

Program:

10:00 - 10:20

Welcome Notes & Introduction: (Achim von Oppen and Susan Arndt, Directors of the Bayreuth Academy of Advanced African Studies)

10:20 - 10:50

Input Presentation: Anton Wilhelm Amo – A Philosophy with no Fixed Abode? (Ottmar Ette, University of Potsdam)

11:00 - 12:15

Lecture with discussion: Transkulturelle Aufklärung. Anton Wilhelm Amos philosophische Ideen im Kontext Jakob E. Mabe, Free University Berlin, Chair: Susanne Lachenicht, Discussant: Peggy Piesche

12:15 - 13:00

Lunch (Catering in the BA)

01:00 - 01:40

Film with Discussion: Grabstätte Anton Wilhelm Amo (dir. by Mo Asumang und John Kantara, 2008), Chair: Achim von Oppen, Commentary: Joshua Kwesi Aikins

01:45 - 03:00

Panel Discussion: Anton Wilhelm Amo between Enlightenment and Slavery. Contexts, Visions and Memory (Joshua Kwesi Aikins, Nicola Lauré al Samarai, Jakob Mabe, Achim von Oppen, Peggy Piesche, Chair: Susan Arndt)

03:00 - 03:15

Coffee Break (Catering in the BA)

03:15 - 04:15

Plenary: Anton Wilhelm Amo's Vision is Now: Research Perspectives, Outputs and Impacts (Chair: Peggy Piesche)

Further artistic representation:

Play (Video): „Amo – eine dramatische Spurensuche“ („Tracing Amo“ Kitunga-Projekte, Münster, 2005.



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BAYREUTH ACADEMY:

Friday, November 22nd 2013

Anton Wilhelm Amo
(1703-1750s)

Visions between
Slavery and
Enlightenment,
between Europe and
Africa

Anton Wilhelm Amo (1703-1750s)

Visions between Slavery and Enlightenment, between Europe and Africa

Organised by **Sub-Projekt 4:
Concepts of Future in Mediaspaces**

(Susan Arndt and Peggy Piesche)

Abstract:

Do you know Germany's first Black philosopher? He contributed tremendously to the findings of the German and European Enlightenment and yet it is little known about his life and work. His name is Anton Wilhelm Amo and he is also known as „Antonius Guilielmus Amo Afer ab Aximo in Guinea". Who was Anton Wilhelm Amo?

Born in Ghana around 1700, the man we know as Anton Wilhelm Amo was captured and enslaved as a little child. It was Herzog Anton Ulrich who bought and renamed him offering him what was a very rare option for a Black person (enslaved at that) at that time in Europe: education, even higher education. Anton Wilhelm Amo studied philosophy and law in Halle. In 1729, he wrote his disputation about the legal status of Blacks in Europe – a document that has gone lost under unclear circumstances –, gaining his Magister in philosophy in 1730. A few years later, in 1734, Anton Wilhelm Amo wrote his doctorate-thesis titled *De humanae mentis apatheia* in philosophy at the University of Wittenberg. For some years, Anton Wilhelm Amo worked as a private lecturer at the Universities of Halle, Wittenberg and Jena, influencing many of the relevant debates within philosophy of his time. Despite of his success and influence, his life in Germany was determined by the spirit of his time: slavery was blossoming and racism – its shield and sword – was becoming even more aggressive when Enlightenment struggled to put it on a scientific pedestal. Thus, although being a professor and philosopher, Anton Wilhelm Amo was living isolated and discriminated against within German academia and society.

Examples of the few preserved documents that bespeak the discrimination against his person are the racist satirical poems about Anton Wilhelm Amo by Johann Ernst Philippi, e.g. "Belustigende Poetische Schaubühne". Feeling even more at loss facing a close friend's death, he decided to 'return' to Ghana (though nobody can say for sure that this is where he originates from).

While he was living and dying withdrawn in Axim and Chama, Germany silenced the professor and philosopher Anton Wilhelm Amo. In the 1960s, under the influence of Kwame Nkrumah, East Germany's university in Halle initiated a remembrance. His work was translated from Latin to English, German and French and a sculpture was dedicated to him. However, this monument represents the racist mood that has accompanied his life and legacy as a philosopher. He is to be seen half-naked, together with an African woman – whoever this might be. It would be unthinkable to put Immanuel Kant on a dubious pedestal like this.

Looking back on Anton Wilhelm Amo's academic career, his legislation during the Enlightenment was enormous and estimable. Though what do people nowadays know about Anton Wilhelm Amo's work and contribution to Enlightenment? Even attempts to reconstruct his biography face many blankets. Public debates do not exist at all. Some initiatives have been generated by the Afro-German community, as e.g. the exhibition "Homestory Deutschland" (2006) or the movie "Grabstätte Anton Wilhelm Amo"/ "The Tombstone of Anton Wilhelm Amo" (2008) by Mo Asumang and John Kantara. As for academia, since 1976 some articles, and books dedicated to Anton Wilhelm Amo's life and work have been published. Recently, Yawovi Emmanuel Edeh (2002) and Jacob Emmanuel Mabe (2007) have published valuable monographs that revisit, reassess and contextualise Anton Wilhelm Amo's life and work with historic and philosophical commitment. Starting off from these two works, this workshop convened by the Bayreuth Academy of Advanced African Studies aims at discussing the state of the art in academia and public memory and at generating a research project/network that intensifies this debate.

Among the questions to be discussed and contextualised, are:

Who was Anton Wilhelm Amo?

What did he contribute to Enlightenment?

What are his visions of the future (e.g. relations between Europe and Africa), his notions of freedom and social justice, and of philosophy?

How are conventional perceptions of Enlightenment affected by the fact that one of its protagonists was of African origin, an enslaved person at that?

How is Anton Wilhelm Amo remembered in public memory and within academia?

How is Anton Wilhelm Amo seen and judged today?

Which images and visions do inform the various writers and activists that revisit the philosopher?

Are there similarities and differences between academic debates in Germany, Europe and worldwide? What can we learn about these perceptions and discourses since the Enlightenment?

Bibliography:

If you want to register and be provided with reading material please contact Susan Arndt or Peggy Piesche (susan.arndt@uni-bayreuth.de or peggy.piesche@uni-bayreuth.de).

For further information on research literature please visit <http://www.bayreuth-academy.uni-bayreuth.de/de/index.php>

Further Reading on Amo's Biography:

<http://amo.blogspot.de/2007/03/07/aw-amos-leben/>

<http://www.homestory-deutschland.de/biografien/anton-wilhelm-amo.html>

<http://www.antonamogesellschaft.de/>

<http://www.theamoproject.org/>

<http://www.jehsmith.com/philosophy/2012/09/anton-wilhelm-amo-c-1703-c1753-a-partial-bibliography.html>

Spottgedicht von Johann Ernst Philippi (Belustigende Poetische Schaubühne) <http://gdz.sub.uni-goettingen.de/dms/load/img/?PPN=PPN728154048>

Events:

http://www.vk.uni-halle.de/de/www/event_detail/?name=Anton-Wilhelm-Amo-Lectures+der+Martin-Luther-Universit%C3%A4t+Halle-Wittenberg&eid=19637&ds=1991-12-25&de=1970-01-01&m=1991-12&p=2&