

ExpoTime!

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The international magazine
for museum professionals

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Lifting up by its bootstraps: After the deletion of the “Sackler” name, secret negotiations with Athens, the British Museum ends the British Petrol sponsorship

After 27 years, the British Museum is stopping its financial support from British Petrol. The last funding agreement from 2016 has now expired. After several other major British museums, such as The Tate (2016), National Portrait Gallery (2022), Royal Shakespeare Company, Scottish Ballet and the Royal Opera House had waived funding, the “Hieroglyphs” exhibition was the last special exhibition to be funded by BP.

For 27 years, BP has supported numerous special exhibitions as title sponsor, most recently the successful “Troy: myth and reality” in 2019/20, “I am Ashurbanipal: king of the world, king of Assyria” in 2018/19 and “Scythians: warriors of ancient Siberia” in 2017. Previously they have supported “Sunken cities: Egypt’s lost worlds”, “Indigenous Australia: enduring civilisation”, “Ming: 50 years that changed China” and “Vikings: life and legend”. In addition, BP has supported special public events at the British Museum such as Chinese New Year (2008), the Mexican Day of the Dead (2009), and most recently the Days of the Dead Festival (2015), supported by BP and in association with the Government of Mexico as part of the 2015: Year of Mexico in the UK. There is also support for the BP Lecture Theater.

However, it remains unclear whether BP is only withdrawing from exhibition funding; it currently seems possible that structural funding for the museum’s revitalization measures (the masterplan (see p. 24) comprises £1 billion / \$1.24 billion) will remain.

Following the oil spill of the “Deepwater Horizon” in 2010, the premises of the British Museum and the Great Hall had been the scene of artful protests by various climate activist groups demanding the end of BP’s sponsorship. It is interesting that the British Museum has always allowed such protests in the museum as long as there is no danger to the collection, the staff or the visitors.

In early 2022, more than 300 archaeologists and historians wrote to the museum’s trustees calling on them to cut ties with the company, while activists presented fake “Stonehenge drilling plans” to visitors. In 2020, the museum was occupied for three days during its BP-sponsored “Troy” exhibition.

Additionally, demands to withdraw from BP funding also came from other parts of society: “Archaeologists, teachers, heritage professionals and climate scientists – as well as its own staff members – have been calling on the British Museum’s director and trustees to rethink their relationship with BP for years” stresses Rodney Harrison, professor of heritage studies at UCL Institute of Archaeology, who himself was one of the signatories to a submission to the museum (“Culture Unstained”), which was submitted by Sir Robert Watson, the former chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, and by Naomi Oreskes, a professor of the history of science at Harvard University. Other signatories included Willow Coningham, from the UK Student Climate Network; Mark Serwotka, the general secretary of the Public and Commercial Services Union, representing many British Museum staff; Paul Ekins, professor of resources and environmental policy at UCL and the former co-director of the UK Energy Research Centre. Actors also got involved, such as Emma Thompson, Mark Ruffalo and Mark Rylance.

Last December, the Chair of the museum, George Osborne, announced that the museum no longer wanted to be a place for climate protests: “Our goal is to be a net zero carbon museum,” said Osborne, “no longer a destination for climate protest but instead an example of climate solution”. Even before that, it had become strangely quiet about the promotion of BP, which recently drew attention to itself with unusual high profits. From April to June 2022, the energy giant raked in adjusted earnings of \$8.5 billion. More than triple compared to 2021.

But how big was BP’s financial commitment really? In the end, it was just a piece of cake for BP, because the sum, which sounded enormous at first, was distributed among several institutions as a big deal. It is said to be less than 1 percent of the British Museum’s budget.

Enjoy the issue!

Christian Mueller-Straten, PhD
Publisher of EXPOTIME!

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Title picture: Just opened: The Richard Gilder Center for Science, Education, and Innovation of the American Museum of Natural History, New York. Rendering by MIR and Studio Gang. For more details, see our next issue! Photo: Museum



| From left to right: High commission of India's first secretary Jaspreet Sukhija, India's consul general Vijay Selvaraj, acting high commissioner of India Sujit Ghosh, Glasgow Life's head of museums and collections Duncan Dornan and Glasgow Life's chairperson Baillie Annette Christie. Photo: Museum

Glasgow Life Museums has been working on the repatriation of the Indian artefacts, alongside the High Commission of India in London, since January 2021. In August 2022, the museums signed a contract which will make it become the first UK museums service to repatriate artefacts to India. The charity which manages the city's museum collections returned already seven Indian antiquities to India. They include a ceremonial Indo-Persian tulwar (sword) which is believed to date back to the 14th cent., and an 11th cent. carved stone door jamb from a Hindu temple in Kanpur. Six of the objects were removed from temples and shrines in different states in Northern India during the 19th cent., while the seventh was purchased following a theft from the owner. The transfer of ownership ceremony took place after Glasgow City Council's City Administration Committee approved a recommendation made in April by the cross-party Working Group for Repatriation and Spoliation to return 51 items to India, Nigeria and the Cheyenne River and Pine Ridge Lakota Sioux tribes in South Dakota.

Included are restitutions of 19 Benin bronzes to Nigeria. This work has been ongoing since it was established that the artefacts – acquired as gifts, bequests and from auction houses – were seized during the British Punitive Expedition of 1897. What was meant to be a repatriation to the State of Nigeria, turned out to be gift to the Oba family, when the Nigerian State donated all restituted Benin bronzes to the Oba Ewuare II recently.

Glasgow has led repatriation efforts in the UK since 1998, when the city agreed to return the Lakota Sacred Ghost Dance shirt to the Wounded Knee Survivors' Association. 25 Lakota and Oceti Sakowin ancestor and cultural items – sold and donated to Glasgow's museums by George Cramer, an interpreter for the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show who visited the city in 1892 – will also be handed back to the Cheyenne River Sioux and Oglala Sioux tribes of South Dakota. Some of these objects were taken from the Wounded Knee Massacre site following the battle of December 1890, while others were personal items belonging to named ancestors or are ceremonial artefacts.



Anette Rein

The German Colonial Era: Facts, Figures and False Consequences ¹

With the founding of the German Empire in 1871, conditions arose that made it possible to also formally engage as a colonial power overseas and to lay claim to one's own rights in the competition between industrial nations. The active German colonial period began in the 1880s, initially by means of trade missions (Bismarck's so-called "protectorates" ²) and ended with the Treaty of Versailles on June 28, 1919. "The German colonies [initially] called 'protectorates' were together [around 1900] about six times larger than the German Empire [and had thus grown to be the third largest colonial possessions of European powers]. In them 25,000 Germans ruled over 12 million colonised people." ³

The goal of developing German model colonies particularly efficiently in the shortest possible time led to the greatest brutality being used to intervene in the living areas of the colonised. The protectorates usually had to be conquered militarily "and local resistance to foreign rule had to be broken with military force from the very beginning". ⁴ This also took place with the support of co-operation partners from other countries in various forms. ⁵ The high points of the anti-colonial resistance with the heaviest losses were the wars against the Herero and Nama in German South-West Africa (1904-1908) with up to 100,000 dead and the Maji-Maji War in East Africa with up to 300,000 victims (1905-1907) on the African side. ⁶ Out of 19,000 German soldiers, about 1,500 died. ⁷

In summary, it can be said that the political and economic hopes of the German Empire associated with the colonial conquests were not fulfilled – instead, in most cases, they remained financial subsidy transactions. Economic profits were primarily made by merchants and trading companies. Ethnological museums were also among the profiteers of colonial policy. They obtained a large part of the objects for their collections in a wide variety of ways during this period.

Collecting in colonial contexts

In the course of European expansion, three motives for collecting can be summarised. ⁸ In the 16th cent., exotic goods and their comparative observation were to lead to more world knowledge, and princely chambers of art and curiosities were created. ⁹ From the 18th cent. onwards, interest in the miraculous waned; as the natural scienc-

es progressed, special collections and various museum genres emerged. Of note from this period are the three voyages of exploration undertaken by the British navigator and explorer James Cook (1728-1779), some of whom travelled with the German natural scientist and ethnologist Johann Reinhold Forster (1729-1798) to the South Seas and along the North American coast. Extensive collections were brought back from these excursions. ¹⁰ In the 19th cent. ¹¹, museum representatives and scholars saw their chance to obtain the necessary comparative material for more intensive research. Accordingly, a "veritable collecting mania" set in. Soldiers, sailors, merchants, travellers, physicians, scientists, missionaries, administrators and settlers collected.

Colonial expansion made the mass accumulation of non-European objects, taxidermy and parts of deceased people for museums possible in the first place. "Researchers and collectors used colonial infrastructures and networks and, conversely, provided knowledge for colonial development through their publications. Museums initiated expeditions to the colonies, encouraged colonial actors ... to collect – for example through written instructions – and acquired objects from wars and colonial 'punitive expeditions', whether from their participants or through trade." ¹² In return, the ethnological museums competing with each other for the best pieces offered the collectors participation in expeditions and gave travellers collection orders with lists of objects. Another form of reward was the social prestige that collectors received for their collecting activities through being named on object labels and commemorative plaques, through honorary memberships in museums or orders ¹³ – also could be awarded the title of consul.

Collecting methods

Things came to Europe in different ways, through commissioned work, excavation, purchase and trade as well as the spoils of war through looting and robbery, but also through exchange between museums or as gifts from heirs/sponsors/patrons. In many situations, the giving away did not take place voluntarily, nor did it consist of an exchange for equivalents, but was accompanied by the use of brute force. However, according to ethnologist Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin, the blanket term "colonial collecting" or "looted art" is inaccurate "because each

case is different and requires careful examination”.¹⁴ “Collecting in colonial contexts”, on the other hand, is more accurate.

What was collected?

One gets the impression that almost everything was collected and transported to Europe. In addition to parts of deceased people (so-called *anthropologica*: skeletons/bones, skulls, mummies, hair, skin, bone flutes), these were *ethnographica* from a variety of materials and life-world contexts as evidence of “dying out” cultures, as well as architecture (building components) and rock images. In addition, measurement data were collected from living people and body descriptions, drawings, photographs, plaster casts (templates for later “race heads”) were made. Furthermore, language and music were recorded with film and sound recordings (using phonographs). Collections of plants and animals were also made. The mission collected so-called idols, according to ethnologist Birgit Meyer “a kind of sacred waste of Christianisation”.¹⁵ Among the human parts of the deceased, skulls worked with various cultural techniques were also collected: Particularly the tattoo skulls of the Maori from New Zealand or skulls from New Guinea modelled over with clay were sought after in Europe. The so-called “rescue ethnology”

of the time justified this collecting mania by claiming that the colonised societies were threatened with extinction. However, their material cultural products would be secured for research and museums by collecting them in Europe.¹⁶

The Frankfurt ethnologist Leo Frobenius – who became director of the *Städtisches Völkermuseum* (now *Museum der Weltkulturen*) in 1935 – also took part in the collecting activities in the colonial environment. “From him alone, there are close to 26,000 objects including more than 9,200 [objects] from his trip to Central Africa from 1905-1907 and over 4,900 from a stay in Nigeria and Northern Cameroon in 1920 and 1922.”¹⁷ According to Frobenius, the ethnographic museums swelled like “pregnant hippos”.¹⁸

The Berlin Ethnological Museum, for example, received 47,000 pieces during the German colonial period, while the Leipzig Museum expanded its collection by 30,000 African objects at the same time. The same applies to a lesser extent to the other museums.¹⁹ As the Berlin director Adolf Bastian (1826-1905) put it, the still young science of ethnology “first had to gather the material for its comparative research before the evaluation could begin ... It was high time for this, because Bastian, like



Provenance research, 2017: Dr. Anna Pfäfflin (left) and Dr. Hanna Strzoda examining the index cards for the “Collection of Drawings” at the Museum of Prints and Drawings, Berlin. © SPK/photothek.net/Thomas Köhler

Provenance research and restitution in Germany



Helmuth O. Wagner, director of the Bremen Überseemuseum, returned the alleged skull of the “Sultan Makaua” (= the ruler Mkwawa) to Adam Sapi already in 1954. See: Bettina Brockmeyer, Frank Edward, Holger Stoecker: The Mkwawa complex: A Tanzanian-European history about provenance, restitution and politics, in: *Journal of Modern European History*, vol. 18(2), p. 1-23, 2020)
Photo: Presentation of the Chief Mkwawa skull at Kalenga Museum, Tanzania. Wikimedia Commons/Vero.

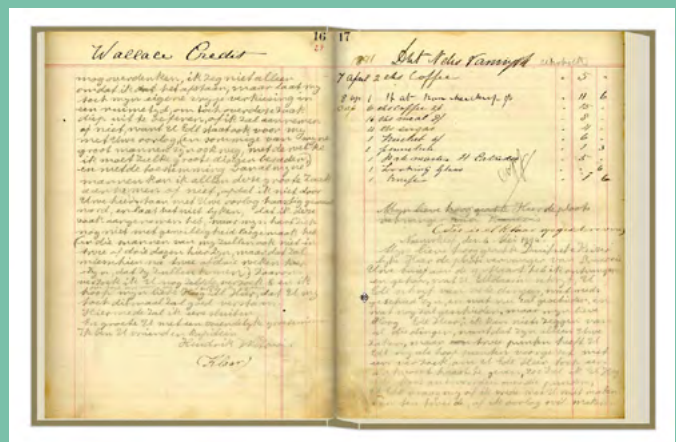
until 1980. Special thanks to Dr Petra Winter, Head of Provenance Research at the State Museums in Berlin - Prussian Cultural Heritage. See: Petra Ettinger: *Deutsche Kriegsbeute in der DDR - Eine Zeichnung von Veit Stoß aus Krakau*. In: *Jahrbuch Preussischer Kulturbesitz* XXXVII, 2000, p. 189ff



In 1986, the Museum *Haus Völker und Kulturen* of the Steyler Missionaries in Sankt Augustin returned 35 cult objects, which reflected a typological and religious mixture of Christian and old Congolese beliefs, to the Democratic Republic of the Congo to enable it to exhibit them as national heritage in the new National Museum in Kinshasa. Photo: Street view of the National Museum of the RD Congo in Kinshasa, Wikimedia Commons/ Munfarid1



In 1971, a draft drawing by Veit Stoss for the Bamberg Altarpiece, which belonged to the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, was identified in the print room of the East Berlin State Museums. It could not be restituted



In 1994, a history student discovered documents by the Nama leader Hendrik Witbooi in the archive of the *Übersee-Museum*, which had been purchased in 1935: two letter copy books and other documents. The Bremen State Archive restored the documents. On the initiative of Dr. Viola König, then director of the museum, and Dr. Peter Junge, head of the Africa department, the documents were returned to Namibia. The handover was made by Dr. Henning Scherf, Mayor and President of the Bremen Senate during a celebratory banquet in Bremen City Hall on June 20, 1996 to President Dr. Sam Nujoma in Bremen. The documents are now in the Namibian National Archives. Photo: pp. 51-52 of Hendrik Witbooi's Journal No. 2 (= A 650 Volume 1) in the Hendrik Witbooi Collection of the Digital Namibian Archive

before the Washington Agreement: a few examples

Since the early 1990s, the German Historical Museum in Berlin has been able to return many objects to other museums and private owners based on its own research. <https://www.dhm.de/blog/2017/11/27/objekte-und-ihre-herkunft-zur-provenienzforschung-am-deutschen-historischen-museum/>



After WWII, the foreign cultural assets were restituted by the Allies. The then Soviet Union also received back the cultural assets stolen from its territory. Any cultural assets that were still found in Germany as a result of the war are returned immediately. According to the Russian government, the painting “Cavalry Battle” was until 1941 in Pavel Petrovich’s tower cabinet in the Gatchina Palace, an early neoclassical park and palace ensemble near St. Petersburg that was built by Catherine the Great’s favorite and lover, Count Orlov. The painting was removed from there under unknown circumstances during the War and was placed in the Depot of the Gemäldegalerie (SPK) for safekeeping in 1945. The work was handed over to Russia in 2005 after its provenance could be clarified. See: Irene Geismeyer: *Gemäldegalerie. Dokumentation des Fremdbesitzes: Verzeichnis der in der Galerie eingelagerten Bilder unbekannter Herkunft. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Preussischer Kulturbesitz. Berlin 1999*, https://www.preussischer-kulturbesitz.de/fileadmin/user_upload_SPK/documents/mediathek/focus/provenienz_eigentum/rp/Rueckgabe_an_Russland_2005.pdf

Photo: © Gemäldegalerie, SMB / Jörg P. Anders

Two mummified heads (*Toi moko*) were de-accessed by the Senate of the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen in 1999 and offered for return to the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. After the *Übersee-Museum* received an official return request in 2006, the two heads were transported to New Zealand, where the return ceremony took place. (<https://www.uebersee-museum.de/ueber-uns/projects-positions/provenienzforschung/>)



Claude Monet’s work “Route, Effet De Neige, Soleil Couchant (Road, Snow Effect, Sunset) of 1869 was part of a batch of 28 works that was returned from Germany to France in May 1994. During the occupation, this body of work had been entrusted by an unidentified German officer serving in Paris to an unknown soldier from the *Wehrmacht* so that the latter could take them to Germany in order to ensure that the works could be recovered at the end of the war. However, the officer never came forward and the soldier kept the paintings. He decided, nonetheless, to hand them over to Monseigneur Heinrich Solbach of the Archbishopric of Magdeburg (former GDR) on the basis of a private confession, to return the works to their legitimate owners. Monseigneur Solbach entrusted the paintings to the National Gallery of East Berlin. Just a few days later, Solbach turned to the Institute for the Preservation of Monuments in Halle/Saale, with whom he often worked in his church function, and asked for an expert opinion on the works of art. The state curator arrived – and alerted the Ministry of Culture in Berlin just before Christmas: The looted works of art handed over to the Catholic Church were paintings by famous artists, including Cézanne, Courbet, Delacroix, Gauguin, Manet, Monet and Renoir. A few years later, in 1974-1975, the works were included in broader and ultimately unsuccessful negotiations between the GDR and France. Two exhibitions in Berlin and Bonn in 1991 also brought no clues. It was not until the fall of the Berlin Wall and German reunification that the works were officially returned to France in May 1994. Then, research into the works’ provenance enabled seven of them to be restored to the families who were the victims of despoilment. The others were added to the inventory of MNR works. This is how the Monet from the old Depeaux collection now finds itself temporarily in the Rouen museum, works that were donated by the patron to the Rouen Musée des Beaux-Arts in 1909.

(Examples compiled by the editors of EXPOTIME!)

many of his colleagues, feared the imminent physical and cultural demise of the so-called primitive peoples due to European influences, especially colonialism".²⁰ He strove to establish a "universal archive of humanity".²¹ The museum was to function as a workshop – this was his idea, which was linked to the hope that the meaning of the things, initially accumulated in a disorderly abundance, would later reveal itself to the scientists through an inductive research approach:²² a momentous error and thus the subject of today's provenance research. At the time, Bastian hoped that collecting ethnographies would be of twofold benefit: firstly for science and secondly for the colonial administration.

This colonial mission to impart knowledge also corresponded to the attitude of the first director of the *Städtisches Völkermuseum in Frankfurt am Main*, Bernhard Hagen, who proclaimed at the museum's opening in 1904: "Our German fatherland has gone from being a great power to a world power, German trade has its now large, enormous interests in all five continents. ... How does the merchant who wants to or has to seek out and conquer new overseas sales territories prepare and arm himself in the face of German conditions? ... He must study the tastes, the peculiarities, the customs and traditions of the people, get to know their cultural products, their living conditions, if he wants to do business with them".²³ Like many of the other directors, these two were well aware of the impending destruction of the colonised peoples due to their previous work as ship's doctors (Bastian) or plantation doctors in Indonesia (Hagen). As later directors of ethnological museums and against the background of this knowledge, they sought to save the objects of "perishing worlds" for their collections. According to the ethnologist and provenance researcher Larissa Förster, various directions of ethnological theorising subsequently used these objects from colonial collection contexts for their evidence, whereby "ethnological museums ... were part of colonial infrastructures and networks as well as sites of colonial knowledge production and representation".²⁴ Ethnologists had known for decades that a large number of objects in German museums had been looted, especially in the course of colonial punitive expeditions. In addition to weapons, these were insignia of royal power and cult objects that were valued as works of art. For over 50 years, ethnologists have denounced this colonial imprint on ethnological museums more or less in vain.²⁵ However, this did not meet with universal approval within the ethnological museum scene or among politicians - even to the point of accusations of "to foul one's own nest".²⁶ It must also be noted – as the ethnologist Michael Kraus pointed out – that every collecting ethnologist who travelled during the colonial period moved in a colonial environment – but was not automatically a colonist. There have always been dissenting voices. As with provenance research, each case must therefore be carefully examined for itself in relation to the context.²⁷

Were all objects from the colonial period actually captured, looted at gunpoint or extorted? Masks, sculptures,

boat models or decorated utilitarian objects were not automatically rare or even disappearing antiques, but were also produced directly for exchange/sale with collectors. In the 15th cent. for example, workshops in the Congo Empire produced ivory carvings for the cabinets of wonder of European courts. The question of whether objects in the form of problematic exchanges or against payment with non-equivalent things (tobacco or pearls) or an inappropriately small amount of money, i.e. transactions reflecting unequal power relations or existing dependencies, can often no longer be answered.²⁸ From an indigenous perspective, many objects (made of wood, clay or mud) were only produced for use, for example to be left to decay after a ritual. "In Africa, pictorial works ... were regarded at best in rudiments and exceptional cases as unique things to be preserved permanently, [they were exposed to the weather and termites without a second thought after their temporary use]; partly because they were supposed to dissolve as what they commemorated was forgotten; partly because they were regarded as realisations of prototypes, their repetitions as equivalents."²⁹ In fact, collectors "rescued" these things from decay and brought them to Europe. Here they were immersed in a completely new concept of storing art objects and were accordingly valued anew and differently in the museum.

Although there was hardly an author's name on the objects or works, the producers were not anonymous persons in their time. They carried out these activities as their profession, for which they were also paid, and particularly successful works were linked with their name by collectors and museums.³⁰ In this respect, they were also able to accept and execute orders from European collectors. According to Kerstin Volker-Saad, ethnologist and provenance researcher, "[t]he filigree Afro-Portuguese ivory works such as spoons, salt and pepper vessels, which were not missing from any *Kunstkammer*, ... were already produced at the beginning of the 16th cent. on behalf of Portuguese traders."³¹

Moreover, according to the ethnologist Fritz Kramer, it is a mistake to portray these societies only as passive victims. The contexts of their active actions would have to be included in the process of colonial provenance research. If one follows Hauser-Schäublin, a "renunciation of the 'perpetrator-victim schema' ... would make complex relationships of entanglements and interactions between colonial actors visible and bring ambivalences to light". Obviously, however, this is also politically undesirable to activists and consequently makes ethnological museums in particular appear suspicious as "hoarding sites of colonial exploitation".³²

Provenance research

The term "provenance research" originates from art history and has so far been used primarily in connection with Nazi looted art. Although individual aspects of Nazi looted art research and ethnological provenance research

overlap, it is clear from many examples that ethnological provenance research needs its own questions and methods. Provenance research is nothing new at ethnological museums: “What is new is ... a focus on the acquisition circumstances of colonial-era collections”³³ as well as research into any injustices committed in colonial contexts. It is about the complete documentation of the origin of objects as well as parts of deceased people from the place of production or origin to the current place of storage. Legal, political, cultural and epistemological circumstances of the translocation must be documented. The pre-colonial owner(s) should be found and researched together with them on site and in the respective museums in Europe. Questions about objects and contexts are developed together. The complex historical and current interrelationships demand that one cooperates with each other in different places where objects were produced, traded and acquired.

The triad of contextualised inclusion of micro and macro perspectives, change of perspective as well as critical (self-) reflection characterises ethnological provenance research.³⁴ The latter in particular is always necessary when it comes to making people aware of specific constructions of criteria of order.

Classifications

How big the personal part is in categorising things was convincingly conveyed by an exercise in the exhibition “HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT” in *Museum der Weltkulturen*.³⁵ An everyday thing like a plastic comb can be placed next to a bar of soap under the heading of “personal hygiene” – or next to a plastic bag because of the same material. Both classifications are correct.³⁶ Individual interpretations of affiliations revealed an unexpected diversity in this experiment. This contrasts with previously common, seemingly unambiguous scientific categorisations of objects in museum collections. The Western, categorical appropriation of things/ethnographies takes place through a standardising and hierarchising process of musealisation to which all incoming objects are indiscriminately subjected. Continuous questioning of existing categories is the basis of postcolonial provenance research.

After finding out where an object comes from, how it was acquired and who the original owners (groups) were, a question automatically follows, which the ethnologist Anna-Maria Brandstetter has sharpened with: “What then?”³⁷ It is about the future handling of objects, where restitution can be a common solution. A distinction must be made between objects and parts of human deceased persons – each of which requires different forms of handover.

Acknowledged context of injustice

“Restitution” refers to the return of objects to persons, communities (societies of origin) or institutions of identity-forming, cultural or sacred objects. “Repatriation” is

the term used when it involves the return of parts of deceased persons.³⁸ In the context of repatriation, rituals for rehumanisation are carried out after consultation with the societies of origin. Through these ceremonies, scientific study objects or museum objects are transformed back into individuals. As ancestors, former family members, members of an ethnic group, they are welcomed and return to the community as individuals. Objects can also go through the process of conversion from return to repatriation. As was made clear when a leather shirt belonging to the former political leader of the Teton Lakota, Chief Daniel Hollow Horn Bear, was returned to his great-grandson Chief Duane Hollow Horn Bear, the latter addressed the leather shirt as a great-grandfather when he handed it over and asked him (“the shirt”) to return home as they would need him there.³⁹ In this respect, not only human bones are considered individuals. Objects can equally be ascribed the status of those human individuals who formerly used them or whom they represented.

If a context of unlawful acquisition has been established and there are claims for restitution, a distinction can be made between two further forms of surrender: While a “restitution” is a more or less voluntary process due to insight or moral pressure, in the case of a “restitution” proof has been provided that the appropriation of the cultural property was unlawful/unethical. In the normative international legal sense of the UNESCO Convention of 1970, restitution means something like an admission of guilt or a legally proven fact. This is why, according to Hauser-Schäublin, “every museum tries to avoid having the stamp ‘restitution’ put on it for the return of a cultural asset”.⁴⁰

Returns and alternatives thereto

According to ethnologist Viola König, the surrender of collections was by no means always a taboo, as opponents of restitution claim. After Bastian’s death, for example, the art historian Wilhelm Bode insisted “that the ethnographic collections be freed from the burden of duplicates by sale, exchange, or if there is no other way, by simple surrender”.⁴¹ In Frankfurt, too, duplicates were exchanged between museums as needed until the 1970s.⁴² There have been spectacular restitutions in recent years, with corresponding press coverage and many-voiced criticism. Two examples from 2019 are the restitution of the Witbooi Bible and whip from the *Linden Museum* in Stuttgart to Namibia,⁴³ and in the same year also of the Cape Cross coat of arms column from the Deutsches Historisches Museum Berlin.⁴⁴ There are also “silent returns”: At the request of iwi elders “who were there”,⁴⁵ the *Museum der Weltkulturen* repatriated a Maori head in 2011 – without the presence of the press.

In restitution negotiations, decisions must also be made about what is to be done later with returned things and parts of human deceased persons. This means a high degree of conflict potential. Viable solutions need to be

carefully prepared together. For years, alternative paths to final restitution have been considered and in some cases already taken: permanent loans, temporary exchange of objects for research projects and/or for special exhibitions, temporary lending for rituals, collaborative research projects as well as restitution in the form of photographs, copies and digital copies or shared ownership. The following three examples once again illustrate the complexity of ethnological provenance research.

- First and foremost are other notions of property that are non-capitalist in nature and recognise more than just “an owner (individual or family) or a community”.⁴⁶ As Hauser-Schäublin states: “significant ethnographic artefacts are often not the property of a single individual and/or his family/clan. Rather, a thing bundles multiple rights from which claims to co-ownership can also be derived. These rights and claims include, if we think of carvings, for example, rights in designs and motifs, rights to make or have made such a thing, rights of keeping, showing and seeing – or excluding a certain public – touching as well as passing on and (bequeathing), alienating or even destroying.”⁴⁷ At this point, the concept of “shared ownership” should be mentioned and the related proposal to let things circulate.⁴⁸ In the context of provenance research and restitution demands, the European concept of ownership and the usual reduction to just one owner must be reconsidered. A “shared ownership” of objects that have also become a European or German cultural asset through their long stay in Europe offers a perspective on this. Many artists – like Picasso, for example – have been deeply impressed by their visits to museums and have been inspired to create new works. Shared ownership of “world heritage pieces” consequently means that Europe also lends important works from its art museums to Africa or to Oceania – in order to create a form of equality and equity in access to objects of a world culture.⁴⁹ “According to the credo of restitution protagonists, no legitimate acquisition of a cultural asset by a European could have taken place during the colonial period. This reductionist approach of a single ‘legitimate owner’ combined with its capitalist notion of ownership excludes a priori the possibility that African (or other) cultural goods can also become a cultural asset (‘heritage’) of the country concerned in the course of their long time in Europe. The material and non-material investments in preservation, documentation, research and mediation (exhibitions and publications) are part of this network of property sharing that has developed around such objects ... Sarr and Savoy rule out plural-ownership. Yet it is precisely the multilateral connections of institutions and people inherent in the artefacts that offer the opportunity to make them visible, bring them together and let them communicate with each other”.⁵⁰

- Likewise, the ideas of animate parts or parts filled with an individual life force of the deceased represent a different, non-Western epistemology. Research in these areas requires, among other things, a very good knowledge of indigenous languages and long (field) research stays. Only trusting and respectful social relationships make conversations about these sensitive topics possible.
- Value conflicts and contradictions can be easily illustrated by secret/sacred objects. The handling of these objects is in many cases subject to exact ideas that include gender or food taboos, but also secrecy of the highest order, so that only initiates and a certain age group are even allowed to see them, let alone touch them.⁵¹



This woman saved Germany and the Allies a lot of provenance research: The French art historian, captain in the French military, and one of the most decorated women in French history, Rose Antonia Maria Valland (November 1. 1898 -September 18, 1980) secretly recorded details of the Nazi plundering of National French and private Jewish-owned art at the Jeu de Paume Museum. Working with the French Resistance, she saved more than 20,000 works of art. Photo around 1939, Archives diplomatiques (La Courneuve)

Conclusion and prospects

There is a fundamental difference in attitude and motivation between postcolonial ethnological provenance research and Nazi provenance research. According to the art historian Christian Fuhrmeister, the first phase of Nazi looted property research after the Second World War “led to restitutions as a result of Allied requirements, not insight or admissions of injustice on the German side”.⁵² In contrast, since the 2010s at the latest, systematic ethnological provenance research has been driven primarily by coming to terms with colonialism and a growing awareness of the responsibility and consequences of collecting in colonial contexts, combined with the colonial injustice caused as a result. Since then, ethnological provenance research has also been increasingly discussed in the public sphere, in connection with a context-related social recognition of restitution. While repatriation of parts of human deceased is undisputedly supported, the restitution of Benin bronzes, for example, is increasingly controversial due to complex historical circumstances (such as slave trade and human sacrifice in the former Kingdom of Benin) as well as current demands from DNA descendants of trafficked slaves.⁵³ The complex ownership and property relations in the societies of origin, who suffered much injustice through collecting in colonial contexts and whose respective cultures experienced great loss of knowledge and trauma, will make it necessary to come to terms with the methods of post-colonial ethnological provenance research for future decades – to clarify the stories of translocation⁵⁴, under which legal, political, cultural and epistemological circumstances objects came into their present storage and ownership and ownership of objects have come about.

Notes

- 1 This text is an abridged and supplemented version of the article from Rein 2023. See also <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=foJKqOkfo9s> (visited April 19, 2023). All texts translated by the author; quotes in English can be found in footnotes in Rein 2023, the numbers will be mentioned.
- 2 Initially, it was left to private entrepreneurs to develop the land; colonies were not considered. Zimmerer, Expansion (Zimmerer 2012): “Since these private colonisation companies all failed within a short time, the state had to take their place. The German Empire was thus the colonial power.” It was not until 1907 that the Reich established a competent colonial office (Staas 2018). The colonisation projects of the Nazi era will not be discussed further here. For NS provenance research see Fuhrmeister 2018
- 3 Köbler/Melber 2004. An interactive map showing the development of the colonial empires over time can be found here: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Colonisation2.gif#/media/File:Colonisation2.gif> (visited February 23, 2022). 13 of today’s successor states were affected by German colonialism, as well as a large number of regions of other states - some of which, however, were only affected for a certain period of time - which will not be discussed further in this text. Cf. Gründer/Hiery,

- 2018, pp. 324; 326, table on “German colonies and their successor states”, in this. pp. 2017; 2019
- 4 Individually, Germans actively participated in these processes of “Europeanisation or globalisation of the earth” from the very beginning in various roles (including as travellers, missionaries, merchants, explorers, scientists and soldiers). The prehistory of the German colonial empire is not discussed further here, nor are many details of the colonial period taken into account. For a multi-perspective account, see Gründer/Hiery 2018
- 5 Speitkamp 2018
- 6 Zimmerer 2012
- 7 Cf. Toyin Falola, *Kolonialismus*, 2001, p. 301
- 8 Cf. Vgl. Rein, 2021, pp. 437-440
- 9 About one tenth of the objects in the Berlin Kunstkammer came from non-European cultures (Kuhn/Peitz 2015).
- 10 Volker-Saad 2017, p. 140. Forster transferred parts of his collection to the Württemberg court (ibid.)
- 11 Typifications and categorisations had already been developed in the Enlightenment.
- 12 Förster 2021, p. 109. S. English quote in Rein 2023, FN 53
- 13 Lindenmuseum 2021, p. 27
- 14 Hauser-Schäublin 2021, p. 55
- 15 Meyer, 2021, p. 53
- 16 Cf. Förster 2021; Habermas, 2019, pp. 20-21
- 17 Bergner, 1996, p. 227
- 18 Frobenius 1925, quoted in Bergner 1996, p. 227
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 König 2021, p. 302
- 22 Penny 2021, p. 38
- 23 Bernhard Hagen 1904, quoted in Raabe, 2019. S.a.: Rudolf Walther 2014
- 24 Förster 2018, p. 40
- 25 Kramer 2018. Kohl 2018. What constitutes “worthless” everyday things that no one wants back has yet to be examined in each case. As the director of the Dakar Museum IFAN (Senegal) Malick Ndiaye stated: s. quote in Rein 2023, FN 72, quoted in Chiwanza 2018
- 26 König 2021, p. 1. Rautenberg 2018. Rautenberg writes of an estimated 30 million art and cultural objects that once reached Europe from all continents.
- 27 Kraus 2015, p. 245
- 28 On the exceptional personality of the collector Hans Himelheber, cf. Oberhofer 2020, pp. 32, 41-42
- 29 Hauser-Schäublin 2018, p. 331
- 30 Oberhofer 2020, p. 34
- 31 Volker-Saad 2017, p. 138
- 32 Hauser-Schäublin 2021, p. 43
- 33 Lang/Niklisch 2021, p. 21. For a review of publications, networks, statements, the founding of the new department at the Zentrum für Kulturgutverluste in 2019, etc. in the context of ethnological provenance research, see ibid. pp. 21-23; 21-23. A film on the topic: Elena Schilling/Kaiyare Saitabao: If Objects could speak (English Subtitles), 30:30 min. © Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg 2020. The topic of colonialism has been addressed by museums in various exhibitions with publications since the 1980s at the latest (cf. Rein 2023, FN 80).
- 34 Cf. Rein 2021, p. 446
- 35 HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT. Vom Unsichtbarmachen und Sichtbarwerden (April 29 to September 5, 2021)
- 36 On changing perspectives and roles when looking at objects see Rein 2021
- 37 Brandstetter 2018, p. 189
- 38 About repatriations since 1954 see: Brockmeyer/Edward/

- Stoecker 2020; Rein 2023; <https://www.uebersee-museum.de/ueber-uns/projekte-positionen/provenienzforschung/> (accessed May 3, 2023)
- 39 The encounter between the "Great Grandfather's Shirt" and Chief Duane Hollow Horn Bear in June 2021 can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mAa-qUeUEUHM> (accessed August 27, 2021).
- 40 Hauser-Schäublin 2018, pp. 69-70
- 41 Westphal-Hellbusch 1973, quoted after König 2021, p. 302
- 42 Rein 2011, p. 84
- 43 <https://www.baden-wuerttemberg.de/de/service/presse/pressemitteilung/pid/witbooi-bibel-und-peitschean-namibia-uebergeben/> (accessed June 15, 2021)
- 44 <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/kultur/rueckgabevon-kolonialobjekt-die-saeule-von-cape-cross-geht-zurueck-nach-namibia/24355024.html> (accessed June 15, 2021)
Cf. also the respective news in MUSEUM AKTUELL and EXPOTIME!
- 45 Eva Raabe, eMail from August 13, 2018
- 46 Hauser-Schäublin 2018, p. 331
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 Cf. Abungu 2021, p. 56
- 49 Further concepts of possession, ownership and inheritance are not dealt with here.
- 50 Hauser-Schäublin 2021, pp. 67-68
- 51 These strict taboos also apply to the handling of the Carl Strehlow Collection at the Museum der Weltkulturen. Raabe has explained these problem areas in several publications: 2018a and 2018, p. 196
- 52 Fuhrmeister 2018, pp. 17-18
- 53 Vincent 2023; Hauser-Schäublin 2021a; Anhalt 2023
- 54 Fuhrmeister 2017
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