

More on the Mysterious 'Kadi of Khartoum':

Richard Buchta and the Kadi of Khartoum

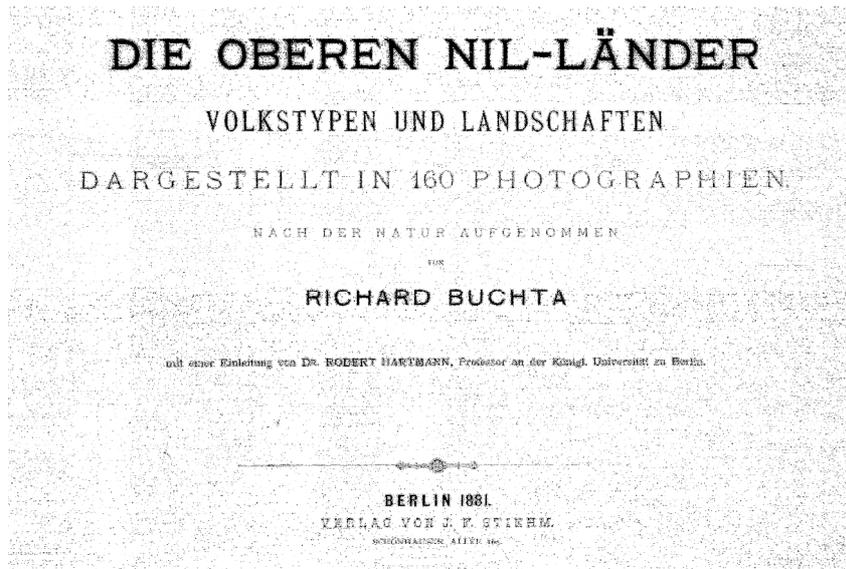
By Thomas Schmidinger (*Lecturer at the department for Political Science at the University of Vienna (Austria)*).

The pictures of the Austrian traveler Richard Buchta from Sudan, his lost publication and the debate in the SSA-Bulletin

According to the *Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliographie*, a bibliographic compendium that was published between 1875 and 1912, Richard Buchta was born on the 19th January 1845 in Radłów, a town in Galicia (Galizien), at that time part of the Habsburg Empire. Today Radłów is a small town in the south of Poland. Despite the fact that Galicia was one of the strongly Jewish inhabited regions of the Habsburg monarchy, there is no evidence that Buchta was Jewish. Since the thirteenth century Radłów was the residence of the bishop and Jews were prohibited from settling there. It was not until the nineteenth century that the first Jews arrived. Compared to other towns of Galicia the Jewish community in Radłów stayed small until its extermination by the Germans after 1939. Nonetheless, it is still interesting that Buchta seems to be predominately German speaking and not Polish. His name is definitely German and he also wrote in German and not in Polish, something that was more in common for the Jewish inhabitants of Galicia at that time, then for the Polish. His family background is uncertain and would need more research.

According to the *Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliographie*, he traveled to Egypt in the early 1870s and continued to the Egyptian Sudan until Equatoria. In 1877 he stayed there with Emin Pasha in Ladó. Emin Pasha, born as Isaak Eduard Schnitzer in a Jewish family in the Silesian town of Opole (German: Oppeln), was the governor of Equatoria and it seems that he supported Buchta in his travels around the region. Buchta traveled around the whole southern Sudan until the present Ugandan border and brought some of the earliest photographs from Sudan with him. When he returned to Europe he published a book with 160 photographs from Sudan: *Die Oberen Nil-Länder. Volkstypen und Landschaften. Dargestellt in 160 Photographien*.

The book was published with an introduction by Robert Hartmann, a professor at the University of Berlin and friend of Heinrich Barth. The picture "Der Kadi von Chartum" was published in this book as picture No. 10 and most probably the picture at the Boston Public Library comes from that book. It definitely is the same picture.



On the same page there is a picture of “Mussa-Bey” described as “Großscheich der Hadendawa”, which means the supreme Sheikh of the Hadendawa. The description of the “Kadi of Khartoum” does not mention a name. But I would disagree with Bushra Babiker Altayeb (SSA Bulletin Vol. 27/Nr. 3-4 2009). “Der Kadi von Chartum” definitely means “The Kadi of Khartoum” and not “The Kadi from Khartoum”. “The Kadi from Khartoum” would be “der Kadi aus Khartoum” and if Buchta wanted to say that this is “a Kadi from Khartoum” he would have written “Ein Kadi von...” or “Ein Kadi aus Chartum” and not “Der Kadi von Chartum”. That does not prove that the person on the picture really is Muhammad Khojali Hitayk, the last Qadi al-Umum al-Sudan of the Turkiyya-Period, but it shows that Buchta at least thought that this is *the* Kadi of Khartoum.

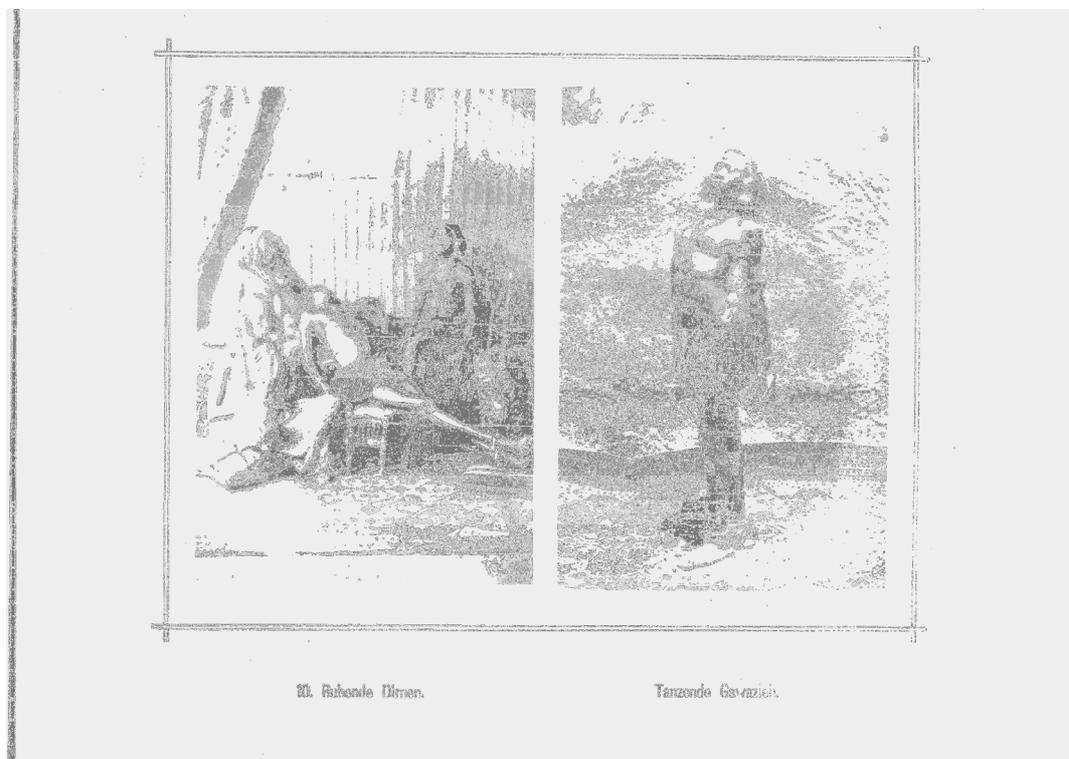


In Hartmann's introduction some of Buchta's pictures are described, but not the "Kadi von Chartoum". So the mystery is not solved in the book. Nevertheless the book is an impressive source not only for the 19th century Sudan, but also for the view of an Austrian traveler at that time on Sudan and the Sudanese. Hartmann's introduction is full of physical descriptions of what he calls "Nigritier" and other "races" in the sub-Saharan Africa. He seems to be fascinated by the bodies of the Sudanese, but we do not get any information about culture, language or society of the various tribes.

Also the photographs show little of the cultural environment of the portrayed tribes. Many pictures are classic anthropological portraits of that time who were taken frontal and side view. These pictures are not described by a name, but by an ethnic group, like picture #88, the "Niam-Niam-Neger". Only few pictures show landscapes or buildings, like the catholic mission for Central Africa in Khartoum.

When Pope Gregory XVI established the Apostolic Vicariate of Central Africa in 1846, the Austrian-Hungarian Emperor Francis Joseph I took over the patronage of the mission and many of the missionaries came from Austria as well. So Buchta's connection with the mission is self-evident. Maybe his picture is the only picture of the mission before its destruction during the Mahdiya-period.

Other pictures show Sudanese prostitutes in a way that could inspire the male orientalist fantasy. None of the pictures is contextualized. So there still would be a lot of mysteries to discover in his book.



In 1884 and 1888 Buchta published two further books with texts about his travels and the history of Sudan, but he does not describe the pictures from his earlier volume there.

According to the *Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliographie* Buchta worked as an artist for the Bavarian King Ludwig II after his return to Europe. With the money he earned from his art he returned once more to Egypt in 1885, where he visited Fayum. After the death of King Ludwig in 1886 Buchta he moved to Vienna, where he died on the 28th of July 1894.

Bibliography

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