

**Provenienzbericht zu Jean-François Millet, *La récolte des pommes de terre* / *The harvesting of potatoes***

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Pencil on paper, 145 x 225 mm

signed in pencil lower right: "J. F. M."

- **Provenance:**

(...)

(Probably acquired by Hildebrand Gurlitt in France in the 1940s)<sup>1</sup>

By descent to Cornelius Gurlitt, Munich/Salzburg

From 6 May 2014: Estate of Cornelius Gurlitt

- **Introductory remarks**

The largest current collection of drawings by Jean-François Millet (nearly six hundred works) is to be found in the Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts Graphiques, part of the Musée d'Orsay's permanent collection. Whereas many other notable collections of his graphic works, American in particular, consist largely of well-executed drawings intended for collectors, the Louvre collection consists of a large number of sketches, studies of nature, quickly jotted down images in a notebook.<sup>2</sup> They display great similarity to the eight drawings, which were found in C. Gurlitt's cache. Like the Musée du Louvre collection, they portray family themes, images of the humility, hard work, and peace of rural life that reflect the artist's nostalgia for a pre-industrial society living in harmony with nature. The drawings by Millet found in the Gurlitt trove are typical to his oeuvre during his countryside residence after he left Paris. He concentrated in capturing the landscape and the humble inhabitants of this region.

Planting and harvesting potatoes is a recurring theme in Millet's oeuvre, depicting the peasants tilling their land for the food of their own consumption. Millet's depictions come to amplify the poverty of peasants, and the fact that potatoes have become the staple starch of many working families.<sup>3</sup> Reviewing a large number of drawings and several paintings relating to cultivating potatoes, a need arose to differentiate between the planting and the harvesting for in the various sources there seems to be some confusion. In the Moreau-Nélaton<sup>4</sup> encompassing publication of Millet's oeuvre, the

<sup>1</sup> Anlage 1\_PhotoGraph 9.1\_F818\_Millet\_Aussaat.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/history-of-the-collections/graphic-arts.html#c4545> (September 2017)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2016/19th-century-european-art-n09499/lot.58.html>

<sup>4</sup> <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k96865944/f157.item.zoom>

illustration of the 1861 painting “Les planteurs de pommes de terre, 1861”<sup>5</sup> clarifies the confusion. The planting is signified by the peasant female standing erect and dropping potato seedlings from her apron into the holes dug by her husband. This scene deviates clearly from Lostart 478206 where the female peasant is depicted bending forward to reach the ground, in order to collect the potatoes her husband has unearthed with his hoe.

Although this drawing clearly is more than a study, by its composition, detailed rendering and rather large sheet of paper, it recalls preparatory drawings for a painting. However, no painting of this particular scene is recorded. The painting “La récolte des pommes de terre, 1867”<sup>6</sup> depicts the farmer pouring the basket of collected potatoes into a sack,<sup>7</sup> clearly the successive scene to Lostart #478206. The two paintings may provide a time span during which Lostart #478206 may have been created, namely 1861-1867.

**Primary sources:**

- **Business records Hildebrand Gurlitt:**<sup>8</sup>

**Book 1: Acquisitions June 1942**

Millet	2 Tuschzeichnungen	139	
Millet	3 Tuschzeichnungen	139	41,727.50
Millet	3 Tuschzeichnungen	139	

Lines 825-827 refer to eight ink drawings bought presumably as one lot, as the price appears as a consolidated purchase. No details are provided beyond the medium. The team believes that the listings could refer to the 8 works on paper with a variety of media found in the C. Gurlitt cache and listed hastily by H. Gurlitt in the ledger.

**Book 1: Acquisitions March 1943**

Millet	Bauern Rad.	177	600,-
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Line 1119 registers one Millet engraving Bauern (farmers) bought from a private source for 600 RM.

**Book 1: Sales January 1943**

Paul Römer [Roemer]	Millet	8 Zeichnungen 1607-14	174	1.500,-
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Line 1032 registers the sale of 8 drawings by Millet for 1500 RM to Paul Roemer. The fact that H. Gurlitt registered Roemer as the buyer does not contradict the fact that the drawings were found in C. Gurlitt’s cache. H. Gurlitt served as Roemer’s main buyer in Paris for his Berlin gallery<sup>9</sup> and Gurlitt may have assumed the future acquisition, which did not materialize, consequently the works remained in H. Gurlitt’s possession.

**Book 1: Sales March 1943**

H. Reemtsma	Millet	Bauern	179	600,-
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Line 1124 registers a sale of Millet Bauern (farmers) to H. Reemtsma for 600 RM.

**Book 2: Acquisition 1942**

1607	20.6.	Millet	Tuschzeichng	Z.	Jean Lenthal
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<sup>5</sup> Collection of the Boston Fines art Museum: <http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/potato-planters-31621>

<sup>6</sup> <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k96868782/f53.image.r=Millet%20racont%C3%A9%20par%20lui-m%C3%A0me>

<sup>7</sup> Collection of the Walters Museum of Art: <http://art.thewalters.org/detail/22652/the-potato-harvest/>

<sup>8</sup> The sales ledger has proven to be problematic, inconsistent and inaccurate by provenance research conducted pertaining to the C. Gurlitt estate

<sup>9</sup> Hoffmann, Meike und Nicola Kuhn. *Hitlers Kunsthändler*. Muenchen 2016. p 217

1608	20.6.	Millet	Tuschzeichng	Z.	Jean Lenthal
1609	20.6.	Millet	Tuschzeichng	Z.	Jean Lenthal
1610	20.6.	Millet	Tuschzeichng	Z.	Jean Lenthal
1611	20.6.	Millet	Tuschzeichng	Z.	Jean Lenthal
1612	20.6.	Millet	Tuschzeichng	Z.	Jean Lenthal
1613	20.6.	Millet	Tuschzeichng	Z.	Jean Lenthal
1614	20.6.	Millet	Tuschzeichng	Z.	Jean Lenthal
1607	1942	Millet	Tuschzchg	Z.	J. Lenthal
1608	1942	Millet	Tuschzchg	Z.	J. Lenthal
1609	1942	Millet	Tuschzchg	Z.	J. Lenthal
1610	1942	Millet	Tuschzchg	Z.	J. Lenthal
1611	1942	Millet	Tuschzchg	Z.	J. Lenthal
1612	1942	Millet	Tuschzchg	Z.	J. Lenthal
1613	1942	Millet	Tuschzchg	Z.	J. Lenthal
1614	1942	Millet	Tuschzchg	Z.	J. Lenthal

Lines 1147-1154 and 1351-1358 register 8 ink drawings as purchased from Jean Lenthal. The falsified listing of the purchase from J. Lenthal was proven by post war letters and an affidavit submitted by H. Gurlitt to the Allies, he testified that J. Lenthal was not the original owner of these items and posed as the seller to abide by H. Gurlitt's request.<sup>10</sup>

### Book 2: Sales 1943

Millet	Bauern	Rad.	Privat H.G.	600,-	12.3.	600,-	Hermann Reemtsma
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Line 1456 from March 12 registers an engraving by Millet "Bauern" (peasants) as having been sold to H. Reemtsma for 600 RM.<sup>11</sup>

### Book 3: Acquisitions and sales 1943

Millet	8 Tuschzeichnungen	Z.	Jean Lenthal, Paris		9.1.	Paul Römer [Roemer]
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Line 258 registers and reiterates the June 20, 1942 acquisitions of 8 ink drawings by Millet from Jean Lenthal and sold to Paul Roemer on September 1 for 1500 RM

### Book 4: 1943

Hermann Reemtsma, Hamburg					
1943	März	12.	An Millet	W. 48	600,-

<sup>10</sup> Anlage 2. According to the extant sale ledgers, this was one of about forty works that Gurlitt claimed to have acquired from the art dealer Jean Lenthal in Paris on 20 June 1942. Research by the Taskforce revealed these entries false. Post-war correspondence between Gurlitt and Lenthal, which was found in Cornelius Gurlitt's Salzburg residence, proved that Gurlitt coerced Lenthal into issuing fake receipts for works that Lenthal never owned or sold. Gurlitt provided Lenthal with a statement to this effect in 1947.

Jean Lenthal (recte Hans Loewenthal, 1914 Vienna–1983 Paris) was an art dealer in Paris. On account of his Jewish descent, Lenthal was deported in 1943, first to Drancy and thereafter to Auschwitz, Sachsenhausen and Mauthausen concentration camps. After the liberation in 1945, Lenthal returned to live in Paris where he resumed his art dealership

<sup>11</sup> An etching of this work was created by J. Millet in 1863, a fact known to H. Gurlitt, allowing him to fabricate a sale of lesser value (NGA Washington 1943.3.6262, "The departure for work")

Line 3214 registers a March 1943 sale of Millet to Herman Reemtsma from Hamburg for 600 RM as per payments by the buyer.

### **Conclusion:**

- The above outline reiterates the challenge of accepting the ledger as reliable, although it reaffirms that the listings do contain partially important facts and dates.
- The team believes that the 8 drawings registered in the H. Gurlitt's various ledgers as outlined above, could refer also to Lostart #478026. In the C. Gurlitt cache a total of 11 Millet items were found. Of these identified in the photograph of an authenticity certificate issued by André Schoeller<sup>12</sup> (Lostart #470201, 478202, 478203, 478204, 478205, 478207). These plus additional 2 drawings (Lostart #478206 and Lostart #478535) together constitute the total of 8, hastily registered by H. Gurlitt, omitting the particular varying media.
- The additional 3 items: 2 framed landscapes (Lostart #478390 and #478391) appear on the Liste Gerard<sup>13</sup>, and in all probability are not part of this register of 8, as well as the pastel rendering of "Fin de la journée" Lostart #532992, the measurements and medium of which would have demanded a separate listing.
- This work could be one of the items listed in the Sales Ledgers with the (falsified) acquisition from Jean Lenthal. Due to the varying technique (ink vs. pencil) it remains unclear if the items from the ledger could be identical with the present drawing.

### **Photograph:**

Among Cornelius Gurlitt's papers, photographs of artworks were found, among them a reproduction of this drawing. André Schoeller, art expert and known collaborator, vouched for the authenticity of this work, dated 14 March 1944.<sup>14</sup>

- **Archival sources**

#### **Witt-Library, London**

The photograph from the Witt library at first glance is identical to Lostart #478206, however, a closer look reveals the differences, mainly in the darker shadows achieved by tighter hatchings, and also the closer distance between the outstretched hand of the female peasant to the hoe held by her husband.<sup>15</sup>

The title of the painting "Crayon Study Potato Planting" is misleading for it is a false attribution to the harvesting scene.

The photo of the drawing, apparently taken from a catalogue, refers to the owner as Cottier of London and New York. Daniel Cottier (1838–1891) was a Scottish stained glass artist, collector and fine arts dealer.<sup>16</sup> Cottier introduced his contemporary audiences in London and New York to the work of French artists. In 1891, following his death a major sale of his collection was held in London. In all probability, this drawing was sold at this time. Its current owners are not known.

#### **ERR database of Art at the Jeu de Paume**

The following ERR files were consulted with negative findings:

Owner: Georges Bernheim. Inventory no.: Gal. Bernst. 3; Millet, Saemann

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<sup>12</sup> Anlage 1\_PhotoGraph 9.1\_F940\_Millet\_Sechs Bilder\_478201-05\_478207\_R / V

<sup>13</sup> Gramlich, J. Quellendokumente zu Paper I5, Muenchen 2015

<sup>14</sup> Anlage 1.

<sup>15</sup> Anlage 3.

<sup>16</sup> <https://gildedage.omeka.net/exhibits/show/galleriesandclubs/galleries/cottier>

List of ERR confiscated items no. 41 Galerie Bernstein<sup>17</sup>

Owner: Cassel van Doorn. Inventory no.: B-2159; Millet: Eines sackanfuellenden Bauernpaares (sic)

Owner: Salomon Flavian. Inventory no.: Fla 6; Millet: Der Holzhacker<sup>18</sup>

Owner: Victor Lyon. No inventory no.; Millet: Baigneuses au repos.

### **MNR Site Rose-Valland - Musée Nationaux Récupération**

Five entries record works of art by J.-F. Millet as restituted to France from Germany. Most of these restitutions were handled at the Central Collecting Point Wiesbaden. None of the works relate to the present drawing.

### **National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) / Fold3**

The large collection of documents relating to the confiscation of Jewish collections in Paris supports the assumption that the Millet art represented in the C. Gurlitt cache originated with one of these looted collections. The fact is that the 79 collections were seized by the ERR,<sup>19</sup> but none of them with reports on Lostart 478206.

One needs to bear in mind the Moebel Aktion– Bilder, which do list Millet art confiscations.<sup>20</sup> Beginning in the spring of 1942, art objects were brought to the Jeu de Paume as part of the loot collected by the ERR offshoot, the “Moebel-Aktion” (furniture operation), stripping furnishings from the homes of Jews who had fled or had been deported. The M-Aktion art loot was separated into a number of special type-specific “M-A” collections, and were inventoried without revealing the name and address of the home from which they were seized. The Millet items in C. Gurlitt’s cache may have originated with such an operation and ended up in the hands of intermediaries like Wuester who dealt clandestinely with the looted items, selling to Parisian art dealers.

### **The Getty Provenance Index Database (Sales catalogue)**

Forty-seven records of J.F. Millet are recorded in the database. All were checked and none corresponds directly with Lostart 478206.<sup>21</sup> Where subject matter and medium did bear similarities, the measurements did not.

It should be noted that the Theodore Fischer sale of 13-16 May 1936,<sup>22</sup> lot 1945, lists three small figure studies in ink with monogram. Two provide measurements, but they do not correspond to Lostart 478206, and neither does the medium. In addition, the Schoeller photograph with expertise attests to the Paris provenance.

- **Auction and Exhibition Catalogues with possible reference to Lostart-ID 478206:**

Catalogue de la vente qui aura lieu par suite du décès de M. Alfred Sensier [...] vente 10 -15 déc. 1877 [...]; lot 232. <sup>23</sup>

To be noted:

No measurements are provided in the sales catalogue, thus final concrete identification is hindered.

Listed medium in catalogue *crayon noir*, referring to Conté Crayon. Nicolas-Jacques Conté invented the Conté Crayon in France in 1795, especially for drawing and sketching. Conté Crayons are made of compressed charcoal or graphite with the addition of wax, or clay mixed in for the base as well as

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.fold3.com/image/303253897> f (September 2017)

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.fold3.com/image/306292350> (September 2017)

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.fold3.com/image/269984171>, 269984187, 269984192, 269984200 (September 2017)

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.fold3.com/image/283748345>, 306282909 (September 2017)

<sup>21</sup> <http://piprod.getty.edu/starweb/pi/servlet.starweb?path=pi/pi.web> (August 2017)

<sup>22</sup> [http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/fischer1936\\_05\\_13/0126?sid=e9599b40011fd57082a43c9622aa07ea](http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/fischer1936_05_13/0126?sid=e9599b40011fd57082a43c9622aa07ea) (September 2017)

<sup>23</sup> <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k12403350>; Anlage 4.

natural pigments for color.<sup>24</sup> The one used by Millet in this drawing was in all probability made of compressed graphite or charcoal, and thus the tendency to identify it as black crayon.<sup>25</sup>

It remains unclear if the work sold at the Sensier sale under lot 232 is in fact identical with the present drawing. An annotated auction catalogue, available via Art Sales Catalogues Online, does not reveal a buyer name, as the writing is illegible.

Lot #216 in this sale lists an identical title. Additional comment in brackets *Effet de soir* (Evening light) refers to a drawing of the same title in the collection of the Morgan Library, NY.<sup>26</sup> The depiction of this scene clearly reflecting the darkness at the tail end of the day, shortly before heading home.

- **Auction catalogues consulted with negative results:**

Tableaux Pastels Dessins Aquarelles, Collection Roger Marx, Galerie Manzi-Joyant, Paris, May 11-12, 1914

Graphik und Handzeichnungen des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts (Auktion 72). Auct. cat., Paul Graupe, Berlin, 5-7 May 1927.

Antiquitäten, Gemälde, modernes Mobiliar (Katalog 2094), auct. cat. Rudolph Lepke's Kunst-Auctions-Haus, Berlin, 1-2 November 1935

Moderne Graphik der Sammlung Heinrich Stinnes, Gutekunst & Klipstein, Bern, Schweiz, 20. -22. Juni 1938.

Tableaux, pastels, aquarelles, dessins. Drouot, Paris, vente du 17 juin 1942.

Tableaux et dessins modernes. Drouot, Paris, vente du 20 novembre 1942.

Succession Georges Viau. Drouot, Paris, vente du 11 décembre 1942.

Tableaux, pastels, aquarelles, dessins. Drouot, Paris, vente du 21 décembre 1942.

Tableaux modernes, aquarelles, pastels, dessins. Drouot, Paris, vente du 4 mars 1943.

Tableaux modernes, dessins, aquarelles, gouaches, pastels. Drouot, Paris, vente du 2 juin 1943.

Tableaux modernes, aquarelles, dessins, gouaches, sculptures. Drouot, Paris, vente du 10 novembre 1943.

Tableaux modernes, dessins, aquarelles, gouaches, pastels. Drouot, Paris, vente du 21 janvier 1944.

Catalogue des dessins, aquarelles, gouaches, pastels. Drouot, Paris, vente du 20 mars 1944.

Tableaux modernes, dessins, aquarelles, gouaches, pastels. Drouot, Paris, vente du 23 mars 1944.

Objets de bel ameublement, tableaux et dessins. Drouot, Paris, vente du 31 mars 1944.

Tableaux modernes, dessins, aquarelles, gouaches, pastels. Drouot, Paris, vente du 24 mai 1944.

Catalogue des dessins, aquarelles, gouaches, pastels. Drouot, Paris, vente du 4 juin 1944.

Estampes anciennes et modernes, tableaux, dessins anciens et modernes. Drouot, Paris, vente du 20 décembre 1944.

Dessins, tableaux modernes, sièges et meubles. Drouot, Paris, vente du 25 mai 1945.

Estampes, tableaux, pastels, aquarelles, dessins modernes. Drouot, Paris, vente du 29 juin 1945.

Tableaux modernes, dessins, aquarelles, gouaches, pastels. Drouot, Paris, vente du 8 novembre 1945.

Estampes, tableaux, aquarelles, dessins, miniatures. Drouot, Paris, vente du 13 décembre 1945.

Dessins de Jean-François Millet. Exh. cat., Musée du Louvre, Paris, 1960.

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<sup>24</sup> <https://keetonsonline.wordpress.com/2017/01/12/interested-in-conte-crayons-but-dont-know-what-they-are-or-how-to-use-them-heres-your-guide/>

<sup>25</sup> It should be noted that the medium was assigned by the Munich team, not by YV team. The HR photographs do not allow precise medium identification

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.themorgan.org/drawings/item/247308>



J.-F. Millet. Exh. cat., Wildenstein & Co., London 1969.  
Jean François Millet. Exh. cat., Hayward Gallery, London 1976.  
Achim Moeller, 5th Anniversary 1972-77, London  
Christie's, 19th Century European Paintings, Drawings, Watercolors, 15 February 1995, New York.  
Millet, Van Gogh: Paris, Musée d'Orsay : 14 septembre 1998 - 3 janvier 1999.  
Christie's, Old masters and 19th Century Drawings, 24 January 2008, New York  
Christi's, Old Master and Early British Drawings & Watercolors, January 2013, New York  
Stephan Ongpin Fine Art, online catalogue, London (August 2017)  
89 various auction catalogues, France, 1942 – 1945: <http://bibliotheque-numerique.inha.fr/collection?search=Millet+dessins&sort=score&perpage=20&fulltext=1&date-start=1942&date-end=1945&page=1> (August 2017)

- **Books consulted with negative results:**

Bacou, R.: Millet. One hundred drawings. London 1975.  
Cain, J. and P. Leprieur: Millet. Paris: Librairie Centrale des Beaux-Arts, 1913.  
Collection Henry Rouart: Première vente. Galerie Manzi-Joyant, Paris, 1912.  
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Murphy, A., R.: Drawn into the Light: Jean-François Millet. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999.  
Murphy: A. R.: Jean-François Millet. Boston 1984.  
Muther, R.: J. F. Millet. Berlin: Bard, 1903.  
Peacock, N.: Millet, London 1905.  
Sensier, A.: Jean-François Millet. London: Macmillan, 1881.  
Sensier, A.: La vie et l'oeuvre de J. F. Millet. Paris: Quantin, 1881.  
Turner, P. M.: Millet. London: Jack, 1910.  
Yriarte, C.: J. F. Millet. Paris 1885.

## **Conclusion:**

The only possible reference found to Lostart #478206 dates to the Sensier sale in 1877, where lot 232 might correspond to Lostart 478206 drawing. However, as measurements, descriptions and photographic comparisons are missing, a clear identification cannot be guaranteed for the subject is abundant in Milles work.

Another hypothesis is, that this drawing might be part of the ledger's register of 8 ink drawings by Millet, falsely attributed as having been in the collection of Jean (Hans) Lenthal. However, as the technique differs and since Gurlitt sold several other works to clients it cannot be said with certainty. The attempt to hide the true owner would be a hint to the dubious source H. Gurlitt wished to leave anonymous.

It is evident though that Gurlitt acquired the works in France in the 1940s which the expertise by Schoeller shows. Gurlitt was in Paris when the certificate was issued and could have acquired the work then.

Former owners of the drawing remain unidentified.

Die Provenienz des Werkes konnte trotz intensiver Forschung nicht lückenlos aufgeklärt werden, d.h. das Kunstwerk ist weder erwiesenermaßen noch mit hoher Wahrscheinlichkeit NS-Raubkunst noch frei von NS-Raubkunstverdacht. Es wurde nach aktueller Einschätzung allen prioritären Rechercheansätzen nachgegangen. Das Werk muss demnach in die Kategorie „ungeklärt“ [=nach Ampelsystem: gelb] eingestuft werden.<sup>27</sup>

## **Disclaimer**

The research that goes into establishing the provenance of a work of art usually requires complex work that often lasts many years. Researchers have to reconstruct events that took place many decades ago. Often, the only sources of vital clues stem from third parties who do not always represent and assess the facts in a manner that is beyond all doubt. The above object record is just an interim report that was designed as a basis to facilitate possible further in-depth research. Despite the short period of time in which it was compiled, this interim report is nevertheless the result of utmost care in research, combined with great professional expertise. The following provisions therefore apply:

- a) The investigation revolved exclusively around the question of the origin and chronology of ownership of the artwork described in the report. No liability will be accepted for:
  - the accuracy of the used sources' presentation of the facts and any analyses, conclusions, and assessments they may contain,
  - the exhaustiveness of our probing into and evaluation of the available source material,
  - the analysis and conclusions drawn from the sources in the course of our research,
  - the findings on the subject of the report and how they were derived,
  - the authenticity of the artwork, as well as the accuracy of its attribution to a particular artist.
- b) The report is based on the sources available at the time it was written. It is an interim report. Further research might be required. It is important to note the possibility that new source material may be found, which may lead to a re-evaluation of the interim findings presented here.
- c) The present report does not purport to make pronouncements on any legal claims and legal positions. No liability will be accepted for any conclusions drawn by the addressee(s) or by third parties based on this report.

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<sup>27</sup> Angleichung durch Projektleitung, 30.05.2018.