

Workshop series "Recontextualising Bismarck"

Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg - Ministry of Culture and Media, Department for Museums

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„What makes the monument so difficult? Examples for dealing with colonial heritage and ideas for the Bismarck monument in the Alte Elbpark“

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The Monument of the German-Togolese Friendship in Baguida, Togo

1984: inauguration of 2 monuments in the context of the centenary of German colonialism in Togo (1884-1984):



Togoville: place of origin of the native people who signed the protectorate treaty. It also inspired the name of the colony Togo



Baguida: place of signature of the protectorate treaty on 5.7.1884. Capital of the colony until 1893.

Monument of the German togolese friendship of Baguida

- Inaugurated on July 4, 1984 as part of the celebration of the centenary of the German colonial presence in Togo.
- Built by the eminent sculptor Paul Ahyi
- Composed of a pedestal on which stand two women: one of African appearance with a flat nose and the other European with a pointy nose
- Behind the couple, there are two pillars that could represent the Togolese and German companies supporting the two women

Symbolic of the Monument

The choice of the sculpted women is about the representation of the woman in the society:

- the cultural identity of her people,
- educator of the family and society,
- The meaning of the appeasement of tensions (tenderness, love)
- therefore a symbol of reconciliation



Friendship Monument ?

Remarks:

- The description of the monument is consistent with its name
- The name Friendship suggests that the German-Togolese past has been cleared up
- thus materialized by the monument which would symbolize the reconciliation and the friendship between the Togolese and German people

Was it a really ? Did the idea come from the population itself?

Why a monument?

- In fact, the signing of the protectorate treaty on July 5, 1884 on the coast of Baguida between the representative of King Mlappa of Togoville and the German consul Nachtigal, representative of the German Empire, was the start of the progressive occupation of the territory from the coast which was to be called Togoland, then Togo.
- Following the First World War in 1914, the German Empire lost its colony which was placed under French mandate until 1960, when Togo obtained its political independence.
- Although the relationship between independent Togo and the former German colonial power has changed, the material and immaterial traces have always brought back memories of this past.
- The year 1984 was an opportunity for the Togolese and German authorities to look back at their common history.
- Building of a monument in Baguida, the first capital of the German Togo colony was decided
- The idea of building a monument to commemorate this past came from the Togolese authorities to materialize this common past

Why the name: "German-Togolese Friendship"?

The attribution of the name Monument of the German-Togolese Friendship comes from the following motivations:

- A part of the Togolese is convinced that the the protectorate of July 5, 1884 sealed a friendship ... although the historical facts show the contrary

- The memory of the G-T past in Togo and political issues led the political authorities to give an impulse to the economic cooperation at the expense of the historical aspect of the celebration.
- The frame and the date were propitious to sign agreements and to reinforce the relations especially economic and diplomatic between Togo and Germany

Proof:

In his speech: Franz Josef Strauß, head of the German delegation did not mention memorial events, monuments and the like, but rather the opening of the national archives, the new harbour wall, the remission of debts, i.e. aspects of tangible economic assistance or cooperation (cf. Thiele 2020)

- So the German side were not really concerned about the monument
- - Instrumentalization of the German colonial past for economic purposes, especially by Franz Josef Strauß
- - the event was the high point of a political use of Germanophilia by the Togolese regime. (cf. Yigbe 2016)
- - the almost caricatural praising of colonization by the Togolese president Eyadéma (cf. Yigbe 2016)
- Celebrations of the event in Germany with Exhibitions in München and Bonn (Cf. Thiele 2020)
- - The monument of the GTF is very well known in the Togolese environment and has become a place of memory that symbolizes the German colonial past
- - also, a touristic attraction that recalls the presence of the German colonial power in Togo

Conclusion

- The monument symbolizes the 'German-Togolese historical reality', but the name that it carries betrays this reality and leads to its instrumentalization.
- It belongs to the most representative monument of the colonial heritage, because it refers to the common past of Germany and Togo.

But:

- - the political discourses around the monument do not easily allow to have a critical opinion about this past