Persia in Gottorf - towards a new interpretation of Friedrich III's pleasure house and gardens

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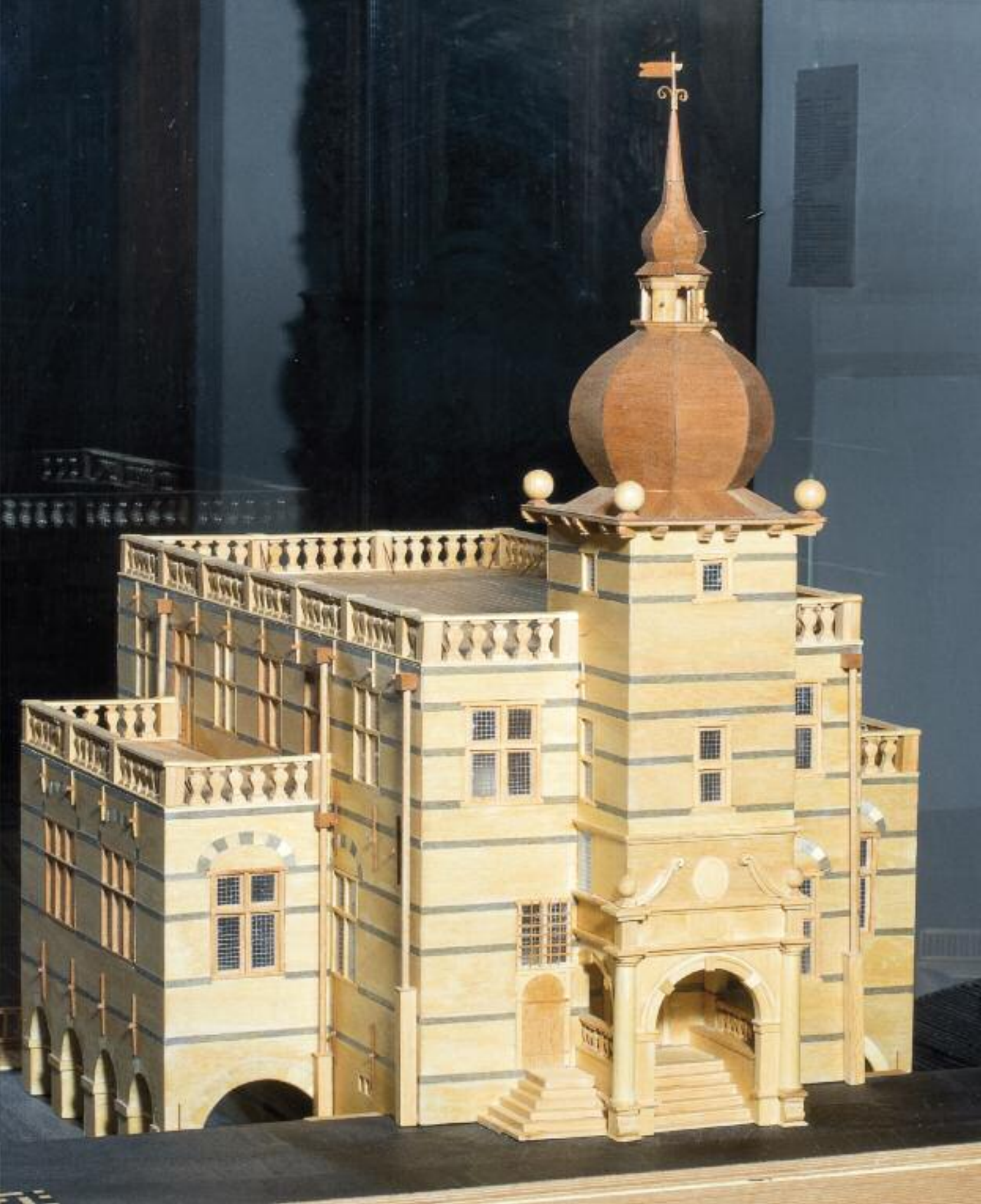

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PERSIA IN GOTTORF – TOWARDS A NEW INTERPRETATION OF FRIEDRICH III'S PLEASURE HOUSE AND GARDENS

In this paper I would like to concentrate on the question of whether we can consider the pleasure house in the gardens of Gottorf Castle as "Persian".[1] It was not until the early 18th century that the building was referred to in this way.[2] I would also like to investigate whether the gardens themselves include "Persian" motifs and if one could speak of an overall iconographic programme of the castle, the garden and the pleasure house, reflecting the socio-economic, cultural and political ambitions of Friedrich III of Schleswig-Holstein-Gottorf.

In 1633 Duke Friedrich III of Schleswig-Holstein-Gottorf (1597–1659) started to make plans to turn his duchy, especially the recently founded new town Friedrichstadt an der Eider, into a European centre of the silk trade with Persia.[3] Together with a rich merchant, Otto Brüggemann, the duke hoped to persuade Shah Safi I to grant him the monopoly on silk. The costly textiles would be transported to the duchy via the Volga River, Russia and the Baltic. The first mission in 1633 was a failure, but the second, larger one, that started in 1635, was a success, although there were many hindrances along the way. Adam Olearius (1599–1671)[4], secretary to the duke and later his court librarian and surveyor of the *Kunstkammer*, returned in 1639 with a Persian delegation, amongst them the scholar Hakwirdi, and a cargo of silk.[5] But ultimately, the silk trade between Persia and Schleswig proved to be impossible: the journey was too dangerous, and the Russian tsar was not very cooperative and levied heavy taxes. The most important reason, however, was that the Swedes, Dutch and Armenians already had full control of the silk trade with Persia.[6]

While Olearius was on his way to Persia, Friedrich III started to make plans to enlarge the gardens of Gottorf Castle with the so-called *Newe Werck*, the first terraced gardens north of the Alps. The surveyor of the work was the famous garden architect Johannes Clodius (1584–1600), born in Wolmirstedt, the third generation in a Lutheran refugee family from Antwerp. He had travelled extensively through the Netherlands, France, England and Spain, before working as an apprentice in Rome – in the Orti Farnesiani with their terraced gardens, and later on in Florence for the Capponi family – before he took over his father's position as chief gardener at Bückeburg Castle, in 1620. In 1625 Friedrich III appointed him chief gardener at Gottorf Castle.[7]

In 1639, the year that Olearius returned to Gottorf with the Persian delegation, a rectangular basin was constructed, the so-called *Herculesteich*, as well as a semi-circular parterre, divided into four parts, with an octagonal pavilion in the middle. It was for the *Herculesteich* that the sculptor Cornelis van Mander, grandson of Karel van Mander and the younger brother of court painter to the Danish King Karel van Mander III, created his best-known work, a huge statue in sandstone of Hercules slaying the Lernaean Hydra. Jets of water were designed to reach up to five metres in height (fig. 1). Four smaller fountains were constructed at the four corners. The statue is already shown on the map of Schleswig that Johannes Mejer made in 1641 and it is important to note that Hercules

Fig. 1 Cornelis van Mander: Remnants of the Hercules slaying the Lernaean Hydra, c. 1640, sandstone, originally c. 590 cm high, SHLM Schloss Gottorf, 1959/1327, 1328, 1337, 1338, 1343, 1357, 1371, 1378; 1986/1666; 1997/440, 441

is facing the castle and can thus be regarded as an *exemplum* to the duke.[8]

The Thirty Years' War interrupted the activities in Schleswig, but Friedrich III was able to continue his project after the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. From 1650 onward, the famous *Globus House* was built in the *Newe Werck*, probably in line with a design by Adam Olearius, who in 1647 had published his travel accounts *Offt Begehrte Rejsebeschreibung*, that were elaborated nine years later in his *Vermehrte Newe Beschreibung der Muscowitischen und Persianischen Reise*.[9] Next to the *Globus House* a *Pommeranzhaus* (orangery) was built as a counterpart, probably with an aviary for exotic birds. The semicircular wall that separated the upper and lower garden was topped with a wooden footbridge, from which one could overlook the *Herculesteich* and the parterre. The wall also featured niches with six gilded busts of the ancestors of Friedrich III (west) and six of his wife Maria Elisabeth of Saxony (east), an *Ahnengalerie*, reflecting the importance of the ducal family.[10]

Four smaller fountain basins were constructed in the four sections of the Globus garden, in c. 1653–54. Sandstone statues were placed here that, according to the inventory of 1708, represented the Four Ages of Man. What is interesting is that the fourth age was represented not by an old man, but by a philosopher in a wide cloak. The man had a book in his hand with a skull resting on top of it (fig. 2).[11]

The *Globus House* derives its name from the giant globe that was erected in the great hall of the pleasure house. The outside represented the earth, the inside the universe. Water was used to drive the bar that made the globe rotate every 24 hours.[12] It is not known if this ever functioned. There was room for eight to ten persons in the globe, that was given at his request to Tsar Peter the Great in 1713 and transferred to St. Petersburg. It should be noted that in the cellar, besides the machinery that had to rotate the globe, there was also a grotto, of which remnants of the decoration survive.

The great hall itself was decorated with small metal plates, on which baluster and flower decorations were painted in the Dutch style. In combination with the windows, these must have created a shimmering, exotic effect in the room. Next to the entrance, there were portraits of both Tycho Brahe and Isaac Newton. In the great hall there was a large portrait of Duke Frederik III, and some 40 paintings depicting landscapes, gardens, rare plants and animals, still lifes, and allegorical, mythological and Biblical scenes. The Hercules motif recurred in two of the paintings. In the stucco ceiling there

were square and oval fields with paintings, with indigenous and exotic birds, and putti surrounding the monograms of Friedrich III and his son Christian Albrecht.

From the great hall one could reach the balustrades running left and right along the building. The side wings with balustrades do not belong to the original building design, but were added halfway through the project when it became apparent that the great hall was too small to house the giant globe in a way that allowed it to be admired and studied from a suitable distance (fig. 3).[13]

The garden of Gottorf Castle was the first terraced garden north of the Alps and because of Clodius's background – he had worked in the Farnesian Gardens – comparisons are readily made with Italian renaissance gardens. But Olearius himself had seen Persian gardens and it is interesting therefore to compare the garden of Gottorf Castle with Persian examples of the period. The best-known types of Persian gardens are the *cha-*

Fig. 2 Cornelis van Mander or Zacharias Hübner: Remnants of The Fourth Age of Man/Philosopher, c. 1653–54, sandstone, 154 cm high, SHLM Schloss Gottorf, 1997/441

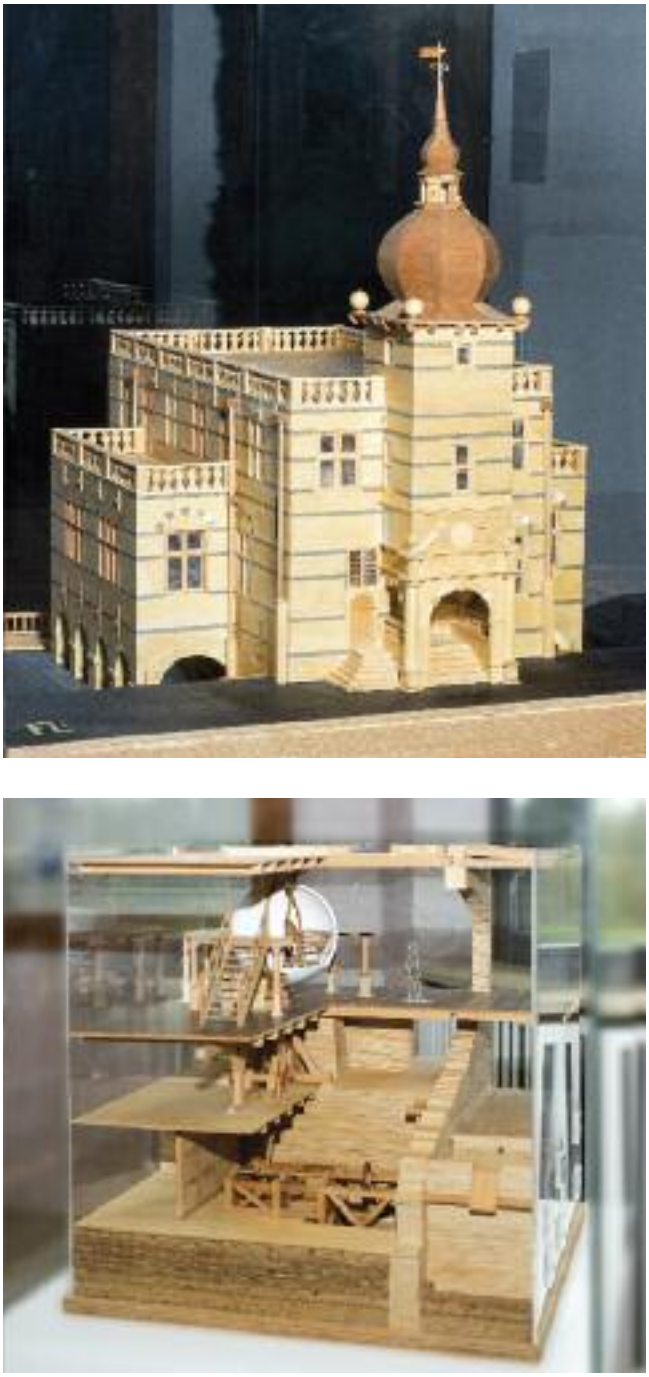

Fig. 3 Felix Lühning: Model of the Globus House (3a) and Reconstruction of the Globus House (section) (3b), SHLM Schloss Gottorf

harbagh and the *bagtakht*. The *chaharbagh* is derived from the four elements as known in Zoroastrism: sky, earth, water, plants. This type of garden is therefore divided into four parts. The *bagtakht* is the Persian terraced garden, situated against a hill, in which water (ponds of various sizes, fountains, cascades) is an important feature, also because of the different sounds the water makes. Apart from the main entrance, one can also enter these gardens from the sides, allowing for a variety of impressions. This element can be seen in Gottorf as well.[14]

The pleasure houses in these Persian gardens often had a pond in front of them, with a fountain to break the sunlight through the water. Many of the pleasure houses also had a deep cellar with a brook running through it, the *sardab* (*sar* means cool, and *ab* water) to keep the food and drinks cool. Adam Olearius's publication *Vermehrte Newe Beschreibung der Muscowitischen und Persianischen Reise* includes a map of the most important towns that the Holstein delegation visited. In Persia these were Ardebil, Soltanie, Saba, Quazwin, Kom, Kaschan and Isfahan. Two important buildings were the *Bagh-e-Fin* in Kashan, which had the oldest garden in Iran, finished in 1590, and the *Ali Quapu* in Isfahan. They were famous at the time of the Savafid rulers and they still are today.[15] One of the illustrations in Olearius's travel account shows members of his envoy walking the gardens of the *Bagh-e-Fin* in Kaschan (fig. 4).

Fig. 4 Representation of the Bagh-e-Fin in Kashan, c. 1639, from Olearius 1656, p. 494, SHLM Schloss Gottorf, 1949/171

The flat roof of the *Globus House* was a normal feature in Persia. One could go outside, during daytime to admire and discuss the gardens and at night to watch the stars and make astronomical observations. Kashan and Isfahan were the important places for astronomers in Persia, thanks to the very favourable atmospheric circumstances here. The terraced roof of the *Globus House* is reminiscent of that of the Ali Quapu, of which Olearius was the first person ever to give a detailed description.[16] The grotto under the *Globus House* is similar to the grotto under the pleasure house in Kaschan. In the garden itself the wooden footbridge is immediately noticeable, an element that was a common feature in Persian gardens.

What is completely absent in other Persian architecture and in Schleswig-Holstein architecture as well, however, is the onion-like spire on the tower, but Olearius and his men had seen these in Russia. For the craftsmen involved it turned out to be a new and challenging commission.[17]

The interior of the great hall was – as we noted before – decorated with metal plates, embellished with a flower motif, similar to Dutch tiles. Maybe this unusual decoration could be seen as the Gottorf counterpart of the banquet hall of Grand Vizier Sarü Tagge that Olearius describes, where the visitors could see themselves reflected in hundreds of large and small mirrors set into the walls and where the floral decorations must have been overwhelming.[18]

An even more interesting feature is the ceiling decoration in Gottorf Castle itself, discovered in the 1990s in one of the rooms that face the garden. The ceiling dates from the middle of the 17th century and features half figures, men and women, in European and "Persian" costumes. Two of them were identified by Heiko Schulze as Friedrich III and his wife.[19] The Persians are not lavish copies of oriental figures as these were

known at the time, but seem to have at least some individual traits. The most interesting figure is that of an old man with a beard and a turban (fig. 5).[20] The coat and turban differ from the illustrations in Olearius's publication. In Persia, in the 17th century, one could recognise poets and philosophers by this kind of clothing. This would mean that this Persian philosopher can be interpreted as the eastern counterpart of the statue of the fourth age of man in the garden, who, as we saw, was also represented by a philosopher. The motif of a meeting between an eastern wise man and an old western philosopher can be found on a perspective painting by Gabriel Engels (active 1607–1654), who is known to have been active for the Gottorf court (fig. 6).[21]

Friedrich III of Schleswig-Holstein-Gottorf had ambitions that do not differ very much from other Protestant rulers in northern Europe. He can be compared particularly with his uncle, Christian IV of Denmark (1568–1648), who saw himself – as I demonstrated some years ago in an article – as the new,

Fig. 5 Johannes Müller (?): Persian wise man/poet with beard and turban, ceiling decoration Gottorf Castle, c. 1650, SHLM Schloss Gottorf

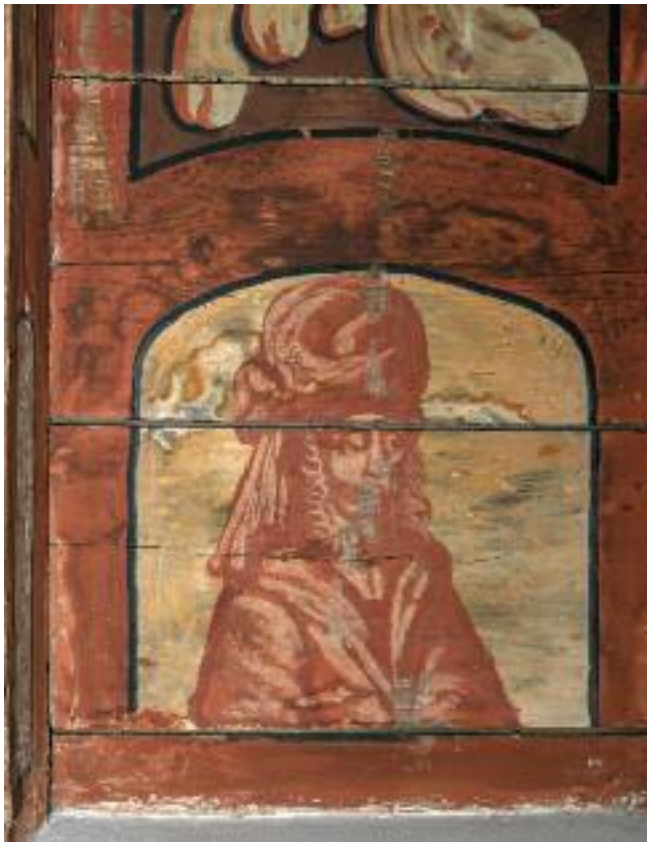

Fig. 6 Gabriel Engels: Old man received by a gentleman in an oriental costume, before 1654, oil on canvas, 52,2 x 65,5 cm, signed (G?) E. FE(CIT?), Statens Museum for Kunst Copenhagen, KMSst487

Lutheran Solomon.[22] Friedrich III started the construction of the *Globus House* only eight years after the *Round Tower*, the famous observatory of Christian IV, was completed.

We might therefore interpret the *Globus House* as an *aemulatio* of the *Round Tower* in Copenhagen, which Christian IV erected as part of the Trinitatiskirke (Trinity church), the university church of Copenhagen, which was built between 1637 and 1642 and was regarded by contemporaries as the "eighth wonder of the world". While the church itself housed the university library, the platform on the tower was used as an observatory. The *Round Tower* was (and is) famous for its broad ramp, by which the king could ascend by horsecar, circling the huge middle pillar seven times before descending from his carriage and climbing a few steps by himself before to arrive at the platform.[23] The tower features the famous rebus that is explained in the *Phospirus Inscriptionis Hierosymbolicae* treatise by Thomas Bang: "Doctrinam et justitiam dirige Jehovah in corde coronati regis Christiani Quart 1642" – Please God, send the right learning and justice into the heart of the crowned King Christian IV 1642.[24] The most important object that was kept in the *Round Tower* was the celestial globe of Tycho Brahe that after the death of Emperor Rudolph II had ended up in Neisse in Silesia. The brother of Christian IV, Prince Ulrik, had captured this valuable item in 1632 while on a military campaign in the region.[25]

Just like Christian IV, Friedrich III made his court the centre of wisdom, concentrating on alchemy, astronomy, botany,

book collecting, and establishing a rich *Kunst- und Wunderkammer*, in which there were many objects from Russia and Persia.[26] The *Globus* was unique in Europe and the rest of the world. In the Kunst- und Wunderkammer of Gottorf Castle another miracle was on display: the *Sphaera Copernicana*, now at Frederiksborg in Denmark. As Lühning points out, the old Ptolemaean, geocentric, view of the universe with the earth at its centre that was the leading idea behind the *Globus*, had its counterpart in this Copernican celestial globe, which represented the newest ideas, with the planets rotating around the sun.[27] In the decoration of the great hall of the Globus House, the portrait of Tycho Brahe represented a point of view in between the old and the new. The *Globus House* therefore incorporated all contemporary views on the universe, in a period when there was much debate on the subject.[28]

On the chimney piece in the library, an inscription in Latin, designed by Olearius, compared the duke's book collection, that was arranged in line with the signs of the zodiac (still visible today), with the famous library in Alexandria. Sitting in his giant *Globus*, Friedrich was intended to be *the* wise Protestant ruler, the new Solomon, of the universe, surpassing his uncle Christian IV. Unfortunately, Friedrich died in 1659, five years before the globe was finished. Christian IV's grandson, Christian V, had his own giant globe made, which was erected in the gardens of Rosenborg Castle. It was even more spectacular than the one in Gottorf, with moving clouds, thunder and lightning that could be simulated and volcanoes that could erupt.[29]

But there also seems to be a resonance of the *Gottorf Globus* in a civic setting, the famous Town Hall of Amsterdam built in line with designs Jacob van Campen (1596–1657) in Amsterdam between 1648 and 1665, and inaugurated in 1655. Van Campen must have heard about this marvel, as the contacts between the Dutch Republic and Schleswig-Holstein were intense at the time, in mercantile, artistic and scientific respects.[30] For the *Burgerzaal* (Citizen's Hall), van Campen designed a detailed series of decorations. On the floor he projected three giant circles, the middle one showing part of the universe, and the two to the left and right representing the

Fig. 7 Dancker Danckerts (possible publisher), after Jacob Vennekool, after a design by Jacob van Campen: Groundplan of the citizen's hall in the Amsterdam Town Hall, 1661, etching, 437 x 759 mm, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, RP-P-AO-21-13-13

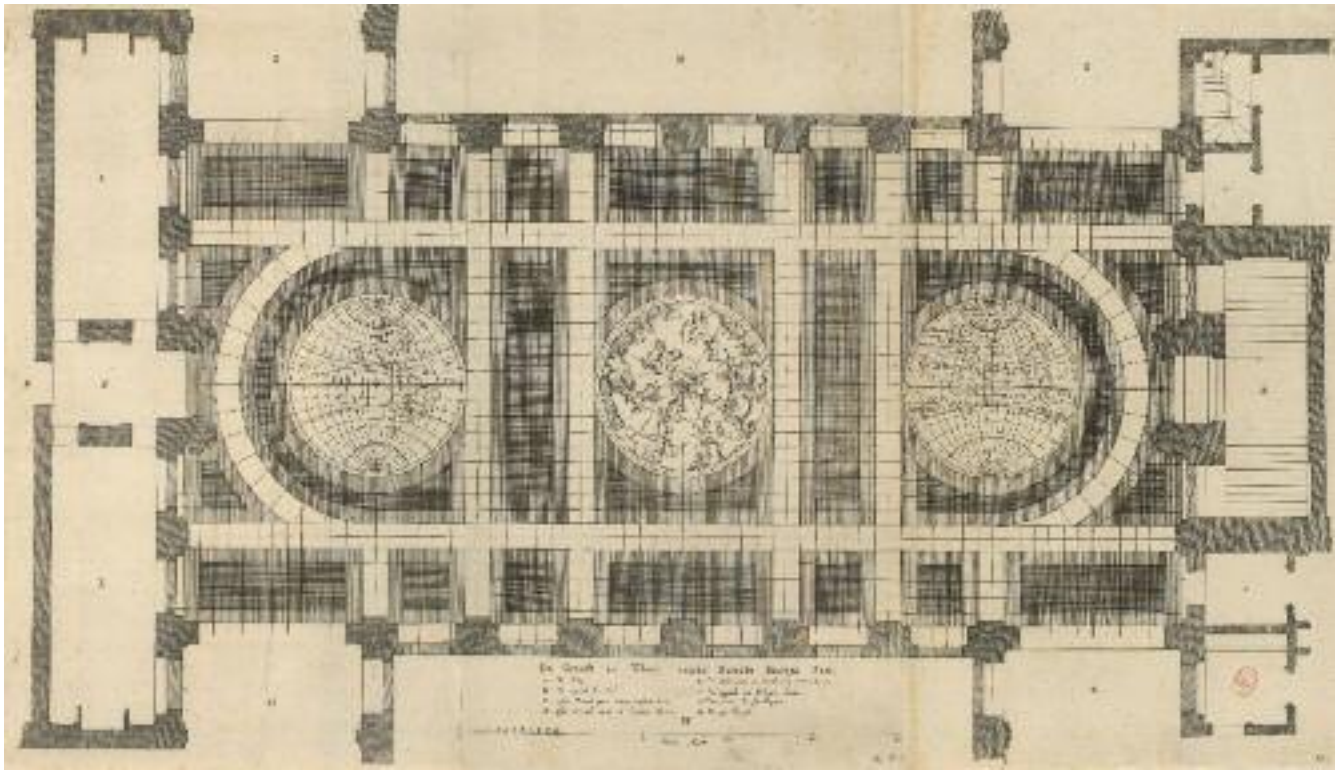

Fig. 8a–b Hamburg Master: Hercules carrying King Solomon meeting with the Queen of Saba, table piece, ivory and silver, gild, 26 cm high, from Kiel Castle, The Royal Danish Collection, Rosenborg Castle Copenhagen, 21–117

two parts of the world as known at the time (fig. 7). The circle with part of the universe also had – according to van Campen's designs – its counterpart in the ceiling. These painted decorations of the ceiling were never executed though, and a decoration in white stucco was applied instead, maybe to make the *Burgerzaal* look brighter. In the upper, semicircular endings of the side walls, in his first draft design, van Campen projected rings with the signs of the zodiac.[31]

Although more research into these relations is needed, it is tempting to think that van Campen transplanted the idea of the giant *Globus* in Gottorf, only accessible to the duke and seven guests, to the civil environment of the Town Hall in Amsterdam. Here the hall itself acted as a giant model of earth and universe, that every citizen of the town could enter freely and study.

I am convinced that in the *Globus House* and the gardens of Gottorf "eastern" and "western" features were combined consciously, as was eastern and western knowledge, symbolised by the two philosophers and reflected by the architecture, the

Fig. 9 Recruitment flyer of Friedrichstadt an der Eider, LASH Schleswig, Abt. 7 Nr. 5499

Fig. 10 Title page of Adam Olearius' HochFürstliche ansehnliche Leichbegängniß, Olearius 1662b, ULB Halle, 78 M 405

garden and the collections. This combination of east and west accounts for the hybridity of architectural forms. The complex was not only meant as a lasting memory of Duke Friedrich III's and Olerarius's expeditions to Russia and Persia, but also of the ambitions of Friedrich III to become a new Protestant Solomon, the wisest king on earth who ministered both eastern and western wisdom in all its aspects, and including old and new visions on the world and the universe.[32]

A most interesting object in this context is a bowl that is kept today in the Danish royal collections in Rosenborg in Copenhagen. This artefact, originally from the Gottorf court, combines the Hercules motif with that of Solomon: Hercules carries King Solomon meeting with the Queen of Saba (fig. 8).[33] Moreover, on the recruitment flyer of the ideal town of Friedrichstadt an der Eider (fig. 9) as well as on the title page of Olearius' *Hochfürstliches ansehnliche Leichbegängniß* from 1662, that illustrates the immense funeral procession of Friedrich III, one can notice – in a complex iconographic context – the twisted columns of Solomon (fig. 10).[34]

"Persia in Gottorf" fully reflects the aspirations of Friedrich III and his adviser, Adam Olearius, in the 1640s and 1650s.

Notes

1 I would like to thank my colleague Laura Plezier and my students Shirin Rezaee and Lizette van den Berg for their most valuable advice and input.

2 In 1729 jurist Ulrich Petersen states that the pleasure house was built in "Orientalische facon", Lühning 1997, p. 33. In 1769 the pleasure house was demolished, after many years of neglect.

3 On Friedrichstadt an der Eider as an answer to Christian IV's Glückstadt: Riis 2003.

4 On Adam Olearius: Baumann/Köster/Kuhl 2017.

5 Brancaforte 2003, 8–21. Hakwirdi, secretary to the Persian delegation, remained in Gottorf and helped Olearius with the translation of Sa'di's work Gulistan from 1258, under the title *Persianischer Rosenthal* (1654). See J. T. Bruijn 1997.

6 Brancaforte 2003, 8–11.

7 Paarmann 1996a; see also Karen Asmussen-Stratmann's essay in this volume.

8 Schulze 1995a and Schulze 1997a, esp. p. 214. On Cornelis van Mander: Roding (in Vorbereitung; forthcoming).

9 Olearius 1656. For the several editions of Olearius's travel accounts and their illustrations, see Brancaforte 2001.

10 Asmussen-Stratmann 2009, pp. 21–22, refers to examples that Clodius must have seen during his stay in Italy: Villa d'Este, Tivoli and Villa Aldobrandini, Frascati; see also Asmussen-Stratmann in this volume.

11 LASH Schleswig, Abt. 66 Nr. 2682, Inventar Schloss Gottorf, 1708, fol. 582ff. Paarmann 1988, p. 24–26.

12 The *Hartlib Papers* (Special Collections, University of Sheffield, www.dhi.ac.uk/projects/hartlib/) contain a very early, anonymous, description of the *Globus: Beschreibung des grossen Globus, so Ihr Hoch-fürstliche Durchlaucht in Holstein, lassen möchen* (68/3/17A). Elsewhere one can read that Olearius and the Duke of Holstein are said to have now found the *Perpetuus Notus* that is driven by water and that is suitable for the Celestial *Globus* but also many other uses (29/6/6A). About Andreas Bösch from Limburg, who executed the Globus: Lühning 1997, pp. 67–75, about the construction and functioning idem, pp. 77–93.

13 Lühning 1997, pp. 21–27 describes into detail the exterior and interior of the Globus House, and idem, pp. 28–-29 the furnishing.

14 Asmussen-Stratmann 1997, p. 222; Asmussen-Stratmann 2009, p. 18, ill. 3, and p. 32, ill. 10; Paarmann 1988, p. 21.

15 Blake 1999; Babaie 2008.

16 Floor 2002, pp. 152, 154; Safi I used the banquet hall as his main audience hall for visitors. On one of the walls there were three large European paintings with historical scenes.

17 Lühning 1997, p. 18.

18 Brancaforte 2003, p. 16.

19 Schulze 1996b, p. 61. In between the figures there were still lifes with fruits and birds.

20 I thank Shirin Rezaee for this information, that needs further research. The figure could be compared with representations of the wise poet Abu 'l-Qasim Firdowski. There was a poet in the Persian delegation who stayed in Gottorf for some time and who helped Olearius to translate Saadi's *Rose Garden*. See J. T. Bruijn 1997; Schnyder 2017.

21 I am indebted to Barbara Uppenkamp, Hamburg, who informed me about this painting. On Gabriel Engels: Fusenig 2012, esp. pp. 708 and 713. The painting, oil on canvas, 52,2 x 65,5 cm, with fragment of signature, is in the Statens Museum for Kunst Copenhagen, inv. KMSst487.

22 Roding 2011.

23 Roding 1991, chapter 9, pp. 101–112,

24 Idem, p. 102; Bang published his *Phosphorus Inscriptionis Hierosymbolicae* for the first time in 1646. The second edition of 1648 was dedicated to the new King Frederik III.

25 For the history of the Globus Magnus Orichalicicus: Jern 1976, pp. 65–66 and fig. 51. The globe got lost in the Copenhagen fire of 1728.

26 Interesting in this respect are the activities of Johannes Clodius's son Frederick in England. Keller/Penman 2015. See also the appendix A, with the "Botanical Instruction" of the Duke to Frederick Clodius of 4 May 1653.

27 Lühning 1997, pp. 101–106.

28 Lühning 1997, pp. 107–124.

29 Lühning 1997, p. 122 and note 53.

30 Mörke 2003.

31 Balbian Verster 1930; Schaick 1954. Jacob van Campen included the designs in his *Afbeelding van 't Stadt Huys van Amsterdam*, Amsterdam 1661, prints O, P, R. See Vlaardingerbroek 2011, pp. 50–51.

32 Roding 2011.

33 Kat. Kiel 1965, p. 123, no. 292; Kat. Schleswig 1997a, p. 515–516, cat. 17.–18. There is another, similar object in the Danish Royal Collections at Rosenborg.

34 Menke 2003, p. 29, ill. 1. The founding charter of "Frederickstat" is in the Landesarchiv Schleswig, LAS Abt. 7 Nr. 5499; Olearius 1662b; see Kat. Kiel 1965, p. 65; Campbell 2020 (forthcoming). I am indebted to Ian Campbell, Edinburgh, for sending me his article before publication.