

The “Court Moor” Anton Eberhard Friedrich (1705)

Abstract

The phenomenon of the “court Moor” at the courts of the Early Modern period can only be understood if it is borne in mind that people of African descent who were designated as such played a prominent role at court. They were not only part of the symbolic communication of hegemony but sometimes even afforded a surprisingly wide scope of action. The court Moor at the East Friesian court, who up to that point was known by the name “Mars,” was baptized in 1705 under the name Anton Eberhard Friedrich. His godfather was Prince Christian Eberhard of East Friesland (1665-1708), from whom he took his second Christian name. The prince gave the baptizand a gift of 100 Reichsthalers. Christian baptism gave the baptizand not only a new name but also established a spiritual kinship with his godfather, and thus led to both cultural and social integration into the Christian community.

Source

Rescript to Treasurer General Teepeken to Pay Interest to the Baptized Moor Anton Eberhard Friedrich on his Godfather's Gift of 100 Reichsthalers Annually Given to Him

We bestowed on our Moor Anton Eberhard Friedrich, as he was recently baptized, a godfather's gift of one hundred Reichsthaler in his honor, such that the one hundred Reichsthaler shall remain in our Oberrentkammer [court financial authority] until said Anton Eberhard Friedrich uses and employs them for his own benefit, and until then he is to be paid five Reichsthaler in interest annually on St. Michael's Day. Now we also order and intend most graciously herewith that you continue to pay Anton Eberhard Friedrich the five Reichsthaler in interest every year annually as long as the said one hundred Reichsthaler have not been withdrawn, the first time on St. Michael's Day 1706, calculating the sum as a disbursement. [...]

Aurich, December 17, 1705 (Signature of Christian Eberhard in his own hand)

Source: Aurich State Archives, Rep. 4 A II b 113.

Translation: Kathleen Dell'Orto

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