b.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 45.

47 See *Eingangsbuch* 1688/1692b, fol. 17r–v.

48 See Fischbacher 2018 and Stört 2022.

49 See Hagelstange 1905, p. 211.

50 For more on this topic, see Anordnung zur Erstellung des Inventariums in *GStA*, HA Rep. 36 Nr. 2053: Acta der Geheimen Kanzlei betreffend die Rüstkammer, unpag. For the inventory, see also Ledebur 1833b, pp. 208–16.

51 See, for example, Anonymus B, fol. 1v.

7 | Child in Dutch costume (French variant). Cornelis de Vos, *Portrait of Frans Vekemans*, 1625, Museum Mayer van den Bergh, Antwerp.



but had no children.”⁵² It is not known whether their lifelike appearance was due to their clothing, the artistic execution, or the materials used.

One striking aspect of this description is that the narrative about the two figures had apparently changed significantly. The information about the historical persons was missing, though it is unclear whether it was deliberately suppressed or more accurate knowledge was lacking. Silbermann, for example, dates the lives of the two small people to the period fifty years earlier, although Bertram in fact lived some 120 years before him. Other visitors to the *Kunstammer* “anonymize”



8 | Child in Dutch costume. Cornelis de Vos, *Elisabeth (or Cornelia) Vekemans as a Young Girl*, 1625, Museum Mayer van den Bergh, Antwerp.

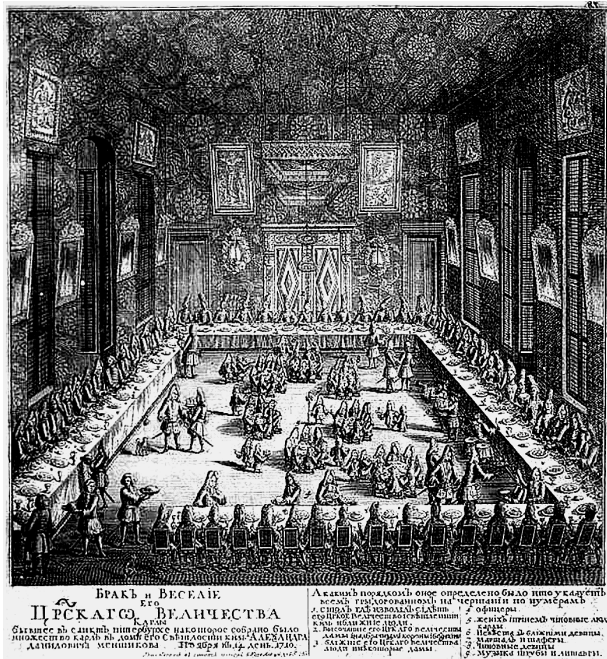
the statues, which shows that they perceived them differently than did visitors to the armoury. For instance, the anonymous *Beschreibung der in der Königlichen Preuß. Residenz Berlin befindlichen Kunst- und Rüst-Cammer* mentions “a set of twins one cubit tall”.⁵³ Another visitor notes the size and age of the small subjects, adopting an almost scientific tone:

Two dwarfs of more or less the same size. The male is forty, the woman, thirty-six. They were married, but had no children. The male broke his neck on a trip to Danzig under Elector Johann Sigismundo.⁵⁴

52 Silbermann 1741, p. 36.
53 Anonymus A, fol. 37r.
54 Anonymus B, fol. 1v.

In this passage, Bertram’s ties to the elector are once again brought up, but the other details do not match his story, nor is his name mentioned. The two little people had not previously been described as married, and the information about their age is incorrect. Furthermore, the short description of the accident uses dehumanizing language.

After the two wooden statues were transferred from the armoury to the *Kunstammer*, their public perception changed within just a few decades. In order to explain their presence in the collection, writers mainly cite their special typological features as representations of people with dwarfism. Designations such as “Männchen” (little man) and “Weibchen” (little woman), as well as references to their size, reveal the objectifying gaze of contemporaries. Guided tours may even have deliberately created the impression that the statues were human specimens. It was common knowledge



9 | Alexey Zubov, *The Wedding of the Dwarf Yakim Volkov on 14 November 1710 in Prince Menshikov’s Palace in St. Petersburg, 1711.*

in the period that people with dwarfism sometimes entered into (forced) marriages at European courts, and visitors’ descriptions evidently refer to this practice. The so-called “Dwarf Wedding” at the court of the Russian emperor Peter I in 1710 was known throughout Europe and may have inspired the change of narrative for the wooden statues in Berlin (fig. 9).⁵⁵ The reclassification of the objects is mainly attributable to changed scientific views in the mid-eighteenth century and to attempts to measure and classify people with dwarfism.⁵⁶ Just when they were playing a less important role as servants at princely courts, their medical classification as extraordinary natural phenomena was attracting greater attention.⁵⁷ As a result, the wooden figures in the *Kunstammer* no longer served as representations of individual human beings, but instead came to epitomize little people in general.

In the course of the eighteenth century, the typological classification of the statues was at least partially reversed. When describing the *Kunstammer* in 1756, Georg Gottfried Küster initially adopted the view that the two little people had allegedly been married but had not had any children.⁵⁸ However, in his appendix, under the heading “Zusätze und Verbesserungen” (“Additions and Improvements”), it becomes clear that he was in fact better informed. On the basis of the funeral sermon for Justus Bertram, he corrected the age and size of one statue while also mentioning Bertram’s sister.⁵⁹

In the following period, based on the well-known funeral sermon, several works on Prussian history describe the historical figure of Justus Bertram in his role as a close servant to the elector – though mostly in a pejorative manner. As one writer notes, “Of course, the goodwill shown to this small man was probably a bit exaggerated.”⁶⁰

In the early nineteenth century, the two wooden figures continued to be displayed in the *Kunstammer* as testimonies to their era.⁶¹ In the work *Wanderung durch die Königl. Kunstammer* (1833), Leopold von Ledebur, the administrator at the time, writes:

This *Kunstammer* has nothing to show of Joachim Friedrich, under whom it was first mentioned. On the other hand, a few objects still recall his son Johann Sigismund, including the wooden figures of a male and a female dwarf, true to nature and wearing their own clothing⁶²

When describing the statues, Ledebur provides the historically known facts about the lives of the two little people while also noting that their clothing was so badly damaged by moths that the statues “had to be set aside for the time being”.⁶³ Nevertheless, in 1844, he includes them under “Historische Merkwürdigkeiten des Vaterlandes” (“Historical Curiosities of the Fatherland”) in his *Leitfaden für die Königliche Kunstammer und das Ethnographische Cabinet*.⁶⁴ Afterwards all trace of them was lost. The surviving inventory books from the Hohenzollern Museum in Monbijou Palace contain no reference to the two wooden figures, although numerous *Kunstammer* objects documenting Prussian history [■ Shattered Die, ■ Wax] were entered into these records.⁶⁵ It could be that, like many other objects not considered sufficiently valuable, they were removed from the collection when the Hohenzollern Museum was founded.⁶⁶ In his 1884 cultural history of Berlin, titled *Renaissance und Rococo*, Oskar Schwebel describes them as former *Kunstammer* objects that captured the spirit of the age of Elector Johann Sigismund. This work, which draws on publications by Ledebur, also paints the picture of a long-gone institution.⁶⁷ Like the *Kunstammer* itself, the statues were by then a mere memory.

As they passed through the electoral and royal collections, the two wooden statues were interpreted in different ways. From objects of memoria that commemorated historical persons, they eventually evolved into curiosa and were then re-historicized. In the end, they were not even important enough as historical testimonies to their age to remain in the collections. Not only do such transitional moments bring into view the object biographies of the statues, they produce these biographies in the first place. At the same time, with the disappearance of the two objects from the collection, their history temporarily came to an end and knowledge of the biographies of the diminutive Justus Bertram and his sister was lost.⁶⁸ Despite the large gaps in the transmitted record, it is particularly worthwhile to study these nearly forgotten objects. As the specific case of the two wooden statues shows, in addition to memorializing historical figures who are unknown today, they can shed light on largely overlooked trends in the evaluation of historical modes of perception.

Translated by Adam Blauhut

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- 55 Petrat even speaks of “breeding experiments” with people of short stature. See Petrat 1998, pp. 57–60; and Seemann 2021, pp. 288–308.
- 56 See Seemann 2018, p. 62.
- 57 See Petrat 1998, pp. 62–3.
- 58 See Küster 1756, p. 19.
- 59 See *ibid.*, cols. 541–2.
- 60 Pauli 1762, p. 584; see also Buchholtz 1767, p. 577.
- 61 Henry 1805, p. 9: “Dwarfs from the Court of the Elector Johann Sigismund”.
- 62 Ledebur 1833a, p. 20.
- 63 *Ibid.*
- 64 Ledebur 1844, p. 101.
- 65 See SP5G Historisches Inventar 833–836 [1876/77], Hohenzollern-Museum.
- 66 On the history of the Hohenzollern-Museum, see Kemper 2005, and esp. pp. 294–9 on the inventories.
- 67 See Schwebel 1884, p. 484. Streckfuß also mentions Justus Bertram in his history of Berlin, see Streckfuß 1864, p. 143.
- 68 However, Justus Bertram is also mentioned in a collection of letters on the life of the elector Johann Sigismund, Gautschi 2005, p. 419.