

## An Obscure *Forschungsreisender*? Wilhelm Joest and the Shaping of Ethnology in Late 19th Century Germany

Carl Deußen

Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum, University of Amsterdam

2022

### POUR CITER CET ARTICLE

Deußen, Carl, 2022. "An Obscure *Forschungsreisender*? Wilhelm Joest and the Shaping of Ethnology in Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century Germany", in *Bérose - Encyclopédie internationale des histoires de l'anthropologie*, Paris.

URL Bérose : [article2719.html](https://www.berose.fr/article2719.html)

BEROSE Publisher: ISSN 2648-2770

© UMR9022 Héritages (CY Cergy Paris Université, CNRS, Ministère de la culture)/DIRI, Direction générale des patrimoines et de l'architecture du Ministère de la culture. (All rights reserved).

Your use of this article indicates your acceptance of the Bérose site ([www.berose.fr](http://www.berose.fr)) terms and conditions of use, available [here](#).

Visited on 19 April 2024 at 08:24

Publié dans le cadre du thème de recherche « Histoire de l'anthropologie et des ethnologies allemandes et autrichiennes », dirigé par Jean-Louis Georget (Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris), Hélène Ivanoff (Institut Frobenius, recherches en anthropologie culturelle, Francfort-sur-le-Main), Isabelle Kalinowski (CNRS, Laboratoire Pays germaniques UMR 8547, Ecole Normale Supérieure, Paris) Richard Kuba (Institut Frobenius, recherches en anthropologie culturelle, Francfort-sur-le-Main) et Céline Trautmann-Waller (université Sorbonne Nouvelle/IUF).

## Becoming an Ethnologist

Wilhelm Joest's entry into the young discipline of German ethnology [1] was due more to circumstance than to a clear plan or desire for a scientific career. He was born in 1852 into a wealthy family of Protestant sugar merchants who belonged to the bourgeois upper class in Cologne. Cologne, at the time part of Prussia, had emerged as the German "colonial capital of the West" and Wilhelm Joest's grandfather had moved the family's import-oriented sugar business there. [2] Joest grew up without his mother, who died when he was three years old, and later remarks in his diaries indicate that his childhood was troubled by his relationship to his father's 'housekeeper' Miss Wendt who came to replace his mother. [3] His closest relationship within this family constellation was with his sister Adele, who supported her brother throughout his life and later became the founder of the museum built in their names. After finishing high school, Joest enlisted voluntarily for the second Franco-Prussian war and his connection with and affection for the military remained strong throughout his life. After some years of perfunctory studies in Bonn, Heidelberg, and Berlin, Joest decided to go

on a grand tour, first to North Africa in 1874 and then through the Americas from 1876 to 1878.

Like many young German men of his class and generation, Joest grew up with an image of the world out there shaped by the writing of Enlightenment travellers such as Alexander von Humboldt, who is mentioned repeatedly throughout Joest's earliest surviving diary. It is, however, not only the adoration for Humboldt that determined Joest's route from Canada to Tierra del Fuego and back up to Brazil. Rather, Joest was following his family's business contacts throughout the Americas. The Joest family had made its fortune in the sugar trade and this background allowed young Wilhelm to travel without much financial or social risk. Of course, "sugar trade" is somewhat of a euphemism – the family's wealth was based on the exploitation of enslaved Africans on sugar plantations in Brazil and the Caribbean. It was on such plantations that Joest first witnessed the workings of racist imperialism that came to shape his own world view; unable to make sense of the violence he encountered, he developed the distinct mixture of desire and disgust for the racialised Other that characterised many of his White male imperial contemporaries. [4] Joest's diaries from the time show a pronounced interest in describing this alterity and trying to make sense of the contradictory imperial world he was inhabiting. However, Joest did not yet think of himself as an ethnographer. Rather, he still fitted the figure of the rich heir on a *Bildungsreise* to the origins of the sugar he was meant to trade in the future. Whenever he collected objects, it was mostly as souvenirs.

Joest returned to Europe in August of 1878, but instead of joining his father's company, he left for a second journey in February of 1879. As there are no surviving diaries for this period, it is unclear what exactly encouraged Joest to leave again so soon. However, Joest certainly spent some time in Berlin during these months and it seems that here he first met the most prominent figure in German ethnology at the time, Adolf Bastian (1826–1905). As director of the newly founded *Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde* (Royal Museum for Ethnology), Bastian was propagating a strategy of "salvage ethnography". To him, the artefacts created by "primitive peoples" contained all the cultural information they were unable to express in writing. As Bastian feared that colonial expansion was about to irreversibly destroy these material records, he attempted to enlist anyone willing to become a collector as a contributor to his museum. [5] This included Joest, who, despite his lack of formalised training, began to think of his travels as a vocation rather than a pastime. It seems that in the calling of salvage ethnography, Joest had found a purpose that would legitimise his absence from Europe and provide him with an opportunity to continue his life as a self-stylised explorer. In any case, Joest collected extensively during his next three-year journey through South, Southeast and Eastern Asia. While still in Moscow on his return trip through Siberia, he wrote a letter to Bastian in which he detailed both his perception of his earlier travels and his plans for a future in ethnology:

I have been roaming all possible and impossible kinds of countries for full 5 years now and the longer I travelled, the more I had to painfully realise what I was lacking: namely, the necessary education [Vorbildung]. I did

study chemistry for 4 terms, but I lost my spirit, or at least this is how I felt and since 1875 I have been travelling. Had I encountered anthropology and ethnology earlier on, I might have been able to be of service to this science in some way. Today I feel that I might have passed many a sight without giving it proper attention or without understanding it at all. Thus, the question is whether I should, in spite of my 30 years, make up for what I am lacking, meaning to sit down and study ethnology. I am completely independent and will hardly be able to bear Europe for long, but I imagine that I might be able to learn [mir eintrichtern] all that is necessary in 1 to 2 years; hence on my journey to the South Seas, which I am determined to go through with, I will be able to travel completely scientifically and finally leave behind the “globetrotter”. [6]

After his return, Joest soon moved to Berlin to study under Bastian. Despite his admitted lack of expertise, he converted the experiences of his last journey into two lectures on Seram, Formosa and the Ainu, which he delivered to the *Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte* (Society for Anthropology, Ethnology and Prehistory), thus starting his career as a professional ethnologist. These lectures, which were later published in the *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, read like common ethnographic case studies of the time: straight-forward descriptions of a people, their way of life and the place they inhabit. Joest combines geographic, linguistic, and ethnographic observations to paint a seemingly comprehensive picture of the people he discusses. However, these studies were in fact based solely on the few erratic glimpses Joest was able to gain during his short stays of often less than a week. Joest also used this period to sort his collection and donate parts of it strategically to museums, most importantly the *Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde* (Royal Museum for Ethnology) in Berlin. Among the things he had collected were his collections of Ainu artefacts and Celadon bowls from Seram that received most attention from colleagues. Joest also enrolled in Leipzig to write his doctoral thesis in linguistics on the Gorontalo language with Bastian as his supervisor, receiving his doctorate in 1883. [7] Donations, public lectures, and his thesis quickly earned Joest a scientific reputation. From November 1883 to June 1884, he travelled around Africa and even though he had to cancel his journey to the Pacific due to a malaria infection, when he returned to Berlin, he had firmly established himself as a member of the Berlin scientific community.

## The Methodology of the *Forschungsreisender*

Before turning to his precise standing within this community, it is necessary to examine Joest's second career: that of a travel writer. While travelling in South Asia, Joest had already written and published two essays on his visits to the maharaja of Patiala and the king of Burma. While working on his doctoral thesis, Joest also wrote *Von Japan nach Deutschland durch Sibirien* (From Japan to Germany through Siberia), [8] a travel report in which he detailed his return journey traversing Russia. Compared to his writing geared towards scientific audiences, these travel reports were written in an anecdotal style with Joest as the visible protagonist. Joest excelled in this format geared towards larger audiences which became his most influential writing. Yet even in his more casual style, Joest never fails to

assert his status as an experienced traveller and scientific author to lend credibility to his positions and distinguish himself from mere “globetrotters”. In this sense, Joest possessed an ability that Clifford Geertz has identified as central to successful ethnographic writing:

The ability of anthropologists to get us to take what they say seriously has less to do with either a factual look or an air of conceptual elegance than it has with their capacity to convince us that what they say is a result of their having actually penetrated (or, if you prefer, been penetrated by) another form of life, of having, one way or another, truly ‘been there.’ [9]

In Joest’s case, much of this authority stems from his self-stylisation as a “Forschungsreisender”, a term that could be translated as travelling scientist, scientific traveller, or traveller-scientist. Joest’s travel reports and ethnographic studies show some stylistic differences, but they share their source of legitimacy: the author’s first-hand experience gained in situ. Hence, they depend on each other structurally: Joest claims scientific authority because of his experience as a traveller and authority as a travel writer because of his standing within the scientific community. In his first and most influential monograph directed at a scientific audience, *Tätowiren, Narbenzeichnen und Körperbemalen* (Tattooing, Ornamental Scars and Bodypainting), Joest cultivates this position by rejecting the work of armchair scholars as lofty overinterpretation. To him, true understanding can only be gained by “having been there”:

That tattooing was almost universally recognised correctly by people who got to know it on the spot, and that here, too, it was only from the armchair that all kinds of mystical-symbolic sense (or nonsense) were interpreted into it, may be corroborated, apart from the views printed in the present book [...] by the statements of some other experts. [10]

On that basis, Joest does not formulate a strong theoretical position but rather uses the book as a collection of observations about body ornamentation. His task as an ethnographic writer was to accumulate these examples from across the globe and place them in a vaguely evolutionist framework in which they could be compared. In this sense, the book bears a strong resemblance to the universalist museum for which Joest collected artefacts and that I will address in a moment. To Joest, method – observation and collecting – was always more important than theoretical thoroughness. Presence and experience were sufficient to define the task of the *Forschungsreisender*.

In a way, this new figure represented an evolution of the earlier archetype of the soldier-explorer, and thus also follows the personal trajectory of Joest himself, who had started his adult life as a Prussian soldier and remained a reserve cavalry officer for all his life. In writing about German colonial officer Hermann von Wissmann (1853–1905), he makes this connection explicit:

It is precisely the officer’s preparatory training that makes him suitable as a scientist-traveller; he is accustomed to physical exertion, he has learned to obey and command, he can train his Negroes to be loyal, useful soldiers and, if necessary, he does not shy away from unrelenting discipline. [11]

While stressing this continuity between older military and newer ethnographic ideals of imperial masculinity, Joest also draws a clear distinction between the two: while the *Forschungsreisender* needs to be able to show “unrelenting discipline”, he is no longer a soldier but a scientist and hence needs to be able to refrain from lethal violence:

In such voyages of discovery and exploration, as we have said before, most of the success depends on the personality of the person in charge. It is no heroic deed to shoot down a few or a few hundred natives with excellent, long-range weapons! But all the greater is the scientist-traveller who, solely through the magic of his personality, which is mysterious to the black man, overcomes and defeats all justified and unjustified prejudices, all the obstacles that stand in his way, without resorting to lethal weaponry. [12]

There is a tension inherent to the persona of the *Forschungsreisender*: a genealogy of militarist imperial exploration as well as Humboldtian Enlightenment science. This ambiguity also defined Joest’s self-image and actions, which ranged from sympathy for misunderstood “savages” to genocidal fantasies regarding people and communities who refused to grant him access to their cultural practices and artefacts. However, both manners of traversing imperial space ultimately relied on the superiority of the observer, who alone decided, based on his experience, which cases called for the “magic of the [scientific] personality” and where “unrelenting discipline” was needed.

This ambiguity towards the violence of empire also reveals itself in Joest’s theoretical framework that accompanied his *Forschungsreisender* methodology and was broadly based on the tenets of his doctoral supervisor Bastian. [13] Among them were a distinction between *Naturvölker* (people of nature) and *Kulturvölker* (people of culture) and a broadly evolutionist relationship between the two, as well as the idea that there were elementary principles shared by all of humanity which, however, were more openly accessible in “less cultured” peoples. [14] Joest adopted Bastian’s global comparatist understanding of the task of the ethnographer. After “having been there”, the ethnographer’s unique intuitive insight needed to be compared with knowledge of other places and peoples. To achieve such an overarching perspective, a true ethnographer thus had to travel frequently and globally. In his work on his journey through South and Southeast Africa, *Um Afrika* (All Around Africa), Joest lays out this approach:

The main attraction of travel lies in the rapid change of the impressions, in the immediate transition from one culture [Kulturleben] to another, or from high culture to barbarism and vice versa. Human beings, with their customs and beliefs, their language and particularly their appearance, are the product of their geographic environment and the longer the foreign observer hurries from one part of the world to another or sees inhabitants of different geographical provinces within the same continent, the more he will learn to recognise the inevitable cultural differences [Kulturunterschied] between peoples according to their natural surroundings and the better he will understand the causal link [Ursächlichkeit] between culture and environment; the clearer the contrasts will become to him; the greater, in a word, will be his pleasure in

travelling. [15]

The quote shows the typical Bastianian combination of a universalist understanding of humanity and an environmental determinism as an explanation for cultural difference [16]. As authentic cultural insight could only be gained in situ, the consequence of this broad perspective was a need for global travel: the knowledge about the causality underlying this determinism could only be gained on the road.

This theoretical outlook fitted Joest's desire to travel and his self-fashioning as a *Forschungsreisender*. And it also helped him integrate his racial worldview with the more liberal tendencies of German ethnology. While this theoretical foundation stood in opposition to cruder biologicistic racisms, it still allowed for a hierarchical understanding of different races determined by their environment. Thus, while Joest was at times willing to highlight the cultural commonalities between European and non-European societies, in the end they remained firmly divided. This theoretical flexibility in Joest's writing may be best understood as what Ann Laura Stoler has termed "colonial common sense": an intentionally unspecific racialised view of the world that could be modified according to the outcome required. [17] In the end, what determined both Bastian's and Joest's position was not their protean characterisation of different *Natur-* and *Kulturvölker*, but their positing of their positionality as White male observers as the source of their scientific legitimacy and authority.

## Joest as Ethnographic Collector

Central to Joest's career was the collection, donation, and exhibition of non-European artefacts. The function of objects within Joest's overall theoretical outlook was closely linked to his understanding of first-hand experience. The auratic quality of material artefacts positioned them as proof of experience: their presence within Joest's collection acted as the extension of his presence in the foreign territories he was writing about. The objects' reality effect grounded his writing and, vice versa, his writing transformed objects into signifiers for greater cultural contexts. Joest was not describing his collected objects systematically, but rather on a case-by-case basis if he found them especially "characteristic". Due to his resources and global reach, Joest ended up collecting more than 5000 objects which remain today in almost all major ethnographic museums in Germany, with the majority held in Berlin and Cologne and some even outside of Germany in Leiden and Copenhagen. In his collecting tactics, Joest relied above all on his status as a White man in an imperial space and on his extensive financial resources to acquire objects. He bought many of them on markets or from local dealers who had specialised in meeting the European appetite for non-European artefacts. A second source was direct barter with indigenous peoples, for which Joest used materials like cloth and tobacco, but also alcohol, despite his clear understanding of its devastating effect on the communities he was collecting from. This shows his general mindset when it came to the acquisition of ethnographic material: he would choose the path of least resistance, but in the end his goal was to get what he wanted, and if this required



violence, he was willing to use it. Thus, while most of his collection was not taken through direct force – but certainly under the influence of the general indirect force of empire – there are various examples in his collection of objects he did steal or plunder. In the end, Joest cared most about having something to show for his efforts in reaching the colonial periphery; in cases of conflicting interests, Joest always prioritised his own collection.



Fig. 1.

The salon in Joest's Berlin flat

©Rautenstrauch Family

The close connection between collecting and Joest's personal desires becomes apparent when shifting the focus to his uses of objects once he had returned to the metropole. The smaller part of the artefacts remained in Joest's personal collection, and he used them to decorate his flat and later his purpose-built house that was described by many of his contemporaries as a small museum of its own. The careful arrangement of objects on the walls of all his rooms, in this figure the salon, appear slightly anachronistic, evoking the exhibitionary aesthetic of the "Wunderkammer". Joest seems to have been indifferent to transforming his private objects into scientific specimens and instead displayed them as souvenirs, with himself as the referent who gave the whole collection coherence and meaning. As Susan Stewart has argued, such a collection of souvenirs like Joest's home "is not a narrative of the object; it is a narrative of the possessor". [18]

Most of his collection, however, was donated directly to various museums. While these donations aimed at strengthening the institution of the museum and increasing his personal academic prestige, Joest also acted out of very concrete and material motives – he was trying to receive decorations. In late 19th-century Europe, and especially Imperial Germany, decorations played a central role as physical markers of prestige. And because ethnographic museums in Germany were often connected to earlier royal or princely collections, donations to them could be understood as a service to nobility and hence rewarded with a decoration. [19] This allowed museums to acquire collections without straining their limited financial resources and while also offering collectors something to show for their efforts – a feature that was of special importance to Joest, who lacked an academic position to prove his scholarly legitimacy. Joest's archive is filled with letters he wrote to museum directors,

bargaining about what number of ethnographic objects would be required for him to receive a decoration in exchange. And in his diary, Joest repeatedly notes the pride he felt when attending the meetings of the Berlin Society for Anthropology in full uniform, his chest adorned with the multitude of decorations he eventually received. This highlights the importance of ethnographic objects for Joest himself and his own career ambitions. But it is important to note that while Joest might have pursued these practices of self-fashioning with special ardour, they did not set him apart from other late 19th-century ethnographers, who also struggled, by ways of decorations, positions, and self-promotion, to gain as much social capital as possible within the nascent discipline of ethnology. [20]

## The Berlin Academic Circles

Joest's pursuit of prestige and social recognition equally shows itself in his tireless networking within Berlin's academic and royal circles. At the height of his career, Joest was well-connected within the Berlin ethnological scene. He held close professional relationships with Adolf Bastian and Rudolf Virchow (1821–1902) and personal friendships with Karl von den Steinen (1855–1929) and Albert Grünwedel (1856–1935). Another close associate was Adolf Bernhard Meyer (1840–1911) from the Dresden Museum of Ethnology, who had also studied languages on Sulawesi and acted as a second mentor for Joest during the work on his thesis. Joest also developed a close relationship with Eduard Schmeltz (1839–1909) in Leiden, who was editor of the *Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie* (International Archives of Ethnography), a publication that Joest supported financially and used to publish many of his later articles. Much of scientific life in Germany in the late 19th century focused on various societies and congresses at which Joest was an avid participant. As Angela Zimmerman [21] has pointed out, much of this scientific sociability was organised in the form of official excursions and drinking events and Joest's diaries support that view. [22] Indeed, names of other ethnologists get mentioned most often not connected to books or theories but encounters at the pub. While in Europe, Joest's days are mostly filled with writing and informal or formal social events within his Berlin circle of acquaintances. Joest's anecdotal writing was matched by a lifestyle of anecdotes exchanged at personal gatherings, both scientific and political.

However, despite his efforts, Joest never managed to receive the scientific acclaim he had wished for; while he was elected as a member of the Royal Museum of Ethnology's supervisory board, his ambiguous identity somewhere between scholar and travel writer, his disinterest in theory and his openly displayed career opportunism made him suspect to many of his academic contemporaries. [23] Still, this blend of roles and genres made Joest's writing very popular outside of academic circles. In a time when the market for travel writing was already saturated, his books nevertheless went through several editions and were also popular with the German aristocracy, whose audience halls Joest began to frequent from his early career onward. It was in relation to royalty that Joest truly excelled: he managed to frame his scientific pursuits in a way that got him invited to the receptions of German nobility and several times by the Kaiser himself. Whenever he published a new book, Joest



made sure to send copies to every nobleman who might be interested, and when he published his opus *Welt-Fahrten* (Journeys Around the World), a three-volume collection of his earlier writings, he even reached the highest possible recipient, as he notes in his diary: “We saw [His Majesty, the Kaiser] at Königgrätzerstraße, he stopped, shook my hand and said: Good day, Joest, many thanks for the books, I will take them with me on my next trip”. [24] This strategy to woo not other scholars but those in power seems to have paid off increasingly also in academic terms: in 1890, Joest received a titular, or institution-independent, professorship in ethnology at a time when these positions did not yet exist at German universities. He also used his political clout to lobby, together with Rudolf Virchow, for the creation of the *Museum für deutsche Volkstrachen* (Museum of German Folk Costumes, today the Museum Europäischer Kulturen), which opened in 1889. Here, Joest’s comparative outlook again becomes apparent: he was as interested in saving “vanishing cultures” in Germany as outside of Europe.

After some years of academic consolidation in Berlin, Joest left Europe for another collecting journey from 1889 to 1891, this time for Suriname, Guyana, and Venezuela. Again, he used the vast collection he acquired as donation material and wrote an ethnographic monograph about his observations. [25] After some further years in Berlin, in 1896 Joest embarked on his final journey, this time to the Pacific. Since his youth, Joest had been dreaming of going there and the collection he was going to assemble was to be the crowning piece of his career. Joest reached Sydney in January of 1897 and first went on a journey around New Zealand and South-Eastern Australia. He then boarded the merchant steamer “Titus” to visit the colony of German New Guinea. After a return to Sydney, he finally reached the Santa Cruz Islands where he intended to stay for a prolonged period to collect and do fieldwork. However, he was already in bad health when he arrived, and his condition further deteriorated in the following months. When the next steamer called at the islands, Joest was already a dying man. On November 25, 1897, he died aboard the steamer and was buried on the island of Ureparapara. After his death, his collection fell to his sister Adele Rautenstrauch, who lobbied for the creation of an ethnographic museum in their hometown of Cologne, using her own considerable financial resources to pay for its construction. Thus in 1906, the Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum was opened, displaying Joest’s former private collection as well as its own quickly expanding inventory.

## Conclusion: Joest and the History of German Ethnology

I want to close with some reflections on Joest’s role within the history of German ethnology. In all historiographic accounts of the academic developments in late 19th century Imperial Germany that have been published so far, Joest’s name does not appear. After his death, his work, which had never been at the centre of scholarly debate in the first place, quickly vanished. It is only because of his sister’s efforts for the foundation of the Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum that his name is still remembered today. And yet I would argue that engagement with Joest’s life and career can be insightful.

First, because it throws light onto the figure of the *Forschungsreisender* which connected the imperial field and the metropole at the pinnacle of the 19th-century collecting frenzy that is shaping contemporary debates about the history and future of the ethnographic museum. Joest's interpretation of this role highlights the tensions between the scientific ideals of "salvage ethnography" and the realities that shaped these often-violent processes of accumulation. Second, Joest's biography connects these global collecting journeys with the German academic sphere and shows the powers at play in the creation of this new discipline. Joest was not at the forefront of the intellectual debates of the time, showing only marginal interest in the differences between evolutionist and diffusionist thought. But it was popular writers like Joest who shaped the public image of ethnology beyond its academic circles, advocating for its core idea that there was something worth observing outside the bounds of Europe. And, importantly, it was also men like Joest who promoted the often-racist tenets of imperial science and thus contributed to the maintenance of this global system of exploitation.

Finally, his institutional and financial independence made Joest's writing at times surprisingly innovative. For example, in an essay dedicated to Bastian from 1896, Joest writes the following about a wooden statue from the Loango coast:

I believe that it also represents a fetish and has served as a fetish, but I am not in a position to bring even a shadow of evidence for this. And why should such a figure not once have been merely a work of art, a gimmick? [26]

At this time, almost all ethnologists would understand West African statues foremostly as religious 'fetish'-objects, a sentiment reflected in the first sentence. However, Joest's scepticism towards overinterpretation allowed him to see this piece rather as "a work of art", a perspective that would only gain ground in the ethnological mainstream in the early 20th century.

Another example is Joest's relationship to fieldwork. Towards the end of the 19th century, German ethnology was shifting its methodology from single person collecting journeys towards scientific expeditions that brought together experts from various fields. This meant longer periods of study, but also a dependence on fixed guarded research stations. [27] Joest, however, because of his rather individualist understanding of ethnography, argued for something much closer to the later Malinowskian model of fieldwork:

In order to really get to know these [local] conditions, one would have to live among the people for years, immerse oneself in their language, concepts and views – a rewarding and worthwhile task for every ethnographer. [28]

In fact, when Joest reached Santa Cruz in 1897, he planned to stay there for at least half a year, living in a trader's house on the outskirts of a local village. Joest fell sick before he had any chance to test this new form of being in the field he had envisioned and died before he could write about it. Given Joest's prior disinterest in theoretical writing, it is unlikely that he

would have developed any kind of coherent theory for this kind of fieldwork. But the episode shows that to understand the history of ethnology in Germany, it is not sufficient to look at the big names that have been passed on but also to focus on those figures at the margins – figures like Wilhelm Joest.

## Bibliography

- Bastian, Adolf. 1885. "Ueber Ethnologische Sammlungen." *Zeitschrift Für Ethnologie* 17: 38–42.
- Bechhaus-Gerst, Marianne, and Anne-Kathrin Horstmann, eds. 2013. *Köln Und Der Deutsche Kolonialismus - Eine Spurensuche*. Cologne: Böhlau.
- Buschmann, Rainer F. 2009. *Anthropology's Global Histories. The Ethnographic Frontier in German New Guinea, 1870-1935*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Deußen, Carl. 2023 (forthcoming). "'To Give Away My Collection for Free Would Be Nonsense' – Decorations and the Emergence of Ethnology in Imperial Germany." In *Material Culture in Transit - Theory and Practice*, edited by Zainabu Jallo. London: Routledge.
- Fischer, Manuela, Peter Bolz, and Susan Kamel, eds. 2007. *Adolf Bastian and His Universal Archive of Humanity: The Origins of German Anthropology*. Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1988. *Works and Lives. The Anthropologist as Author*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Joest, Wilhelm. 1882. *Aus Japan Nach Deutschland Durch Sibirien*. Köln: M. Dumont-Schauberg.
- Joest, Wilhelm. 1883. *Das Holontalo. Glossar Und Grammatische Skizze*. Berlin: A. Asher.
- Joest, Wilhelm. 1889. "Dr. Otto Finschs Samoafahrten. Reisen in Kaiser Wilhelms=Land Und Englisch=Neuguinea in Den Jahren 1884 Und 1885 an Bord Des Deutschen Dampfers Samoa." *Kölnische Zeitung*. March 11.
- Joest, Wilhelm. 1896. "Eine Holzfigur von Der Loango-Küste Und Ein Anito-Bild Aus Luzon." In *Festschrift Für Adolf Bastian Zu Seinem 70. Geburtstage*. Berlin: Verlag von Dietrich Reimer.
- Joest, Wilhelm. 1893. *Ethnographisches Und Verwandtes Aus Guayana*. Leiden: P. W. M. Trap.
- Joest, Wilhelm. 1887. *Tätowiren, Narbenzeichnen Und Körperbemalen: Ein Beitrag Zur Vergleichenden Ethnologie*. Berlin: A. Asher.
- Joest, Wilhelm. 1885. *Um Afrika*. Köln: M. Dumont-Schauberg.
- Köpping, Klaus-Peter. 2005 [1983]. *Adolf Bastian and the Psychic Unity of Mankind. The Foundations of Anthropology in Nineteenth Century Germany*. Münster: LIT.
- Penny, Glenn. 2002. *Objects of Culture: Ethnology and Ethnographic Museums in Imperial*

Germany. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Stewart, Susan. 1993. *On Longing. Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. Durham/London: Duke University Press.

Stoler, Ann Laura. 2009. *Along the Archival Grain. Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*. Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Stoler, Ann Laura. 2010. *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*. 2nd ed. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Stoler, Ann Laura. 1995. *Race and the Education of Desire. Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Young, Robert J. C. 1995. *Colonial Desire. Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race. Journal of Rural Studies*. Vol. 12. London/New York: Routledge.

Zimmerman, Angela. 2001. *Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

---

[1] I will use the term “ethnology” rather than “anthropology” in this text, following Joest’s own use of “Ethnologie” in contrast to “Anthropologie”, which in the German usage rather evokes connotations of “physical anthropology”, an undertaking in which Joest did not participate.

[2] For a broad overview of colonial Cologne, see Marianne Bechhaus-Gerst and Anne-Kathrin Horstmann, eds., *Köln Und Der Deutsche Kolonialismus - Eine Spurensuche* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2013).

[3] No documents survive from Wilhelm Joest’s childhood except for his high school reports, which paint him as a troubled, unruly boy who only later accommodated to the discipline of higher education.

[4] See, for example, Robert J. C. Young, *Colonial Desire. Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race, Journal of Rural Studies*, vol. 12 (London/New York: Routledge, 1995); Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire. Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995); Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

[5] Adolf Bastian, “Ueber Ethnologische Sammlungen,” *Zeitschrift Für Ethnologie* 17 (1885): 38–42.

[6] Letter from Joest to Bastian, 3 September 1881. All translations of Joest’s writing by the author.

[7] Wilhelm Joest, *Das Holontalo. Glossar Und Grammatische Skizze* (Berlin: A. Asher, 1883).

[8] Wilhelm Joest, *Aus Japan Nach Deutschland Durch Sibirien* (Köln: M. Dumont-Schauberg, 1882).

[9] Clifford Geertz, *Works and Lives. The Anthropologist as Author* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 4–5.

[10] Wilhelm Joest, *Tätowiren, Narbenzeichnen Und Körperbemalen: Ein Beitrag Zur Vergleichenden Ethnologie* (Berlin: A. Asher, 1887), 53.

[11] Taken from an undated fragment from Joest's personal archive held at the Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum.

[12] Wilhelm Joest, "Dr. Otto Finschs Samoafahrten. Reisen in Kaiser Wilhelms=Land Und Englisch=Neuguinea in Den Jahren 1884 Und 1885 an Bord Des Deutschen Dampfers „Samoa“,“ *Kölnische Zeitung*, March 11, 1889.

[13] See, for an explicit reference, Joest, *Tätowiren, Narbenzeichnen Und Körperbemalen: Ein Beitrag Zur Vergleichenden Ethnologie*, 5.

[14] For a more detailed discussion of Bastian's theories and agenda, see Manuela Fischer, Peter Bolz, and Susan Kamel, eds., *Adolf Bastian and His Universal Archive of Humanity: The Origins of German Anthropology* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2007).

[15] Wilhelm Joest, *Um Afrika* (Köln: M. Dumont-Schauberg, 1885), 196.

[16] For a discussion of Bastian's approach, see Klaus-Peter Köpping, *Adolf Bastian and the Psychic Unity of Mankind. The Foundations of Anthropology in Nineteenth Century Germany* (Münster: LIT, 2005 [1983]), 140.

[17] Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain. Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009).

[18] Susan Stewart, *On Longing. Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham/London: Duke University Press, 1993), 136.

[19] For an overview of this practice, see Rainer F. Buschmann, *Anthropology's Global Histories. The Ethnographic Frontier in German New Guinea, 1870–1935*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009; Glenn Penny, *Objects of Culture: Ethnology and Ethnographic Museums in Imperial Germany* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 65–66; Angela Zimmerman, *Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 168–69.

[20] For a more detailed analysis of Joest's relationship with decorations, see Carl Deußen, "To Give Away My Collection for Free Would Be Nonsense' – Decorations and the Emergence of Ethnology in Imperial Germany," in *Material Culture in Transit - Theory and Practice*, ed. Zainabu Jallo (London: Routledge, 2022).

[21] Also known as Andi Zimmermann.

[22] Zimmerman, *Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany*, 125–26.

[23] For example, Wilhelm von Bode, general director of Berlin's stately museum, in his memoirs calls him a "Christmas tree" in relation to his highly decorated appearance.

[24] Wilhelm Joest, Diary XXI, p. 119. The diaries remain unpublished and are held at the Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum.

[25] Wilhelm Joest, *Ethnographisches Und Verwandtes Aus Guayana* (Leiden: P. W. M. Trap, 1893).

[26] Wilhelm Joest, "Eine Holzfigur von Der Loango-Küste Und Ein Anito-Bild Aus Luzon," in *Festschrift Für Adolf Bastian Zu Seinem 70. Geburtstage* (Berlin: Verlag von Dietrich Reimer, 1896), 126.

[27] Buschmann, *Anthropology's Global Histories. The Ethnographic Frontier in German New Guinea, 1870-1935*.

[28] Joest, *Ethnographisches Und Verwandtes Aus Guayana*, 64.