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There are many factors governing the desirability of precious stones: value, beauty, durability, rarity, fashion, social custom, tradition, myth, legend, history and ethical and environmental considerations. These factors are often interlinked or even interdependent, and each represents only the tip of an iceberg, for there are many further factors controlling them. One such is the notion of geographical locality – defined by the Gemmological Association of Great Britain as the area or district in which the stone is/was found. Diamonds, for example, occur internationally, but diamonds from one source may nonetheless be more coveted than diamonds from another. The same is true of amber, for which there are dozens of major deposits scattered around the world. Ask anyone in the western world today about the source of amber and their answer is likely to be Poland. And indeed, today no exhibition dealing with “Polish history” or culture would be without this material. Visitors to Danzig (Gdańsk) or to Crakow’s Sukiennice are encouraged to associate product and Poland by grand displays of the material. Rarely seen today without a qualifier, this essay explores the history of amber as a “Polish material” by focusing on the geographical locality of amber deposits and exploring the importance of source to those who owned amber in the early modern period. In so doing, this paper also touches upon the problem of “national” materials and investigates the validity of this notion when dealing with the past. Exploring recent nationalistic narratives in the first half, this essay moves on to test the idea of amber as a national material for the early modern period in the second, its aim is show that amber’s cultural identity was considerably more ambivalent in times past.

The Finding and Commerce of Amber in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period

Before the 19th century virtually all of the amber found in Europe had begun its life on the Baltic littoral, and most commonly in the area then known as Prussia. There, not far from the towns of Danzig and Königsberg (Kaliningrad), two long thin spits of land project out into sea on either side of the Samland Peninsula, trapping water behind them in two protected lagoons (the Frisches Haff to the south, and the Kurisches Haff to the north). Following an age old practice, local men shed their clothes – when the winds and currents were right – and advanced into the churning waters with nets stretched before them. They netted seaweed and whatever debris they could and hauled this back to the beach where it was sorted by their wives and children, and subsequently delivered to “collecting centres” spread across the region. The ownership of amber fell to the ruler of Prussia: its possession by anyone but was illegal and punished severely. The law forbidding this was called the Bernsteinregal (the amber monopoly) and it allowed the rulers of Prussia to control the fate of amber, which they did by overseeing and organizing its collection, as well as selling the right to trade the raw material to certain individuals only. Early modern legal structures made provision for that which could be found buried in a territory’s soil deeper than blade of the plough could till (be it ancient treasure or mineral riches), or for flotsam and jetsam and other things found floating in its waters to belong to the crown.

Before the Second Peace of Thorn (Toruń) in 1466, Prussia and all finds of amber with it belonged to the Teutonic Order. The region was then divided: the western part (later known as Royal Prussia) became an autonomous province belonging to the Crown of Poland; the eastern part (later known as Ducal Prussia), became a fief of the Catholic Polish crown remaining in the hands of the Order. Albrecht of Brandenburg-Ansbach, the 37th Grand Master of the Teutonic Order, introduced Lutheranism to East Prussia in 1525. This brought the Protestant Reformation to the region, ended the hold of the Order over it, and trans-
formed Albrecht from an ecclesiastical into a secular prince.

For much of the later Middle Ages there was little to link Prussia and product. The Order had treated amber as an export good and sold it onwards to Lübeck and Bruges, the names of which towns had become associated with beads of amber and other small goods made of this material. According to Georg Rheticus, the Polish king, Casimir IV, had done "as a Christian ruler does when he knows that the skies and the seas being rich treasures of mother-of-pearl, coral, lodestone, amber and other such, belong to the rich and poor alike" and given "these to everyone living in Prussia, whoever they may be [...] in the wake of the Peace'. He is likely to have been referring to Casimir's support for the formation of a guild of amber workers there in 1480'. The birth of a guild there meant that large quantities of amber were now being worked in a place not all that very far away from where it was being found. The Order protested at its establishment, arguing that the formation of the guild contravened the peace and continued to pursue a policy of prohibition in their own territories. Though the Order's rule there would come to an end with Albrecht's conversion to Lutheranism, the prohibition of amber's working in the eastern part of Prussia would remain in place for some time to come.

We cannot expect that consumers, looking at the region from the outside in, understood the division of Prussia, the structure of rule and the impact this had on amber. Sixteenth-century maps of Prussia rarely make the divided nature of the territory clear. They do, however, frequently highlight the abundance of amber, particularly in the sea and lagoons surrounding the Sambian Peninsula, for example Olaus Magnus's Carta Marina or Sebastian Münster's map of Prussia, which remained unchanged in all 27 editions of the Cosmographia. The average consumer of amber – although the generalization average is difficult because amber is found in the inventories of kings, goldsmiths, members of the gentry, church treasuries etc. – is also unlikely to have been much interested in the precise source of the amber he or she bought. It has been argued, for example, that most Southern Europeans were far from interested in the Baltic region. Fifteenth-century Italian portolans were imprecise, even hypothetical, when it came to regions north of the Flemish towns in which Italian city-states had their agents. And it has been traditionally argued that the Hansa deliberately suppressed information about the North in order to discourage foreign encroachment on their trade.

For those who did want to know more there were written works discussing amber, its nature and its place of finding. Several classical authors, Pliny for example, had linked amber and the Baltic region. Written in Latin and thus understandable to many educated Europeans, the first sixteenth-century book to contain extensive information was Georg Agricola's De Natura Fossilium of 1546. The foundation of a university in Königsberg in 1544 (the first Protestant university after Marburg) and the establishment of a press in the town also encouraged the production of the first local treatments of amber. Andreas Aurifaber's Succini Historia of 1551 clearly saw itself as a corrective to Agricola, who had erred on number of occasions. Aurifaber's work is full of locally specific apparently accurate knowledge. Other than locating amber and its collection "in Preussen" Aurifaber does not actually explicitly stake Prussia's claim to amber (by which I mean stating that it is "preussisch"), although it is clear that the publication itself plays a part in making a claim of sorts. By merit of being in German and printed at the Lufft press, works issued from which were censored by the Index, Aurifaber's work had little traceable impact. The writings of fellow Prussian Severin Göbel were much better known. His books had been published in Latin before being translated into German, and then reprinted by the influential Konrad Gesner. Göbel also benefited from a family connection to one of Southern Europe's most important universities: his relative the Königsberger Melchior Wieland (Guilandinus/Guilandini) was prefect of the botanic gardens in Padua and as such acquainted with the big names of contemporary Italian natural history. Several authors cite Göbel, but he, like Aurifaber spills little ink on the political and geographical situation.

Amber after 1900: Deutsch beyond doubt

By the seventeenth century, the word Prussia had come to mean something quite different. The union of
Brandenburg and the Duchy of Prussia in 1618 had produced a state consisting of several geographically disconnected territories. The Treaties of Königsberg and Labiau in 1656 granted the then duke full sovereignty of the duchy, which had, until this point, still been the fief of another crown. In 1701 the duchy became a kingdom, the capital of which was Berlin. In 1772 the Kingdom of Prussia annexed most of the Polish province of Royal Prussia, to its west, including the city of Danzig, replacing the Polish administrative and legal code with the Prussian system. By the dawn of the twentieth century, the state commonly known as Prussia mostly comprised territory lying outside of Prussia proper.

There are relatively few couplings of amber with a specific country before the early twentieth century. In 1900 the notion of geographical indication – a name or sign used on certain products which corresponds to a specific geographical location or origin – was in its infancy, advanced first by the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property in 1883. France was at the forefront of this type of legislation and it was also there that the famous ‘appellation d’origine contrôlée’ was established as a designation for agricultural products in 1905. Although primarily linked to foodstuffs, the new notions of geographical ownership protected by law emerging at the end of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century played a role in the hitching of materials and products to physical regions. The same is also true of international exhibitions at which countries funded and constructed their own pavilions to the glory of their own progress and products. Having been exhibited in single lonely examples at previous world fairs, an enormous display stand sponsored by the Royal Prussian Ministry for Trade and Industry was dedicated to amber in the German Pavillon at the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1900”. Though Germany was a relatively new concept, the connection of amber with it was not: Tacitus’s Germania contains one of the earliest references to it”. In the millennium since Tacitus, the Baltic Sea had also gone from being the only known source of amber to one of several major deposits worldwide. This may be another reason for the development of a clearly stated geographical claim.

Though amber had been chosen to part represent the German mining industry in Paris, the literature of the time is clear about its geographical connection to Samland and Prussia proper, rather than Germany. Indeed 10 of the 17 exhibitors were from Danzig or Königsberg.

It is first around the time of the Great War that we find amber claimed for Germany. The first consistent description of amber as German can be found – to the best of my knowledge – in an article researched during the conflict. Otto Pelka’s *Die Meister der Bernsteinkunst* is the first “scholarly” history of amber. Bristling with indignation, Pelka protests that the war and Russian Revolution have prevented him from accessing amber in collections outside of his homeland. For Pelka, amber is “the most German of all materials” and the war has now “closed (it) to German scholars” by locking collections of it in “enemy territory””22. By the time his book *Bernstein* appeared in 1920, the Treaty of Versailles had cloven Prussia from Germany proper. Some areas, what is more, were given to the Second Polish Republic; Danzig became a Free City under the administration of the League of Nations; and East Prussia became an exclave, only reachable by ship or by a railway through the Polish Corridor”. It is in exactly these years the notion of amber as German takes hold. By the time the time National Socialism became fully fledged, the material which in the early 1930s might still occasionally be referred to as “Samlandian Gold””24 or “Königsbergian””25, had become fully entrenched as a “deutscher Werkstoff””26.

The fate of amber under National Socialism is a subject about which I have written elsewhere. The National Socialist party gained considerable support in East Prussia and strategies were developed to encourage other Germans to continue to support the now detached region which faced financial difficulties because of its status. Amber, as an export product, received attention. Marketing strategies suggested that Germans had a moral responsibility to buy because amber purchase would support Prussian/German industry”. The material acquired new meanings with the spread of the National Socialist ideology: Consumers were now introduced to amber as a “blonde” coloured stone with an affinity to the colour
of “German curls” and “ripe sheaves of corn”. From 1933/34 onwards, tiny shards of amber were worked into over 60-million pins and pendants for sale by the Nazionsocialistische Volkswohlfahrt (the National Socialist People’s Welfare Organisation) and the Deutsche Arbeits-Front (German Work Front) in order to finance Winterhilfswerk (Winter Relief).

One art historian believed that his fellow Germans were drawn to wear amber “by an inner need of the soul”, and another poetically-inclined lover of the material penned the following hymn to it:

German stone from German soil
Hold it proudly in your hand
You are asked to wear amber
Because you love your Fatherland.
Ancient elemental forces have shaped you
Simple German gem
They radiate and proclaim:
“My bearer should be German too.”

**Amber since 1945: Polish par excellence**

Perhaps unsurprisingly there has been little talk about “German amber” since 1945. The years since then, and especially those since 1989/1991, have seen the increasing Polonisation of amber. Founded in 1994, the Amberif Trade Show has the declared intention of promoting the Polish amber industry. Established in 2006, the World Amber Council has appointed Gdańsk, the city in which it is based, the World Capital of Amber. In 2011 amber was one of fifteen sectors identified by the Polish Ministry of the Economy for a special export promotion program, and ‘trend forecasters’ now hope to position jewellery made of this ancient fossilised resin as one of Poland’s flagship products. All of this naturally involves claiming amber for a Polish material and the politically and economically motivated positioning of objects made of it. Amber is a popular material for gifts of international cultural significance. The Gdańsk-based amber artist Mariusz Drapikowski was commissioned to create not only the celebrated Millennium Monstrance but also an amber chalice and patena for Pope Benedict XVI and an amber crucifix for Pope John Paul II in 1999. Drapikowski has also worked on an amber altar for the Basilica of St Brigida in Gdańsk, a church of significance for the Solidarność movement. This huge structure, 11 metres high by 9 metres across, showcases St Brigida’s copy of The Black Madonna of Częstochowa, an important symbol in Polish culture, Protectress of Poland since 1656.

Yet the production of other large projects has stalled in the years since the completion of the altar at St Brigida, in part due to the fourfold rise in the price of amber in the last decade. Though amber has become the quintessentially Polish material, and owners of objects made from it are encouraged to consider themselves owners of little pieces of Poland, most amber being worked in Gdańsk is imported from the strip mines of the Kaliningrad Oblast, or elsewhere. For many years now finds of natural amber in Poland have fallen far below the amount needed to meet demand. Thus Polski Bursztyn is often actually – at least in material terms – far from it. The modern consumer of amber acquires a notion, a material which experiences its artistic transformation in Gdańsk having come from a region which is now Russia, was once German, and has, since 1656, had no real connection to Poland. The notion of amber as Polish clearly foots on an older historical tradition. Yet as the assertion above suggests, this is less clear-cut than it might seem. The second part of this essay considers the historical status of amber and explores notions of its “nationality” in the early modern period.

**The Ownership and Perceived Origin of Amber in the Early Modern Period**

Studying in Italy in 1640, a young man from Cracow, a certain Jan Ługowski, wrote to his father that he had made a new acquaintance in Rome. This new friend had given Jan to understand “that he would wish to have something beautiful from Poland”. But what? Jan had himself been unsure until the acquaintance suggested an amber rosary. Ługowski’s example demonstrates that in the early seventeenth century Poland was associated with this yellow “stone” in the eyes of early modern Italians. Yet the anecdote also questions the degree to which the Polish expatriate community identified with the material which came from a region geographically, culturally and politically on the fringes of their own home country. Though there are numerous sources detailing
Poles giving gifts of amber, or of amber being acquired in Polish cities – many of which will be explored in the coming pages – it is actually rare to see amber being coupled with the adjective “Polish”. Equally, though we may read of people from both Ducal and Royal Prussia giving gifts of amber, or of amber being acquired in Prussian cities, it is actually rare to see amber being coupled with the adjective “Prussian” in the early modern period.

Sixteenth-century consumers of amber living beyond the territory in which it was found appear to have had a very general and superficial understanding of amber and its origin. How, then, did those living in East or West Prussia (i.e. Ducal or Royal Prussia) understand their claim to this material? One sixteenth-century anecdote suggests that neither was unequivocally entitled to claim amber for their own.

Like his already-discussed father, Severin Göbel the Younger was an authority on amber and on the different varieties available, a reason for which we actually encounter amber described as “preussischer Stein” in his work. His relative Melchior Wieland helped him to matriculate at the University of Padua, and while in Italy he was very much an ambassador for the material, introducing his patron, the Venetian senator Aloysio Mocenigo, to two exceptional pieces of amber in the collection of the Duke of Mantua. These pieces are first recorded as having been in Danzig in 1593, where, according to the English traveler Fynes Moryson, King Sigismund of Poland had seen them and “offered five hundred dollars” [11 kg. of silver] for them to their owner Andreas Jaski. Danzig was a city with special status and enjoyed more autonomy than other towns within the Kingdom of Poland. It was, however, still Sigismund’s city and Jaski Sigismund’s subject. But Jaski refused to sell to him and presented the pieces to Georg Friedrich of Brandenburg-ansbach instead. Georg Friedrich was the governor of Ducal Prussia. The Jaski family were not Georg Friedrich’s subjects, but they were the only merchants to whom the Dukes of Prussia, who had a monopoly over amber, supplied it. There was no industry of working amber in Ducal Prussia at that time. According to the literature, it was then Georg Friedrich who had made a present of the frog and lizard in amber to the Duke of Mantua.

Amber was thus plausibly the property of Sigismund and Georg Friedrich both (Sigismund, because amber was worked in his territory and Georg Friedrich, because it was found in his). In this sense it united the two. The story also shows that amber brought them into conflict. Sigismund was pitted against Georg Friedrich to acquire the choicest pieces. We know that both factions and their subjects employed amber extensively in their diplomacy. Did this competition extend to it?

**Amber in Polish Diplomacy**

Italy presents a good test case when discussing diplomacy because not only was it home to the Roman Catholic Church but also to several powerful dynasties; and because given the huge distance between them few Italians actually acquired their amber in person in Prussia. Diplomacy and the exchange of diplomatic gifts was the main source of their amber and this could take many forms.

**Nuncios and Legates**

Few Italians travelled to the North, legates and nuncios being the exceptions. One such was Giacomo Fantuzzi from Ravenna, who undertook a tour of Poland at the end of his spell as papal legate there in 1652. Fantuzzi watched amber being worked in Danzig and acquired a set of knife handles. Given its importance to trade, many kings and princes, as well as city states sent their envoys to the city, who, like the French diplomat Charles Ogier, are sure to have seen amber being worked and acquired it too. Amber was also a common parting gift for those who were returning to their countries of origin, for example, the set of amber objects for the celebration of the mass presented by Sigismund III to the Nuncio Enrico Caetano on his departure in 1596. In such cases amber is essentially a souvenir, a token of remembrance (in Caetano’s case of Poland) with the capacity to invoke memories. The material is necessarily linked to a place, although as these examples demonstrate the place is frequently Poland or Polish Danzig.

**Mediated Gifts**

The average Italian who wanted to acquire amber above and beyond beads or small pieces of raw am-
ber depended on the mediation of others, for example agents, friends, or simply roundabout contacts. Whoever they were, they all inevitably had some sort of relationship to the north. Here again legates and envoys had a role to play. Ferdinando Cospi in Bologna acquired the amber playing pieces in his collection from Ercole Zani, an Italian who had accompanied a Polish embassy to Moscow in 1672. And Cospi’s grand-nephew, Giovanni Carlo Ranuzzi, nuncio in Poland, was responsible for Cospi’s specimens of amber with inclusions. The Milanese collector Manfredo Settala had Tito Livio Buratino, an Italian contact in Danzig, who provided him with amber. In these cases the mediating person is the lynch-pin and their importance is reflected by the fact that their names are recorded alongside the entry. As the examples above demonstrate, whether Cospi or Settala, amber is the vehicle that allows them to repeatedly emphasize how well connected they are within Italian society. The actual geographical source of their amber is not stressed.

**Non-mediated gifts**

The majority of the more interesting amber objects in Italy were non-mediated gifts from high-ranking northern Europeans. Many members of the Polish elite carried amber to give as gifts when abroad. Philipp Hainhofer, for example, was given a lizard in amber by the Polish prince Władysław Vasa. According to Hainhofer, Władysław had originally chosen this object as a gift for Francesco Barberini whom he was to meet in Rome in 1624/5. This would have been a diplomatically adroit gift for it fused amber from Władysław’s home country with a sentiment linked to ancient Italy. No contemporary account of amber and the inclusions found within it was complete without reference to Martial’s epigrams on amber-embalmed creatures and this connection was not lost on Italians who were particularly taken by the idea of owning the physical expressions of poetry. In some cases objects incorporating inclusions were even explicitly linked to the Roman poet. An anonymous Polish bishop gave an amber chalice to Cardinal Scipione Borghese. The chalice’s foot contained a frog and was inscribed “latet et lucet” a motto taken directly from the opening to Martial’s epigram on a bee in amber. The already mentioned gift of Georg Friedrich to the Duke of Mantua may have encompassed a similar gesture, for the river Po cut its path straight through his duchy and it had been into this river which, or so said the myth, amber had first been created. These gifts are linked to the foreign personalities giving them and thus also linked to a specific geographical origin, yet again it is
most often the former (i.e. provenance) which is foregrounded with only scant attention being paid to the latter (i.e. source).

**Faith**

An expression of shared religious belief was an important factor underlying many gifts to Italy. A large amber altar in the Museo degli Argenti was originally a gift from Andreas Trzebicki to Innocent XI, the Medici pope (fig. 1). Trzebicki was Deputy Chancellor of the Polish Crown from 1652, bishop of Przemyśl from 1655 and bishop of Crakow after 1659. An amber reliquary casket donated to the Neapolitan convent of Santa Chiara in 1697 by Cardinal Alderano Cybo may have been the result of his dealings with Poland in the 1670s. Pilgrimages by nobles from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to sites of religious interest in Italy also occasioned gifts of amber: for example, the set of objects to be used for the mass – meaning an amber oil lamp, amber cruets, amber candlesticks, an amber basin, an amber pax and an amber chalice – given to the Santa Casa at Loreto by Caterina Zamoyska. In Rome, Prince Michał Kazimierz Radziwiłł presented an amber figure of St Peter to the Pope, two days after celebrating the feast of St Casimir there in 1678. Casimir, a prince of Poland, who had died in 1484 and been canonized in 1522, was a well-known saint in Italy; he had been proclaimed the protector of Palermo by Urban VIII in 1636 and his feast day was celebrated with pomp and in the presence of the Pope in Santo Stanislao dei Polacchi in Rome. His image is found atop a casket in the Museo degli Argenti which also shows the symbols of the Medici and thus unites the two cultures in one object (fig. 2). Further research is still required to find the name of its donor, but it is more than likely that he or she was someone from the Polish community, and probably, given the size and complexity of the object, a member of the Polish elite.

**Non-Polish Givers**

In all of the cases mentioned above, it is probable that the giver felt an affinity or connection with the material and that this affinity may have had something to do with his or her identification with the place of their and its origin, as well as pride as expressed through the material. Polish nobles – whether anonymous, like the giver of Cristina of Lorraine’s amber, or named – are in the overwhelming majority when it comes to gifts of amber to Italians. It would be wrong to think, however, that all amber in Italy was the result of Polish-Lithuanian gift-giving: the House of Bavaria, for example, was responsible for the gift of an amber Virgin to the church of Santa Maria della Vittoria, and Charles II of Spain for a chalice inset with ivory symbols of the Passion presented to the Archbishop of Syracuse, Francesco Fortezza. Nor did they have to be Catholic: Johann Friedrich of Pomerania sent an amber croosifix and some beads to Francesco de Medici in 1578 some 44 years after the Protestant Reformation had been adopted in Johann Friedrich’s lands.

**The Dukes of Prussia**

There are few traces of people from Ducal Prussia in Italy, probably because the region lay outside of the Holy Roman Empire and was Protestant which means, for example, that Prussians cannot be found in the registers of the German church in Rome, Santa Maria dell’Anima. They are not, however, entirely absent. For nearly a century an enormous amber chandelier consisting of “three-tiers [...] with eight arms per tier, and ovals and roundels full of figures and histories in white amber and with an eagle on top” was a star attraction in the Medici Galleria, first in the Tribuna where it hung beneath the famous lantern, and later in the Gabinetto di Madama. This amber is...
likely to have been a gift from Johann Sigismund who married the daughter of the administrator of Ducal Prussia in 1594, and who, although Margrave of Brandenburg, would also be administrator of the duchy for several years before fully inheriting it in 1618. When compared with gifts given by members of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, there are certainly fewer gifts from people from Ducal Prussia to Italian nobles. Why and when did Ducal Prussias give gifts of amber and to whom were they sent?

**Faith**

Some gifts were used to cement confessional relationships: Albrecht of Brandenburg-Ansbach, the 37th and last Grand Master of the Teutonic Order, who had introduced the Protestant Reformation to Prussia, presented amber to the reformers Martin Luther and Philipp Melanchthon, as well as to new Lutherans like Georg Ernst von Henneberg-Schleusingen. But by making gifts of amber to people like Margaret of Austria, he also honored Arch-Catholics equally.

**Family**

The majority of gifts of amber appear to have been to relatives of the dukes themselves, or to relatives of the administrators of the region. The earliest example is of eighteen amber and silver plates stamped with the cypher “S.M.Z.B.H.Z.B.V.L.” and dated 1585. These initials refer to Sophia, Margravine of Brandenburg, Duchess of Brunswick and Lüneburg, the wife of Prussia’s governor Georg Friedrich of Brandenburg-Ansbach. She was also the daughter of Dorothea of Denmark, a connection which explains the presence of these plates in Slot Rosenborg today.

Sophia appears to have adopted amber as her signature gift, giving goblets of amber to Elisabeth of Austria, wife of the King of France, and to Elizabeth I of England. Inventories show that Elizabeth’s successor and Sophia’s cousin Anne had one of the most interesting collections of amber of her time and it is highly likely that her links to Sophia had a role to play. Sophia and her husband are probably also the source of the amber gamesboard given to Landgrave Moritz of Hessen-Kassel, a cousin of Georg Friedrich, who, like Anne, had a large and unusual collection of amber.

This pattern of gift giving among close relatives can naturally also be seen among members of the Polish royal family, but the paths taken are less consistent: the Kings of Poland were elected monarchs, meaning that dynastic allegiances were more fluid. By the mid-sixteenth century, female members of the Jagiellonian dynasty had become Queens of Hungary, Poland and Sweden, as well as Duchesses of Brunswick and Saxony. The later Wasa dynasty could be linked to the Houses of Sweden, Hapsburg and Bavaria, as well as to the Jagiellons, and the Sobieski to the House of Nevers and Bavaria. The royal crown was not linked by succession to any of these families. Patterns and predilections for giving amber change with each different generation. We do not appear to see the consistent use of amber in the cultivation of one or two familial bonds and development of estimable collections of amber on the back of them.

Although a hereditary line, the Dukes of Prussia could not claim to be on the same level as the Polish royals. The duchy’s power first really increased in the early seventeenth century, when Duke Albrecht Friedrich died and his successor Johann Sigismund brought Brandenburg and Ducal Prussia into personal union. The next generation of rule saw Prussia’s foregrounding: Johann Sigismund’s son, Georg Wilhelm moved the court to Königsberg in 1638. The growing importance of Ducal Prussia for its rulers, who were now resident there for the first time in many years, saw a new focus on amber. Friedrich Wilhelm licensed the first guild of amber turners ever known in Ducal Prussia and re-acquired the right to trade amber from the Jaski in Danzig first sold to them in 1530s. Friedrich Wilhelm thus became the first ruler of Ducal Prussia to really have full control over amber from sea to sale. Furthermore his status as one of the seven members of the Electoral College bearing the right to vote for the emperor essentially placed him on a par with other kings in Europe, the Polish king included. This said, Prussia remained the fief of the Polish crown until the Treaty of Labiau in 1656. Friedrich Wilhelm, however, did more than commission works in amber; he also appears to be the first to have been portrayed in it since the time of Georg
Friedrich\textsuperscript{69}, most famously in a double portrait with his wife Luise Henriette of Nassau-Orange, which belonged to his sister Hedwig Sophie, wife of Wilhelm VI of Hessen-Kassel\textsuperscript{70}. Friedrich Wilhelm is also said to have worked amber himself, with his skill being praised by Joachim Müllner in the poem \textit{Drechsler-Kunst} of 1653\textsuperscript{71}.

**War and Peace**

The first of Friedrich Wilhelm’s many notable commissions for non-family members were related to religion, but not in the sense we have seen. The Thirty Years’ War saw the region become embroiled in this great Northern conflict and then extensive peace talks which brought Europe together in Münster. The War played a role in spreading amber across Europe. In Italy, nephew of Pope Urban VIII and a negotiator for the church Francesco Barberini’s collection probably grew up on the back of this conflict though more research is required to discover who the sources of his ambers were\textsuperscript{72}. The Peace of Westphalia in 1648 also saw Cardinal Alderano Chigi, one of the chief negotiators, receive the gift of an amber pyx from an as yet unknown donor\textsuperscript{73}, and probably also the making of the huge cabinet now in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum with the eight new electors agreed upon during the negotiations\textsuperscript{74}. Claude de Mesmes is said to have received a gift of amber as a gesture of thanks for his involvement in the peace negotiations for the Swedish-Polish War\textsuperscript{75}. And less honest pursuits, like looting and booty-taking, meant that amber made its way across borders.

Friedrich Wilhelm went on the diplomatic offensive after the cessation of hostilities and amber was his weapon of choice. He used it to secure cheaper grain for his war-ravaged lands, and to cement relationships with his neighbours. In the course of the next twenty years, as the sovereign ruler of Prussia from 1656 onwards, he sent copious amounts of unusually worked amber to the Tsars of Russia\textsuperscript{76}, commissioned majestic gifts for Emperor Ferdinand III and Leopold I\textsuperscript{77}, sent a spectacular chandelier to Frederick of Denmark, honoured the Electors of Saxony\textsuperscript{78}, and the child-regent King Charles of Sweden\textsuperscript{79}. Friedrich Wilhelm was careful to make sure that no two gifts were the same – this meant altering the details of established forms as well as commissioning new and unseen ones, like the gondola-shaped amber vessel and the quite amazing amber mirror frame given to Louis XIV of France\textsuperscript{80}.

**Conclusion: Whose amber?**

The examples given above suggest that there was no “clear” attribution of amber to one territory or another in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, perhaps because it was a material which was being both found and worked in not only Ducal but also Royal Prussia, as well as being used in the diplomacy of the rulers of both. In this sense, objects made of amber were truly “gemeine Artefakte”. Indeed, as if to provide further proof, documents also record that the Russian tsars, for example, often re-cycled the gifts they had received, simply passing them on to other potentates as and when was appropriate\textsuperscript{81}. Amber was, after all, a precious and rare material, which made a suitable gift for high-ranking personages and, as we have seen for Italy, there was no hard and fast rule that its donors had to be Prussian or Polish themselves\textsuperscript{82}. Sir Walter Leslie, a Scot, gave an amber tankard to the Emperor in Vienna. There are even examples of amber being given to the rulers of Poland, for example the amber crucifix and other altar goods given by Johann Sigismund of Saxony to Constance of Austria, wife of Sigismund III\textsuperscript{83}. How are we to understand the link between material and its geographical origin in this circumstance? In cases such as Leslie’s one might argue that the object’s provenance – in this example presumably somehow associated with his involvement in the Thirty Years War – had a role to play. Every object has a story – as the cliché goes – and, as we have seen with Hainhofer’s lizard in amber, stories were very important in the early modern period. Johann Sigismund, on the other hand, was married to the Princess of Prussia, daughter of Albrecht Friedrich, Anna of Prussia, and it is probably only thanks to this relationship that he could have made such a spectacular gift to Constance. In short, amber appears to have been capable of ambivalently playing a number of roles – its identity was dynamic and like the material itself, which was famous for becoming statically charged, it could be charged, discharged and recharged.
This forces us to return to the issue of the marking of geographical identity when it comes to materials. As was noted at the beginning of this essay, early modern legal structures made provision for all that could be found buried below a certain depth in a territory’s soil, or for flotsam and jetsam found floating in a territory’s waters to belong to the ruler of that territory. In the legal sense, amber or other minerals belonged to the ruler, and the exploitation of them, as with the production of porcelain from Saxon earth by Augustus the Strong, can be thought of as creating a product that is inextricably linked to a unique geographical locality. When it came to Meissen this was certainly true in the eyes of Augustus’ contemporaries – when they spoke and wrote about Europe’s first porcelain they did not speak of Meissen, as we do today, but rather of ‘porcelaine de Saxe’ in France or simply of Saxe in the Ottoman Empire. Here the place of the material’s making/finding and the object made of it were linked by name. But there is no consistent or strong evidence that this is the case for amber until the twentieth century. Amber’s status was decidedly less fixed than today: it could be draped with a variety of meanings, which could be cast off and replaced by others, or which might exist simultaneously. It was only in the last century that strong claims were made to the actual ownership of the material and that people more generally, with the rise of the notion of nation and national, have been able to link a nation with the material.

Endnoten

1. Amber was shown in the exhibition Polen–Deutschland. Tür an Tür. 1000 Jahre Kunst und Geschichte at the Martin-Gropius Bau in Berlin, and is also addressed in the catalogue accompanying the exhibition: Berlin, Martin-Gropius Bau, Tür an Tür. Polen – Deutschland. 1000 Jahre Kunst und Geschichte, ed. Malgorzata Omilanowska, Köln 2011. The previous year, 2010, was POLSKA! YEAR in the United Kingdom, and this was marked with, among other things, an exhibition on amber in the Hunterian Museum, Glasgow, with catalogue: Glasgow, Hunterian Museum, Amber. Tears of the Gods, Neil Clarke, Edinburgh 2010.


7. On this map and the collection of amber in it, see Jan Forkie- wicz, The Baltic amber deposit in the light of sixteenth-century cartographic resources, in: Libri Gedanenses 1973 (4–5), pp. 21-
Agricola 1955, De natura fossilium, p. 75. Twenty years after the Lutheran conversion of the Order’s Grand Master in 1525 and the associated secularization of their lands, Agricola was still asserting, for example, that the Teutonic Knights coordinated the collection and sale of amber in Sambia. Aurifer makes a valued but still clear reference to inaccuracies in Agricola’s work: “Wer- den aber die selbigen, so gantzlich an anderer gezeigten hangen, mir disfals guenstiger erscheinen, und mich alles beschwemis erlassen, so ich nicht der erst diese lere vom Boern- stein an tag gebe, sonder vor mir davon geschrieben hat der hochgelahrte und vortreffliche philosophus un’ artzt D. Georgius Agricola, dere in der heubtschacht [wie ich solt sagen] mit mir eige- gentlich ubereintrifft…”

16. The text was commissioned by Duke Albrecht. For a discussion of Albrecht’s ability to read Latin see Thomas Anselmino, Medicin und Pharmacie am Hofe Herzog Albrechts von Preussen: (1490-1568) (Studien und Quellen zur Kulturgeschichte der frühen Neuzeit, Bd. 30, Heidelberg 2006; available online: http://www.helsinki.1ib.ee/leh/2006/papers1/Unterger.pdf, 17.11.2013). Neither interpretation takes into account that, by the early fourteenth century, Italian commercial involvement with the region was also taking place via internal routes.


13. Agriola, Georgius, Georgii Agricolae de ortu et causis subterraneorum lib. V. De natura eorum quae effluunt ex terra lib. IIII. De uocum rei metallicæ, nunc primum studio & labore Laurentii Sulzibeli medicis Vratist, in lucem edita, in: Consiliorum, et epistolarum medicinâ in medicina, gemmis, lapidibus, metallis Et Hvivsmodi, Libri Ali- mus. De Succino libri Dvo; Horvm Prior, Liber continen piam commonefactionem, de paßione, resurrec- tione, ac beneficicii Christi, quae in historia Succini depecta, Posterior veram de origine Succini addit sententiâ Avthore Seuerino Goebelli, Medico Doctore,...: in: De Omri rerum fossili- um genere, gemmis, lapidibus, metallis Et Hvivsmodi, Libri Ali- mus, Plerique Nunc Primum Edit. Conradus Gesnerus, Zürich 1565. Gesner appears to have been particularly interested in amber in Winter/Spring 1564-5. His work suggests that he was awa- re of Caspar Peucer’s Propositiones de origine et causa succini Prussiaci, Wittenberg 1555 but had yet to read them. Then, in April 1565, Achilles Gasser sent him a copy of Severin Göbel’s research, which was published in 1567, “De Succino libri duo...” and not the rival Polish king. On its history, see Matthew


15. On whom see Nancy G. Siraisi, History, medicine, and the tradi- tions of Renaissance learning, Cultures of knowledge in the early modern world, Ann Arbor 2007, p. 277 and Paula Findlen, Possessing nature: museums, collecting, and scientific culture in early modern Italy (Studies on the history of society and culture, vol. 29) Berkeley etc., 1994, p. 69. For his connections, see

30. The copying process meant that this detail would appear re- versed when reproduced in Magnus’ Historia de gentibus sep- tentrionalibus, the book he published in 1555, with the result that amber is shown being collected from the sea to Danzig’s west, and that Royal Polish Prussia becomes the source of amber.

20. Amber was shown in New York in 1853, at Santiago in Chile in 1875 and in London in 1891. For the exhibitors at the Paris exhi-


21. Cornelius Tacitus, Germania, trans. J. B. Rives (Clarendon an-

22. Otto Pelka, Die Meister der Bernsteinkunst, in: Anzeiger und Mit-

23. Authors pointed out that where amber had carried Prussia’s name abroad, it was now the Treaty of Versailles that was re-

ponsible. For any reference to the region see Karl Andrer, Der Bernstein und seine Bedeutung in Natur- und Geisteswis-
senschaften, Kunst und Kunstgewerbe, Technik, Industrie und Handel, Königsberg 1937, pp. 7-8: Versailles had redrawn the boundaries of Europe and left East Prussia separated from main-
land Germany. This separation was only indirectly determined by pro-German vote in a refer-
endum in 1920. Prussia’s new physical removal from Germany and the economic difficulties this involved explains the tone of the following passage: “The link between amber and German East Prussia (was) indissoluble, because Nature has laid such a rich and inexhaustible wealth of this precious stone in the lap of the old lands of Prussia that no other deposit ... outside of our country can compete with it ... If in the interests of the German economy and the preservation of the jobs of many hundreds of German workers the thankworthy attempt were to be made to bring amber back into bloom and to revive with it one of the most unique German industries in the new Germany, then it is in the interest of German East Prussia, which first became known to the Mediterranean world in Antiquity through its amber, and which after the War and the demarcation enforced by Versailles, has once again drawn the attention of an international public to it, to wish these attempts complete success”. Author’s translation.


26. Rohde 1937, Bernstein. Alfred Rohde, Bernstein, ein deutscher Werkstoff, in der Vergangenheit, in: Berlin, Preußische Staatsma-


27. Anonymus, Bernstein als urdeutscher Schmuck, in: Die Gold-

schmiedekunst 9, 1933, p. 433: “Wenn Du aber, deutscher Mann und Du deutsche Frau, die schönen Gegenstände aus Bernstein wählst, so bringst Du damit ein wunderbares Geschenk der Hei-

schen Boden, / Stolz gefasst von deiner Hand, / Dich zu tragen und Du gibst Hunderten Arbeitsmöglichkeit und lässt auch sie mit zukunftsfrohen Augen an dem Erstarken unseres Vaterlandes Anteil nehmen”: “But if you, German man or German woman, choose beautiful objects made from amber, so you will be taking a wonderful gift from your home soil, giving a chance to the Polish ambassador to Moscow in 1671, see E rcole 1677, see pp. 48-50, 178, 285, 307 on amber. Zani accompanied the Polish ambassador to Moscow in 1671-1672, see Ercule

28. Wilhelm Bölsche, Der deutsche Bernstein, in: Veilhagen und Kla-
sings Monatshufte, vol. 1, 1934/5, pp. 89-90: “Der blonde Stein, der zugleich an deutsche Erinnerung erinnert und reife Garbe”.


31. Christian Schwahn, Deutsche Schmucksteine, in: Die Gol-

dschmiedekunst 9, 1933, p. 191: “Deutscher Stein aus deut-

schem Boden, / Stolz gefasst von deiner Hand, / Dich zu tragen ist geboten / Dem, der liebt sein Vaterland, / Urgewalten, die dich 

schaffen, / Deutscher schlchter Edelstein, / Strahlen aus von Dir und deutschem und auch deutscher Kunst”.

32. Discussed at length in Goldbergen 2004, Polish Amber Art. St Bridiga is one of the most significant religious sites in modern 

Poland because it is connected to Solidarność. After the declara-
tion of martial law in Gdansk in December 1981, St Brigida’s be-

norial became a centre of resistance, hiding such figures as Lech Walesa.


34. Two examples being: Ptolemy, Geographia cioè descrittione uni-

versale della terra in due volumi, nel primo de’ quali si contengono gli otto libri della geografia di G. Tolomeo nuo-

vamente con singolare studio ricostaurati, & corretti dall’eccelmo. sig. Gio. Ant. Magni Padovano ... dal latino nell’italiano tradotta dal r.d. Leonardo Cenotii, Venice 1598, pp. 110-111 where am-

ber appears under Prussia, which is a subsection of the chapter on Poland, and Georg Braun, Civitates orbis terrarum, Cologne 1572 (here the edition of 1599), p. 46, which discusses amber in the section on “Gedanum” or Danzig.

35. Severin Göbel, Einfelliger jedoch gründlicher Bericht und Be-

36. The Galileo Project has Göbel Jr, travelling to Padua in the com-
pany of Michael Maer in 1591. This is currently not supported by archival evidence. The petition for a place at Padua can be found in Berlin, Geheimes Staatsarchiv, Preußischer Kulturbesitz XX Hauptabteilung, Ostpreußische Folianten, 60, f. 9r, letter dated 23rd March 1596 to Doge Marino Grimani in Venice.

37. Göbel 1616, Einfelliger Bericht, unpaginated, which duke is un-

clear as no name is mentioned.

38. Fynes Moryson, An itinerary vvritten by Fynes Moryson gent. first in the Lateine tongue, and then translated by him into English: containing his ten yeeres travell through the twelve dominions of Germany, Bohmern, Switzerland, Netherland, Denmark, Poland, Italy, Turkey, France, England, Scotland, and Ireland. Divided into III parts. The I. part, containeth a journall through all the said twelve dominions. The II. part, containeth the rebellion of Hugh, earle of Tyrone, and the appeasing thereof: witten also in form of a journall. The III. part, containeth a discourse vpon severall heads, through all the said severall dominions, London 1617, p. 81. See Tesdorpf 1887, Gewinnung, p. 15 n. 2 for the Jaski genealogy.

39. Göbel 1616, Einfelliger Bericht, unpaginated; and Friedrich Sa-

muel Bock, Versuch einer kurzen Naturgeschichte des Preußi-
schen Bernsteins und einer neuen wahrscheinlichen Erklärung seines Ursprunges, Königsberg 1767, p. 67.

40. Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Miscellanea Armadio XV, 80, Itinerario di lacomo Fantuzzi da Ravenna nel partire di Polonia della 1652, ff. 25r-27v. A printed edition of this manuscript is available as Giacomo Fantuzzi, Dianasz podroży po Euopie (1652) Giacomo Fantuzzi, z rękopisu przełożył, wstępem i przypisami opatrzył Wojciech TygIELSki, Warsaw 1990 and more recently in Italian as Giacomo Fantuzzi, Diario del viaggio europeo (1652) con instrut-

41. Grabowska 1983, Polish Amber, p. 9. Ogier also sought to acqui-

re amber through his contacts, visiting the father-in-law of the theologian Martin Ruarus. See the story told in Kurt Schottmue-

ler, Reiseeindrücke aus Danzig, Lübeck, Hamburg und Holland 1836. Nach dem neuentdeckten II. Teil von Charles Ogiers Ge-
schichtsverzeichnis, Berlin, Berlin 1836, p. 15 n. 2 for the


43. Marquis Ferdinando Cospì began collecting around 1624. In 1657, Cospì donated his collection to the town of Bologna. Here, it was displayed in the Palazzo Pubblico alongside Aldrovandi’s collections. In 1742 the Senate decided to move the collection to the Palazzo Poggi, where a number of objects still remain, al-

though the one-time system of classification has been dissolved. The collection was published in Lorenzo Legnani, Memorie Cospia-

no annesso a quello del famoso Ulisse Aldrovandi e donato alla sua patria dall’illuminissee signor Ferdinando Cospì, Bologna 1677, see pp. 48-50, 178, 285, 307 on amber, Zani accompanied the Polish ambassador to Moscow in 1671-1672, see Ercule

47. Manfredo Settala used his contacts to build up a considerable collection of amber. But for the descriptions in the numerous catalogues he commissioned of his collection and the like, these objects have disappeared. See Paolo Maria Terzago, Museum a galeria adunata dal sapere, et dallo studio del signore ca- nonico Manfredo Settala Descritta in latino dal Sig. Paolo Maria Terzalo; et hora in italiano dal Sig. Pietro Francesco Scarabelli e dal medemo accresciuta, Tortona 1666, pp. 56-61. This text had originally appeared two years earlier as Museum Septalianum Manfrendi Septalæ Patritii Mediolanensis industrioso labore con- structum; Pauli Maria Terzagi ... genial laconismo descriptum, etc., Tortona 1664. Information about Tito Livio Buratino is scarce. It appears that he is the same "viro erudito in Matematicis" who presented Valeriano Magni, a Capuchin friar from Milan, with a hydrostatic balance in 1644. Using this balance, who was working at the court of Wladyslaw IV Vasa in Warsaw, was able to discover the density of mer- cury, see Michael John Gorman, The Scientific Counter-Revolultion: manifести tradizioni antiche e esperimenti in Je- suit culture 1580-c1670. Thesis presented for the Doctor of Phil- losophy, EUI Florence, 1998, p. 182, n. 29. Gorman cites Sebas- tiano Ciampi, Bibliografia critica delle antiche recopie corrispon- denze politiche, ecclesiastiche, scientifiche, letterarie, artistici- che dell'Italia colla Russia, colla Polonia ed altre parti settentrionali nello il tutto raccolti, 3 vols, vol. I, Florence 1834-42, p. 311 as his source. A more comprehensive treatment of Buratino is: Jan Wladyslaw Wos, Tito Livio Buratino, uno scienziato italiano nella Polonia dei Seicento, in: L'Europa di Giovanni Sobieski. Cultura, Politica, Mercatura e Società, ed. Gaetano Platania, Viterbo 2005, pp. 23-36.


49. In the ancient account of amber’s creation Phaëthon seeks proof of his father’s paternity by asking to be allowed to hold the reins to Helios’ chariot of drawing the sun. Unaccustomed to control- ling the powerful horses, Phaëthon allows the wagon to career towards the earth, at whose frightened request it is dashed from the sky by a thunderbolt. Phaëthon plunges to his death in the river Eridanus, where the discovery of body by his mother and sisters provokes such overwhelming grief that his sisters are transformed into trees. Their arms and hands gnarl and their tears course down their skin – now knotted back – as drops of s- quid amber. This myth was well-known in Kircher’s early peri- od, principally because of the role it played in Ovid’s Metamor- phoses, but also because it could be found in the writings of se- veral ancient authors, such as Euripides, Hesiod and Aeschylus.

50. The altar is discussed in K. Aschengreen-Piacenti, Due altari in ambo del Museo degli Argenti, in: Bollettino d’Arte, vol. 4 (5), 1966, pp. 163-166, here p. 165. By 1704, this altar had entered the possession of Cosimo III and is recorded in Inventario della Galleria del 1704, n. 317, on which see Aschengreen-Piacenti 1966, Due altari, Aschengreen-Piacenti highlights the presence of a note inside the altar, which suggests that it was still in Dan- zig in 1669: "Das Ich Unterschreibener von Herrn Johan Adrian König dass Versetzte Pfandt von Herrn Petro Gatoriu, gott Voll- kommen undt Unversehret empfangen habe, tuhe ich mit Eigener Unterschrift bezeigten, Datum Dantziz den 24. Sept. Anno 1669 – Woicyzek Zelusky MP!; Hanns Steiniger MP! I have yet to trace these persons.

51. On Trzebicki see Gaetano Platania, Viajes, mercatura e política: diez viajes en el regno de los Sarmatos europeos en el XVII siglo: Piel- tro e Tommaso Talenti (Viaggi & storia, vol. 2), Viterbo 2003, p. 125; Trzebicki was deputy chancellor of the Polish Crown from 1652, bishop of Przemysl from 1665, and bishop of Crakow from 1668.


53. The donation is discussed in Giacinto Gimma, Della storia naturale delle gemme, di delle pietre, e di tutti i minerali, overo della fi- sica sotterranea di Giacinto Gimma ... in cui delle gemme, e delle pietre stesse si spiegano la nobiltà, i nomi, i colori, le spezie, i luoghi, la figura, la generazione, la grandezza, la durezza, la ma- dricre, l’uso, le virtù, le favole; se al fuoco resistano; quali sieno nella Sagra Scrittura nominate; quali i simboli ... Si, da ancora la cognizione de’ metalli, delle terre de’ sali, de’ solfi, de’ bitumi ... di qualche si tratta nella storia de’ fossili, che dalle pietre si formano; delle caverne, delle acque, e Edè fuochi sotterrani, de’ vulcani del mondo ... oltre alcuni trattati valevoli a dilucidare la storia tutta della minerale, ed altri, che della vegetevole, e di quella degli animali, sono proprij, 2 vols, vol. I Naples 1793, p.
393. My research has uncovered no Caterina married to Jan Zamoyski (1540-1605), Great Crown Chancellor and Great Crown Hetman or to Andrzei Zamoyski (1716-1792) Great Crown Chancellor, humanist and reformer. Catarina Zamoski (Gimma’s spelling) may refer to Katarzyna (née Ostrogowska) (1602-1642) who married Tomasz Zamoyski. She was the daughter of the Deputy Grand Chancellor of Poland, in 1620. This places the donations between 1620 and 1642, most likely in 1633-1634 when the coronation of a new King in Poland (Władysław IV Vasa) occasioned an embassy to Italy. On this event see Gigli 1994, Dion, vol. 1, pp. 237 and 244. There were still two amber candlesticks in the treasury at Loreto in 1889: Julius Lessing, Aus den Kirchenschätzten S. Nicolò in Bari und der Santa Casa in Loreto, in: Jahrbuch der Preußischen Kunstsammlungen, vol. 10, 1889, pp. 151-154.


55. Archivio Biblioteca Uffizi, Ms. 95, Inventario della Galleria (1753) reproduced online at: http://www.memofonte.it/home/files/pdf/lorenese_1753_95.pdf 17.11.2013. Entry 985 reads: “A casetta impiallacciata d’ambra a spartimenti che alcuni sono bassorilievi d’avorio bianco con fondo di tabi” nera o a colore, con colonnette e figurine d’ambra gialla e bianca con rossetti simili e s’apre davanti con due portali con coperchio sopra fermo a sepolcro con quattro gigli e un cavallino d’avorio in mezzo, con figura sopra d’ambra gialla che rappresenta S. Casimiro, foderato dentro di veluto rosso cremlini, con pallisotto d’ambra gialla alta braccia 1/3 [19.3 cm], larga soldi 9 [26.1 cm] e lunga soldi 19 [55.1 cm]. Inventario vecchio n. 335. See most recently Marilena Mosco, Maria Maddalena di Austria. Amber, in: The Museo degli argenti: collections and collectors, ed. Marilena Mosco and Omrilla Casazza, Florence 2007, pp. 96-107, p. 104 (fig. 8) on this object. The same object is recorded as having been in the chapel in Archivio di Stato Firenze, Guardaroba Medicea. 1090, f. 3 (n. 11), see K. Aschengreen-Piacenti, Il Museo degli Argenti, Florence 1967, pp. 156-160, Nr. Inv. Bargello 1917 (1) 77. Entry 951 in the 1753 inventory refers to a small box with the portrait of King Sigismund in its lid.

56. Archivio di Stato Firenze, Guardaroba Medicea 152, Inventario di... 1636 with Urban VIII’s proclamation of St Casimir of Poland as “esse solet” sent by Johann Friedrich of Pomerania in June 1578. It is possible the “crucem et globules aliquos succini, quod in ... du-...” (1753) reproduced online at: http:www.memofonte.it/home/files/pdf/lorenese_1753_95.pdf 17.11.2013, Entry 2865. This room had a south-facing window http:www.memofonte.it/home/files/pdf/lorenese_1753_95.pdf 17.11.2013, Entry 2865. This room had a south-facing window which Johann Friedrich asked Francesco to allow one of his subjects to study at the University of Siena.

57. Discussed in Johann Georg Keyssler, Fellow of the Royal Society in London. Carefully translated from the second edition of German, London: printed for A. and just description of the present state of those countries; their history, their manufactures, painting, sculpture, architecture, coins, antiquities, curiosities of art and nature, &c. Illustrated with copper-plates, engraved from drawings taken on the spot. By John George Keyssler, Fellow of the Royal Society in London, 1729/30, the “little world of figures” Lassels had mentioned were laid with “a world of little figures”. He believed these to be of the chandelier by those who saw it not only help us to locate it and the chandelier was hung directly in its light. Descriptions of the chandelier by those who saw it not only help us to locate it but also to gain an accurate picture of its real appearance. According to the above-mentioned Lassels, the chandelier was in laid with “a world of little figures”. He believed these to be of marble or wax but they were probably bone amber. According to Johann Georg Keysler, who saw the Medici chandelier in 1729/30, the “little world of figures” Lassels had mentioned were actually the “heads of princes and princesses of [the] illustrious house of [Brandenburg]" from whom the chandelier had been a gift, see Keysler 1756, The travels, p. 431. Lassels too, had heard that the chandelier had been a gift but from quite another source entirely. It had been presented to Mathias de Medici by the duke of Saxony, Johann Georg, who had been given it by Sophia “Duchess of Lüneburg”, the wife of Georg Friedrich. This story was also current in 1730; Giacinto Gimma was repeating it as Keysler was telling his version, see Gimma 1730, Della storia naturale, p. 393. It was, however, Keysler’s variant which Giuseppe Bianchi noted when he prepared his Catalogo Dimostrativo (Archivio Biblioteca Uffizi, Ms. 67, Il Catalogo Dimostrativo, Giuseppe Bianchi, 1768). Already over a hundred years old by this time Bianchi wrote above it, the chandelier’s arms had become broken and it was beginning to fall apart. It was moved again, this time to the guardaroba for safekeeping, where all traces have since vanished, see Aschengreen-Piacenti 1966, Due altari, p. 163. Bianchi too believed that the chandelier had been a gift from the house of Brandenburg. For him, the eagle with sceptre surmounting it provided the proof. According to Keysler the rondeaux also contained likenesses of personages from this family; indeed, they formed a genealogy. But Bianchi’s account is no more authoritative than Keysler or Lassels for it too is also filled with errors. One is Bianchi’s contention that King Frederick Wil-
Rohde 1937,

Hermann Ehrenberg,

Tesdorpf 1887,

Ekkehard Schmidberger,

M. T. W Payne,

Rohde 1937, Bernstein, pp. 22-23, 45; Reineking von Bock 1981, Bernstein, das Gold der Ostsee, p. 69 (fig. 64); and, most recently, Cranach and the Kunsten der Renaissance unter den Hohenzollern. Kirche, Hof und Stadtkultur: eine Ausstellung der Stiftung Preussische Schlösser und Gärten Berlin-Brandenburg in Kooperation mit der Evangelischen Kirchengemeinde St. Petri-St. Marien. Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2009, pp. 244-245 (cat. no. V. 39-40). It is unclear if these plates are related to the large piece of amber in the possession of Königsegg notary Jacob Stolz, which was turned into twelve plates and reported by Matthaeus Praetorius. See Karl Gottfried Hagen, Geschichte der im Jahr 1603 in Ostpreußen gefundenen großen Börnsteinmasse und Vergleichung derselben mit andern, deren in Acten und bei Schriftstellern erwähnt wird, in: Beiträge zur Kunde Preussens, vol. 6 (8), 1824, pp. 507-532.


Elkehard Schmidberger, SchatzKunst 800 – 1900, Kunsthandwerk und Plastik der Staatlichen Museen Kassel im Hessischen Landesmuseum Kassel, Wolfra thorfhausen 2001, pp. 176-177 (cat. no. 71), cf. pp. 176-179 (cat. no. 72). Reineking von Bock 1981, Bernstein, das Gold der Ostsee, p. 32; Rohde 1937, Bernstein, p. 28; Pelka 1920, Bernstein, p. 39. Other gifts which have a connection with or will probably be traced back to the dukes of Prussia when more research has been done are a gamesboard given to her husband the Elector of Saxony by Magdalene Sibylle of Brandenburg-Bayreuth, the granddaughters of the incapacitated Albrecht Friedrich, whose wife had sent amber to her cousin Rudolf II; an amber gamesboard was given to Johann Friedrich, Duke of Württemberg, who married Barbara, Margravine of Brandenburg, the daughter of Georg Friedrich’s heir, Elector Joachim Friedrich, in 1609.

Tesdorpf 1887, Gewinnung, p. 41-42; see also Pelka 1918, Die Meister der Bernsteinkunst, pp. 24-32; Pelka 1920, Bernstein, p. 42; Rohde 1937, Bernstein, p. 40; and Reineking von Bock 1981, Bernstein, das Gold der Ostsee, p. 36.

See for example, the medal with a likeness of Georg Friedrich von Brandenburg-Isenburg, miMed191 in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg.


For a discussion of the relationship between Chigi and the Barberini see Irene Fosi, Fabio Chigi and der Hof der Barberini - Beiträge zu einer vernetzten Lebensgeschichte, in: Historische An- stöße. Festschrift für Wolfgang Reinhard zum 65. Geburtstag am 10. April 2002, ed. Peter Burschel and Mark HAB endein, Berlin 2002, pp. 179-196. Although Chigi did discuss gifts from the Emperor in his diaries (7th May 1649) he did not mention amber per se, see, for example, Sforza Pallavicino, Vita di Alessandro VII, ier cinque del cardinale Sforza Pallavicino, … con discorso di Pietro Giordani su la vita e su le opere dell’autore … s vol. 1, Milan 1843, pp. 132-133 on a “credenza d’argento”. On the pyx discussed, see Bernstein für Thron und Altar 2005, pp. 58-59 (cat. no. 28), and Wolfram Koeppel, Die Lennart-Danforth-Sammlung Wetzlar. Europäische Wohnkultur aus Renaissance and Barock, Heidelberg 1992, pp. 496-498 (cat. no. G03).

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Abbildungen
This essay explores the issue of cultural identity and cultural identification with respect to one material: amber. Prior to the discovery of the new world and for quite some time afterwards, the primary source of amber in fifteenth-, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe was Prussia. Few Europeans, however, really understood much about its source. Indeed, few seem to have shown any interest in knowing more. This paper explores the ways in which people outside of Prussia acquired amber and whether these connections and routes led to the linking of the material with the region or not. The early modern understanding of amber’s geographical origin is contrasted with amber’s situation after 1900. The advent of notions of geographical indication at the end of the nineteenth century, coupled with the growth of national manufacturing pride emerging at the International Fairs in the decades after 1851, appear to bring about the first strong claims concerning amber’s nationality. The years after 1914-1918 war, which saw Prussia cleaved from Germany according to the Treaty of Versailles, give birth to the notion of amber as German, a status which was heavily emphasised under the National Socialist dictatorship. Since 1945, and especially in recent years, amber has become the Polish material par excellence. Highlighting recent nationalistic narratives, its aim is show that amber had plural cultural identities in the early modern period and that this ambivalence allowed amber to be draped with a variety of meanings which were cast off and replaced by others, or which existed simultaneously. It was only in the last century that strong claims were made to the actual ownership of the material and that people, with the rise of the notion of nation and national, have been able to link a nation with the material.

Rachel King studied modern and medieval languages at the University of Cambridge, design and the decorative arts at the Royal College of Art and the Victoria and Albert Museum and art history at the University of Manchester. Her AHRC-funded PhD dealt with objects made from amber and collections of them in the sixteenth, seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries and saw her spend time at the British School at Rome and in Berlin on a scholarship from the Studienstiftung des Abgeordnetenhauses Berlin. Having worked at a number of UK museums, she was a junior curator with the Staatliche Bayerische Sammlungen und Museen from 2011 to 2013, where she worked to produce exhibitions on subjects ranging from seventeenth-century silver to handbags. She has been a member of the department of Art and Design at the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh since June 2013. Her areas of specialism are sculpture and objects in organic materials, as well as precious and semi-precious stones.