About the Cover Image

The cover of this volume reproduces the picture on the front page of the second of three volumes by August Ludwig von Burgsdorf, entitled *Versuch einer vollständigen Geschichte vorzüglicher Holzarten in systematischen Abhandlungen zur Erweiterung der Naturkunde und Forsthaushaltungs-Wissenschaft* (“Attempt to Present a Complete History of Excellent Types of Wood in Systematic Treatises for the Enhancement of Natural and Forestry Sciences”) that were published between 1783 and 1800 at Joachim Pauli publishers in Berlin. The second volume, printed in 1787, deals with “native and foreign oak species”.

The copper represents a Native American who hands over acorns in a basket to a European merchant on the coast of North America. On the right are seed bags with the inscription “Red-Oak” (*Quercus rubra*) and “Chest nut-Oak” (*Quercus montana*); the legend (not reproduced here) is “Enriching Europe” (*Europen zur Bereicherung*). It is Europe that benefits from plants and knowledge of other continents.

The author, August Ludwig von Burgsdorf (1747–1802), a descendent of a Gotha noble family, had finished his formation for the forestry service in 1770 at the newly founded *Forstschule* in Berlin, the first public forestry school in the Holy Roman Empire. In 1777 he became, thanks to the intervention of the royal chamberlain Alexander Georg von Humboldt (the father of Alexander and Wilhelm), chief forestry officer (*Oberforstrat*) in Tegel. Nine years later, he also succeeded the renowned botanist Johann Gottlieb Gleditsch (1714–1786) as director of the Berlin Forestry Academy, which he himself had attended earlier. He was thus actively involved in the increasing state engagement in the forestry sector.

Burgsdorf distinguished himself with forestry and natural history publications, in which he repeatedly advocated the use of “foreign” species, not last from outside Europe, in order to counter the shortage of wood that he repeatedly invoked. In 1782, he became a member of the *Gesellschaft der Naturforschenden Freunde zu Berlin* (“Society of the Friends of Natural Science in Berlin”) and in 1786 a corresponding member of the Göttingen Academy of Sciences and Humanities. Besides his forestry and publishing activities, Burgsdorf was a successful seed trader. His *Burgsdorf’sche Kisten* (“Burgsdorf boxes”), each containing 100 seeds of different (not last “foreign”) trees, were distributed throughout Europe.

The engraving thus refers on the one hand to a “scientific” position aimed at the circulation of resources and knowledge, which is associated with Burgsdorf until today. On the other hand, it reflects the tangible interests of an actor who promoted his career and economic success by attributing “usefulness” and “state relevance” to his knowledge, which included non-European forest botany.

At the lower edge of the copper can be found a signature (which is not reproduced on the cover either): *Halle deli[neavit] et sculps[it]* (“Halle has drawn and engraved it”). “Halle” refers to Johann Samuel Halle (1727–1810), born in...
Ermland and since 1760 professor of history at the Royal Prussian Cadet Institute in Berlin. Halle was a well-connected scholar, scientist, and populariser of science in various fields: He translated and edited French books, published on art history and art production, on natural history, on “state history”, on plant, animal and mineral poisons, on the “magic powers of nature”, on manufactories and technologies. Furthermore, he worked as a copper engraver who, among other projects, contributed to the illustration of the German edition of Buffon’s *Natural History*. 

**VI**

About the Cover Image