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DISPLACING AND DISPLAYING THE OBJECTS OF OTHERS

THE MATERIALITY OF IDENTITY AND DEPOTS OF GLOBAL HISTORY

Edited by Jürgen Zimmerer, Kim Sebastian Todzi, and Friederike Odenwald

EUROPEAN COLONIALISM IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

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Edited by
Jürgen Zimmerer

Volume 3

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Introduction

Jürgen Zimmerer, Friederike Odenwald, Kim Sebastian Todzi

Displacing/Displaying the Objects of Others: Towards a Holistic Approach in (Post-)Colonial Provenance Research

The issue of looted colonial objects and postcolonial provenance research has gained momentum in the past few years. How did objects from colonial contexts, and even human remains, end up in European museums and collections? This question has become central in discourses around colonial legacy. The reconstruction of the Berlin palace, and plans to establish a Humboldt Forum within it, have raised public awareness about the issue in Germany. Ever since it was first proposed, the exhibition of ethnological collections at the Humboldt Forum has been accompanied by criticism. Not only is little known about the objects' colonial contexts of acquisition, but the entire project – according to its critics – runs the risk of whitewashing German history.[1] In the past few years, the provenance of the "Benin Bronzes" has become a particular focus of public attention.[2] This group of objects was taken from the Benin kingdom (in what is present-day Nigeria) by the British army in 1897.[3] After Nigeria's many unsuccessful calls for restitution, and years of debate about whether these objects were indeed illegally acquired, rights of ownership to most of the Benin Bronzes in Germany were at last transferred to Nigeria. The first bronzes were physically restituted on December 20, 2022,[4] leading German foreign minister Annalena Baerbock to pronounce that "[o]fficials from my country once bought the bronzes, knowing that they had been robbed and stolen. After that, we ignored Nigeria's plea to return them for a very long time. It was wrong to take them. But it was also wrong to keep them."[5]

1 See No Humboldt21 !, "Stop the Planned Construction of the Humboldt Forum in the Berlin Palace!" For the history of the debate, see Morat, "Katalysator wider Willen"; Simo, "Formen und Funktionen des Gedächtnisses der Kolonisation"; and Zimmerer, "Erinnerungskämpfe."

2 Zimmerer, "'Benin-Forum.'"

3 For general information about the Benin Bronzes, see Hicks, *The Brutish Museums*; Philips, *Loot*; and the essay by Eiser in this book. Between 2019 and 2022, the Research Centre "Hamburg's (Post-)Colonial Legacy" conducted a pilot project on "The Benin Bronzes: Globalizing the Colonial Looting of Art." The Gerda Henkel Foundation financed the project and documented it in a video series: https://lisa.gerda-henkel-stiftung.de/beninbronzen?language=en.

4 "Joint Declaration on the Return of Benin Bronzes and Bilateral Museum Cooperation."

5 Baerbock, "Speech by Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock."

Note: Translated by Elizabeth Janik

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A central concern here is knowledge about the contexts of injustice in which cultural objects were acquired and kept. Piecing together this knowledge is one part of provenance research. Thus, for some years, it has been at the center of the debate around returning objects acquired during colonialism. The great political and cultural significance of (post-)colonial provenance research is, by now, broadly accepted – as is evident in political declarations, initial acts of restitution, and measures to promote this research. Some scholars even argue that provenance research increasingly helps to fulfil the promise of a right to truth, which is anchored in concepts of transitional justice.[6] Knowing how and where an object was acquired, moved, and kept is part of the immaterial atonement for past injustices – and also the basis for material atonement, as in the form of restitution.

Nevertheless, there is persistent criticism about how provenance research is conducted and financed – including calls to broaden and systematize a narrow understanding of it, and demands for more intensive institutional, interdisciplinary, and international exchange, especially with societies of origin. Other critics have called for provenance studies that are more strongly contextualized within the history of colonialism.[7] While colonial provenance research is clearly in vogue, the debate over what it should look like is by no means settled. For colonial contexts, the danger of an imprecise concept of provenance research is that – if too narrowly defined – it might hinder more than help, especially since there is no broad, theoretically grounded consensus on how to understand "colonial contexts."[8] This raises

6 This argument is made by Stahn, *Confronting Colonial Objects*, 55.

7 A call for systematization can be found in Förster, Edenheiser, and Fründt, "Eine Tagung zu postkolonialer Provenienzforschung," 18. Seeking to avoid a narrow scholarly approach, Sandkühler, Epple, and Zimmerer plead for an interdisciplinary debate on colonial plunder. See Sandkühler, Epple, and Zimmerer, "Restitution und Geschichtskultur im (post-)kolonialen Kontext," 20. Zuschlag likewise emphasizes interdisciplinarity, while Fründt, and Andratschke and Müller underscore the importance of international exchange. See Zuschlag, *Einführung in die Provenienzforschung*, 11–12; Fründt, "International Perspectives"; and Andratschke and Müller, "Provenance Research in Dialogue." Savoy argues for grounding provenance research in a broader transnational history in *Die Provenienz der Kultur*.

8 The term "colonial context" is widely used in the German debates about provenance research. A definition in the German Museum Association's Guidelines is oriented around Jürgen Osterhammel's seminal definition of colonialism. See Osterhammel and Jansen, *Kolonialismus*. "Colonial contexts" thus encompass not only formal colonial rule, but also "structures of great power political imbalances" and an ideology of cultural superiority. This definition stresses the complexity of colonialism, and thus of "colonial contexts." See Deutscher Museumsbund, *Leitfaden*, 27. All original German quotations are translated by Elizabeth Janik unless otherwise indicated.

the question whether a narrow concept of provenance research has prevailed because it also limits political consequences.[9]

In this introductory essay, we aim to historically contextualize the current debates over provenance research for objects from colonial contexts. We begin by tracing the roots of the current interest in objects from contexts of injustice: the long fight for compensation and restitution by victims of looting by the Nazis, and also by the colonial powers. We demonstrate that the responsible countries and institutions have only gradually begun to take up these issues – starting in the 1990s with Nazi loot and continuing with objects from colonial contexts. We proceed to examine the current debates around the scope and implications of (post-)colonial provenance research. Finally, we propose an inclusive approach to holistic, postcolonial provenance research, which is the foundation for this book. We argue for a provenance research that is no mere auxiliary to legal and museological debates, but instead part of the colonial and postcolonial history of transfer and entanglement. We understand this as an expansion of classical provenance research, going well beyond the reconstruction of how an object or collection was acquired. In line with the research projects that inspired the essays collected here, this book primarily deals with ethnological and art objects from Africa, although many of our observations can also be applied to other regions and groups of objects.[10]

1 Provenance Research: From a Side Pursuit of Museums to the Investigation of Nazi Art Theft

Information about the origins of objects has always played a role in museums and collections, but provenance research – defined as systematically investigating the origins and changing ownership of objects – is relatively young.[11] Investigating and establishing relations of ownership can confirm the authenticity of artworks and

9 On how European museums intentionally suppressed restitution debates in the 1970s and 1980s, see Savoy, *Africa's Struggle for Its Art*. For current positions, see Zimmerer "Die größte Identitätsdebatte"; and Manase's chapter in this book.

10 Human remains are a highly significant aspect of the colonial practices of collection and acquisition, although they are not a main focus of this book. By no means is this intended to suggest that human remains (or manuscripts, historical documents, or natural objects) are unimportant. Rather, our editorial decision reflects the articles' emphases on ethnological artifacts and their respective backgrounds.

11 Zuschlag, *Einführung in die Provenienzforschung*, 21.

cultural assets, while also detecting misappropriation and theft. Provenance research today is an interdisciplinary endeavor, dedicated to investigating the origins of artworks, cultural assets, and objects of cultural heritage, and how their relations of ownership have changed over time.[12] Thus, we can discover broader relationships, and reconstruct historical collections, interiors, and libraries while expanding our knowledge of the history of art, material objects, and collections.[13] This kind of systematic investigation, as it has evolved over time, is tied to questions regarding the lawfulness of acquisition and, ultimately, also to questions of restitution.

Calls to restitute stolen property existed long before institutional provenance research took up the cause. Consider, for example, the long history of appeals colonized people made, even though the public and political discourse of former colonial powers has only begun to acknowledge the issue's political and cultural relevance.[14] The struggle for acknowledgement and compensation has also been long for those dispossessed under National Socialism as well as their descendants.

Engagement with systematic looting by the Nazis, particularly of Jewish property, was a pivotal moment at the end of World War Two, as the issue of looted objects began to gain prominence, and avenues for their return were explored. The Allies constructed the first legal foundations for returning stolen property to lawful owners.[15] After the end of the war, "central collecting points" for art were established in the American occupation zone, and were subsequently taken over by West Germany.[16] This was the context for the first acts of restitution and compensation – although the provenance of many cultural assets was unclear, and political resistance, resentments, and legal obstacles kept many survivors and heirs from realizing their claims. Moreover, debates that had been driven by the Allies petered out quickly once this external pressure eased.[17] The Cold War kept East Germany and Eastern Europe from participating in these initiatives. In the aftermath of German reunification, one new problem was the issue of outstanding compensation for those people in the Soviet occupation zone and East Germany who had been robbed in the Nazi era; another was the question of dealing with nationalized property in East Germany.[18] The best-known example of these issues is the dispute around the Hohenzollern family.[19]

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12 The notion of "cultural assets" explicitly includes natural objects. See Briskorn, "Provenienzforschung," 11.

13 Zuschlag, *Einführung in die Provenienzforschung*, 11–13.

14 See Section 2 in this essay on "Provenance research on objects from colonial contexts."

15 See also Stahn, *Confronting Colonial Objects*, 354–55.

16 Lauterbach, *Der Central Collecting Point in München*.

17 Brandstetter and Hierholzer, "Sensible Dinge," 14–15.

18 See Cladders and Kratz-Kessemeier, ed., *Museen in der DDR*.

19 See Weber, "Streit in Zeiten der Pandemie."

Only at the end of the 1990s did provenance research emerge from the shadows. A key turning point was the adoption of the "Washington Declaration, or Principles on Nazi-Confiscated Art," at the Washington Conference on Holocaust-Era Assets on December 3, 1998. Goals of the declaration – which was not legally binding – were to identify art that had been confiscated during the Nazi era, to determine lawful owners or heirs, and to cooperatively find "just and fair solutions."[20] Germany responded to this declaration with a voluntary commitment, the "Common Statement by the Federal Government, the *Länder* ['federal states'] and the national associations of local authorities on the tracing and return of Nazi-confiscated art, especially Jewish Property," dated December 9, 1999, followed by subsequent guidelines for implementing this statement.[21] According to the guidelines, it was the responsibility of German museums, archives, and libraries to identify this art. The guidelines called for strengthening provenance research in museums and institutions.[22]

As a consequence, provenance research that was focused on contexts of Nazi injustice was institutionalized and professionalized. The *Koordinierungsstelle für Kulturgutverluste* ['Coordination Center for Lost Cultural Assets'] founded in Magdeburg in 1998, took up the work of previous institutions under the banner of the "Washington Principles." Two years later, provenance researchers established an informal working group (*Arbeitskreis Provenienzforschung*). In 2008, this was followed by a new department for provenance research (*Arbeitsstelle für Provenienzforschung*) at the Institute for Museum Research in the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. In 2015, this department merged with the Coordination Center for Lost Cultural Assets to become the *Deutsches Zentrum Kulturgutverluste* ['German Lost Art Foundation'], also in Magdeburg.[23] To a lesser degree, provenance research was also institutionalized at German universities.[24]

The debate gained new momentum with the discovery of the "Gurlitt art trove" in 2012. More than 1,500 artworks – including masterpieces by Monet, Picasso, and Matisse – were seized from an apartment in the Munich city district of Schwabing. The collection, one of the most spectacular postwar art troves, belonged to Cornelius Gurlitt, son of the Nazi art dealer Hildebrand Gurlitt. One and a half years later, the

20 See "Washington Principles."

21 See "Common Statement."

22 See Minister of State for Culture and the Media, "Guidelines."

23 Brandstetter and Hierholzer, "Sensible Dinge," 14–15; and Briskorn, "Provenienzforschung," 12.

24 The University of Bonn, for example, introduced a Master of Arts program in provenance research and the history of collecting, and the University of Hamburg supported a junior professorship in provenance research between 2019 and 2021. See Brandstetter and Hierholzer, "Sensible Dinge," 14–15; and Briskorn, "Provenienzforschung," 20.

German newsmagazine *Focus* broke the story of the "discovery of the century,"[25] sparking a media frenzy and raising the question: "Who are the precious artworks' rightful owners?"[26] Under tremendous public pressure, elected politicians also got involved.[27] A "Schwabing art trove" task force was initially established,[28] and in 2016 the German Lost Art Foundation began to investigate the artworks' origins.[29] Despite this intensive provenance research, only 14 works have thus far been definitively identified as Nazi-looted art and restituted.[30]

The Gurlitt trove brought unprecedented international attention to looted art and provenance research, but, even in the case of Nazi-looted art, there are still many works not yet investigated, let alone restituted. In any event, the Gurlitt trove encouraged nearly all museums to redouble their efforts at researching the origins of their collections.[31] Over the course of these debates, victims' descendants, museum workers, scholars, and other members of the international community have established an understanding and practice of provenance research that seeks to account and make amends for historical injustice. This happened despite institutions' political resistance – or, at least, unwillingness – to confront their own past. The focus on Nazi-looted art has since fostered broader debates about cultural assets from various contexts of injustice.

2 Provenance Research on Objects from Colonial Contexts

If the Gurlitt trove directed the interest of the (international) public toward provenance via Nazi-looted art, the debate around the Humboldt Forum, which was gathering momentum at the same time, met with a similarly growing interest in colonial history. Described as the "largest cultural project in Europe"[32] since the

25 See "1500 Werke von Künstlern wie Picasso, Chagall und Matisse"; and "Kampf um den Kunstschatz."

26 See "Wem gehören die teuren Kunstwerke?"

27 See Wissenschaftliche Dienste Deutscher Bundestag, "Raubkunst und Restitution."

28 See Taskforce Schwabinger Kunstfund, "Wir über uns."

29 See Baresel-Brand, Bahrmann, and Lupfer, *Kunstfund Gurlitt*.

30 See Wojcik, "Was lernen wir aus dem Gurlitt-Kunstfund?"; and Mekiska and Emmerlich, "Zehn Jahre Fall Gurlitt."

31 For a current overview of the debates and recent projects, see, for example, Schoeps and Ludewig, eds., *Eine Debatte ohne Ende?*; Gallas, Holzer-Kawalko, Jessen, and Weiss, eds., *Contested Heritage*; and Golinets and Rost, eds., *Beredte Objekte.*

32 See "Restitution bleibt Verpflichtung."

turn of the twenty-first century, the Humboldt Forum and its planned ethnological collections have given the debates a new focal point. The decision to present Berlin's ethnological collections in the reconstructed Berlin palace shifted the focus of debate to colonial provenance. The Humboldt Forum's relevance for the self-image of the Berlin Republic – due to the expense of its construction and its symbolic significance – transformed the question of colonial plunder into a public affair.[33]

Another key moment in this debate was French president Emmanuel Macron's 2017 speech in Ouagadougou, which emphasized the importance of restituting African cultural treasures that had come to France in the colonial era. Macron stated:

> I cannot accept that a large share of several African countries' cultural heritage be kept in France. There are historical explanations for it, but there is no valid, lasting and unconditional justification. African heritage cannot solely exist in private collections and European museums. African heritage must be showcased in Paris but also in Dakar, Lagos and Cotonou; this will be one of my priorities. Within five years I want the conditions to exist for temporary or permanent returns of African heritage to Africa.[34]

Decades after colonialism formally ended for most countries – and centuries after it began – critiques of its central structures of power and injustice, including epistemic ones, gradually gained acceptance in former centers of colonial power. However, critiques of colonialism are as old as colonialism itself and have most often been issued by its victims. From the beginning, resistance and subversion accompanied colonial rule. Furthermore, there is a long history of colonized peoples criticizing the theft of cultural assets. The unjust nature of looting and collecting was always clear to those who were robbed.[35] Various African states, organizations, and activists have long worked to retrieve cultural treasures that had been stolen from them as a consequence of colonialism.[36] Some of the earliest calls for restitution came from Ethiopia and Liberia, countries that had managed to escape formal colonial rule, even during the height of European colonialism on the African continent, which gave them a certain agency to negotiate and make restitution claims.[37] As early as 1872, the Ethiopian emperor Yohannes IV demanded the return of a group

33 On the implications of this decision in the context of memory politics, see Zimmerer, "Erinnerungskämpfe"; and Zimmerer, "Der Völkermord an den Herero und Nama und die deutsche Geschichte."

34 "Emmanuel Macron's speech at the University of Ouagadougou."

35 In the case of the Benin Bronzes, we know that newspapers like the *Lagos Press* already published critical debates around the time of their looting. See Eiser's essay in this book.

36 For an overview of these calls for restitution, see Müller, *Returns of Cultural Artefacts*.

37 See Müller, *Returns of Cultural Artefacts.* On Liberia, see Mark-Thiesen and Mihatsch, "Liberia an(d) Empire?" On Ethiopia, see Burka and Eshetie, "Heritage Management Practice in Ethiopia."

of objects that were stolen in a British raid on Magdala in 1868, and he met with at least some success.[38] While in 1924, Momulu Massaquoi, the Liberian consul general in Hamburg, sued the German traveler Hans Schomburgk for taking the "Mafue Stone" from Liberia to Germany; Massaquoi, too, was successful, and the stone was returned.[39]

However, these early examples of successful restitution claims in no way established a legal precedent. In fact, until very recently, successful examples of restitution were quite easy to count, while a list of unsuccessful claims might go on almost indefinitely.[40] We know that another early call for restituting objects from Benin was made in 1935: Akenzua II, who was then Oba of Benin, unsuccessfully demanded the return of several thrones from Berlin's Ethnological Museum.[41] Debates around the restitution of objects from the Benin kingdom, especially the Benin Bronzes, attracted great public attention in Nigeria in the 1950s, and in the 1970s became the focal point of a restitution campaign.[42] The objects, however, were not returned.

In general, after the political decolonization of the African continent, the topic gained momentum.[43] Calls for restitution grew louder in international organizations and forums. In 1973, Mobutu Sese Seko, President of Zaire, introduced a resolution before the UN General Assembly on the restitution of colonial plunder.[44] In 1978, UNESCO General Secretary Amadou Mahtar M'Bow also pled "for the return of an irreplaceable cultural heritage to those who created it."[45] Even today, however, there are no comprehensive or legally binding international rules on looted assets from colonial contexts.[46] In *Africa's Struggle for Its Art*, art historian Bénédicte Savoy shows that calls for restitution did have some reso-

38 The British Museum restituted one of two copies of a manuscript that were in its possession – the copy deemed of lesser quality. Additional objects were not returned. See Müller, *Returns of Cultural Artefacts*, 12–13; and zur Lage, "Challenging Eurocentrism in Memory and Historiography."

39 Müller, *Returns of Cultural Artefacts*, 5–6.

40 As late as 1999, Richard Pankhurst wrote that the return of the aforementioned manuscript to Ethiopia in 1872 was the British Museum's only restitution to a "Third World country." See Pankhurst, "Ethiopia, the Aksum Obelisk, and the Return of Africa's Cultural Heritage," 233.

41 Peraldi, "Oba Akenzua II's Restitution Requests."

42 See Eiser's essay in this book.

43 See Abungu and Ndoro, "Introduction," 2; Apoh and Mehler, "Mainstreaming the Discourse on Restitution and Repatriation within African History," 3; and Savoy, *Africa's Struggle for Its Art*.

44 Fitschen, "30 Jahre 'Rückführung Von Kulturgut,'" 46.

45 See M'Bow, "A Plea for the Return of an Irreplaceable Cultural Heritage."

46 Briskorn, "Provenienzforschung," 16–17; and Sarr and Savoy, *The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage*, 75.

nance in European institutions and museums, but that these debates were systematically suppressed.[47]

The situation was somewhat different in former settler colonies such as New Zealand, Australia, or Canada, where descendants of the dispossessed indigenous societies were able to intervene more directly in political debates. These countries grappled much earlier with the return of cultural objects and human remains, and also with decolonizing museums.[48] But here, too, the debate has been led by indigenous scholars, who are critical of the fact that, even today, restitutions and repatriations still follow colonial patterns.[49]

In Europe, Macron's 2017 speech marked a significant step toward greater sensitivity around postcolonial questions in provenance research, setting an international example for engagement with colonial heritage in museums. This was the first time that a former colonial power credibly signaled the political will to address this issue. A few months later, Macron commissioned the scholars Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy with preparing a report on the restitution of African cultural assets – another milestone in this debate.[50] The report's focus was on African art in French public collections; by the authors' estimate, there were at least 90,000 such pieces. The report recommended returning objects that had come to France in the colonial era, under the assumption that nearly all such transactions were coerced. Publication of the report generated worldwide interest and coincided with the release of the Marvel film *Black Panther*, which brought the issue of restitution to the attention of a much wider public. One of the film's main characters, Erik Killmonger, asks the curator of African art in the (fictional) "Museum of Great Britain": "How do you think your ancestors got these [artifacts]? Do you think they paid a fair price? Or did they take it, like they took everything else?"[51] That same year, protests in American art museums called for the restitution of colonial looted art.[52] Attention to the issue grew, as did the pressure on states and institutions.

These international developments reinforced a discussion in Germany that had been gaining intensity for the past several years. As already stated, the Humboldt Forum stood in the spotlight of this debate. Intended to occupy the controversial,

47 Savoy, *Africa's Struggle for Its Art.*

48 Fründt, "International Perspectives," 38. See also Pickering, "'The Big Picture'"; Turnbull, "Managing and Mapping the History of Collecting Indigenous Human Remains"; and Turnbull, *Science, Museums and Collecting the Indigenous Dead in Colonial Australia.*

49 See, for example, Gray, "Rematriation."

50 See Sarr and Savoy, *The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage.*

51 See Cascone, "The Museum Heist Scene in 'Black Panther.'"

52 See Reed, "American Museums and Colonial-Era Provenance."

newly rebuilt Hohenzollern city palace, the forum was supposed to unite Berlin's scattered ethnological collections under a single roof, and to serve as a symbol for a cosmopolitan, open Germany. For years, citizens' initiatives like "No Humboldt21 !" had called for the "disclosure of ownership history" and for the return of these collections.[53] Already in 2015, there was good reason to warn that ignoring the ethnological collections' colonial heritage, and placing them on display as a supposedly cosmopolitan symbol, could become a "beacon for negative virtues long thought to have been overcome – such as arrogance, hubris, and even racism toward people and cultural traditions from other regions and continents."[54] In an interview in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in the summer of 2017, Bénédicte Savoy catapulted colonial provenance research concerning the Humboldt Forum into the center of the German debate: "For me, it's less important to know the function that an object had in Namibia than to understand the circumstances that brought it here. . . . I want to know how much blood is dripping from an artwork, how much scholarly ambition is embedded in it, how much archaeological luck."[55] Her indictment of the Humboldt Forum carried special weight, as she had resigned from the project's expert advisory board just days before the interview was published.

Now the field was opening up in Germany, too. The coalition agreement between the country's governing parties (CDU, CSU, and SPD) on February 7, 2018, even identified colonial provenance research as a government priority: "We want to support, with a dedicated funding priority, reappraising the provenance of cultural assets from colonial heritage in museums and collections – especially through the German Lost Art Foundation and in cooperation with the German Museums Association."[56] That same year, the *Deutscher Museumsbund* ['German Museums Association'] introduced its first "Guidelines for the Care of Collections from Colonial Contexts," which were written by an interdisciplinary group of experts as a practical aid for German museums.[57] Multiple publications, especially from the institutional context of various museums, have since documented the first findings of provenance research on objects from colonial contexts in their collections.[58]

53 See No Humboldt21 !, "Stop the Planned Construction of the Humboldt Forum in the Berlin Palace!"

54 See Zimmerer, "Humboldt Forum."

55 See Savoy, "'Das Humboldt-Forum ist wie Tschernobyl.'"

56 "Ein neuer Aufbruch für Europa. Eine neue Dynamik für Deutschland. Ein neuer Zusammenhalt für unser Land," 169.

57 A third and final edition of the guidelines was published in 2021, including translations into English and French.

58 See Binter *Der blinde Fleck*; Briskorn, *Zur Sammlungsgeschichte afrikanischer Ethnographica*; Brogiato and Röschner, *Koloniale Spuren*; Lang, Nicklisch, and Oestermann, *Den Sammlern auf der Spur*; Oswald, *Working through Colonial Collections*; Schulze and Reuther, *Raubkunst?*; and

In 2021, France returned 26 objects, which had been stolen from the kingdom of Dahomey, to the state of Benin.[59] Savoy underscored the caesura that this restitution illustrated: "Just as there was a before and after the fall of the Berlin Wall, there will be a before and after the return to Benin of the works looted by the French army in 1892."[60] For Germany, the restitution of ownership of the first Benin Bronzes in the summer of 2022 had a similar function as France's first restitution in the previous year – affirming the principle that the acquisition of objects that had once been brought to Europe in an illegal or illegitimate way did not constitute a legitimate basis for ownership, and that such objects should be restituted.

3 Postcolonial Provenance Research and Broadening Perspectives

Provenance researchers usually study individual objects or collections to determine whether these came illegally to museums. With objects from colonial contexts – even more than with Nazi-looted art – researchers are confronted by the challenge of provenance information that is far less instructive than one might hope.[61] Only in the rarest cases were details ever recorded about individual producers or previous owners; often there is only a geographic or ethnic classification, which was part of the racist production of knowledge about non-European colonized societies. Whether individual objects were acquired as gifts, purchased, or stolen was recorded only sporadically. Even when such information is present, we must be skeptical of "gifts" and supposedly lawful purchases that were made in a fundamentally

Brockhoff, Brüggen, and Kiermeier, eds., *Kulturgüter, Provenienzen und Restitution*). In June 2023, the PAESE project (*Provenienzforschung in außereuropäischen Sammlungen und der Ethnologie in Niedersachsen*/'Provenance Research in Non-European Collections and Ethnology in Lower Saxony') held its concluding conference at the University of Hanover and subsequently published an anthology that brings together the findings of its nine sub-projects. See Andratschke, Müller, and Lembke, eds., *Provenance Research on Collections from Colonial Contexts.*

59 The kingdom of Dahomey corresponds to the present-day state of Benin, which should not be confused with the historical kingdom of Benin – which is the Benin Bronzes' homeland and one of Nigeria's present-day federal states.

60 Nayeri and Onishi, "Looted Treasures Begin a Long Journey Home from France."

61 In her overview of provenance research, which was published in the yearbook of the Übersee-Museum Bremen, Bettina von Briskorn points to the special problems posed by sources that come from colonial contexts. See Briskorn, "Provenienzforschung."

racist and unjust system.[62] "Gifts" may well have been coerced, and "purchasers" may simply have taken items at prices they set themselves.

Colonial rule was based on extreme inequality and racialized categories, enforced by military power. Systematically analyzing travel reports and diaries by European scholars and collectors shows the murkiness of boundaries between outright theft and purchases made under duress or the threat of violence.[63] Colonialism in general – and, therefore, also knowledge production and collections in colonial contexts – was characterized by the structurally, and sometimes intentionally produced, invisibility of colonized people's contributions and perspectives. Illuminating these contributions and perspectives is one of the great methodological challenges of colonial historiography, and also one of its great achievements. It is also a challenge faced by provenance researchers who want to trace an object back to its original owners or producers, and not only to the first European to sell it on the international art market.

With these difficulties in mind, museum workers and scholars in various disciplines – especially in classical, object-oriented fields like ethnology and art history – have made suggestions for a methodological and theoretical expansion of provenance research on cultural assets from colonial contexts. These current reflections, including central contributions that we review in the following passages, show that provenance research encompasses much more than merely the origin of objects. For practical reasons, our primary focus is on the German debates. A comparative international study is still to be written.

Ethnological approaches, in particular, have benefited from the central and longstanding role of objects in their methodology and theory – evident in concepts such as Arjun Appadurai's "social life of things," the object biographies associated with Igor Kopytoff, Nick Thomas's "entangled objects," and Alfred Gell's work on the agency of objects.[64] Methodological and theoretical innovations in ethnology have, since the 1980s, encouraged interdisciplinary engagement with object-centered methods in cultural studies and the humanities. Associated with the "material turn" or "new materialism," these methods have provided a foundation for many approaches used to study colonial objects.[65] Actor-network theory, from the context of science and technology studies, also still plays a central role.[66]

62 See, for example, the essay by Manase in this book.

63 See the essays by Hege and Jarling in this book.

64 See Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things*; Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things" (part of Appadurai's edited collection); Thomas, *Entangled Objects*; and Gell, *Art and Agency*.

65 See Bräunlein, "Material Turn."

66 See Latour, *Reassembling the Social*.

The important work of Larissa Förster, Iris Eidenheiser, Sarah Fründt, and Heike Hartmann looks at the institutional contexts of museums, especially ethnological ones. Their edited collection, which was published in 2018, introduces main positions in the ethnological debate on colonial provenance research. In contrast to museums' emphasis on the history of acquisitions, and to the ethnological approach of object biographies, the coeditors' concept of postcolonial provenance research underscores key moments of expansion and systematization. By grappling with problematic and violent contexts of acquisition, such research overcomes the false dichotomy of legitimate purchases and illegitimate theft. Provenance research needs more resources, the coeditors argue; it should not be limited to objects with concrete restitution claims, but should become a core aspect of museums' mediating work.[67] Also in 2018, Anna-Maria Brandstetter and Vera Hierholzer entered the debate with their own edited collection, on "sensitive things in museums and university collections," broadening their gaze beyond ethnological objects. Brandstetter and Hierholzer characterize things as "sensitive" on the basis of provenance – that is, when conditions of "acquisition, origins, production, and appropriation, up through museum conservation" are questionable, or when things are used in the context of racist scholarship.[68] Brandstetter and Hierholzer see no reason to carve out a narrow concept of provenance research from an investigation of discourses and the production of knowledge and meaning – about, with, and through objects.

Bénédicte Savoy has become a leader in the art-historical debate around provenance research, and not only because of her report, co-authored with Felwine Sarr, on African cultural heritage in France. In her inaugural lecture at the Collège de France, she proposed writing "a transnational history of Europe" via "the byway of the object,"[69] and she pointed to the relationship "between the accumulation of objects, the production of knowledge, and fantasies of world dominion." The 2018 translation of her book, *Die Provenienz der Kultur*, also brought this perspective into the German debate.[70] That same year, Savoy coedited *Acquiring Cultures*, a collection of case studies about the European art trade in non-European objects, and the process of exoticization that accompanied this trade.[71]

Another important voice in the discussion belongs to the art historian Christoph Zuschlag. In a 2019 essay, he proposed that a "provenancial turn," focusing on the translocation of cultural assets, could introduce a new paradigm in cul-

67 Förster et al., *Provenienzforschung zu ethnografischen Sammlungen der Kolonialzeit*, 16–18.

68 Brandstetter and Hierholzer, "Sensible Dinge," 12–13.

69 Savoy, *Die Provenienz der Kultur*, 19. For the French original, see Savoy, *Objets du désir, désir d'objets*.

70 Savoy, *Die Provenienz der Kultur*, 23.

71 See Savoy, Guichard and Howald, *Acquiring Cultures*.

tural studies and the humanities,[72] and in 2022 he published one of the first introductions to provenance research, describing it as a kind of context research that "rested interdisciplinarily between history, art history, economic history, and social history."[73]

The 2021 collection *Geschichtskultur durch Restitution?* (edited by Thomas Sandkühler, Angelika Epple, and Jürgen Zimmerer) occupies a similar disciplinary intersection – in this case, between history and art history, examining debates around the restitution of cultural assets from colonial contexts through the lens of historical culture. These debates underscore the potential of broadly contextualized provenance research, especially for understanding the "historical and systematic relationship between colonial orders of knowledge and the national self-image of colonial states that competed with other colonial states over art and cultural objects from the Global South."[74]

To a certain extent, the discipline of history approaches the question of provenance research from the opposite direction as ethnology or art history. Working with objects has long been a mainstay of ethnologists and art historians, at the heart of their methodological debates, while historians have traditionally focused on written sources.[75] The discipline of history is concerned less with broadening and deepening the historical contextualization of objects and more with using translocated objects as historical sources, while encouraging provenance research as a method of global and colonial history. Nevertheless, the discipline of history, in the wake of the "material turn," has also critically examined its own methodologies and concepts and developed object-centered historiographical approaches.[76] These approaches also offer central reference points for a holistic understanding of postcolonial provenance research, as an interdisciplinary and globally oriented colonial history is only beginning to illuminate the specific aspects of colonial contexts that inform provenance research.

There is, however, a persistent tendency to isolate questions of provenance from broader interrogations of colonial history and its legacy today. In 2019, Jürgen Zimmerer and Philipp Osten criticized the limitations on provenance re-

72 See Zuschlag, "Vom Iconic Turn zum Provenancial Turn?"

73 See Zuschlag, *Einführung in die Provenienzforschung*, 11–12.

74 Sandkühler, Epple and Zimmerer, "Restitution und Geschichtskultur im (post-)kolonialen Kontext," 20–21.

75 This is, of course, something of an exaggeration, as ethnology has not been overwhelmingly object-based for quite some time. See Sanjek, *Fieldnotes*.

76 Boschung, Kreuz, and Kienlin, *Biography of Objects*; and Gerstenberger and Glasman, *Techniken der Globalisierung*. Within the history of science, there is a tradition of historical scholarship on collections that, since the late 1980s, has reflected on the implications of colonial history for this discipline. See Heesen und Spary, *Sammeln als Wissen.*

search in the German Lost Art Foundation's new guidelines for researching colonial contexts. Their criticism centered around a proposal to investigate the history of the remains of 75 humans that came from a colonial context, and which were and are held by the Museum of Medical History in Hamburg. The German Lost Art Foundation had only agreed to fund an investigation into the origins of these remains, not including their use in research and exhibitions (for example, in the Nazi era). Likewise, there were no funds to investigate the whereabouts of other remains, which had once been recorded as part of the collection but were no longer in Hamburg. Both applicants saw this as an effort "to separate provenance research from its scholarly context in the collecting institutions of the past," and they warned that "provenance research without context" was a "compulsory exercise devoid of content," which did not support basic research but rather hindered it, "out of political motivations."[77] Supporters of a narrower conception of provenance research in turn argue that provenance research runs the risk of being politically instrumentalized, when it aims at restitution, or ideological, when it is explicitly framed as postcolonial.[78]

We argue for a postcolonial provenance research that considers both the fundamentally illegitimate character of the colonial situation and its persisting epistemic consequences. This ultimately means reversing the burden of proof for objects from colonial contexts – a call that was already made with respect to German collections in 2015: "In contrast to the common practice that an acquisition is considered legal until its illegal character is proven, the opposite actually holds true: Colonial objects should be suspected of having been illegally acquired until the opposite is proven."[79] It also means that the entanglement of European science, collecting, and scholarly institutions within the colonial project must be taken into account. Systematically implementing this research can broaden our view of colonial rule and knowledge systems.

Committing the necessary infrastructure and resources to investigating objects' colonial provenance, and fully contextualizing these findings in colonial history, can present challenges for European museums, which hold most of the collections in question. This also raises conceptional questions about the very institution of the museum. The crisis of objects' origins is part of the larger crisis of

77 See Schröder, "Provenienzforschung."

78 This argument is made by Zuschlag, *Einführung in die Provenienzforschung*, 117, 129–130.

79 See Zimmerer, "Kulturgut aus der Kolonialzeit."

museums, particularly ethnological ones:[80] Beyond deciding what to display, museums must also ask how and why.

Universities face a similar challenge because they, too, often own collections of unknown – and possibly colonial – provenance, while they simultaneously facilitate historical and provenance research. Thus, the role of European universities, and that of science and scholarship as a whole must also be considered when interrogating the colonial history of objects and collections.[81]

In the cases of both Nazi-looted art and colonial plunder, there is a shared tendency to limit the epistemic and political consequences of theft and restitution. Indeed, beneath all of the rhetoric, even in the case of Nazi-looted art, results – in the form of actual restitutions or reparations – have fallen very short. To a surprising extent, the debates around Nazi-looted art have avoided addressing the persistence of antisemitism and *völkisch* tendencies in German society.

There is, however, one essential epistemic difference in the public responses to Nazi-looted art and colonial plunder: With respect to Nazi expropriations and looting, the liberal West has, since the 1990s, emphasized its own values and principles as a means from distancing itself from Nazi crimes, which it understands as a deviation from an otherwise untarnished history of progress. This is a critique of the breakdown of Western values in one particular case, but it is not a critique of the values themselves or how they have been systematically undermined in the past and present. By contrast, the debate around colonial (art) theft emphasizes the inherent failings, hypocrisies, and duplicity of this very same West. The stakes of this debate are no less than the European, or colonial, gaze toward the world, the production of this gaze, and how this world is actually appropriated. This goes well beyond objects' origins and property rights, and even beyond collecting and research practices. This is a crisis of representation of the world in the Global North.

4 (Post-)Colonial Provenance Research as Global History

While the political and cultural significance of provenance research is almost taken for granted in public discourse, postcolonial research on looted art is currently in danger of being restricted in its scholarly dimensions and political consequences,

80 With respect to the Swedish context, Mårten Snickare even speaks of a "Current Museum Crisis." See Snickare, *Colonial Objects in Early Modern Sweden and Beyond*, quote from the title of his book; for details see 189–190.

81 See Zimmerer, "Kolonialismus und Universität."

as reflected in the debate around its aim and substance. Our conceptualization of postcolonial provenance research is about more than merely investigating changes in ownership. Building on existing concepts while adding a specifically historical dimension, this book encourages the continuing development of provenance research under the banner of global history. The examples and reflections on the following pages grew out of practical experiences with provenance research projects associated with the Research Center "Hamburg's (Post-)Colonial Legacy."[82] This provenance research is based on the following assumptions:

- Colonial collections and exhibitions should not be regarded separately from overall colonial history but are an integral component of it.
- Colonialism should not be reduced to formal colonial rule, nor to political administration or economic exploitation. Colonialism also includes scholarly and cultural interactions.
- "Discoveries" and exploration prepared the way for, and accompanied, colonial expansion. Ethnological museums, and the academic disciplines of ethnology and geography, came into being and prospered in this context. Especially in Germany, these academic disciplines had a symbiotic relationship with growing colonial enthusiasm.
- Knowledge is, and was, not innocent. Museums contributed to the colonial project, in part, by satisfying the bourgeoisie's interest in "foreign" worlds, and by depicting these worlds in a homogenizing and exoticizing way. This stabilized the Eurocentric gaze, and thereby the sense of European superiority that was an important factor in upholding colonialism. This colonial, Eurocentric gaze is among colonialism's most fateful and enduring consequences.
- Colonialism is an unjust order. It is based on racist – or, at least, proto-racist – worldviews. This order was characterized by a substantial imbalance of power, often accompanied by extensive violence. Even when physical violence was not exercised, its threat was inherent. The assessment of any transaction – also of "collecting" – must consider this implicit threat of violence. This is not to say that there could not have been voluntary or fair exchanges of property

82 These research projects include "Museum Collections in the Emerging Colonial Situation: The Africa Collections of the Übersee-Museum Bremen from the Former German Colonies," sponsored by the Volkswagen Foundation; "The Benin Bronzes: Globalizing the Colonial Looting of Art," sponsored by the Gerda Henkel Foundation; "Colonial Photographs from Namibia at the MARKK," sponsored by the Gerda Henkel Foundation; "Colonial Documents in the 'Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg': Africa as the Subject of Colonial Photography," supported by the ZEIT-Stiftung Ebelin und Gerd Bucerius; and "Colonized Manuscripts: The Provenance of Hamburg's Papyrus Collection," supported by the DFG Excellence Cluster "Understanding Written Artefacts."

in the context of colonialism – but the initial assumption must be that violence, or the threat of violence, played a role.
- When we discuss the biographies of colonial objects, their origins and future, we are also discussing how our modern world came to be – a process associated with European expansion throughout the entire world and this world's subjugation, also through systems of knowledge and law.
- The topic of "colonial looted art" should not be discussed in isolation; it is part of a broader discourse about colonial legacy and colonial amnesia. This discourse – and so, too, the debate around colonial looted art – is a symptom of the transition from colonial to postcolonial globalization.
- Violent suppression and colonial dominion may have formally ended; epistemological hegemony has not.[83]

The questions raised in this book involve the future of a world defined by postcolonial globalization. How to grapple with our colonial legacy, with the colonial legacy of Europe, is one of the great debates – if not the greatest debate – about identity in our time. The dispute around colonial looted art is one of its chapters. This book and its case studies thus present empirical, theoretical, and methodological foundations for holistic (post-)colonial provenance research. Each chapter highlights a specific theme and particular region, contributing to a multifaceted picture of (post-)colonial provenance research.

The provenance research we outline here, and as it is practiced in the individual essays, carefully considers contexts of acquisition and the actors involved in objects' circulation, thereby expanding our understanding of global and (post-)colonial history.[84] This provenance research looks beyond individual objects to collections and their history. It does not merely ask which objects were taken and from whom, or where these objects were brought – but also why different actors in different places collected these objects in the first place. It asks what happened after the objects were acquired, how specific collections came together or were dissolved at particular times, what purpose the objects and collections served, and how their function changed over time.[85] This research also asks about blank

83 Jürgen Zimmerer presented his first programmatic reflections on this topic under the title "Was heißt und zu welchem Zweck betreibt man Provenienzforschung?" at the colloquium in honor of Uwe M. Schneede's eightieth birthday.

84 See Manase's essay in this book.

85 See Jarling's essay in this book.

spaces and opposing perspectives, and how societies of origin have responded to the loss and removal of objects.[86]

Our perspective extends beyond the focus on a few well-known and culturally significant objects whose restitution has been demanded. The practice of collecting large numbers of everyday, unspectacular objects belongs to an integrated study of colonial provenance,[87] raising questions that might be overlooked with a narrow focus on prominent objects or the shape of existing collections: Which elements of colonized societies did not interest the scholars who studied them, and so what kinds of objects might therefore not have been collected? And how, even today, has this influenced our knowledge about those colonized societies? Beyond the focus of this book, we believe that postcolonial provenance research must also consider grave robbery and the hunt for human remains, the transfer of historical documents and manuscripts to Europe, and the systematic collecting of natural objects. An integrated view of European collecting in colonial contexts, which incorporates the issues that are outlined here, can illuminate the interconnections between scholarship/science and colonialism. This view acknowledges the methodological challenges of asking about objects' former owners and producers, and about these objects' significance and purpose in their societies of origin. To counteract the epistemological Eurocentrism of written documents – classic sources of provenance research that track objects' acquisition, circulation, and conservation in museums – oral history must be a central component of postcolonial provenance research.[88] It can broaden our perspective on colonized societies, beyond those phenomena and objects that collectors once deemed relevant.[89]

This kind of provenance research, informed by postcolonial and global historical approaches, can offer profound insights into the dynamic relations between epistemic voids,[90] (ethnological) objects, collections, and colonial power structures. Understanding the heterogeneity of the colonial situation, and colonialism as a "phenomenon of colossal ambiguity,"[91] is critical for tracking the winding paths of provenance and the circulation of objects and entire collections. This awareness enables a critical perspective on the historical circumstances of objects' acquisition, often revealing connections to systematic atrocities or violent expropriation. Such a holistic approach also allows us to understand the ethical

86 See Eiser's essay in this book.

87 See Hege's essay in this book.

88 On oral history as a method of African history, see Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History*.

89 See Awono's essay in this book.

90 See Masebo, "Epistemologische Leerstellen in den verflochtenen Geschichten Tansanias und Deutschlands."

91 Osterhammel and Jansen, *Kolonialismus*, 8.

and moral implications of collecting within or alongside colonial power structures. Consequently, (post-)colonial provenance research is of immense importance in understanding the intricacies of colonialism and its legacies, informing discussions about identity, postcolonial justice, and decolonization in our modern world.

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Research Chapters

Ndzodo Awono

The Cameroon Collection in the Übersee-Museum: Constellations of Actors and the Consequences of Collecting

Cameroon's cultural diversity is great. Anyone who knows its cultural landscape would affirm that its many ethnic groups are well represented in the Cameroon collection at the Übersee-Museum in Bremen. The focus of this essay is the constellation of actors who were involved in assembling this collection. I show not only how Germans robbed Cameroonians of the fruits of their creativity, but also how Cameroonians participated in this unprecedented collection work. My thesis is that collecting was an interactive process between Germans and Cameroonians, in which Cameroonians sometimes played a passive, and sometimes an active, role. I emphasize main groups in a constellation of actors, rather than presenting an exhaustive catalog. I also use the term "actor" to refer to companies, institutions, and anyone directly or indirectly involved in the context of collection, in Cameroon or in Germany. By adopting actor-network theory and a postcolonial approach, I show how different all of these actors were, and how each engaged with the network at particular points in time. I explain the circumstances (or collection procedures) that informed how objects were acquired, and I show how new elements enriched the network, or chain of actors, as the objects in the collection made their way to the museum over time. It is not just human actors that are considered here, but also collective ones (such as freight companies, ships, and museums).

Actor-network theory, according to Bruno Latour, "says that no science of the social can even begin if the question of who and what participate in the action is not first of all thoroughly explored."[1] Latour understands action not as an individual event or initiative, but as the result of agency that is shared by many different entities, whereby actors always depend on the behavior of other actors in the network.[2] Postcolonial theorists understand colonial history as one that entangles colonizers and colonized; they "regard the colonial experiences of both sides as a history of mutual transnational entanglements."[3] The German-African interaction focused on here included sites in the world beyond Europe, which I identify as Ger-

1 Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 72.

2 Schulz-Schaeffer, "Akteur-Netzwerk-Theorie," 287.

3 Zeller, "(Post-)Koloniale Gedächtnistopografien in Deutschland," 337.

Note: Translated by Elizabeth Janik

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man-overseas memory spaces [‘*Deutsch-Überseeische Erinnerungsorte*’]. I thereby extend the concept of “German memory spaces” to the German colonies and colonial collections, affirming the German historian Jürgen Zimmerer’s observation that “these collections remain an oppressive memory space of colonialism.”[4]

German colonization in Cameroon officially began on July 14, 1884, with a proclamation affirming the seizure of territory by Dr. Gustav Nachtigal (1834–1885), German consul general in Tunis and commissioner for German interests on the western African coast.[5] Before this proclamation, Duala rulers – with the exception of Kum’a Mbapé (also known as Lock Priso), head of the Bele Bele clan in Hickory Town (today, Bonabéri) – had signed what became known as the Germano-Duala Treaty.[6] Germans in the colony engaged in tasks that were not merely expansionist, political, or economic. Alongside their official duties and activities, many Germans were expected to collect as many objects as possible from “indigenous” peoples.[7] Germans of all classes and professions landed in Cameroon, including soldiers, traders, missionaries, entrepreneurs, researchers, and even private tourists. Many contributed, in their various ways, to plundering the cultural riches of the colonies’ supposedly “natural” peoples [‘*Naturvölker*’]. Germans in Cameroon most often appropriated objects by military force.

This essay analyzes the different constellations of actors, and the strategies these actors employed in a colonial context shaped by violence, thereby helping to establish the Cameroon collection in the Übersee-Museum in Bremen. I also consider the effects of colonial collecting on the social and political life of Cameroonians. My intent is to show how Germans/Europeans and Cameroonians/Africans participated in collecting. My focus is thus on the constellation of actors and the consequences of colonial collecting.

1 Colonial Collection Strategies

This section analyzes the contexts of acquisition and collection for cultural treasures in the German colonial era. I focus on the state-driven processes that influenced both government authorities and non-state actors. Colonial authorities included soldiers, civil servants, expedition leaders, heads of districts and stations, and other officeholders, while clergy and businessmen also engaged in colonial col-

4 Zimmerer, “Kolonialismus und kollektive Identität,” 21.

5 Schnee, *Deutsches Kolonial-Lexikon*, vol. 2, 612–613.

6 Jaeck, “Die deutsche Annexion,” 68–69.

7 Ankermann, *Anleitung zum ethnologischen Beobachten und Sammeln*, 7.

lecting.[8] Main collection strategies involved expeditions (to research and explore, as well as to punish), administrative tasks, scholarly pursuits, and business and private travel. Further, all colonists, independent of their official functions, had other means of acquiring objects – namely, through judicial proceedings, business deals, barter, and reparations.

1.1 Punitive Expeditions

Punitive expeditions [‘*Strafexpeditionen*’] were military campaigns to stamp out resistance. In German Cameroon, these expeditions were demonstrations of military force, intended to consolidate Germany’s claim to power and to subjugate the population.[9] Expeditions were also used to appropriate the cultural wealth of local residents. The Germans stopped at nothing to reach their goal. Towns, villages, kingdoms, and palaces were plundered and sometimes set on fire. To echo the words of Noam Chomsky, “Europeans ‘fought to kill,’ and they had the means to satisfy their blood lust.”[10] In the process, the colonial masters appropriated all kinds of prestigious, ritual, and valuable objects in military operations, with some scholars asserting that the Germans conducted around 100 military expeditions in Cameroon.[11] I contend that this number is much too low. According to the journalist and legal scholar, Christian Bommarius (b. 1958), hardly a day passed without war in German Cameroon.[12] Between 1889 and 1912, 146 large campaigns were waged against Cameroon’s ethnic groups.[13] As Jos van Beurden states, “[m]ilitary confrontations were countless in the colonial empires.”[14]

According to my research, around 15 German colonial officers were directly or indirectly involved with the Cameroon collection in the Übersee-Museum. One of the best known punitive expeditions, the spoils of which are now located in the Bremen museum was led by Captain von Kamptz (1857–1921) against Lamido [great king/leader] Mohaman Lamou of Tibati on March 11, 1899.[15] Hans Dominik (1870–1910) wrote that the plunder included “ivory tusks, tools, gunpowder, rifles, revolver cartridges, finished garments (robes and/or boubous with hoods), leop-

8 Djomo, “Vom Träger zum Getragenen,” 230.
9 Grimme, “Auseinandersetzung mit einem schwierigen Erbe,” 122.
10 Chomsky, *Year 501*, 33.
11 Speitkamp, *Deutsche Kolonialgeschichte*, 49.
12 Bommarius, *Der gute Deutsche*, 9.
13 Morlang, *Askari und Fitafita*, 56.
14 Beurden, *Treasures in Trusted Hands*, 44.
15 Bericht über den Wute-Adamaua-Feldzug, DKB 10 (1899), 838–849.

ard skins, woven baskets and mats, knives and spears, saddles, bridles, armor – in short, everything stored by a Sudanese ruler in his armory and vault."[16] The attack and plundering of the lamido's palace seems to have devastated the people of Tibati, who passed down a narration of these events from generation to generation. As the current lamido of Tibati, Hamidou Bello, states:

> They entered the lamidat, and they took the bed and precious objects, including the lamido's bed [see Fig. 1] and the throne on which he governed. I'm here on a sofa that was made by our sons, but the throne they took is one that can no longer be made this way. Tibati was a city of warriors, and so all precious objects were taken: works of art, weapons, instruments played by griots to honor the lamido, and drums. There were even signal drums that announced the slightest danger. The drum communicated danger in different languages, so that everyone in their own communities knew when danger arose. All of these drums were stolen. Even today, the lamidat is still devastated; they took everything essential to the lamidat. Besides stealing objects, they murdered the population and burned down the city, which is why no one knows anymore how to make our lost treasures. Now we're sitting on a sofa that we may have made ourselves. When someone comes to Tibati and sees the living room of the lamido furnished with sofas, he certainly knows that these are not old objects.[17]

The lamido is speaking here about the extinction of artisanship. We do not know for sure whether craftsmen were intentionally massacred during the expedition; many were presumably compelled to flee. The German colonial masters of this era saw the spoils of war as trophies – affirmation of their own technical and military superiority and the natives' subjugation. The throne of the lamido was

16 Dominik, *Kamerun*, 276.

17 Interview with Lamido Hamidou Bello of Tibati (November 11, 2018), conducted in French during my field research in Cameroon on objects from the German colonial era: [Ils ont rentré dans le lamidat, ils ont emporté le lit du chambre, les objets d'art; parmi ces objets d'art le lit à coucher du lamido était parmi, et le trône ou le lamido sortait pour faire son règne, par exemple me voici aujourd'hui sur un fauteuil fabriqué par nos fils, mais le trône qu'ils ont emporté jusqu'aujourd'hui on n'a pas les qui peuvent encore fabriquer ce genre. Euh . . . comme Tibati était une ville guerrier, ils n'ont pas laissé les armes, nos objets d'art comme les armes, comme les objets que les griots hmm . . . faisaient les louanges au lamido et les tambours. Il y'a même les tambours d'annonce que lorsqu'il y'a moindre danger, que si on annonçait la danger avec ces tambours, ça parlait aussi plusieurs langues et la population existant à cette époque à Tibati, chacun de sa coutume, s'il sentait ce tambour, il savait qu'l y'avait un danger, tous ces tambours ont été emportés. Aujourd'hui hmm. . . . Ils ont désorganisé le lamidat, ils ont emporté tout ce qui était nécessaire au lamidat, aujourd'hui . . . et ils ont tué, pas même les objets qu'ils ont ramassés, ils ont incendié la ville, ils ont tué la population, raison pour laquelle aujourd'hui nous n'avions plus des anciens qui peuvent fabriquer nos objets qu'ils ont emportés. Aujourd'hui nous voici assis sur un canapé peut-être fabriqué par nous-même, si quelqu'un arrive à Tibati aujourd'hui, il voit le salon du lamido orné avec des canapés, il sait bien que ce ne sont pas des objets vraiment de l'antiquité.]

Fig. 1: Object B 13897: The bed of Lamido Mohaman Lamou from Tibati (Photo: Völker, ÜM).

just one drop in the ocean. As the photo of plunder from Ngila (see Fig. 2) shows, all kinds of items were confiscated in punitive expeditions: ivory tusks, weapons, regalia, musical instruments, and everyday objects, as well as luxury or prestige items and even human bones. For some German colonial officers like Hans Dominik, cutting off the head of a fallen enemy was a custom of war.[18] According to a note in the Übersee-Museum archive, the Cameroon collection holds the skull of a Maka leader whom Hans Dominik had ordered shot during the war against the Omvang and Maka in 1909/10:

> Skull of a Maka, S. Cameroon.
> Gift from Major Dominik to Herr Paulisch of Wandsbek.
>
> This man was among the people who murdered and ate the Hamburg businessman Brettschneider in 1908. Major Dominik tasked Kirchhof, the district commissioner, with the punitive expedition against the Maka village where this man also lived. The people refused to hand over the murderers, whereupon the village was set on fire and ultimately some of the murderers were caught. A judicial proceeding was initiated, and these people were sentenced to death by hanging. This man behaved so defiantly that he was struck down right away. The skull was dug up around one year later, and Dominik gave it to Paulisch as a present.[19]

Parts of other soldiers' collections – for example, those belonging to the officer Adolf Schipper, and the sergeant Heinrich Merz – also came from punitive expeditions. In June 1904, Schipper led a military raid against the Duhu to "liberate"

18 Dominik, *Kamerun*, 91; and Dominik, *Vom Atlantik zum Tschadsee*, 132 and 264.
19 ÜM, "Konietzko" binder.

Fig. 2: Plunder from the capture of Ngila (Source: DKB 10 [1899], 847).

the trade route between Garoua and Dikoa.[20] The spoils included at least three decorative items in the Bremen museum – B05374 and B05375 (arm rings), and B05377 (leg ring). The museum's inventory book tersely describes their origin as "found in Duhu Res[identur] Garua." Sergeant Merz most likely obtained object B05530 (war helmet) on the Mbo expedition led by Captain v. Krogh in 1905/06.[21] It is listed in the inventory book as "war helmet w. black feathers Mbo."

1.2 Inspection Tours and Meetings With Local Elites

Colonial authorities' tours through the colony were often shaped by combat with hostile groups and an ethos of "might makes right." Inspection tours and meetings with autochthonous elites provided further opportunities for collecting objects. On January 20, 1902, the colonial officer Hans Dominik summoned all *lamibé* (plural of *lamido*) and *yauros* ['village leaders'] from Maroua and the surrounding area, so that he could confiscate their weapons: "'Yalla' ['onwards'], I called, and Dalil Fure Gabba, Bokari Bogo, Saadu Mendif, the proud lamidos and eight yauros laid down their swords."[22] In 1904, the German colonial officer Wilhelm Langheld (1867–1917) was appointed Resident of German Adamaua, Bornu, and the German *Tschadsee-*

20 ANY-FA1/118, Akten betr. Station Garua, jetzt Residentur Adamaua, vol. 1, 1902–1904, 258–259; ÜM, inventory book; and DKB 17 (1906), 773–774.
21 ÜM, inventory book; and DKB 17 (1906), 773–774.
22 Dominik, *Vom Atlantik zum Tschadsee*, 204.

länder ['Lake Chad countries'] and he subsequently undertook an official tour of his *Residentur* ['jurisdiction'] with his colleagues Strümpell, Dr. Heßler, and Stieber, the junior officers Schmidt and Dombrowski, and other soldiers and carriers. The *Residenturen* were distinguished by their indirect governance; the lamidats[23] and their leaders, the lamibé, remained in place, but they were overseen by a German Resident.[24] Hostilities sometimes erupted with non-Muslim groups; German forces engaged the Giddir-Wuhum and the Lahm in the first half of December 1904. Langheld ordered the plundering of every site. He used each stage of his journey to acquire local objects – musical instruments (trumpets, shawms, and kettledrums), riding gear, and embroidered saddlecloths in Garoua; penis sheaths and skirts from non-Muslim groups in Mayo Oulo; spears, arrowheads, swords, knives, large bells, and musical instruments of all shapes and sizes on the way to Ngaoundéré; two poison arrows in the village of Gobi; two large ivory tusks in the village of Gedenyato near Ngaoundéré (a gift of the *sarki yaki*, or minister of war, of the lamido of Ngaoundéré); animal skulls from the Gbaya. The lamido of Tibati gave him an eagle, a raven, and a colobus monkey. Langheld presumably also obtained items (leather and leather goods, cloth, beads, knives, daggers, swords, baskets, etc.) at the marketplace in Tibati.[25]

1.3 Scientific Expeditions

Whereas punitive expeditions were led exclusively by military officers, exploratory or scientific expeditions were conducted by both civilian and military personnel. Scientific expeditions in the colonial era were organized around specific research goals, in fields such as geography, ethnology, zoology, or botany.[26] These expeditions were sometimes initiated by the central government, and sometimes by businesses or other institutions in the metropole.

The traveling scholar, Günther Tessmann, is one example of a collector on scientific expeditions. Tessmann was sent by Richard Karutz, head of the Ethnological Museum in Lübeck, to lead the Pangwe expedition in southern Cameroon and Spanish Guinea in August 1907. With the help of soldiers who were placed at his

23 Before and after colonization, the lamidat was a territory in northern Cameroon, led by a lamido of the Fulbe group. Today some Islamicized autochthonous groups in northern Cameroon, such as the Musgum and Mafa, have their own lamidat that is led by the group's lamido.

24 Mveng, *Histoire du Cameroun*, 316.

25 ANY-FA1/76, Kaiserliche Residentur Kusseri, 96–104: Bericht über die Expedition nach Nord-Adamaua; and Langheld, *Zwanzig Jahre in deutschen Kolonien*.

26 Dinslage, *Günther Tessmann*, part 3, 36.

disposal, he seized objects of ethnological interest after raids on the villages of Mabungo and Bibai between October and December 1907. Although some local leaders gave him items as gifts, he also used tricks and deceptive maneuvers, like judicial proceedings, to take villagers' precious possessions. To learn more about the culture of the indigenous population, he observed traditional ceremonies and how objects were produced. He witnessed an iron smelting process in November 1908, and subsequently produced a model furnace. In March 1909, he observed a Ngi ceremony that involved a cleansing fire under the image of a gorilla, and he took possession of many ritual objects. Only members of the Ngi cult could participate in this ceremony, which empowered them to neutralize magical attacks, and to expose, punish, or kill magical beings.[27] In May 1913, Tessmann undertook his second exploratory expedition to Cameroon, on an assignment for the Imperial Colonial Office.[28] He collected ethnographic objects in many villages and made replicas of houses, furnaces, drums, and other everyday objects. This scientific expedition was led by Captain Adolf Max Emil Freiherr von Seefried auf Buttenheim (1873–1914). Alongside First Lieutenant Erwin Gotthold Winkler (1873–1923), Seefried also led the eastern boundary expedition in eastern Cameroon between 1905 and 1907 and the boundary commission's Congo-Cameroon department.[29] While demarcating boundaries, he stayed at various sites (such as Bertoua, Batouri, Meiganga, Garoua, Nola, Koundé, Bongor, and Binder) in the border region between Cameroon, Chad, and what is now the Central African Republic.[30] It is hardly surprising that objects from these sites, or other areas close to the border, have been ascribed to these two colonial officers.

27 Tessmann, *Die Pangwe*, 78–93; and Laburthe-Tolra, *Initiations et sociétés secrètes au Cameroun*, 353.

28 ANY-FA1/974, Akten betr. Ethnographisch-zoologische Expedition Günther Tessmann 1913–1914, 1 and 7.

29 ANY-FA1/150, Personalangelegenheiten Grenzkommission Ost-Kamerun und teilweise Grenzkommission Südkamerun, 1905–1908; and ANY-FA1/151, Akten betr. Personalsachen der Südgrenzexpedition 1905–1907.

30 BArch Berlin R 175-I/7, Beiakten, Deutsch-französische Ostkamerun-Grenzexpedition, Deutsche Abteilung (Hauptmann Seefried), vol. 1, 1905–1907; BArch Berlin R 175-I/8, Beiakten, Deutsch-französische Ostkamerun-Grenzexpedition, Deutsche Abteilung (Hauptmann von Seefried), vol. 2, 1905–1907; Briskorn, *Zur Sammlungsgeschichte afrikanischer Ethnographica*, 306; and Hoffmann, *Okkupation und Militärverwaltung in Kamerun*, vol. 2, 200.

1.4 Business Interests

Beyond military and scientific expeditions, colonial trading companies and individual businessmen in the colony also collected local artifacts. These companies and businessmen sometimes purchased items from other collectors, and sometimes hired their own African agents to search for objects. My focus here is on the businessmen who spent time in Cameroon. Ludwig Broeckmann (1855–?) directly collected the most items in Cameroon for the Übersee-Museum in Bremen. As chief executive of the Bakossi tobacco company and co-owner of the cigar factory F.W. Haase, Broeckmann collected objects of Bakossi culture during his travels to southwestern Cameroon between September and December 1913. A letter from the Bakossi tobacco company to the museum, dated January 28, 1914, reads as follows:

> Our company's chief executive, whose signature is below, brought back various objects for the museum from his trip to Cameroon between September and December of last year – they are from the Bakossi districts along the northern railway, near the Manenguba and Kupe mountains – and we are offering these to the museum at no cost: a large drum and two small drums, a number of spears, a quiver, a dance costume with mask and workers' bags, as made by the local natives, and also the hide of an adult female chimpanzee. The accompanying skeleton is still being preserved in Cameroon and will be delivered to you in a few months. . . . And then, from the Haussas, we acquired a musical instrument from Cameroon, although its exact place of origin cannot be determined. All of the objects, with the exception of the large drum, can be received at our office on Meterstr. 45.[31]

This letter shows that the company's chief executive collected objects for the Übersee-Museum. Other German businessmen and companies likewise engaged directly in collecting Cameroonian objects.[32]

1.5 Private Tourism

Alongside military officers, colonial officials, traveling scholars, and businessmen, private tourists such as the painter and writer Ernst Vollbehr (1876–1960) also collected museum objects. Vollbehr published an account of his travels, *Mit Pinsel und Palette durch Kamerun* ['With paintbrush and palette through Cameroon'], in

31 ÜM, "Erhaltene Korrespondenz vom 1. November 1913 bis 31. Mai 1914" binder: Letter from 28 January 1914 (filed under "T").

32 They included Adolf Diehl (chief representative of the Northwest Cameroon Company), Max Ohling (owner of the "Kumilla" trading post in Bangandou, in the Molundou district in southeastern Cameroon), the trading companies Vietor & Freese, and the West African Company, etc.

1912. Between mid-November 1911 and January 1912, he toured the grasslands and villages on Cameroon's southern coast. At every stage of journey, he collected as many objects as possible, which he described as gifts from local rulers, or as items purchased from autochthonous residents.[33] The objects ranged from everyday items to formal regalia (see section 3.5). Other Germans, including Emil Reiche, also traveled to Cameroon on their own, and their collections eventually came to the Übersee-Museum.[34]

1.6 The Missions

Missionaries were also active collectors, and they supported European museums with material gifts and/or loans. Missionaries also acquired objects by force. Franz Michael Zahn, inspector of the North German Mission, once described mission practices in the colonies as *Kriegswerk* ['act of war'].[35] The missionary Jakob Keller (1862–1947), who worked for the Basel Mission in Cameroon between 1885 and 1914, attested to the missions' use of force against autochthonous peoples: "As a cavalry division takes its enemy by storm . . . this is how we attacked the idols and took them captive."[36] On the reverse of a photograph of ethnographica at the Basel Mission, a handwritten text likewise points to the missionaries' brutality: "Spoils of the victory of the Abo Mission on 10 Dec. 1897."[37] Bernhard Gardi, ethnologist and head of the Africa department at Basel's ethnological museum, speaks of the "victory of Christianity over heathenism,"[38] while the French ethnosociologist and Africanist Réné Bureau (1929–2004) sees a certain complicity, or even complementarity, between missionaries and the military in Cameroon's coastal region.[39] Missionaries used their months or years spent in certain regions to collect objects. The Keller collection is comprised of objects that the missionary

33 Vollbehr, *Mit Pinsel und Palette durch Kamerun*. On pages 40, 46, 52, 61, 77, 82, 83, 91, 95, and 109, Vollbehr describes gifts that he received from rulers in western Cameroon. On pages 110 and 165–166, he discusses objects purchased from young people.

34 ÜM, "Erhaltene Korrespondenz vom 1. Mai 1932 bis 30. Sept. 1933," vol. 3. Emil Reiche visited Cameroon twice, in 1896 and 1898.

35 Franz Michael Zahn, quoted in Briskorn, *Zur Sammlungsgeschichte afrikanischer Ethnographica*, 132.

36 Jakob Keller, quoted in Gardi, *Kunst in Kamerun*, 22.

37 Quoted in Gardi, *Kunst in Kamerun*, 29.

38 Gardi, *Kunst in Kamerun*, 29.

39 Bureau, *Le peuple du fleuve*, 23.

likely assembled during his residence in Bali-Nyonga between 1902 and 1914.[40] A long stay in one location allowed collectors to trade directly with societies of origin, and to gather extensive information about the objects.

1.7 Judicial Proceedings

Judicial proceedings were among the other methods of acquisition available to colonists, independent of their profession, official role, or status. Like punitive expeditions and travel for research or exploration, these proceedings demonstrated the Germans' power. Colonial officials and expedition leaders assumed legislative, judicial, and executive functions in the context of their work. Because trials were not based on fixed rules, Germans had great leeway in decision making,[41] and presumed perpetrators faced arbitrary sentences. The goal of judicial proceedings was "to keep the blacks subordinate"[42] – that is, to prevent them from controlling their own fates. Seeking objects from local residents, some European collectors had no qualms about making a parody of justice. Because colonists pronounced the sentences, these were always in their favor. Günther Tessmann described a trial, or "palaver," in which "chieftains" were so afraid of punishment that they gave him valuable gifts like wooden masks.[43]

1.8 Reparations

Local powerholders defeated in colonial wars or punitive expeditions were expected to pay reparations. Colonial usurpers used tributes of war to assert dominion over the land and its people.[44] Wars presented an opportunity for the Germans not only to resolve their shortage of workers and carriers, but also to obtain ivory and objects of ethnographic interest. After taking Tibati, the punitive expedition leader Captain von Kamptz ordered the fugitive lamido Mohaman Lamou to pay 300 ivory tusks, 50 head of cattle, and 50 donkeys.[45] According to the historian Christine Seige, high reparations cost the lamido of Tibati, and most Vute leaders in

40 ÜM, "Afrika" binder. This source erroneously indicates that Keller collected these objects in Cameroon over a period of 24 years.
41 Schaper, *Koloniale Verhandlungen*, 164.
42 Quoted in Schaper, *Koloniale Verhandlungen*, 168.
43 Templin, *Günther Tessmann*, part 2, 120–122.
44 Djomo, "Vom Träger zum Getragenen," 237.
45 DKB 10 (1899), 846.

central Cameroon, a large part of their ivory reserves.[46] Although the question of reparations is not well documented, it is important to note that this widespread practice gave the colonial masters access to luxury goods and other prestigious items. Reparations and tributes were nothing new to many groups. Instead of ending these practices, the colonial masters expanded them, in order to meet the metropole's demands.

1.9 Between Purchase and Barter

Interactions between colonial masters and the local population in German Cameroon occurred in the "colonial situation," which was shaped by many forms of violence against colonized people. In this sense, violence was inherent to the colonial system. Similarly, any commercial transactions with colonial authorities or European non-state actors were strongly influenced by uneven power relations, and thus could only be unfair (see Fig. 3). Many of the Europeans were soldiers themselves (or else were accompanied by them), and their very presence symbolized the culture of violence. The colonial officer Hans Dominik recounted his visit to a market in mid-December 1901; he was accompanied by Bülow, another officer, and the soldiers Mahama, Osman Kato, and Ibrahim.[47] Vollbehr, too, was joined by African soldiers on his hinterland expedition in November 1911.[48] Under these circumstances, is it even possible to speak of "free" exchange? Some Africans disagree, while some Europeans characterize these transactions as normal. In the following paragraphs, I present both sides.

Tchakountouo (b. 1950), the oldest dignitary in the Bangou *chefferie*, asserts that his ancestors were deceived in their negotiations with colonial masters:

> Our parents were previously not so wise. They were corrupted and cheated by the colonists. Only now do our parents, our brothers, know the value of certain things. . . . Today they can no longer part as easily with this kind of sculpture. . . . Our parents were cheated. The white colonists knew the value better than our parents.[49]

46 Seige, "Von allen begehrt," 224.

47 Dominik, *Vom Atlantik zum Tschadsee*, 73.

48 Vollbehr, *Mit Pinsel und Palette durch Kamerun*, 11–12 and 25–26; and Schuberth, *Ernst Vollbehr*, 107. Schuberth writes that Vollbehr was accompanied by 15 soldiers.

49 Interview with Tchakountouo, dignitary and protector of tradition in the Bangou *chefferie* (November 29, 2021), conducted as part of a project (*Die neue Brisanz alter Objekte*) on understudied objects in the University of Göttingen's ethnological collection. [Vous savez, nos parents auparavant n'étaient pas tellement sages, les colons les ont corrompus comme ça, les trompaient. C'est actuellement que nos parents, nos frères connaissent la valeur de certaines choses, . . . au-

Tchakountouo complains that the colonial masters acquired valuable items for prices much less than their actual worth, a source of great outrage and dissatisfaction.

In Ndoumba in 1894, Morgen purchased a 50 lb ivory tusk for three *Faden* (about 5.4 meters) of cloth, worth about 70 pfennigs. On the coast, this tusk was worth 450 marks.[50] During his second trip to Cameroon between 1912 and 1913, Vollbehr purchased an old and valuable pearl headdress, which depicted a giant lizard, for only 4 1/2 marks. A similar scene transpired in Longji near Kribi, where Vollbehr purchased musical instruments on the cheap.[51] Between 1981 and 1986, Cameroonian eyewitnesses were recorded for the project *Souvenirs de l'Epoque allemande au Cameroun*, and these interviews were published in 2018. Some eyewitnesses recalled how the Germans had obtained local products at low prices: "Those who came to buy our goods paid us a starvation wage."[52]

This way of analyzing colonial transactions contrasts with the approach of ethnologist and Africanist Michaela Oberhofer, who emphasizes that groups like the Bamun sometimes demanded large sums of money for valuable objects. Oberhofer cites the collector Bernhard Ankermann, who complained that 40 to 50 marks was too much for a brass neck ring.[53]

Europeans had another method for acquiring local art objects: trading these for manufactured goods or even local provisions. Items of lesser value from Europe – such as mirrors, spoons, padlocks with keys, tobacco, perfume, and cotton – were proffered in exchange for valuable pieces of African art.[54] Ankermann, for example, requested "a few more cases of the cheap sparkling wine, which I brought along specifically for thirsty chieftains."[55] If there was nothing else to trade, Germans proffered wild game in exchange for ethnographic objects. On this subject Tessmann wrote: "I stayed in the village and sent out people to retrieve the rest of the meat. I traded part of the meat for ethnographic objects."[56]

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jourd'hui ils ne peuvent plus livrer ce genre de sculpture comme ça. . . . On a trompé nos parents. Les colons blancs connaissaient la valeur plus que nos parents.]

50 Seige, "Von allen begehrt," 213.

51 Vollbehr, *Mit Pinsel und Palette durch Kamerun*, 165–66; and Schuberth, *Ernst Vollbehr*, 142.

52 Ndumbe, *Jetzt berichten afrikanische Zeitzeugen*, 194. Kum'a Ndumbe III was the project leader.

53 Oberdorfer, Michaela, "Zwischen Tradition und Innovation."

54 Oberdorfer, Michaela, "Zwischen Tradition und Innovation."

55 Zentralarchiv der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin, Akte I/MV 798, E 879/08: Letter to Prof. Dr. v. Luschan, director of the Africa-Oceania department of the Ethnological Museum in Berlin (March 2, 1908).

56 Dinslage and Templin, *Günther Tessmann*, part 1, 289–290.

Fig. 3: Market in Kumbo (northwestern Cameroon) in the German colonial era (Source: African Fruit Company A.G., Hamburg-Cameroon).

In light of this analysis, I can assert – echoing the words of both Adam Smith and Chomsky – that most of the aforementioned collection strategies were an expression of "the savage injustice of the Europeans."[57]

It is difficult to establish the circumstances in which many military and civilian officials first acquired their collections. The German colonial administrator, Leopold Conradt, headed the Lolodorf outpost in 1895, and served as station director in Johann-Albrechtshöh (today, Kumba) in 1895/96. In July 1899, he wrote to Felix von Luschan, director of the African department in Berlin's Ethnological Museum, but this correspondence does not reveal how he acquired his collection.[58] We do not know whether the collection came from a punitive expedition. The same is true for most of the collection of the colonial officer Adolf Schipper, and for the collections of other colonial administrators, like Governor August Köhler and Consul General Gustav Nachtigal.

57 Chomsky, *Year 501*, 4 and 32.

58 Zentralarchiv der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin, Akte I/MV 723, Acta betreffend Erwerbung ethnologischer Gegenstände aus Afrika, vol. 23, 1. April 1900 bis Ende Oktober 1900 (E. N. 759/1899), 191.

2 Transport to Germany and Transfer to the Übersee-Museum

2.1 Transport Companies

Transport is an important aspect in the constellation of actors. Objects collected in Cameroon would never have made their way to Europe without extensive transport logistics. Thus, identifying the actors (companies) involved in transport is of interest in this context. African carriers were responsible for the first stage of transport, from the Cameroonian hinterland to the coast. The available sources indicate that freight forwarders and other large companies then brought the African objects to Germany. I will attempt to address the question of transport using a few examples.

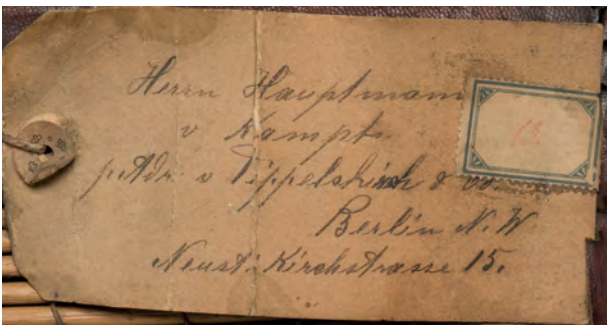

Fig. 4: Label on the lamido's bed (Photo: Awono).

A label attached to the bed of the lamido of Tibati suggests that the Hamburg-America Line and Tippelskirch & Co. transported the Kamptz collection to Berlin and/or other sites in Germany (see Fig. 4). These companies were not exclusively organized to transport cultural artifacts, as the Woermann Line and Tippelskirch & Co. also carried military equipment, government officials, and non-state personnel to the colonies. Collections necessarily made their way to Germany with the help of freight and shipping companies. I was not able to determine whether some transport companies entered into agreements with collectors or museums.

2.2 Paths to the Übersee-Museum

This subsection identifies the human and non-human actors involved in bringing collections to the museum. Objects came to the museum in various ways. Collectors and their family members, ethnographica dealers, and other museums all made collections available to the Übersee-Museum. However, very few collectors gave their collections directly to the museum. Kamptz was part of this small group. He initiated contact with the museum himself, and invited its representatives to view his collection in Berlin. The Übersee-Museum's director, Professor Hugo Schauinsland, offered to buy the collection for 3,000 marks, to be paid in two installments.[59] Other owners donated their collections, or sold individual objects to the museum,[60] while many collections came to the Übersee-Museum via a third party. For instance, the majority of the Schipper collection came to the museum via Schipper's brother-in-law, the Bremen attorney Bernard B. Danziger, who was presumably his legal representative. Some German ethnographica dealers – like Julius Konietzko, Johann Gustav Umlauff, and Hermann Rolle – had an expansive network of contacts with access to other collections. The Konietzko collection alone comprises one quarter of the Übersee-Museum's entire Cameroon collection. He obtained 2,100 objects from the Ethnological Museum in Berlin between 1909 and 1939,[61] and bought the Baia collection from Tessmann.[62] Collections from Vollbehr and others came to Bremen via other German museums.[63]

3 African Involvement in Colonial Collecting

Colonial rule depended in part on cooperation with local residents. This cooperation flowed through traditional centers of power, as colonial authorities supported

59 ÜM, "Archiv 1900–1910" binder: Major von Kamptz to Professor Schauinsland (September 4, 1902).

60 ÜM, "Erhaltene Korrespondenz vom 1. Januar 1917 bis 31. Juli 1917" binder.

61 Zwernemann, "Julius Konietzko," 22–24.

62 ÜM, "Konietzko" binder: J. Konietzko to Prof. Dr. Roewer, Director of the German Colonial and Übersee-Museum Bremen (April 11, 1936). See also ÜM Bremen, "Afrika" binder.

63 Other contributing museums included the Museen Böttcherstraße (Vollbehr, Ausstellung Aalderink/Amsterdam, Fritz Reinhardt/Hamburg, August Brandt/Fahrenholz bei Rinteln, Keymel/Hamburg, Ludwig Roselius); Königliches Museum/Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde Berlin (Langheld, Leopold Conradt, von Stein, Frobenius, and Gustav Nachtigal); Museum für Völkerkunde Leipzig (Arthur Speyer, Diehl); and the Museum für Tier- und Völkerkunde Dresden (Winkler).

local rulers who were friendly to their administration, and ousted those who were hostile. Colonial authorities also recruited autochthonous workers for certain tasks, such as carrying and interpreting, or serving in the colonial army or police. While this cooperation can be interpreted in various ways, it certainly facilitated colonial collecting. Some Africans helped to transport artifacts that colonists had purchased, confiscated on expeditions, or received as gifts; others explained these artifacts' cultural significance. This section examines how Cameroonians participated in colonial collecting.

3.1 Colonial Soldiers and Police

As Germany commenced its colonial rule in Cameroon, its local army was largely comprised of soldiers from Western Africa, including the Kingdom of Dahomey, Liberia, Nigeria, Togo, Sierra Leone, and Gabon.[64] Under the command of German superiors, these African soldiers took part in expeditions that sought to "liberate" trade routes, and to plunder and destabilize *chefferies*, kingdoms, and other centers of local power.[65] Defiant local chiefs and their subordinates were frequently stripped of their possessions, and their crops and homes were burned to the ground. The lion's share of the spoils went to German superiors, although African soldiers also profited.[66] The cosmopolitan character of the colonial army encouraged African soldiers to participate in looting. Soldiers rarely came from the sites that were raided or looted. Diaries and published accounts describe African soldiers as intermediaries, interpreters, collectors, and producers of objects. Illustrative examples of this activity include the African soldiers who took part in storming and plundering the settlements of local powerholders in the Vute region (Mango, Watare, Ngila), and also in Tibati and Maroua, between 1897 and 1899.[67] Tessmann described soldiers who worked on models of native homes, alongside their surveillance duties.[68] On a punitive expedition to the Yambassa region (central Cameroon) in November 1914, he sent "all available soldiers . . . to hunt for any ethnological pieces."[69] On such expeditions, African soldiers also acted as interpreters.

64 ANY-FA1/3, Angelegenheit des Schutzgebietes Togo, vol. 3 (July 1908), 137–141. See also Rüger, "Die Entstehung und Lage der Arbeiterklasse unter dem deutschen Kolonialregime in Kamerun," 187.
65 Morlang, *Askari und Fitafita*, 56.
66 Glasman, "La troupe de police du Togo allemand," 44–45.
67 Dominik, *Kamerun*; and Dominik, *Vom Atlantik zum Tschadsee*.
68 Dinslage, *Günther Tessmann*, part 3, 101.
69 Dinslage, *Günther Tessmann*, part 3, 248.

3.2 Carriers

At first, carriers in German Cameroon were persons from the Gold Coast (today, Ghana), or the Vai (also called Vei or Kru) from Liberia (not a colony, since it had been politically independent since 1847). Because this solution proved impractical, inefficient, and expensive in the longer term, the Germans decided to recruit carriers from local ethnic groups.[70] African carriers performed many tasks on expeditions. They traveled ahead and knew the terrain better than the colonizers, and so naturally they served as guides, even though colonial propaganda downplayed this reality as much as possible.[71] Their main duty, however, was transporting equipment, items of barter, monthly rations, and food for Europeans. They also brought plundered objects to ports where they were shipped overseas.[72] Objects seized on expeditions were always transported by African carriers. After Tibati was captured and plundered on March 11, 1899, around 250 African carriers transported the spoils, including ivory tusks.[73] Locals in Bipindi supported the German gardener Georg August Zenker (1885–1922), who collected zoological and ethnological objects; they not only transported these objects, but gave Zenker all kinds of information about them.[74] In 1912, as Vollbehr's expedition in Cameroon drew to a close, he relied on around 120 carriers to transport his collection.[75]

Carriers were essential to transportation logistics, and numerically they represented the largest contingent of persons on expeditions. In the 1890s, the German colonial officer Hans Dominik emphasized that the lack of transportation made "human shoulders" indispensable: "Without carriers, he [the expedition leader] is immobile."[76] Carriers did not merely transport baggage; they even transported Europeans.[77] They also were often tasked with collecting insects or plants, or with purchasing ethnographic objects (see Fig. 5).[78] It is a subject of debate whether carriers assigned to German colonial administrators or travelers as

70 Djomo, "Vom Träger zum Getragenen," 233.
71 Malzner and Peiter, "Einleitung," 14.
72 Gütl, "Mori Duise," 141.
73 Hamidou Bello, the lamido of Tibati, spoke of around 300 carriers in my interview with him (November 11, 2018). See also Barrywa, *Le lamidat de Tibati*, 70.
74 Kaiser, "Sammlungspraxis und Sammlungspolitik," 8.
75 Schuberth, *Ernst Vollbehr*, 158.
76 Dominik, *Vom Atlantik zum Tschadsee*, 25.
77 Gütl, "Mori Duise," 141; and Djomo, "Vom Träger zum Getragenen," 242–243.
78 Templin, *Günther Tessmann*, part 2, 89, 91, 109, and 127; and Dinslage, *Günther Tessmann*, part 3, 76, 94, 113, 115, 128–129, and 144.

tributes of war, compulsory laborers, slaves, or prisoners voluntarily participated in plundering local treasures.[79]

3.3 Interpreters

Difficulties with comprehension – especially linguistic – were the first great challenge encountered by members of an expedition in the colonial context. It is hard to imagine an expedition without interpreters. African interpreters were essential to every expedition because they mediated between colonial masters and local residents. They were paradigmatic figures who narrowed the gap between Europeans and Africans. In Cameroon, they enabled communication and interactions between Germans and Cameroonians.[80] They helped to consolidate and spread colonial influence and thus proved indispensable: "A single European traveler, a missionary, or a European military leader were all dependent to a greater or lesser extent on their interpreters."[81] Most interpreters on expeditions were not professionals, but they typically knew local languages and English or pidgin English. To overcome the language barrier during his time in Cameroon, particularly during the Garua-Lake Chad expedition, Hans Dominik relied on a few individuals – namely, Sergeant Samba, a private named Johnny, and especially Mohamed Beschir, who had previously taught the Haussa language at the Oriental Seminar in Berlin. As interpreter on the Garua-Lake Chad expedition, Beschir was occasionally supported by a soldier named Mahama.[82] During this period the Germans frequently employed Haussa as interpreters and guides.[83] The best-known Cameroonian interpreter, who was frequently at Dominik's side, was the Beti ruler Karl Atangana. In the six years before Dominik's death in 1910, Atangana served as an interpreter and mediator in most of Dominik's expeditions and other official tours.[84] By teaching Dominik about autochthonous culture and enabling access to objects, Atangana undoubtedly helped with the collection of ethnographica.

The success of Günther Tessmann's Ssanga-Lobaye expedition depended in part on his interpreters, a role assumed by African soldiers.[85] In the preface to his

79 Dinslage, *Günther Tessmann*, part 3, 275; and Djomo, "Vom Träger zum Getragenen," 237.
80 Schaper, *Koloniale Verhandlungen*, 204–205.
81 Lawrance, Osborn, and Roberts, "Introduction," 11.
82 Dominik, *Kamerun*, 166 and 247; and Dominik, *Vom Atlantik zum Tschadsee*, 2, 5, 53, and 71.
83 Seige, "Von allen begehrt," 223.
84 Dominik, *Vom Atlantik zum Tschadsee*, 38; and Quinn, "Charles Atangana of Yaounde."
85 Dinslage, *Günther Tessmann*, part 3, 212.

work, Vollbehr wrote that "completely reliable colored interpreters, left for me by the government stations, stood by my side when I wanted to find something out from the natives themselves."[86] George August Zenker, the former Yaoundé station director, lived with two Beti women who served as mediators and interpreters and gave him information about cultural objects, plants, and animals.[87]

Local rulers as well as Europeans relied on interpreters to communicate with outsiders. African elites employed their own interpreters. The Vute ruler Ngutte relied on a "Haussa-speaking Vute" when he received Hans Dominik.[88] Dominik himself wrote about Abinda, a young woman from the Madiongolos (a subgroup of the Tikar), whom he met "as her king's interpreter and pipe keeper [*Pfeifenwart*]" in Ngambe near Tibati.[89] In villages with Haussa residents, local rulers frequently asked leaders of Haussa caravans to mediate between outsiders and the autochthonous population.[90]

Fig. 5: Günther Tessmann with his African escorts at Nkoltangan, October 1907 (Source: Templin and Böhme, *Hans Jobelmann*, 231).

86 Vollbehr, *Mit Pinsel und Palette durch Kamerun*, preface.
87 Kaiser, "Sammlungspraxis und Sammlungspolitik."
88 Dominik, *Vom Atlantik zum Tschadsee*, 53.
89 Dominik, *Vom Atlantik zum Tschadsee*, 59.
90 Seige, "Von allen begehrt," 215.

3.4 African Intermediaries

Africans participated in colonial collecting not only as soldiers, carriers, and interpreters, on expeditions or as collectors themselves, but also as traders and middlemen. Trade in Cameroon was dominated by the Haussa, except in the south and on the coast,[91] and, acting as intermediaries between Europeans and other Africans, they even became an "important factor in the colonial economy."[92] The increased engagement of Haussa traders in Cameroon was closely linked to colonization:

> Haussa trade expanded immensely once the Germans occupied Cameroon – not only because the establishment of peace secured trade routes and opened up new ones, but also because the colonizers directly supported this trade. Haussa followed Europeans to the newly established stations, just as they had once followed the conquering Fulbe.[93]

Dominik noticed Haussa hunters while visiting the Vute leader, Ngila, in September 1896. Ngila had clearly arranged to procure more ivory to sell to Haussa traders, and, indirectly, to the Germans. The Haussa supplied Europeans with ivory and all kinds of handicrafts, obtaining these items inexpensively and aiming to turn an especially high profit as middlemen.[94] They were not, however, the only intermediaries in the colony. Other groups (including the Duala, Bakoko, and Beti) also assumed this role, if sometimes only regionally. The Duala fished and traded along the Cameroonian coast, and they kept other groups from interacting directly with the Europeans in the first years of colonization; they thus sought to keep the advantages of intermediary trade for themselves.[95] The Duala commissioned craftsmen and artists from other ethnic groups to produce objects like stools and masks, which the Duala then sold to the Europeans.[96] The Bakoko were the most important intermediaries in the large region between the Sanaga, the Nyong, and the Mbam.[97] The Beti, who lived near the Yaoundé station, had traded ivory, rubber, and other commodities along the Cameroonian coast since 1895, and accompanied the military caravans that shuttled between the station and the coast.[98]

91 Geary, "Political Dress"; and Geary, "Elephants, Ivory, and Chiefs."
92 Gründer, *Geschichte der deutschen Kolonien*, 160.
93 Braukämper, *Der Einfluss des Islams auf die Geschichte und Kulturentwicklung Adamauas*, 32.
94 Seige, "Von allen begehrt," 213 and 220.
95 Dominik and Ramsay, "Kamerun," 61–65.
96 Wilcox, "Elephants, Ivory, and Art," 271–272.
97 Seige, "Von allen begehrt," 217.
98 Seige, "Von allen begehrt," 219.

3.5 The Role of Local Powerholders

The historian Carsten Kretschmann interprets nineteenth-century gift-giving as a symbolic diplomatic act, a strategy in the struggle for social and cultural recognition.[99] Local rulers' gifts to the Germans played an extremely important diplomatic role. Some of these gifts were symbols of power, and could not be given away without a reciprocal gesture or gift. The painter and independent traveler Ernst Vollbehr was among those collectors who received many objects from Cameroonian rulers. Local powerholders in western Cameroon gave him many valuable objects on his tour in 1911. These included an ornate decorative gourd (from the king in Bamengang); an idol statue (village chief in Fossong); a "richly carved throne" and a "porcupine-like cap" (village chief in Babanti Tungo); a newly forged sword (village chief in Babungo); and masks, carvings, old bronze pipes, the complete uniform of a Bamun horseman; a house model, and other old and valuable ethnographic objects (King Njoya and his mother).[100] Because of their cultural significance, it is unlikely that most of these objects were simply given away to the Germans. Instead, these gifts were politically motivated with powerholders using them to earn respect from the German colonial administration. Gifts thus embodied a tactical and political calculus for holding onto power. Ncharé Oumarou, director of cultural and political affairs at the Royal Palace of Foumban, explains the relevance of Njoya's gifts to the Germans:

> The cooperation was good. Further, when you visit . . . the royal museum, you will see many objects that were King Njoya's gifts to the Germans. Even when you visit the Ethnological Museum in Berlin, you will see that King Njoya's throne is on display. When you receive a friend, you give him a gift. Some people today believe that the Germans forcibly expropriated this throne from King Njoya. I can surely say that it was more of a gift from King Njoya to Kaiser Wilhelm II, to strengthen friendly relations between his people and the Germans.[101]

From the moment that the colonial powers sought to install their own local rulers, gifts from the aforementioned leaders became an expression of submission, and

99 Kretschmann, *Räume öffnen sich*, 150–151.

100 Vollbehr, *Mit Pinsel und Palette durch Kamerun*, 91 and 95.

101 Excerpt from my October 23, 2018, interview in French with Ncharé Oumarou at the Royal Palace of Foumban: [La collaboration était bonne. D'ailleurs si vous visitez le musée du roi . . . le musée du palais, vous verrez beaucoup d'objets qui étaient les cadeaux du roi Njoya aux Allemands. Si vous allez même au musée für Völkerkunde à Berlin, vous verrez que le trône du roi Njoya est exposé dans ce musée. Quand vous recevez un ami, vous lui donné un cadeau. D'aucuns aujourd'hui pensent que ce trône du roi Njoya est une expropriation forcée des Allemands. Moi je peux dire sans risque de me tromper, que c'était plutôt un cadeau du roi Njoya à l'empereur Guillaume II, pour conforter les liens amicaux entre son peuple et les Allemands.]

those from the Germans were rewards for loyalty.[102] Other Germans, like the colonial officer Richard Hirtler, also received objects from many rulers in the Cameroonian grasslands.[103] Some objects were commercially produced just for Europeans. According to Michaela Oberhofer, Njoya participated through intermediaries in commercial transactions between the Germans and the Bamun.[104]

Women were also involved in colonial collecting. Although underrepresented, they occasionally acted as interpreters and mediators, or even sold objects themselves. The aforementioned Beti concubines of Georg August Zenker, the former Yaoundé station director, also mediated and interpreted for him, and they gave him information about cultural objects, plants, and animals.[105] The German ethnologist, painter, and photographer Marie Pauline Thorbecke wrote that 300 to 400 Bamun women offered objects to her and her husband Franz Thorbecke (1875–1945) during the German Colonial Society's research tour in Cameroon in 1911/12:

> Our house is quite the museum; we've picked up fabulous treasures, mostly from women who literally stormed our house when they realized that in return we could offer money, tobacco, perfume, and mirrors for their pots, baskets, jewelry, and pipes; there must have been 300 to 400 women all at once. . . . Now just a few individuals come from time to time, because we're only still buying things that are especially nice or old.[106]

These few examples contradict Benjamin N. Lawrance, Emily Lynn Osborn, and Richard L. Roberts, who assert that all intermediaries and interpreters were men.[107]

4 Effects of Colonial Collecting on African Social and Political Life

Investigating the sociopolitical consequences of colonial collecting on Cameroonian ethnic groups demands giving close consideration to the circumstances in which cultural treasures were taken. Analyzing these effects takes us beyond the collections in the museum's Cameroon holdings. Germans did not always use the same methods for acquiring desirable objects. The sociopolitical situation some-

102 Beurden, *Treasures in Trusted Hands*, 56 and 233.
103 DKB 15 (1904), 587 and 591.
104 Oberdorfer, "Zwischen Tradition und Innovation."
105 Kaiser, "Sammlungspraxis und Sammlungspolitik."
106 Quoted in Oberdorfer, "Zwischen Tradition und Innovation."
107 Lawrance, Osborn, and Roberts, "Introduction," 4.

times depended on whether locals collaborated with, or opposed, the colonial administration. Since fully depicting the effects of colonial actions is beyond the scope of this essay, I will illustrate the range of effects with three representative examples: Tibati/Maroua, the Duala, and the Bamun.

4.1 Tibati and Maroua

During the German colonial era, both Tibati and Maroua were subject to Fulbe rule. German punitive expeditions left a scar on both cities. Countless residents were murdered, and social and political structures were destabilized or destroyed, culminating in the removal of previous rulers and their replacement with willing collaborators. After Tibati was captured on March 11, 1899, Commander von Kamptz ordered the plundering of Lamido Mohaman Lamou's treasure chambers. Mohaman Lamou was arrested and deported to Douala, and replaced by his cousin, Yerima Chiroma.[108] The capture of Tibati brought about the collapse of existing structures of governance and the political and administrative splintering of the Tibati lamidat; all Tikar settlements were removed from Tibati's sphere of influence.[109] Craftsmen and their cultural experience disappeared without a trace. Today, the current lamido of Tabati still mourns this loss and attributes it to the Germans:

> They entered the lamidat, and they took the bed and precious objects, including the lamido's bed and the throne on which he governed. I'm here on a sofa that was made by our sons, but the throne they took is one that can no longer be made this way. . . . Even today, the lamidat is still devastated; they took everything essential to the lamidat. Besides stealing objects, they murdered the population and burned down the city, which is why no one knows anymore how to make our lost treasures.[110]

108 Barrywa, *Le lamidat de Tibati*, 70.

109 Hoffmann, *Okkupation und Militärverwaltung in Kamerun*, vol. 1, 251.

110 Interview in French with Lamido Hamidou Bello of Tibati (November 11, 2018), conducted during my field research in Cameroon on objects from the German colonial era: [Et ils ont rentré dans le lamidat, ils ont remporté le lit du chambre, les objets d'arts. Parmi ces objets d'art le lit à coucher du lamido était parmi, et le trône ou le lamido sortait pour faire son règne, par exemple me voici aujourd'hui sur un fauteuil fabriqué par nos fils, mais le trône qu'ils ont emporté jusqu'aujourd'hui on n'a pas les qui peuvent encore fabriquer ce genre. . . . Ils ont désorganisé le lamidat, ils ont emporté tout ce qui était nécessaire au lamidat . . ., ils ont tué la population, raison pour laquelle aujourd'hui nous n'avions plus des anciens qui peuvent fabriquer nos objets qu'ils ont emportés.]

The lamido implicitly points to the strong relationship between regalia and power. By removing symbols of power, the Germans wanted local residents "to experience, with their own eyes, the collapse of the chieftain's power."[111]

The change in leadership in the Tibati lamidat raised tensions between the emir of Yola and the German colonial administration. It led to political uncertainty and weakened the economy. The new lamido lacked legitimacy, and trade no longer flourished as it had before the Germans arrived.[112] The plundering of the royal palace, and the destruction of Fulbe's social and political structures, thwarted plans to establish an emirate in Tibati.[113] After the German colonial forces triumphed over the army of Suberu and his ally Amadu Rufai, Maroua was captured and plundered in January 1902. Here, too, there was a change in leadership; Hans Dominik appointed Yerima Abduramani Suyudi, a willing collaborator and brother of the fugitive Amadu Rufai, to serve as his brother's *wadjiri* ['governor'].[114] The dismissal of old leaders in Maroua and Tibati shows the Germans' lack of regard for local leaders and existing hegemonic structures. In sum, the consequences of colonial collecting in Tibati and Maroua were sociocultural, economic, and political.

4.2 The Duala

This subsection focuses on the *Tangué* – a carved wooden ship's beak, or prow ornament – that was an emblem of power for the Duala. The object was confiscated by Max Buchner, provisional representative for Imperial Germany, in a punitive expedition against Duala "chieftain" Kum'a Mbape in Hickory Town, and the subsequent plundering of his house, on December 22, 1884.[115] My emphasis here is not on the history of the *Tangué* itself, nor on the course of Alexandre Kum'a Ndumbe III's campaign for its restitution – but rather on frictions sparked by this campaign since the 1990s, and the related controversy in the Bele Bele family over the legitimate heir to Kum'a Mbape's throne. Kum'a Ndumbe first petitioned to reclaim the object in 1999, after he learned of an article by Rosalinde

111 ÜM, "Konietzko" binder, undated.
112 Seige, "Begehrt von allen Seiten," 303. Reprint of an article on Haussa trade.
113 Barrywa, *Le lamidat de Tibati*, 70.
114 Dominik, *Vom Atlantik zum Tschadsee*, 215.
115 Splettstößer, "Ein Kameruner Kulturerbe?"; and Bokohonsi, Hamann, and Michels, "Plenty trouble," 32 and 35.

G. Wilcox that discussed the *Tangué* and its presence in Munich's ethnological museum.[116] Wilcox described it as follows:

> The carved canoe prow ornament, *tange*, is one of the most spectacular achievements of Duala art. A log is carved lengthwise and a transverse section added. The ornament caved in an intricate openwork tableau is painted and attached to canoe prow. This *tange* was collected in Douala in 1884 by Max Buchner, one of the envoys sent by Bismarck to claim Cameroon as a German protectorate. Buchner rescued it from the burning house of Chief Lock Priso, which had been set afire during the German shelling of Douala. The *tange* was his "main booty" . . . which he claimed for the museum in Munich. Wood, paint. Length 145.10 cm. No. 7087, Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde, Munich.[117]

The question of Lock Priso's legal successor seems not to have been raised until Kum'a Ndumbe III called for the return of the stolen *Tangué* in 1999. Jean-Pierre Félix-Eyoum[118] agrees, pointing out that no claims have been made even on the second *Tangué*, which is held in storage at the Munich museum.[119] Kum'a Ndumbe III's calls for restitution have led to the emergence of two rival groups in the Bele Bele family (Kum'a Mbape's grandchildren and great-grandchildren), each claiming the rightful heir.[120] The object has not yet been restituted. This case shows that, more than 100 years later, the Bele Bele family is still experiencing the collateral damage of colonial collecting and the seizure of the *Tangué*.

4.3 The Bamun and Bali

Punitive expeditions and plundering led to the collapse of hegemonic structures in many Cameroonian regions, but the consequences were different for the Bamun people and in Bali. Collecting in the Bamun region was not just driven by theory; local actors also played a large role. King Njoya's cooperative stance toward the Germans informed the Bamun's distinctive position. Njoya had heard about the Germans' punitive expeditions and acts of revenge against rebellious ethnic groups in western Cameroon, and also about the colonial forces' modern weapons. Seeking to avoid a struggle that could cost his life or his throne, he

116 Splettstößer, *Umstrittene Sammlungen*, 209.
117 Wilcox, "Elephants, Ivory, and Art," 269.
118 Eyoum is a member of the Bell family from Douala, Cameroon. He is a teacher in Dorfen, Germany.
119 Heuermann, "Der Schizophrene Schiffsschnabel," 38.
120 Heuermann, "Der Schizophrene Schiffsschnabel," 45–48; and Splettstößer, *Umstrittene Sammlungen*, 185–279.

decided to interact with the Germans as friends. Ncharé Oumarou, director of cultural and political affairs at the Royal Palace of Foumban, explains:

> But it was really in 1902 that the first Germans entered the Bamun kingdom. They approached; they were on the coast. We were in the mountains; we heard about their striking power. We learned that the peoples who wanted to resist were sometimes defeated militarily, abused, or massacred. . . . I think that Njoya had a vision, a very great vision, because on the way to Foumban those who tried to resist were defeated. Much blood was shed, and many people lost their lives. King Njoya, who really cared about his people's lives, had never wanted a Bamun to lose his life. . . . So instead he decided to welcome the Germans peacefully, to receive them as distinguished guests – contrary to the resistance of his counterparts, which means that, at that time, he was even called a traitor. So they were very well received.[121]

With the help of the German colonial forces, Njoya defeated the Nso' in 1906.[122] The Bamun were also affected by conflicts between Cameroonian rulers and the colonial administration; trade monopolies and the power of local chiefs were points of contention. Although King Njoya lost control over his craftsmen, and his monopoly on trade and culture, he always maintained good relations with the Germans and continued to sell them objects.[123] He accepted these changes, although he instituted reforms out of a "mixture of innovative spirit and resignation."[124] His innovations most deeply affected the fields of art, architecture, and design.[125] He introduced and promoted cotton weaving in his kingdom, and also the production of cotton fabric with Bamun motifs,[126] combining "indigenous" forms with Islamic and Euro-

121 Interview in French with Ncharé Oumarou in the Royal Palace of Foumban, on October 23, 2018: [Mais c'est réellement en 1902 que le premier Allemand va frôler le sol du royaume Bamoun. Ils sont arrivés, ils étaient à la côte, nous sommes sur les montagnes, on avait leurs échos, leur puissance de frappe, on avait bien appris que les peuples qui ont voulu résister, ont été parfois gagnés militairement, malmenés, massacrés. . . . Je pense que Njoya avait une vision, une très grande vision, parce que sur le chemin qui mène vers Foumban, ceux qui avaient tenté la résistance, avaient été vaincus et du sang a coulé, des gens ont perdu leur vie. Le roi Njoya qui était vraiment soucieux de la vie de son peuple, n'avait jamais voulu qu'un Bamoun perde sa vie. . . . Il a donc décidé plutôt de d'accueillir les Allemands pacifiquement, les recevoir comme si quelqu'un accueillait un hôte de marque, contrairement à la résistance que ses homologues de l'autre côté ont fait; ce qui a valu même le fait qu'il soit traité même de traître à l'époque. Donc qu'ils étaient très bien accueillis.]

122 Banadzem, "Catholicism & Nso' Traditional Beliefs."

123 Bommarius, *Der gute Deutsche*, 122–123.

124 Christaud Gerary quoted in Oberdorfer, "Zwischen Tradition und Innovation."

125 Oberdorfer, "Zwischen Tradition und Innovation."

126 Warnier, *Échanges*, 110.

pean elements. The new, German-style uniforms worn by Njoya and his bodyguards were a visible sign of his openness to change.[127] The colonial administration eliminated privileges once reserved for Njoya and his family and court, so that all Bamun could now use royal materials like brass and ivory, and adopt royal motifs like the two-headed snake; they could also sell art objects directly to Europeans.[128] By dealing directly with the Germans, Bamun craftsmen achieved financial autonomy from their king without overturning the social order. Unlike elsewhere in western Cameroon, Germans acquired Bamun objects without turning to violence.

The case of the Bamun, however, was not unique. In the Bali region of northwestern Cameroon, production of pipes and regalia boomed as never before during the colonial era. Many objects, such as sculptures and masks, were imported from other centers of production to sell to Europeans.[129] In contrast to Maroua and Tibati, where punitive expeditions halted art making and weakened hegemonic structures, Bamun craftsmen (following Njoya's lead) used the relative peace in their territory to produce objects and sell them to the Germans. As long as questions surrounding Lock Priso's legal successor and the return of the *Tangué* remain unresolved, division will always shape the day-to-day life of the Duala and the Bele Bele family.

Beyond the aforementioned consequences, we should not forget that, in many parts of Cameroon, traditional art objects have completely disappeared and are unknown to present generations. Those who crafted these objects often fell victim to expeditions, or they left the places that were raided: "Today the younger generation after the 1960s can't recognize these objects. They also don't know these objects' purpose or cultural significance."[130] In some places, the loss of objects was accompanied by the loss of associated rituals and knowledge.

For Africans, collecting was a sideline to other jobs – for example, as carriers or soldiers. The involvement of autochthonous persons in collecting led to the disintegration of socioeconomic structures. Families suffered without their heads of household and starved. The transmission of disease was also closely related to carrying. Carriers were potential spreaders of disease. Disease was rampant in most villages on caravan routes.[131]

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127 Geary, "Political Dress," 179–180.

128 Oberdorfer, "Zwischen Tradition und Innovation."

129 Luschan, *Beiträge zur Völkerkunde der deutschen Schutzgebiete*, 54.

130 Excerpt from my interview in French with Essiané Mballa in Sangmelima (October 11, 2018). [Maintenant beaucoup de ces choses, la jeune génération d'après les années 60, ils ne peuvent même plus reconnaître ces objets, á quoi ça servait, et qu'est-ce que c'est.]

131 Essomba, "Voies de communication et espaces culturels," 153–154.

5 Conclusion

This essay has concentrated on two kinds of collection strategies: main strategies, which were directly tied to certain colonial activities, and secondary strategies, which were practiced by all colonists, independent of their profession or official function. Colonial collecting was grounded on many different processes with different effects on the local population. Upon closer observation, it is evident that collecting was an important extra task for every colonist, and also for some of the colonized. Although some local actors did profit from collecting, it must be conceded that colonial masters were the main agents and beneficiaries; members of the local population tended to implement others' plans.

This essay has shown the importance of investigating the circumstances in which objects were acquired and the constellations of actors who were involved. A closer look at these constellations reveals that many different colonists from many walks of life participated in collecting, but also that some civil servants and other workers did not actively collect some objects. Thus, it is hardly surprising that the constellation of objects is as heterogenous as that of collectors. The constellation of actors affirms the idea of an entangled history – that acquiring objects in the colony was a contested process of interaction between collectors and the autochthonous population. While most groups gave up their objects under pressure from the colonists, some local chiefs like the Bamun king Njoya used objects as means of diplomacy to win the Germans' favor. The collection strategies described in this essay show how Europeans used the colonial context to plunder Africa's cultural heritage. Even today, the wide-ranging consequences of colonial collecting are evident in many societies. Members of the Bele Bele family are still divided over the question of Lock Priso's legitimate successor more than one century after the *Tangué* was seized, while some groups do not even know about the existence of objects that were taken from them.

Knowing the different actors who were involved in collecting is essential to the history of collections that came from colonial contexts. The strategies identified in this essay thus not only contributed to the unprecedented plundering of Africa's cultural heritage, but also served as methods of controlling territories and their populations. As this essay has primarily concentrated on the Cameroon collection in the Übersee-Museum, I look forward to further research that will explore additional colonial collection strategies.

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Christian Jarling

Settler Colonialism and Collecting for Museums: The Namibia Collection in Bremen's Übersee-Museum (1880s to 1970s)

The ethnographic Namibia collection in Bremen's Übersee-Museum encompassed more than 1,500 objects at the end of 2020. Most of these objects, unlike the museum's other collections from former German colonies, were not exclusively collected during the period of formal German rule.[1] Rather, the objects and their documentation came together over the course of many decades, largely between the 1880s and 1960s, and thus attest to a longstanding relationship between Namibia[2] and the Bremen museum. An evolving historical context informed how objects were first collected and the museum's desire to have them. These two phenomena were mutually reinforcing and tell a shared story.[3]

This essay depicts the formation of the Bremen collection as a process with caesuras and continuities. Over eight decades, individual objects and groups of items found their way to Bremen under specific circumstances and with the help of various actors. The museum did not receive these items directly from their African producers or previous owners (with one notable exception). Instead, museum workers engaged with German actors on site, who enabled the transfer of Namibian objects to Bremen. Within the system of settler colonialism[4] in Namibia, civilian actors supported the museum and continuously expanded its holdings. In Cameroon and German East Africa, by contrast, colonial soldiers and government officials more often performed this work.

1 For the Übersee-Museum's ethnographic collections from Cameroon and German East Africa, see the essays by Awono and Hege in this book.

2 In this essay I also use the name "Namibia" in conjunction with the eras of this state's colonial predecessors, German South-West Africa (1884–1919) and South West Africa (1919–1990). The state received its current name only after gaining independence in 1990. Likewise, I situate the museum's objects within the geography of the present Namibian state.

3 See the introduction in Thomas, *Entangled Objects*; and Conrad and Randeria, "Einleitung: Geteilte Geschichten."

4 On the different forms of colonialism, see Osterhammel and Jansen, *Kolonialismus*. See also Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*.

Note: Translated by Elizabeth Janik

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Contexts of acquisition were shaped by the needs of the museum, and also by actors on site. Africans' cultural artifacts in Bremen reflect political and sociocultural changes between the 1880s and 1960s. This essay therefore introduces individual contexts of acquisition in periodicized, chronological order, alongside the history of Namibia and the institution of the Übersee-Museum and its predecessors. I argue that objects in the Bremen collection reveal more about the institution's self-image and Europeans' views than about the historical realities of African societies.

1 1864 to 1883: A Khoikhoi Body Ring?

If you were to search for the oldest object in the Namibia collection in the Bremen museum's electronic database, you would find number B03061, identified as a "woman's body ring" (*Leibring Frau*) (see Fig. 1). According to its accession number, it was the sole item gifted by a Dr. Ehmck in April 1864. An additional note in the database, from 1999, states that the object consists of two parts, which originally belonged together: a "skirt of braided strands" and a "chain of brass discs." In an article on the museum's Herero collection, Africa curator Silke Seybold describes the "Khoikhoi body ring" as the oldest "object from the territory of contemporary Namibia."[5] Just this one item illuminates some of the challenges of working with objects, with their entries in accession registers and inventory books, and with the database and other sources. I therefore begin this essay by introducing fundamental aspects of working with objects (and their accompanying sources and data) in the museum's Namibia collection. In subsequent sections, I show how the Bremen collection reflected and embodied broader historical trends.

By tracing all of the entries associated with an object – from its current database entry by way of an inventory book, to the oldest accession registers – deviations, omissions, and/or transcription errors are evident. Thus, the "woman's body ring" became a "body ring of brass" when it was entered into the Subject Register of the Ethnological Collection Dept. B Africa I[6] (see Fig. 3). The omission of the previous owner's gender is an evident deviation, as earlier accession catalogs clearly described it as the "belt of a female Hottentot,"[7] or the "belt of a Hottentot woman"[8] (see Figs. 2 and 4). Errors of transcription occurred at various

5 Seybold, ". . . alles, was an die alte Zeit erinnerte," 80.
6 ÜM 513, Sachverzeichnis der völkerkundl. Sammlung Abt. B Afrika I.
7 ÜM 505, Eingangsverzeichnis Real Katalog Ethnografie 1878–1889.
8 ÜM 509, Geschenke an das Museum 1808–1891.

Fig. 1: B03061 “Woman’s body ring” CC BY-SA 4.0 Übersee-Museum Bremen (Photos Volker Beinhorn).

levels and are often not as obvious as in this particular example. Such errors are not only associated with the transfer to the digital system. Even among the various paper records – accession registers and inventory books, lists, and correspondence – fundamental deviations can raise more questions than answers about an object or group of objects. In the present example, the object’s geographic origin – that is, its situation within the territory of a contemporary state[9] – has been muddled by flawed classifications. The accession register lists its place of origin as “South Africa” (see Fig. 2). However, the object’s current assignment to Namibia is presumably based on its ethnic category. With the introduction of digital databases in the 2000s, all of the objects that earlier inventory books had identified as coming from the “Hottentots” (see Fig. 3) were simply reassigned to Namibia.

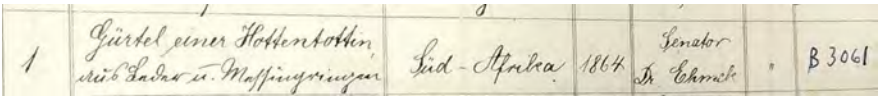

Fig. 2: Excerpt from the accession register “*Real Katalog* Ethnography 1878–1889”.

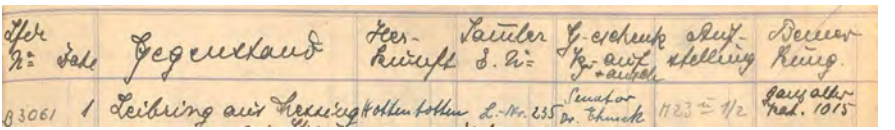

Fig. 3: Excerpt from the inventory book “Subject Register of the Ethnological Collection Dept. B Africa I”.

9 The database allows for more specific classifications (region, town, etc.), but these only apply to a few objects since original sources rarely provided more detail.

An ethnic marker was an essential scientific category for classifying objects in ethnological collections. Objects ultimately served as proxies for a certain imagining of peoples and cultures without a history,[10] ideas that reflected colonial thought patterns and evolutionist scientific tradition during the founding era of many museums, as anthropological subdisciplines were being established at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[11] Such ideas had little to do with the historical reality of these supposedly *Naturvölker* ['natural peoples']. Transformation and exchange took place everywhere in the world. And although, within the field of ethnology, ethnicity itself has shifted from essentialist to constructivist concepts (at the latest, since Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*), ethnic designations for objects in ethnological collections remain an important category.[12] These labels not only make plain how collections necessarily order and interpret, but also provide a basis for today's debates about restitution and provenance research. Thus, considering the existing historical sources precisely and critically is all the more important.

The "woman's body ring" was originally attributed to an anonymous Nama woman. The museum's digital database now orders all Nama objects under the designation "Khoikhoi."[13] However, this term encompasses many different groups in southern Africa. So as not to perpetuate sometimes strongly discriminatory, colonial-era group names, the Bremen museum has used more modern or neutral designations since at least the introduction of the digital databases in the 1990s. For the Namibia collection, this means avoiding names with racist connotations – "Hottentots"[14] for the Nama (who are now identified as Khoikhoi in the Bremen database), and "bushmen" for the San.[15] By contrast, historic accession registers,

10 See Förster, "Öffentliche Kulturinstitution, internationale Forschungsstätte und postkoloniale Kontaktzone," 189.

11 On the roots of evolutionism and Social Darwinism, see Petermann, *Die Geschichte der Ethnologie*, 463. For the changes in German ethnology museums, see Zimmerman, *Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany*.

12 See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

13 Sometimes with other spellings, such as "Khoekhoen" or "Khoi-Khoi." On the history of this terminology and for a more precise differentiation of Khoikhoi and Nama groups, see Forkl, *Von Kapstadt bis Windhuk*, 10.

14 I repeat these discriminatory terms here only when quoting historical sources. I otherwise favor the terms for ethnic groups that are used in current scholarly literature and in Namibia today. For an overview of the terminological history of Namibian ethnic groups, see Scheulen, *Die "Eingeborenen" Deutsch-Südwestafrikas*, 49.

15 The San designation is also controversial, as it is not how these people refer to themselves and can likewise be understood as discriminatory. Representatives of different San groups prefer their own names. I use the term here because the specific group to which the objects should be attributed is not always clear.

inventories, and correspondence used the old discriminatory labels exclusively until at least the end of the 1960s.

To point out one final nuance in the confusing data for the "woman's body ring" – which is mostly limited to entries in accession registers and inventories, as well as the database – we can look to the object's oldest historical record, the "Gifts to the Museum" register from 1808 to 1891. The *Real Katalog* Ethnography 1878–1889, which was later transferred to the database, was itself a transcription of this earlier register (see Fig. 4).

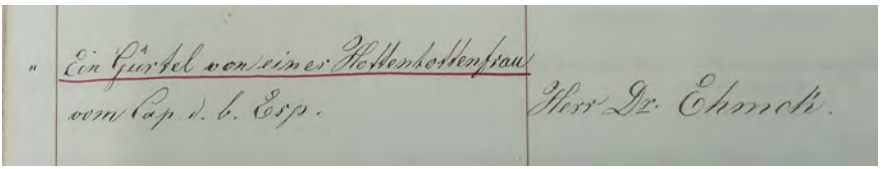
" Ein Gürtel von einer Hottentottenfrau vom Cap d. g. Esp. Herr Dr. Ehmck.

Fig. 4: Excerpt from the accession register "Gifts to the Museum 1808–1891".

Despite the artifact's assignment to southern Africa in the *Real Katalog* 1878–1889 – and its later reassignment to Namibia because of its ethnic designation as Nama (and then Khoikhoi) – the oldest register linked it to a relatively specific location – the *Cap de Bonne Espérance* (French for the Cape of Good Hope). Further, Bettina von Briskorn has noted that the object was, in all likelihood, not originally collected by Senator Diedrich Ehmck, but instead by a Captain Gontard.[16] Ehmck, a cofounder of the museum's predecessor institutions, merely transported the object. Thus, the "woman's body ring" is probably not a Namibian object at all, and it would take 20 more years for objects from present-day Namibia to become part of the Bremen collection. With these considerations in mind, I will briefly describe the situation before "German South-West Africa" became a colony.

The territory that is Namibia today became an object of colonial conquest comparatively late, chiefly because of its inhospitable terrain and resources that long seemed ill-suited for profitable exploitation. But traces of European expansion were palpable even in sparsely settled southwest Africa. Rapidly transforming communities of African cattle herders who competed for pasture and watering holes dominated central and southern Namibia in the nineteenth century. Settled monarchies lived in the north, which was long spared from the direct influence of the

16 Bettina von Briskorn points to a typewritten document by Achelis about the "Society Museum," which identifies Gontard as a captain of the English-German legion. It is unclear whether Gontard himself acquired the object. Briskorn, *Zur Sammlungsgeschichte afrikanischer Ethnographica*, 224–225.

German colonial administration. Societies of hunters and gatherers also occupied many "in-between spaces."[17]

Group identities often did not coalesce until the nineteenth century. Moreover, all of these societies were in constant contact with another – engaging in trade, waging wars, or merging into new groups. Imagined conceptions of Ambo, Damara, Herero, Himba, Nama, and San (the ethnic groups to which objects in the Bremen collection were assigned – for this reason, I do not discuss the northeastern regions of Kavango and Zambezi) created a picture of closed societies without a history. In fact, these peoples were very flexible; they could, or had to, explore new territory and join other groups. Individual Herero and Nama herders sometimes fell into poverty, or lived from hunting and gathering in times of crisis. Individual Damara and San integrated in other societies and took on their identities. Similarly, societies that were mostly nomadic took up farming in rainy years. Ambo in the north not only worked the land, but also raised livestock. None of these ethnic groups were a closed political unit. Instead, territory, pasture, and watering holes were constantly renegotiated, just like alliances between the individual political units of the various ethnic groups. Likewise, global developments and Europeans were not unknown to the African societies. Orlam groups[18] migrated from the south, pushed northward by European expansion around the Cape Colony.[19] These groups not only brought weapons and horses to central Namibia, but they were already Christianized, and at least their elites could speak and write Cape Dutch.[20] Missionizing efforts began in the south of present-day Namibia in the early nineteenth century, and in the second half of the century the Rhenish Mission successfully gained a foothold among the Nama and then the Herero.[21] European travelers, traders, and merchants also interacted with Africans in the mid-nineteenth century, creating "islands" of European settlement that brought African societies into contact with

17 My general remarks on the history of Namibia are largely drawn from Wallace, *A History of Namibia*. I cite other authors for aspects of this history that are particularly relevant in this context.

18 Orlam was the name for Khoikhoi groups who lived south of the Oranje and had long been in contact with European settlers. Some were the offspring of mixed marriages between Boer men and Khoikhoi women, and some participated in the colonial economy as farmers. Today all Khoikhoi who live in Namibia are called Nama. On the differentiation and geographic location of individual groups, see Forkl, *Von Kapstadt bis Windhuk*, 16–17.

19 Present-day South Africa was governed by the Dutch until 1806, and by the British until 1910. The subsequent apartheid regime lasted until 1990.

20 An early form of Afrikaans, which evolved from modern Dutch in the seventeenth century and increasingly became a *lingua franca*.

21 See Altena, "Ein Häuflein Christen," 33.

global commerce.[22] Thus, even on the inhospitable, sparsely settled territory of Namibia, African societies had come into contact with global commerce and European beliefs and values well before their colonization. Africans were not isolated *Naturvölker*, despite their stylization as such by museums that selectively highlighted their "other" material culture.[23]

The founding of ethnographic museums in Germany – and with it, the amassing of non-European cultural artifacts – reached a peak in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These collections usually had their origins in aristocratic curiosity cabinets and bourgeois *Wunderkammer* ['cabinet of curiosities'] that had presented non-European cultural and natural artifacts as trophies or objects of spectacle since the early modern era. Such collections not only confirmed the political or military conquest of non-European territories, but also encouraged the integration of "foreign" objects and collections in the emerging corpus of new scientific disciplines.[24]

The Übersee-Museum[25] in Bremen has been known by multiple names throughout its history. Its origins lay in bourgeois associations and reading societies that dated back to the seventeenth century.[26] The "woman's body ring" entered the Museum Society's collection in 1864. This society was founded in 1783, and acquired its holdings over decades. New associations that were founded in the nineteenth century show how various scientific disciplines sparked the interest of the Bremen bourgeoisie. The Natural Science Association was founded in 1864, and the Anthropological Commission in 1872. Both groups took over specialized collections from the Museum Society, and plans coalesced for a museum. Briskorn shows how collecting – or rather, "saving" – the material culture of supposed *Naturvölker* was already regarded as an important priority.[27] Thus, according to the preface in a catalog for an ethnographic exhibition in 1872:

> It is almost only residents of the Asian and African mainland who are withstanding contact with European culture, while Australian and American tribes are rapidly fading away upon their encounter with whites – and namely, the Anglo-Saxon race. This circumstance is, first

22 See Melber, "Das doppelte Vermächtnis der Geschichte," 57–58.

23 I use "other" in the postcolonial sense of the word, following Said, Fabian, and Spivak.

24 On ethnology and ethnographic museums, see Laukötter, *Von der "Kultur" zur "Rasse,"* 32. See also Penny, *Objects of Culture*.

25 In this essay, my discussion of the Bremen museum refers to its various incarnations at different points in time.

26 For critical analysis, see Briskorn, *Zur Sammlungsgeschichte afrikanischer Ethnographica*, 50; Ahrendt, *Faszination* provides a brief introduction; Abel, *Vom Raritätenkabinett zum Überseemuseum* is more thorough.

27 Briskorn, *Zur Sammlungsgeschichte afrikanischer Ethnographica*, 55.

> and foremost, a warning to get to know the human types that have been ordained to perish, as thoroughly as possible, as long as they still exist. Further, it is our experience that contact with European culture – among the peoples who can resist it at all – quickly leads to a complete transformation of traditions and native industry.[28]

This passage not only reveals a motive for collecting, but also highlights the evolutionist and Social Darwinist thought patterns that fed a deep-seated conviction in Western superiority and in the necessity of colonization. The natural scientific and ethnological collections ultimately landed in the hands of the city, and these were reorganized as the Municipal Collections of Natural History and Ethnography in 1878. Administration of the collections became increasingly professionalized. The first object-oriented inventories were introduced – including the aforementioned *Real Katalog* for Ethnography, and specialized accession registers that also incorporated objects in existing collections.[29] Johann Spengel became the municipal collections' director in 1881. A few years later, Spengel negotiated an agreement with Adolf Lüderitz and Lüderitz's helmsman Joseph Steingröver, an agreement that brought the first objects that were verifiably from Namibia to the Bremen collections.

2 1883 to 1889: Herero Arm Decoration (?) from Namaland?

According to the municipal collections' accession registers, a larger number of Namibian objects came to Bremen between 1886 and 1888. In addition to lizard and bird specimens, there were also articles of clothing: five ethnographic objects that were simply attributed to "Lüderitz." Two "leather arm rings (?)" and a "bundle of leather straps" were identified as coming from "Namaland."[30] However, these objects did not receive catalog numbers (B03054a and B03054b for the arm rings, and B03055 for the bundle of straps) until the regional inventories were updated in the 1930s.[31] By this point, the other three articles of clothing must have been lost or misclassified. Nothing else is known about their whereabouts or appear-

28 Catalog for the 1872 ethnographic exhibition, in Briskorn, *Zur Sammlungsgeschichte afrikanischer Ethnographica*, 54.

29 For a thorough history of these registers, see Briskorn, *Zur Sammlungsgeschichte afrikanischer Ethnographica*, 39.

30 ÜM, Allgemeiner Eingangskatalog 1889–1895; and ÜM 506, Eingangsverzeichnis der Abteilung Völkerkunde 1893–1900.

31 Regional inventories and a card catalog were introduced in 1893 – when the "B" numbers still used today were first assigned. After about 1909 or so, no further catalog cards were added.

ance. The arm rings became "leg decorations" in the inventory book, and only one was listed as still on hand (see Fig. 5).[32] Further, this book classified the remaining objects (arm/leg decorations and leather straps) as Herero – evidently in contradiction to the place of origin that was listed in the accession register.

Fig. 5: B03054a "Leg decoration" CC BY-SA 4.0 Übersee-Museum Bremen (Photo: Volker Beinhorn).

The name Lüderitz points directly to the acquisition of Namibia, which became the first formal German colony, "German South-West Africa," on April 24, 1884.[33] Heinrich Vogelsang, who was commissioned by Franz Adolf Eduard Lüderitz, acquired the first tracts of land in 1883 – an undertaking that, even today, typifies many of the deceptive or underhanded agreements between European colonizers and non-European "partners."[34] Due to high investment costs and initially unsuccessful expeditions, in April 1885 Lüderitz was already compelled to sell his private acquisitions to the German Colonial Society for South-West Africa, which he had established expressly for this purpose. With the society's financial support,

Many objects that were provisionally recorded in lists were not cataloged in inventory books until the 1930s. See Briskorn, *Zur Sammlungsgeschichte afrikanischer Ethnographica*, 45.

32 This was reaffirmed when the Namibian holdings in storage were newly inventoried between April and July 2018.

33 For a brief summary, see Zimmerer, *Deutsche Herrschaft über Afrikaner*, 15. This work has been published in English as Zimmerer, *German Rule, African Subjects*.

34 On the contracts commissioned by Lüderitz, including a facsimile, see Hinz, Patemann, and Meier, *Schwarz auf Weiß*.

he then planned a new expedition to the Oranje in the south. While attempting to return to "Lüderitzbucht"[35] by foldboat on the open Atlantic, Lüderitz and sailor Joseph Steingröver perished at the end of October 1886. On March 2, 1886, immediately before Steingröver departed for Africa, they had signed a contract with Spengel, the museum director in Bremen, about establishing and preserving natural scientific collections.[36] Although, in the 1880s, colonial euphoria in Bremen was limited to a few businessmen and colonial agitators (with the exception of a brief wave of publicity surrounding the establishment of the colony), Spengel seized the opportunity to acquire new objects directly from Africa.[37] We do not know how long Spengel had already been in touch with Lüderitz, or whether Lüderitz himself was an enthusiast of the museum, but by May 1886 objects from Lagos were already inventoried under his name.[38]

Steingröver collected natural scientific specimens in Angra Pequena from the time of his arrival, in mid-April 1886, until he joined the expedition in July. In contrast to the ethnographic objects, he personally labeled and dated these specimens. Steingröver received his instructions and materials from Spengel, and he worked in a laboratory at the German station.[39] Even before he set sail from Bremen, he wrote to his parents with high hopes not just for the Lüderitz expedition: "I'll work diligently to honor the Steingröver name as a researcher and collector, so that, afterwards, Dr. Spengel will leave me with good references and recommendations."[40] During the expedition, he again wrote to his parents, this time hinting at the fruitless search for mineral deposits: "My activity here has included astronomical observations, hunting and then preserving 42 birds and a few small mammals, as well as a few hundred specimens in alcohol and 50 different plant species – these are my tangible achievements so far."[41] Working as a collector or researcher "in the name of science" was an appealing proposition, not only for

35 At the time, this site was still called Angra Pequena, after the voyages of discovery by Portuguese explorer Bartolomeo Dias in the late fifteenth century.

36 The original contract is not in the museum. For a facsimile and transcript, see Abel, "Ein Lüderitz Dokument," 46.

37 On initial skepticism toward the colonies in Bremen's political and business establishment, see Müller, "Lüderitz und der koloniale Mythos," 125.

38 On Lüderitz's activity in Lagos, see Briskorn, *Zur Sammlungsgeschichte afrikanischer Ethnographica*, 261. For an overview of trade between Bremen and Western Africa, see Müller, "Bremen und Westafrika."

39 Abel, "Ein Lüderitz Dokument," 48–49.

40 Steingröver to his parents (February 28, 1886), in Lüderitz, *Die Erschließung von Deutsch-Südwest-Afrika*, 144.

41 Steingröver to his parents (August 14, 1886), in Lüderitz, *Die Erschließung von Deutsch-Südwest-Afrika*, 151.

amateurs with a bit of training, like Steingröver, but also for professionals. The botanist Hans Schinz traversed Namibia between 1884 and 1887, likewise (at least initially) as part of one of Lüderitz's expeditions.[42] He collected a wide array of natural scientific and ethnographic objects. As he made his way from one mission station to the next, his approach sometimes raised eyebrows. His guiding motto: *Man muss eben alles sammeln* ['You've got to collect it all'].[43] The Bremen inventories[44] include a noteworthy entry from 1896: "blue Venetian glass beads," which have since gone missing, but which were originally collected by Schinz on his trip to the Kalahari – testament to the exchange between the Bremen museum and travelers, researchers, and other colonial agents in Namibia and Europe as early as the 1880s.

Although we know that Lüderitz gave the arm ring and bundle of leather straps to the museum, we – unfortunately – can't say for sure where they came from or link them to a particular collector. We can, however, untangle some of the contradictory information around them. Schinz, Vedder, and Irle all described what they saw as "traditional" Herero clothing: A belt of leather straps, and leg and arm rings, were part of a male ensemble.[45] Other objects in the Bremen collection, presumed to be from the Herero have iron beads similar to those on the leather arm ring. Thus, comparisons with other objects and widespread European descriptions may have informed the later adjustment to the arm ring's ethnic designation. Lüderitz himself – like his deputies and staff, and also his brother August – was in contact with Nama as well as Herero.[46] However, we should keep in mind that most of his contact was with Nama and Herero elites, who often already wore European clothing. We do not know who collected the objects, where, or from whom. In 1888, Lüderitz was already dead, and his economic ties to Namibia had been severed. It is possible that his oldest son, Franz Adolf Eduard Jr., gave the objects to the Bremen collection,[47] and that he knew nothing else about them.

42 Schinz published a comprehensive travelogue in 1891. See Schinz, *Deutsch-Südwest-Afrika*.

43 This is how Schinz, in a letter to his mother, described collecting human remains. His research and collection tour has been comprehensively studied. For an overview of his collections and their contexts of acquisition, see Beckmann, *"Man muss eben alles sammeln."* The quote is on page 5.

44 See ÜM, B-Zettelkatalog, B00351.

45 According to the perspective of European authors about Namibian societies. See Irle, *Die Herero*, 55; Vedder, *Das alte Südwestafrika*, 44; and Schinz, *Deutsch-Südwest-Afrika*, 150.

46 Among other accomplishments, August Lüderitz helped to negotiate the agreement between Kamaherero and Heinrich Göring in October 1885. See Gustafsson, *Namibia, Bremen und Deutschland*, 173.

47 Lüderitz Jr. is noted as the donor of some of the collection's natural scientific specimens.

German hegemony in Namibia was still extremely fragile in the 1880s, with the Herero *Omuhona* and the Nama *Gaob* still possessing de facto power. This changed in the following decade, as the first military forces arrived and a colonial administration was established. In Bremen, Hugo Schauinsland became the new director of the municipal collections in 1887.[48] Under his purview the collections were featured at the Northwest German Commerce and Industry Exhibition in 1890.[49] His curated section on trade and the colonies was regarded as especially successful, bolstering subsequent discussions about a dedicated building for the museum.

3 1890 to 1903: Bonnet, Headdress, or Cap? *Ekoris* in Bremen

The Municipal Museum for Natural History, Ethnology, and Commerce opened its doors at a prominent site next to Bremen's train station on January 15, 1896. Financed by private donations from the local community, as well as a larger grant from the Bremen Sparkasse, it aspired to become a "hall of fame of Bremen trade,"[50] in the spirit of the earlier presentation at the commerce and industry exhibition. Although the new museum's exhibitions did not yet focus on the German colonies, the number of objects in its Namibia collection grew significantly. This is the era when several *Ekori*, from three different groups of objects, entered the museum's holdings. One of these headdresses worn by married Herero women is still on display in the museum's permanent exhibition on Africa (see Fig. 7).

Karl Raben, a judge from Bremerhaven, donated the *Ekori* pictured in Fig. 6 as part of the "clothing of a Herero woman."[51] Raben himself had probably never been to Namibia. He may have acquired Namibian objects through his work as a judge and maritime office director [*'Seeamtsleiter'*].[52] However, it seems likely that Raben's collection was related to another, larger collection, which was given to the museum in April 1901 – a group of 67 objects donated by the settler August

48 The zoologist Hugo Schauinsland (1857–1937) served as director of the museum until 1933.

49 For an overview, see Niemann, "Die Handelsausstellung von 1890."

50 Senator Barkhausen in his speech at the museum's opening. Quoted in Abel, *Vom Raritätenkabinett zum Überseemuseum*, 74.

51 This group of donated objects also included two vessels. See ÜM 507, Eingangsverzeichnis der Abteilung Völkerkunde, 1900–1916; and ÜM, B-Zettelkatalog, B0926.

52 For his appointment as a judge in 1888, see StAB 6,40-D. 3.b no. 32, Bremische Bürgerschaft seit 1848.

Fig. 6: B00926g "Woman's headdress, bonnet" CC BY-SA 4.0 Übersee-Museum Bremen (Photo: Matthias Haase).
Fig. 7: Africa exhibition (Photo: Jarling).

Engelbert Wulff, who emigrated to the colony in 1897. Raben's sister Helga Henrietta was married to Dietrich Boysen, the business partner and father-in-law of August Wulff's brother, Carl.[53] In later eras as well, Bremen residents' ties to relatives who had moved abroad facilitated the museum's access to objects. In the case of Raben and Wulff, we have no further information about the objects' transfer to the museum, or who owned the objects beforehand. The same is true for the

53 August Wulff's brother Carl, who was five years older, had already emigrated in 1895. Carl Wulff first worked for Dietrich Boysen before founding his own company. He married Boysen's daughter in 1901, and three years later he merged his company with Boysen's, to form Boysen Wulff & Co. Briskorn and Seybold suggest that Carl Wulff was August's father, but population registers in the National Archives of Namibia (NAN) clearly indicate that he was August's older brother. See NAN ZBU 766 G.III.D.1 Specialia vol. 2 sheet 12; and StAB 4,82/1-3264 (91). For Helga Henrietta (Raben) Boysen, see NAN ZBU 766 G.III.D.1 Specialia vol. 2 sheet 122; and StAB 4,82/1–164 (267).

group of objects donated by August Köhler; the museum received them in 1907, but the Namibian objects at least had been first assembled in the early 1890s.[54]

In contrast to the 1880s, when the colony was first established by Lüderitz and the German state, the balance of power between colonizers and colonized later shifted away from the Africans. In October 1888, Heinrich Göring, the first imperial commissioner, had to retreat to Walvis Bay in response to pressure exerted by Kamaherero.[55] With the landing of the first military troops under Curt von François, the balance of power changed. The first military skirmishes occurred under François' command, culminating in the "Hornkranz massacre" of April 1893.[56] Even in the years immediately thereafter – which were characterized by the "Leutwein system"[57] and indirect rule,[58] a sharp contrast to the violent excesses during and after the genocide – African resistance was brutally suppressed. Africans certainly still had room for maneuver, and for making their own life decisions. However, during this era, at the latest, the museum's objects may have been violently acquired.

Contemporaries described the Herero women's head coverings as very conspicuous,[59] "quite strange,"[60] and even as "works of art."[61] Indeed, their unique form and design have long made them an eye-catching focus of museum exhibitions. Their unique appeal as display pieces – also in regional or international comparison – has heightened their power as a symbol of Herero identity, even (or especially) today. Like other articles of clothing, a head covering was the personal property and status symbol of a particular woman. "Giving away" personal items was a radical step, whether or not this occurred by force. Women who moved to a mission station or converted to Christianity might have more or less voluntarily given up their "traditional" clothing. Western styles of clothing had long been familiar, particularly around mission stations, and some women may have even favored them. However, an emergency might also have compelled women to settle near a mission station and change their way of life. In the end,

54 In the early 1890s, August Köhler was a civil servant and thus represented Curt von François, who in 1895 became *Landeshauptmann* ['provincial administrator'] and governor in Togo, where he died in 1902.

55 Maharero kaTjamuaha (also named Maharero), 1820–1890 was one of the paramount chiefs (omuhona) of the Herero people and father of Samuel Maharero. See Henrichsen, *Die Hegemonie der Herero in Zentralnamibia.*

56 Schildknecht, *Bismarck, Südwestafrika und die Kongokonferenz*, 243.

57 Bley, *Kolonialherrschaft und Sozialstruktur*, 18.

58 The system of indirect rule, largely defined by Frederick Lugard, became the model of British colonial administration. See Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa.*

59 Irle, *Die Herero*, 56.

60 Schinz, *Deutsch-Südwest-Afrika*, 152.

61 Vedder, *Das alte Südwestafrika*, 44.

we cannot rule out the possibility that objects were taken by force in a military campaign.

Individual owners and specific places or regions are almost never identified in the collection records. The place of origin of August Wulff's collection, for example, is simply listed as "Damaraland"[62] – an early name for the region where Herero lived, but hardly helpful for reconstructing the origin of particular objects. Wulff's photographs show that he traveled throughout the region,[63] but it is nevertheless unclear whether he collected the objects himself. Precisely because of his background as a trader and a businessman, he (or his brother or Boysen) might have acquired the collection at once, or else piece by piece. Africans did not necessarily trade their own possessions for other commodities. Missionaries, soldiers, or other Europeans might just as easily have sold "their" objects or collections to dealers in European settlements.

In any event, the objects' precise origins did not inform the museum's exhibition and collection practices. Whether household items, weapons, ritual objects, jewelry, or clothing – all were considered anonymous. Objects were essentialist symbols of an imagined culture of particular ethnic groups. The Bremen museum's mimetic exhibition strategy[64] reinforced this way of thinking. Up until this point, museum objects had usually been presented in display cases, which were organized regionally or thematically in a scientific, straightforward manner. At the end of the nineteenth century, however, Schauinsland's "Bremen model" revolutionized the depiction of non-European cultures.[65] The museum became an agent of popular education, and it strove to present its collections in an engaging, appealing way. Samples of various commodities offered interested entrepreneurs a glimpse into the possibilities of exploiting various regions, while dioramas and plants introduced fauna and flora. Models, maps, and texts provided supporting information. Museum curators commissioned plaster models of people, as lifelike as possible, garnishing them with objects from the collection and arranging them as *Schaugruppen* ['display groups'] that brought the cultures of foreign lands and people "to life." At first, the collections from Namibia were still presented in a cabinet.[66] However, as the war against the Herero and Nama commanded media attention in Bremen and beyond, curators set to work on a Herero *Schaugruppe*.

62 See ÜM 507, Eingangsverzeichns der Abteilung Völkerkunde 1900–1916.

63 On the collection of photographs from Namibia in the archive of the Übersee-Museum, see Seybold, "'Alas! My fallen Olga – Rest in peace.'"

64 See Briskorn, *Zur Sammlungsgeschichte afrikanischer Ethnographica*, 62; and Jungermann, "Eine Begegnung mit dem 'Fremden.'"

65 Ahrndt, *Faszination*, 15.

66 Seybold, "'. . . alles, was an die alte Zeit erinnerte,'" 82.

Additional objects and "decorations" had to be procured. As we will see, genocidal warfare and the complete disenfranchisement and dispossession of Herero societies[67] made this procurement more difficult than first anticipated.

4 1904 to 1918: Museum Collections as a Mirror of Genocide

This section discusses the relationship between museum presentation and historical reality, drawing upon the aforementioned example of a Herero *Schaugruppe*.[68] Documents relevant to the collection reflect the drastic changes that affected African societies in Namibia. Further, these documents suggest that during and after the genocide[69] of the Herero and the Nama,[70] a competitive struggle flared over the last "traditional" cultural assets. However, the Bremen exhibition on "German South-West Africa," which claimed much more space in the museum from 1911 on, obscured this historical reality into the 1970s. As Silke Seybold aptly describes, "the museum's heterogenous collection of Herero objects created a homogenous, clichéd image of a Herero household, which was supposed to show the 'unspoiled traditional life' of the Herero that had not existed since at least 1904."[71]

The photo (see Fig. 8) shows plaster casts created by Heinrich Boschen, the Oldenburg court sculptor. Three women, a man, and a child were decorated in a makeshift way, with objects from various collections (including Wulff's and Raben's). The household articles and wood on the *pontok* (a replica constructed in Bremen) were shipped to the museum by Eduard Hälbich in 1909. The scene also

67 The same was true for many Nama societies, although this was not reflected as clearly in the collection. The Witbooi diaries (which were restituted to Namibia in 1996) are an exception. See Jarling, "Afrika-Sammlungen."

68 See Fig. 8. For critical analysis, see Briskorn, *Zur Sammlungsgeschichte afrikanischer Ethnographica*, 69ff; and Seybold, "'. . . alles, was an die alte Zeit erinnerte.'" See also Jungermann, "Eine Begegnung mit dem 'Fremden'" and Jarling, "Wer war Salomo Perekete?"

69 The genocide is widely recognized by scholars; ongoing debates revolve largely around intention and historical continuities. For a summary, see Häussler, *Der Genozid an den Herero*, 7. This work has been translated into English as Häussler, *The Herero Genocide*.

70 This is most evident in the Bremen collection with respect to the Herero; the collection has relatively few objects ascribed to the Nama. On the genocide of the Herero and the Nama, see Zimmerer and Zeller, *Völkermord in Deutsch-Südwestafrika*. This work has been translated into English as Zimmerer and Zeller, *Genocide in German South-West Africa*.

71 Seybold, "'. . . alles, was an die alte Zeit erinnerte,'" 87.

Fig. 8: Herero *Schaugruppe* between 1911 and 1936, Übersee-Museum, Historisches Bildarchiv P20545.

included objects from the collections of Aachen ethnographica dealer, Adam Pelzer, and Bremen émigré, Hans Leer. The large cabinet in the background held further objects from the Namibia collection.

Museum director Hugo Schauinsland was initially uninterested in strategically expanding the collections from Africa (with the exception of Egypt). He traveled to Asia, Oceania, North America, and Egypt on his five great collection tours between 1896 and 1926.[72] In the spirit of his mimetic exhibition strategy, objects' visual appeal assumed outsized importance. This appeal was determined by trends and the zeitgeist. A museum needed objects from China, Japan, and Egypt – not least, to compete with other ethnographic collections. And the Bremen public was globally networked, especially the businessmen who were the museum's key patrons.[73] Direct trade with the German colonies, by contrast, was comparatively insignificant in Bremen. After the end of Lüderitz's "ventures," the media in Bremen took little

72 See Backmeister-Collacott, Burkhardt, and Determann, *Schauinsland!*

73 On mutual relations between institutions, and museum relations with the public, sponsors, and patrons, see Penny, *Objects of Culture*.

interest in the colony of German South-West Africa.[74] That changed almost overnight in 1904, with the outbreak of the Namibian War.[75]

Schauinsland reacted quickly. In April 1904 he commissioned the sculptor Heinrich Boschen to create the plaster figures of an imagined Herero *Schaugruppe*.[76] In October, he wrote to the Colonial Department in the Foreign Office, the colonial government in Windhuk, and the Rhenish Mission Society in Barmen.[77] He initially received no response. Only in April 1905 did the colonial government in Windhuk refer Schauinsland to an official order[78] "about the handling of ethnographic and natural scientific shipments from the protectorates ['*Schutzgebiete*']."[79] The Colonial authorities nevertheless directed Schauinsland explicitly to the Windhuk businessman, Carl Wulff, who originally came from Bremen. Just two months earlier, Schauinsland had asked Carl's brother, August, to help procure objects. August had been the collector and/or transporter of the first larger collection in 1901, and he later ran a business in Gibeon.[80] However, he had been called up as a reservist in the colonial army and did not respond to the museum.[81] In the context of this service, he later appropriated some of Hendrik Witbooi's letter books, which he sold to the museum in 1935. These were restituted to the National Archives of Namibia in 1996.[82]

After these initial efforts came to nought, Schauinsland and Johannes Weissenborn, director of the museum's ethnographic collection, began to explore new paths of expanding the collection in the summer of 1907. They wrote to the Imperial Colonial Office and the colonial government in Windhuk.[83] The latter again referred

74 Müller, "Lüderitz und der koloniale Mythos," 128.

75 I have adopted Marion Wallace's term "Namibian War" to emphasize the effects of the conflict on all African societies in Namibia, even though the Herero and Nama were uniquely affected by genocide. See Wallace, *A History of Namibia*, 155 and 353.

76 See Briskorn, *Zur Sammlungsgeschichte afrikanischer Ethnographica*, 69ff.; and the thorough account in Seybold, "'. . . alles, was an die alte Zeit erinnerte.'"

77 ÜM 151, Vol. 2 Briefkonzepte 1904–1910.

78 Beginning in 1889, civil servants and officers were expected to give their collections to Berlin. For a summary of the government resolution and the perspective from Bremen, see Briskorn, *Zur Sammlungsgeschichte afrikanischer Ethnographica*, 65.

79 ÜM 142, Korrespondenz 1905.

80 ÜM 151, Vol. 2 Briefkonzepte 1904–1910.

81 See Mamzer, Schöck-Quinteros, and Witkowski, *Bremen – Eine Stadt der Kolonien?*, 55.

82 Witkowski, *Bremen – Eine Stadt der Kolonien?*, 57–58. See also Jarling, "Afrika-Sammlungen."

83 For the correspondence with Imperial Colonial Office, see ÜM 151, Vol. 2. For the colonial government in Windhuk, see NAN ZBU 1004, Spec.2, sheets 1 and 1b.

Schauinsland to settlers and missionaries, whom he contacted in May 1908.[84] Martti Rautanen, a Finnish missionary in Olukonda, underscored that even Ambo objects from the north had become rare and expensive, although these could still be produced.[85] The museum received a similar response from the settler, Eduard Hälbich, who – in Okahandja in 1909, with the assistance of Johannes Diehl[86] – ultimately arranged for a larger collection of Herero objects to be sent to Bremen. Diehl wrote in early September 1908: "Among the Herero today there are, unfortunately, almost no more old household utensils, weapons, clothing, or farming tools. Everything has been bought up, so to speak, by soldiers and other collectors."[87]

By this point, the Herero lived overwhelmingly in concentration camps, in harrowing conditions that contributed substantially to the Herero genocide.[88] Diehl probably asked an older man named Salomo Perekete to craft items for the Bremen collection. We do not know anything more about Perekete's life; there is no trace of him in the surviving records of Okahandja's "native register."[89] He was not the only producer of items mentioned by Diehl. Aware of the distinctiveness of Herero women's clothing, Diehl emphasized that "there is a Herero woman who would make us one of the old women's caps."[90] Insofar as the Herero and Nama were unable to flee, they were dispossessed, recruited as compulsory laborers, and thereby robbed of their freedom by the end of the war. The collection of household items and clothing used for the Bremen *Schaugruppe* was assembled under these conditions. In May 1911, a commercial employee named Hans Leers, who originally came from Bremen, attested to the disappearance of Herero material culture. Without specifically addressing the war or violence, he commented on a shipment of Herero women's clothing:

84 ÜM 144, Korrespondenz 1907. Letters to the missionaries Eisenberg, Wandres, and Rautanen can't be located today, but they are mentioned in a letter book of outgoing correspondence. See ÜM 291, Briefbuch 1904–1908.

85 ÜM 145, Vol. 2 Korrespondenz 1908.

86 Johannes Diehl (1884–1911) was the son of the missionary Philip Diehl. See Hofmann, "Missionare und Missionarsfrauen aus Ehringhausen."

87 See Diehl to Hälbich NAN A.455/151, Hälbich files, quoted in Seybold, "'. . . alles, was an die alte Zeit erinnerte,'" 86.

88 Zimmerer, *Deutsche Herrschaft über Afrikaner*, 42.

89 The Okahandja division's native register filled four volumes, but only volumes two and four have survived. Registers often identified people by their European Christian names only, so the name given by Diehl may not be correct. See NAN DOK 150 Vols. 2 and 4.

90 NAN A.455/151, Hälbich files, Diehl to Hälbich.

> The decorations are valuable in the sense that, since the uprising, the natives no longer make them, and they may destroy, or not want to give up, examples still in their possession. The items have therefore become very rare & may be suitable for your museum.[91]

The museum's collections grew rapidly after 1896. The museum closed between 1908 and 1911, while an addition to the building was completed. The reopened museum had its first dedicated colonial department.[92] The exhibitions' colonial propaganda later intensified within the context of the colonial revisionism of the Weimar Republic, and especially upon museum director Schauinsland's dismissal and the appointment of the National Socialist sympathizer Carl Friedrich Roewer in 1933. In the meantime, the collection of African cultural artifacts in Namibia continued apace. The two largest sets of objects in the Namibia collection were assembled in the 1920s. Both sets were collected by German settlers and originally came from groups of San. Since Herero material culture had been utterly destroyed, effectively left to reinvent itself after the genocide,[93] objects from the San were regarded as authentic emblems of a "traditional," and especially "exotic," way of life. The following section introduces one of these collections.

5 1919 to 1932: A Collection from "the Otjonjou clan of the ´Kung tribe"

A distinctive aspect of the Namibian collection in Bremen is the large proportion of San objects. Nearly half of the objects are associated with the San,[94] the people who are thought to have lived the longest in southern Africa. They were long romanticized by Europeans as a living Stone Age culture.[95] Thus, their objects assumed particular importance from a Social Darwinist or evolutionist point of view; they were regarded as a living example of the "beginning of human development." However, even San groups did not live in a timeless space, as autarkic

91 ÜM 149, Vol. 1 Korrespondenz 1911.

92 Briskorn, *Zur Sammlungsgeschichte afrikanischer Ethnographica*, 69.

93 For the beginning of this process, see Gewald, *Herero Heroes*, 231.

94 The title quote is how collector Johann Hinrich Gaerdes identified this group of objects in a December 7, 1930, letter to the Bremen museum.

See ÜM, Ordner Afrika Seven-hundred objects are ascribed to the San in the museum's database. Another 300 are ascribed to the Herero, 200 to the Ambo, 40 to the Himba, 20 to the Nama, and 10 to the Damara. Another 190 objects are identified only by geography, and the remaining 180 have no supporting information.

95 For critical analysis, see Gordon, *The Bushman Myth*.

societies of hunters and gatherers. Rather, they were in contact with their neighbors and they traded, migrated, and changed over time. Already in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, their areas of settlement were affected by the migratory movements of the Herero and Orlam-Nama – a process that continued with European expansion. Moreover, the San were not a monolithic group with a uniform way of life. In addition to hunting and gathering, Nama-speaking Hai//om to the south and east of the Etosha Pan also raised livestock, while individual groups on the Atlantic coast enriched their diets by catching fish.[96]

The surrender of the German colonial army on July 9, 1915, initially bolstered the African societies' hopes for a better life. Under British rule, Africans' freedom of movement initially increased, and other controls were eased within the Police Zone.[97] Even cattle farming resumed. But these freedoms did not last long. With the League of Nations' formal recognition of the South African mandate on January 1, 1921, Namibia was increasingly integrated within the later apartheid regime.[98] Controls over African workers were reinstated. With the exception of German military and government officials, settlers and other civilians were not expelled from the country. Indeed, Namibia became a new destination for impoverished white South Africans. Despite fundamental competition between German and South African white minorities, the system of racial segregation and the economic power of German settlers favored their integration. Beyond the central spaces claimed by German émigrés, vast expanses of land were still open for settlement. Older British propaganda against German colonial rule no longer reflected the new reality of white power in Namibia.[99]

After the Battle of Waterberg, at the end of 1904, Herero attempted to flee through eastern Namibia (today's Omaheke region); there were still few white settlers in the region in the early 1920s. The dry semidesert provided living space for some San groups. Relatively small family clans controlled large swathes of land around watering holes, and territory for hunting and gathering. Their seminomadic lifestyle necessarily limited their material possessions. The Omaheke region became the source of one of the few collections in the Bremen museum's

96 On the history of the Hai//om, see Dieckmann, *Hai//om in the Etosha Region*.

97 This was originally a veterinary cordon, intended to separate the more densely populated north from central and southern Namibia. Settlers and businesses were not allowed beyond this border. For a thorough discussion, see Miescher, *Namibia's Red Line*.

98 South Africa directly encouraged this integration after 1946. See Wallace, *A History of Namibia*, 243.

99 In 1926, for example, the so-called Blue Book that denounced German colonial rule was banned, and efforts were made to destroy all copies. See Silvester and Gewald, *Words Cannot Be Found*. On Namibia's transformation during and after World War One, see Wallace, *A History of Namibia*, 205.

Namibia holdings that meets Michael O'Hanlon's criteria for "primary" collecting, "by explicit, intellectual design."[100] The collector, Johann "Jan" Hinrich Gaerdes, touted the collection's comprehensiveness and thorough documentation in his offer of sale from early December 1930:

> Since I put down roots as a farmer here at Kalidona, 200 km n.e. of Okahandja and right on the border of the settled territory, in the heart of the Omaheke, I gradually, while on hunting trips, earned the trust of a clan of around 100 persons. The clan's territory extends outward from the Otjonjou watering hole in a ca. 60 km radius. . . . I acquired the present collection from this clan bit by bit; it represents the full spectrum of this clan's cultural assets, in select original pieces that (because of the bush people's lack of materialism) I often could obtain only with great effort, and only by befriending the chief of the clan.[101]

The list of objects that Gaerdes sent to the museum encompassed weapons, hunting tools, clothing, jewelry, and household utensils, along with descriptions of how these items were used. He also offered tracings and photographs of rock paintings, and declared his willingness to "shed further light on individual objects." In conclusion, he added:

> Moreover, insofar as my time allows, I would be happy to entertain any questions or requests with respect to other tribes in S.W.A. and the local fauna. I would like to add that I believe my active interest and comprehension surpasses that of the average educated amateur.[102]

The museum did not pursue Gaerdes' modestly self-assured offer, and did not contact him again after purchasing his collection. Jan Gaerdes – a pharmacist who had emigrated from Vegesack to Namibia in 1913 – was, in fact, an extremely knowledgeable and well-informed author.[103] He regularly contributed to the newsletter of the South West African Scientific Society, which was founded in 1925. Specializing in depicting the local fauna (as mentioned in his letter) and changes to its population, he also authored a comprehensive article on San arrow

100 O'Hanlon distinguishes between three ideal types of collecting: primary, secondary ("when collecting was a goal, but one subordinate to some other, primary, purpose"), and concomitant ("those [collections] that arise in a sense incidentally"). See his introduction in O'Hanlon and Welsch, *Hunting the Gatherers*, 12–13.

101 See Gaerdes's letter to the museum (December 7, 1930), 1, ÜM, Ordner Afrika.

102 See Gaerdes's letter to the museum (December 7, 1930), 2, ÜM, Ordner Afrika.

103 See the publication register for J. Gaerdes in *Mitteilungen der Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft für Südwestafrika* 10, no. 12, 5–6, which is part of Johann Gaerdes' papers, BAB pa.2, Teilnachlässe.

poisons.[104] Gaerdes' determined personality is evident in his obituary.[105] He lost much of his start-up capital during World War One, worked as a pharmacist, a commercial employee, and also on farms. He also acquired his knowledge about animals by hunting big game and taking part in expeditions. He traversed much of the region on foot.

His obituary also emphasized his engagement in the last stand against South African troops.[106] He seems, moreover, to have been universally beloved. Herero in the northwestern Kaokoveld called him *K‘ ozombaze* ['the man with the feet'] because he marched alongside the trackers on elephant hunts.[107] Even so, his relationship to Africans was ambivalent, to say the least. As a farmer, he profited from racial segregation and cheap labor. In a historical portrait of the farm he had leased in 1927,[108] he described the "robbing and murdering" Herero and Tswana, who had migrated to the region in the nineteenth century, expelling and mercilessly murdering some San; once the Herero had left again after the end of the Namibian War, the San had returned.[109] The San had indeed been supplanted, sometimes violently, by other Africans, but Gaerdes completely discounted the expansion of German colonial rule. Instead, he emphasized the rivalry between Herero and San. Even so, Gaerdes is difficult to characterize as an unconditional racist or inhumane colonialist. Rather, his respectful assessment of the San and close description of their culture show the multifaceted ambivalences between Europeans and Africans in a system of rule shaped by apartheid.

There is little reason to doubt Gaerdes' account of his friendly relationship to the "Otjonojou clan" and other San people. Farm diaries (which were largely kept by his wife Elisabeth) mention several visits by one or more San between 1928 and 1930. In December 1929, San guests spent three weeks on the farm, helping with daily chores in return for food.[110] It is impossible to reconstruct whether the individuals photographed at Kalidona (see Fig. 9) belonged to the aforementioned

104 Gaerdes, "Über Südwestafrikanische Pfeilgifte."

105 Rust, "Nachruf auf Johann Hinrich Gaerdes."

106 Rust, "Nachruf auf Johann Hinrich Gaerdes," 5.

107 Rust, "Nachruf auf Johann Hinrich Gaerdes," 3.

108 See the file on Gaerdes's farm in NAN LAN 469, Farmakte Gaerdes, vol. 2, sheet 173.

109 See Pesch, *Okarirona*, 7.

110 Farm diary (1929), private property of the Gaerdes family, Kalidona. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the Gaerdes family for their hospitality and for allowing me to view to these calendar-like records, which mostly concern the farm's expansion. As I began this project in 2016, I had the good fortune to meet Gaerdes' daughter, Lisa Pesch, before her death in 2018. She gave me a copy of the farm history that she had compiled from farm diaries, photos, and her own and her daughter's recollections.

Fig. 9: "Bushmen at Kalidona, 1928," from the album of F. Gaerdes.[111]

Fig. 10: Elisabeth and Jan Gaerdes, in Pesch, *Okarirona.*

111 The picture came from Jan Gaerdes, and it is in his brother Fritz's photo album. See BAB pa. 1, Fritz Gaerdes's papers, photo G08_0040.

"Otjonjou clan." Photos in albums that belonged to Jan's brother Fritz Gaerdes[112] depict various groups in various places; many of these photos came from Jan. None of the descriptions in these albums explicitly mention the Otjonjou watering hole. However, in an October 1929 letter to the South African administration, Jan Gaerdes offered to assist a Kalahari expedition. He wrote that he knew San on the "Otjosondjou" farm whom he could ask to serve as guides.[113] The name of the farm corresponds with some of the captions on Gaerdes' photos, and he himself mentioned the Otjonjou watering hole. The territory of the farm, like many others in the easternmost part of the colony, was probably not part of an organized settlement until the early 1940s.[114] Thus, in the 1920s, the group of San whose property ultimately formed the Gaerdes collection in Bremen may still have acted and made decisions relatively free of colonial influence.

The museum did not use these objects as a basis for expanding its collections or information about the former colony. Since the museum's reopening in 1911, its exhibition space was essentially spoken for. Although Bremen – especially after World War One – had become a "center of the neocolonial movement,"[115] apparently no further expansion of the "German South-West Africa" display was considered. The neocolonial movement included businessmen with connections to the former colonies and once-prominent colonial agitators and officers; they now often heralded Lüderitz's acquisition of Namibia, which had been practically forgotten by the turn of the century, as Bremen's pioneering contribution to German colonialism. Even schools increasingly relied on colonial revisionist material.[116] The Nazi seizure of power in 1933 only reinforced this trend. Under the museum's new director, Carl Friedrich Roewer, exhibitions became a showcase of colonial revisionist propaganda. Gaps were filled in the collections of former colonies. For the Namibia collection, curators strategically sought objects from the Ambo in the north.

112 Fritz visited Jan Gaerdes in 1921 and ultimately emigrated to Namibia himself. He lived as a teacher in Okahandja and was also active in the Scientific Society.

113 NAN LAN 469, vol. 2, sheet 173. Letter from Gaerdes to Courtnay Clark (October 20, 1929).

114 NAN LAN 513, Farmakte Otjozondjou.

115 Müller, "Lüderitz und der koloniale Mythos," 134.

116 Müller, "Lüderitz und der koloniale Mythos," 136–37.

6 1933 to 1945: Filling the Gaps in the Nazi-era Colonial Museum

The Nazi seizure of power in 1933 ended the era of Hugo Schauinsland, who had served as the museum's director since 1887. On his own initiative, and drawing upon the support of Nazi party members in the cultural administration, Carl Friedrich Roewer staged a coup[117] to become the museum's new director. He pointed to the poor condition of the museum's exhibitions and its stagnant scholarship. Schauinsland was forced to resign. Weißenborn and Cohn, who worked in the ethnography department, faced growing pressure from the Nazis, and they were replaced by new personnel after their deaths in the mid-1930s. The Bremen Senate immediately embraced Roewer's concept for a museum about the German colonies. In 1935, the municipal collections were renamed the German Colonial and Overseas Museum (*Deutsches Kolonial- und Übersee-Museum*).[118]

In 1936, Roewer emphasized to Bremen cultural authorities that African collections from the former German colonies should receive greater attention:

> With respect to the expansion of the Colonial Museum, here, just to the right of the front atrium, the German-African colonies (which have, to this point, been quite meagerly represented) should be expanded from an ethnographic and economic perspective. . . . I believe the German-African colonies should accompany a prominent position, directly by the museum's entrance.[119]

In a 1941 treatise "on the German Colonial and Overseas Museum in Bremen in the present and future,"[120] Roewer summarized the state of the African collections before he became the museum's director, and the changes he initiated:

> Ethnographic collections from Africa, with the exception of Egypt, were not particularly well maintained by my predecessor. I have since been able to make more acquisitions, so that holdings from our African colonies (Togo, Cameroon, East Africa, South-West Africa) have also been filled in nicely.[121]

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117 As early as 1927, Roewer had criticized the condition of the museum and cast himself as Schauinsland's successor. A Nazi party member himself, he succeeded only with the support of the regime.

118 For a detailed and critical account of these events, see Briskorn, *Zur Sammlungsgeschichte afrikanischer Ethnographica*, 82. See also Abel, *Vom Raritätenkabinett zum Überseemuseum*, 171.

119 Roewer summarized his petitions to the cultural administration in an unpublished pamphlet from 1941. It is available in the museum's archives. See Roewer, "Sisyphos," 44.

120 This was an expanded and revised version of his petition from 1933. See Roewer, "Denkschrift."

121 Roewer, "Denkschrift," 3.

He went on to describe his plans for displaying the ethnographic collections from Africa:

> Each of our (earlier and future) colonies will need to be shown with their many different peoples and cultures, forms of settlement, and economics – likewise in life-size groups, insofar as possible. . . . Alongside a number of life-size groups from different overseas territories, the Masai-East Africa are a new addition to the two African groups already on display, Herero-Southwest and Pygmies-Cameroon. But for our African territories, this is hardly sufficient.[122]

With respect to presentation, Roewer's plans differed little from those of his predecessor. However, he assigned much greater importance to the former colonies in Africa, and especially to expanding their collections. While only the small collection from East Africa had previously been seen as a priority,[123] Roewer believed that the Namibia collection, too, had gaps that needed to be filled. He thus planned *Schaugruppen* of Ambo, San, Nama, and Kavango,[124] although he largely focused on acquiring Ambo objects. In contrast to his predecessor, he relied less on direct contacts and more on targeted purchases and exchanges with ethnographic dealers and other museums. These acquisitions came, almost without exception, from former soldiers, missionaries, and civil servants who had lived in Namibia during German colonial rule.[125]

Woven baskets, jewelry, and weapons are among the objects ascribed to the Ambo in the Bremen collection. Sets of Ambo objects would almost always include "daggers," "knives," or "swords," with Schinz and Vedder describinng these as an essential part of Ambo men's attire.[126] The knives' carved wooden sheathes expose their iron blades; sometimes two blades are held in one sheath (see Fig. 11).

Even before European colonization, Ambo traded intensively with their neighbors.[127] Ambo objects were thus widespread before and during the first decades of colonial rule. After the German conquest and genocidal warfare in central

122 Roewer, "Denkschrift," 17.

123 See Hege's essay in this book.

124 Roewer used the names "Ovambo, Bushmen, Hottentots, [and] Kaffirs (Barotse)." The former Barotse kingdom was mostly located in Zambia. In the Namibian context, the discriminatory label "Kaffir" was primarily used for groups that lived in the northeast. Roewer lumped together various groups in the northeast under the label "Barotse."

125 Original sources for the Bremen collection included the former officer Victor Franke (purchased from an ethnographica dealer named Konietzko in 1936), and the missionary Hermann Tönnies and civil servant Georg Hartmann (exchanged with the Berlin Ethnographic Museum in 1938).

126 See Schinz, *Deutsch-Südwest-Afrika*, 279; and Vedder, *Das alte Südwestafrika*, 67.

127 For a thorough discussion of this labor market system, see Zimmerer, *Deutsche Herrschaft über Afrikaner*, 176.

Fig. 11: Ambo knives in a display case at the Übersee-Museum (Photo: Jarling).

and southern Namibia, Ambo served the colonial system primarily as a reservoir of labor. The discovery of diamond deposits, at the latest, encouraged a system of labor migration that only intensified under South African rule, with the effects of this system still palpable today.[128] Men were engaged in weeks- or months-long "contract work," especially in mines or quarrying diamonds. Like the *Ekori* of Herero women, daggers became an ideal-typical symbol of the material culture of Ambo men, and thus an essential object for collectors. Direct contexts of acquisition can rarely be reconstructed for the "Ambo objects" in Bremen. Many cannot be linked to a particular collector. Thus, "filling the gaps" was limited to assembling anonymous knives, baskets, and jewelry. Most had already been collected during German colonial rule.

From the perspective of African societies in Namibia, World War Two was relatively insignificant, although the rise of the Nazi regime did raise many German émigrés' hopes for taking back the colony. South Africa banned National Socialist propaganda, which was widespread among the Germans in South-West Africa, and it also forbid associations close to the Nazi regime. After the war started, German men were interned in South Africa, and they could not return until the hostilities had ended. White colonial society became increasingly divided, and German Namibians developed their own identity.[129]

128 Wallace, *A History of Namibia*, 197. For the era of South African rule, see Dobler, *Traders and Trade in Colonial Ovamboland*.

129 For a summary, see Wallace, *A History of Namibia*, 243. On Namibian Germans before, during, and after World War Two, see Eberhardt, *Zwischen Nationalsozialismus und Apartheid*. On the formation of German-Namibian identity, see also Schmidt-Lauber, *Die abhängigen Herren*.

Roewer had planned his own tour in Namibia to expand the collection. The advantages of such an undertaking were readily apparent: Not only would it solve the problem of having to rely on middlemen and the limited selection of other museums, but less expensive objects could be procured according to their individual appeal.[130] Financing problems and the outbreak of World War Two hindered this endeavor.[131] But in 1952, once the museum was rebuilt after it had been bombed twice during the war and suffered extensive water damage, Herbert Abel, head of the ethnography department, was able to put Roewer's plans into action.[132] Abel established close contacts among settlers of German descent, who once again offered substantial support. He successfully expanded the museum's natural history collection, although procuring ethnographic objects proved more complicated than he expected.

7 1945 to 1975: Himba Objects and Traveling Scholar Herbert Abel

Aside from Roewer, most of the staff were permitted to resume work after the end of World War Two. Their immediate priority was rebuilding the museum; the aquarium opened in 1948, followed by the first exhibition spaces one year later. The institution was renamed the "Übersee-Museum" in 1952.[133] Schauinsland's old exhibition strategy was revived. The museum returned to depicting non-European cultures and natural objects, with no particular emphasis on the former German colonies, although the Herero *Schaugruppe* was reconstructed according to the old model. There was still no engagement with real living conditions in the present, or with historical developments in non-European territories under European colonial rule. This continuity was also apparent in how objects were procured.

Plans began anew for a collection and research tour in Namibia, which had first been proposed in the 1930s. A key step was presumably the meeting (held at the end of May 1951) between the new director, Helmuth O. Wagner,[134] and a settler

130 Roewer had already noted this two years into his tenure. See Roewer, "Sisyphos," 40.

131 Abel, *Vom Raritätenkabinett zum Überseemuseum*, 175–176.

132 Abel started as a volunteer under Roewer, and later became head of the ethnography department. He served as museum director between 1971 and 1975.

133 Abel, *Vom Raritätenkabinett zum Überseemuseum*, 197.

134 Wagner served as director from 1951 to 1962. He had previously worked as a scientist and collector in Mexico.

of German descent named Joachim Cranz.[135] Wagner had already tasked the ornithologist Walter Hoesch with expanding the collections, and Cranz had helped to coordinate the first payments. Plans for a trip by Herbert Abel, head of the ethnographic department, began to coalesce after Wagner met with Cranz.[136] Abel traveled throughout Namibia between January and December 1952. Although he was head of the ethnographic department, his own research as a geographer concerned the morphology of the Great Escarpment.[137] His interest in the natural sciences informed his approach to collecting. He regularly reported to Wagner about the large mammals he could acquire.[138] Even today, these zebras and antelopes from Namibia remain the central focus of a large diorama in the Übersee-Museum. Most of these animals were hunted on the farms of white settlers.[139] The names of the farms are precisely documented. Abel's ethnographic collection, by contrast, in no way corresponded to scientific standards, as there is no comprehensive list or description of the individual objects he collected. An accession book merely records a "zoological and ethnographic collection" from "SW-Afrika Exp. 1952." The objects were not inventoried until 1956, four years after Abel's trip. In addition to some objects from the Police Zone that were ascribed to Herero and Damara, Abel largely collected "Himba objects" from the Kaokoveld.

Abel traveled with Jürgen Cranz (Joachim Cranz's son) and Walter Hoesch to northwestern Namibia in June 1952. Due to reserve and racial segregation policies, the region was still comparatively unexplored.[140] Even today, the rugged mountain landscape of the Kaokoveld is extremely sparsely settled and its area roughly corresponds to the size of the state of Slovakia. Abel estimated the resident African population to be about 6,000,[141] including just under 2,000 Himba. The Otjiherero-speaking Himba had first come to southwestern Angola and north-

135 ÜM 363, Vol. 2 Cranz, Wagner to Cranz (May 24, 1951).

136 Sending money abroad was still difficult in the early postwar era. See ÜM 363, Vol. 2 Ankäufe aus Privathand 1951–1974. On plans for the tour, see the correspondence between Wagner and Cranz in ÜM 363, Vol. 2.

137 Abel embarked on a second tour, financed by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, in 1957. This trip took him mostly to southern Angola and southern Namibia but did not involve collecting ethnographic objects. For his geographical research, see "Beiträge zur Morphologie der Großen Randstufe."

138 ÜM 215, Schriftwechsel Abel 1952.

139 See ÜM, Katalog Säugetiere.

140 Particularly under South African rule, it was nearly impossible for white scholars to travel to the Kaokoveld until the late 1940s. Numerous requests were denied. See NAN SWAA 1328–1336, South West Africa Administration.

141 Abel drew upon a 1947 estimate by the Officer of Native Affairs. See Abel, "Völkerkundlich-kulturgeografische Beobachtungen," 171.

western Namibia in the sixteenth century, part of the migratory movements of Bantu-speaking groups. The Himba were closely related to the Herero in cultural-anthropological terms. The two groups' languages, economic systems, and material culture were very similar. The remote location of the Himba people, which was enforced by colonial reserve and apartheid policies, helped to preserve their comparatively "traditional" way of life. Today the Himba are still regarded – especially by the tourism industry – as living witnesses of an imagined past, which was destroyed in the Police Zone by colonial rule.[142]

Himba objects collected by Abel included vessels, clothing, and jewelry. In form and design, many resembled "Herero objects" in other parts of the Bremen collection (see Figs. 12 and 13). Thus, Abel saw an opportunity to fill another "gap" in the museum's Namibia collection, although he had surely envisioned gaining easier access to the objects.

Fig. 12: B12925 "Kalebasse" CC BY-SA 4.0 Übersee-Museum Bremen (Photo Volker Beinhorn).
Fig. 13: B12935 "canister" CC BY-SA 4.0 Übersee-Museum Bremen (Photo: Volker Beinhorn).

He wrote indignantly to Wagner:

> The ethnographic side is not getting a fair shake, to the extent that the Ovahimba still do manifest very primeval conditions, but in practice can't be moved to give away any of their inherently quite paltry cultural assets as a pastoral people. This has to do with the fact that they themselves craft almost nothing, but instead trade cattle for any items of significance – i.e. jewelry, spears – from the (artisanally very talented) Ovambos. What's more, they receive their body jewelry (which is practically all they wear, except for a hide skirt) at their maturity ceremony and aren't allowed to take it off again, otherwise bad luck will befall

142 Breitwieser, *Die Geschichte des Tourismus in Namibia*, 200.

> them. So I can already predict right now that the collected ethnographic spoils will be none too great. Even with plenty of tobacco, tasty morsels, with knives – to this point, anyhow – I've hardly been able to round up anything.[143]

Africans, just like "children," were to be won over with tasty morsels. Wholly in line with colonial tradition, Abel offered tobacco and knives as additional goods of exchange. The experience was apparently so frustrating that he hardly ever collected ethnographic objects again. He wrote nothing more on the subject in his letters to Wagner. He did, however, facilitate the acquisition of other collections through his contacts with white settlers. Thus, Fritz Siever's brother-in-law sent his relative's extensive San collection to Bremen; the objects had been collected in the 1920s, in the region around Grootfontein.[144] Likewise, two shipments of necklaces from Elisabeth Wollmer in Swakopmund were probably connected with Abel's tour. Abel also established close contacts with museums in Windhoek and Swakopmund. Both museums were built and supported by settlers of German descent.[145] The Windhoek museum received German animal specimens from Bremen.[146] Seals that are still displayed in the Swakopmund museum today were preserved in Bremen. A technician named Fritsch sent precise instructions from Bremen for building dioramas.[147] So, for the first time, collected objects traveled from German to Namibia. Notably, neither hand axes and jewelry from burial mounds, nor Bremen fishermen's caps and harpoons, were appointed to remind the German minority of their homeland. Instead, the museum sent animal specimens like a deer, fox, and stork.

Abel's view of Namibian society in the 1950s stands out in his publications. As a geographer, he naturally commented on settlement structure and the apartheid system, and in a short essay he explicitly addressed "Southwest African native problems."[148] As suggested by the title, he analyzed the relationship between Africans and Europeans in the past and present:

> With respect to the native question, which is the focus here, difficulties are certainly not limited to the present. Leafing through our colonial literature and reading travelogues and accounts from the old German South-West Africa, it is striking that complaints about the colored people's insolent and presumptuous nature, and also their laziness, do not date

143 ÜM 215, Schriftwechsel Abel 1952, Abel to Wagner (June 22, 1952), 3.

144 ÜM 369, Vol. 1b, Sievers to Wagner (May 30, 1952).

145 A museum was established in Windhuk in 1907. Weber founded the Swakopmund museum in 1951, and it is still privately operated today. On Namibia's museums, see Wessler, *Von Lebendabgüssen, Heimatmuseen und Cultural Villages*.

146 ÜM 375, Vol. 7.

147 ÜM 375, Vol. 7.

148 Abel, "Südwestafrikanische Eingeborenenprobleme."

> back only a half century ago, to the era of the great uprisings; rather, similar complaints were already made in the era of German colonization [*Besitzergreifung*] (1884). . . . Today, however, relations are substantially more difficult because esteem for the white man in Africa has waned, and in South-West, too, the natives no longer see him as much of an authority figure.[149]

Abel did not agree with the opinion, widespread among whites, that "the natives are becoming more and more lazy,"[150] and he pointed to his own experience:

> By nature the South-West African native is certainly not insolent, demanding, and insubordinate. I need only point to the Ovahima and Ovatjimba in the restricted area of the Kaokoveld, who, as the last parts of the Herero people not yet touched by civilization, have retained their unspoiled nature here in the country's remote northwest. They are proud and self-assured people, very easy to get along with when treated well, and I remember them fondly. . . . In contrast to them, the civilized Herero can only be described as wretched beings. They have come to this because they no longer live in their old tribal bonds.[151]

For Abel, "genuine Africans" had not been directly affected by the consequences of colonization, and still lived in an "authentic African" lifeworld, far removed from colonial influence. Abel did, at least, trace the origins of the Africans' present (1950s) status within the Police Zone to the expansion of European territorial claims after the mid-nineteenth century, and to the "suppression" of the wars of resistance between 1904 and 1908. He did not, of course, elaborate on the escalation of violence. He then emphasized the South African administration's efforts to promote "the natives' wellbeing" – a blatant euphemism, given the increasingly radical policies of apartheid. Abel saw the solution to "native problems" in the explicit separation between Africans and white colonial elites, greater agricultural investment, and less dependence on black labor: "If the future of South West Africa is to belong to the white man, he must work to substantially reduce the participation of colored workers in economic life, and, most of all, in farming."[152]

Abel took the practice of racial segregation in Namibia as a given, and therefore argued on behalf of expanding the "reserves." His romanticized image of "genuine" Africans in Namibia was rooted in the aftermath of their first contacts with Europeans and the experiences of Schauinsland's generation. Africans were

149 Abel, "Südwestafrikanische Eingeborenenprobleme." 125–126.
150 Abel, "Südwestafrikanische Eingeborenenprobleme," 126.
151 Abel, "Südwestafrikanische Eingeborenenprobleme," 127.
152 Abel, "Südwestafrikanische Eingeborenenprobleme," 129.

"genuine" as long they remained in an essentialist, primitive state – still "proud," but also "childlike." And, above all, ethnographically valuable things could still be collected in such a state.

8 Conclusion: Historical Continuities and Contexts of Acquisition

Only in the 1970s was there a significant caesura in the Übersee-Museum's collection and exhibition practices. Herbert Ganslmayr became the museum's new director after Abel retired in 1975. Influenced by decolonization and the protest movements of 1968, the museum became an advocate for the "Third World."[153] The museum was reorganized, and the Herero *Schaugruppe* was dismantled. Although the distinction between the European "self" and non-European "others" remained, perspectives on the non-European world changed. The museum became more political, actively addressing contemporary economic, ecological, and social problems. Initiatives supporting Namibian independence coalesced in Bremen.[154]

Until the 1970s, however, exhibition practices and contexts of acquisition were characterized by a long continuity, which extended back to the museum's founding era. Views of the "others" hardly changed. Objects represented societies in a "timeless," "primeval" state. The museum was uninterested in the collected objects' actual owners, regarding them as agents of this imagined culture. The Namibia collection illustrates this continuity especially well. Plentiful contacts with white settlers provided a stream of opportunities to fill the collection's gaps. Although these gaps were strategically identified in Bremen, they were filled by "men on the spot" with their own agendas. Many coincidences occurred in this way. The historical context in Namibia determined the makeup of the collection in Bremen.

Structures of settler colonialism proved especially enduring,[155] and the Bremen museum exploited these into the 1970s to expand its collection. Objects were largely selected according to the perspective of white colonial elites and an imagined ideal of African societies in Namibia. Collectors, both "men on the spot" and the museum itself, knowingly disregarded persistent contexts of violence that ranged from conquest and genocide to enduring policies of racial segregation.

153 See Stiller, "Wilde Jahre"; and also Savoy, *Afrikas Kampf um seine Kunst*, 179.
154 Gustafsson, *Namibia, Bremen und Deutschland*, 361.
155 Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 3.

Historicizing the collection not only illuminates the repression of the native population during colonial rule, but also the disappearance and destruction of the very items that the museum desired. After the Namibian War and genocide, the museum needed settlers' help to commission the production of objects, in order to preserve the last remnants of an extinguished Herero culture. In the interwar years, thanks to the settler, Johann Hinrich Gaerdes, the museum gained access to San objects in eastern Namibia. San areas of settlement had steadily dwindled due to colonial expansion and repression. In the 1950s, Herbert Abel – head of the ethnographic department and later museum director – needed German settlers to ensure the success of his collection and research tour. He only considered Himba objects as worth collecting, and showed no interest in the things of Africans who lived in the Police Zone. He did not see them as "genuine" Africans, but as part of the policies of racial segregation that he himself accepted. The Bremen museum not only profited from German agents of settler colonialism in Namibia; it also participated in processes of acquisition and determined the image of Namibian societies that the ethnographic collection was supposed to convey.

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SWAA 1327–1336 South West Africa Administration, Museums and scientific research

Basler Afrika Bibliographien (BAB) Archive

BAB Personenarchiv pa.1 Teilnachlass Fritz Gaerdes, Fotoalbum G08 "Buschmänner, Ovambos, Kaokoveld." Includes Photo G08_0040, "Buschmänner auf Kalidona 1928"
BAB Personenarchiv pa.2 Teilnachlässe und Manuskripte: Johann Gaerdes

Staatsarchiv Bremen (StAB)

StAB 6,40-D. 3.b Nr. 32 Bremische Bürgerschaft seit 1848, Rechtspflege, Richterkollegium, Richterwahlen (Ernennung Karl Raben zum Richter)
StAB 4,82/1-164(267) Meldeakte Boysen/Raben
StAB 4,82/1-3264(91) Meldeakte Wulff Carl und Ilda (geb. Boysen)

Other

Farm diary of the Gaerdes family, Kalidona, 1929

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Isabel Eiser

Fighting Fictions – Producing 'Truths': Tracing the Discursive Struggles Over the 'Benin Bronzes'

1 Introduction

The so-called 'Benin Bronzes' are emblematic of contemporary disputes over the restitution of art looted in colonial times.[1] Plundered and dislocated globally by British troops in 1897 in a so-called 'punitive expedition' against Benin City in today's Nigeria, these reclaimed and retained objects numbering in their thousands became a collective icon of post- and decolonial narratives and movements. Public discourses, reports in print and online media have been decisive for the global reception, perception, and construction of the Benin Bronzes in the public sphere from 1897 until today. The violent suppression of Benin City, accompanied by wide public colonial and anticolonial coverage, as well as the appropriation of the Benin Bronzes as war trophies form 'the moral core' that laid the basis for these objects becoming a symbol for a global debate about the restitution of art to their countries of origin.[2] The explicit nature of this military attack, and the subsequent destruction and looting of the Kingdom of Benin combined with the discursive struggles around these events made the Benin Bronzes a prime example of colonial loot.[3] Originally created as ceremonial courtly art and visual archives of cultural history, following their dispossession the Benin Bronzes were sold and collected as spoils of war and incorporated by ethnological museums, becoming exhibits and projection screens for racist theories, eventually fetching record sums at auctions as both art and commodity.[4] Following their translocation and retention, the objects were claimed back by Nigeria for decades. Restitution

1 This chapter is produced in the context of the dissertation project, "Becoming an Emblem. From Colonial Propaganda to Decolonial Movement. A Discourse Analysis of the Benin Bronzes." It is part of the wider research project "'The Benin Bronzes.' Globalising the Colonial Looting of Art," at the research center for "Hamburg's (Post-)Colonial Legacy," University of Hamburg, Department of History, Global History. The research was funded by a three-year doctoral grant from the Gerda Henkel Foundation.

2 Wood, "Display, Restitution and World Art History," 121.

3 Paczensky and Ganslmayr, *Nofretete will nach Hause*, 130.

4 On visual archives, see Erediauwa, "Geleitwort," 13. Objects from "punitive expeditions" were long considered authentic on the art market, which in turn increased the price of the goods. See Barlovic, "Versteigerung von Benin-Bronze."

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claims like these were increasingly expressed as part of pan-African movements following the process of numerous African states gaining independence in 1960.

The Benin Bronzes and its discourses are relevant to and made relevant by collective events and processes of social identity formation.[5] In global public reception over a period of two centuries, they appear, disappear, and reappear again, and it is the stories evoked by the objects' *presence* and *absence* that do need to be addressed.[6] Emerging public discursive events around the Benin Bronzes, where the discourse on the objects changed or thickened, reveal the manifold levels of semantic attributions the objects experienced. Following the tracks of these discourses uncovers the development of its becoming an emblem as a focal process in the objects' biography or career, reaching over three centuries into current debates, touching and symbolizing social key debates of postcolonial struggles on how to cope with colonial legacies that were and still are under intense negotiation.[7] A key iconic and discursive event, besides the 1897 invasion, is the Festac '77 of 1977. This Nigerian festival offers an insight into the process of the Benin Bronzes' iconization reaching into current debates. It is a success story of a production of a discursive entity and an icon of a movement for restitution that in 2021 resulted in the achievement of exactly what it claimed should happen.

While the discourses on the Benin Bronzes are manifold, this research focuses on how subjection is performed through power/knowledge relations and discourses, and how discourse control is gained by hegemonic and counter-hegemonic actors through (re-)appropriation, (re-)interpretation, and mass distribution. In a multi-modal and comparative approach, it studied the use of linguistics and visuals in the form of symbols in three decisive discursive events from the Benin discourse.[8] An insight into these three case studies is presented in this chapter. With public discourses as a material basis, in the first case study the focus will be on the central role of press discourses and the production of 'fictions and truths' in mass colonial propaganda and less assertive counter-narrations on

5 Social structures are produced and reproduced in communication, and knowledge production and their distribution are closely linked to communication. See Knoblauch, "Diskurs, Kommunikation Und Wissenssoziologie," 209.

6 Hahn and Weiss, *Mobility, Meaning and the Transformations of Things*, 3, referring to Svensson, "Knowledge and Artifacts."

7 Appadurai, "Introduction"; Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things." While Kopytoff uses the term 'biography,' Appadurai uses the concept of 'career.'

8 This discourse analysis combines approaches from the following works: Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*; Wodak, *Critical Discourse Analysis*; and Keller, Hornidge, and Schünemann, *The Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse*.

a linguistic level in newspaper reports on Benin in 1897. The second case study highlights the emergence of the Benin Bronzes as a symbol within the mass communication campaigns related to Festac '77. The last shorter case study focuses on a critical perspective on the twenty-first century restitution debate, and the appropriation of counter-hegemonic narrations by hegemonic actors.

Encompassing the three case study sections, questions of discourse analysis are placed in relation to guiding questions of subjectification, the materiality of discourse, and identity-forming processes. Chief among the questions is how in (post)colonial discourses the Benin Bronzes' removal and absence were instrumentalized in (counter-)discourses and how the objects were used to shape identities and solidarities. (Historical) discourse research is thus able to reveal transnational networks and discourses, which reinforce not only colonial and racist structures and thought patterns, but also form anticolonial counter-narratives and movements including historical and contemporary discourses on restitution. It is a multi-axial undertaking, as it draws its material not only from different times and regions, but reaches into multiple fields of theory and methodology. In terms of the latter, the goal of such a multi-axial discourse analysis is not only to be digitally oriented but also counter-hegemonic or decolonial, by relocating the focus away from dominant hegemonic discourses to less assertive counter-narrations, and taking into account and putting into a relation these two antagonistic datasets, or the "double empirics," as discourse analysts such as Saša Bosančić call it.[9] This methodological conceptualization aims to emphasize the importance of acknowledging discourse analysis not only in highly digitized times, but also in times of great dispute over what ideas, discourses, methods, and theories are silenced, included, or highlighted.

While twenty-first century provenance research as a widely practiced (re)action strategy has emerged from restitution claims, this research area is often understood as part of what tends to be a rather narrow field of investigation into collection histories, while discourses around objects are considered only marginally if considered at all. This chapter approaches the topics foregrounded by this volume by inviting methodological reflections on discourse analysis as a useful method to research reception histories and thus expand the field of provenance research into the field of discourse analysis. The here proposed perspective on the Benin Bronzes can show how object biographies can be studied, shifting a provenance research's focus upon the appropriation and distribution of material

9 For subjectivation analysis and "double empirics," see Bosančić, Pfahl, and Traue, "Empirische Subjektivierungsanalyse," 141–148; for a visual discourse analytical approach, see, for example, Traue and Schünzel, "Visueller Aktivismus und affektive Öffentlichkeiten."

objects towards the production and appropriation of the discourses surrounding these objects. As provenance research is often limited to the study of materiality and the biographies of Western collectors, a reproduction of narratives of colonial actors and reception by European ethnologists is consequently common when tracing processes of dispossession and violence. Less often taken into consideration are less prominently occuring counter-hegemonic narrations on and discursive makings of objects. These counter-narrations are worthy of consideration in the research of provenances, especially when acknowledging that it is precisely those counter-discourses of claims for restitution that led to actual restitutions and in turn to increased provenance research as a supposed prerequisite of the act of giving back. Only in the last years, a shift to more decolonial approaches can be observed, where European narrations are increasingly decentered. A counter-hegemonic discourse analytical approach to provenance research is able to extend our understanding of objects and their history, to de-center hegemonic actors, and to take into account counter-narrations as part of the social construction of reality and its objects. Achille Mbembe argues that to account for "the imagery and efficacy of postcolonial relations of power, one has to go beyond binary categories in the interpretation of domination, like hegemony and counterhegemony, because they cloud our understanding of postcolonial relations."[10] As such binary categories exist and are produced, used, and consumed, they deserve attention. By addressing these 'double empirics,' it is possible to approach those gray scales absent from binary categories, making transparent complex social realities, power/knowledge relations, and the tools used to examine them. With the following case studies, these antagonisms will be used to approach the narrative contexts of the Benin Bronzes and link research on their provenance as an outcome of their restitution, which itself is a result of the discursive struggles around it.

2 Fighting Fictions – Producing Truths: 1897 Benin Discourses

The Benin Bronzes are highly visible in historical and contemporary global public discourses on restitution. They are constructed to a large extent through these very public discourses, and carried into everyday life primarily via transnationally distributed press and media. In this context of public reception and perception, in a process of consumption, construction, and production, the objects gained a status

10 Mbembe, "Provisional Notes on the Postcolony," 3.

as symbols of the restitution discourses in (post-)colonial contexts.[11] Consequently, in approaching the emergence of the Benin Bronzes as an emblem, this chapter asks how the objects were and are discussed, received, and perceived in public discourse. Discursive struggles played out in media and newspapers already had a leading role in the nineteenth century in shaping these objects' biographies and establishing their iconic status as a 'rebellious' emblem. The mass public discourse on the Benin Bronzes finds its starting point in discursive struggles in public press reports in 1897. Early antagonistic colonial propagandistic and anticolonial discourses, even when mostly not directly referring to the looted Benin Bronzes, are at the very heart of the discursive network around the discourses on the return of these objects that encompass struggles over the gaining and resisting of hegemony.

The development of mass media in the nineteenth century played a particularly important role in maintaining imperial patterns of global networking, and consequently, in creating transnational identities.[12] Such imperial connections linked different places in the colonies together – an interplay between the local, the national, the global, and the imperial.[13] New developments in media and colonial politics in the mid-1890s also led to a significant increase in the political importance of public debates about imperial expansion. In the course of enforcing expansion plans and trade treaties, colonial wars and invasions increased. Such so-called 'small wars' were often accompanied by constant press coverage and war propaganda, distributed globally by press agencies like Reuters.[14] In case of the Benin invasion, it was the British public in particular that was intensively supplied with facts and fictions regarding imperialist processes. The aggressive expansion aimed at systematically extending British rule also met with resistance on the African continent. While physical resistance was often answered by colonial retaliation, discursive resistance found clear expression in the African and colonial-critical press. Even when published continuously, these fierce anticolonial reports were only rarely distributed globally and therefore were recognized only by a limited audience.

11 With "restitution discourses," the author refers to the restitution of (im-)material culture dislocated in colonial times.

12 Potter, *News and the British World*; and Carey, "Time, Space, and the Telegraph."

13 Ballantyne, *Orientalism and Race*, 14.

14 Methfessel, *Kontroverse Gewalt*, 12 and 13; and Geppert, *Pressekriege*, 62.

3 Colonial Discourse: 1897 Discourse in the Colonial and Euro-American Press

In February 1897, a British military force started its attack on Benin City and violently overthrew the kingdom of Benin while looting thousands of objects from the city. This violent expansion of British territory and its gaining of control over trading routes was like many such colonial wars labeled as a 'punitive expedition,' justifying with this terminology a supposed need for military intervention. The press reported on the invasion of Benin City and the surrounding events to a remarkable degree giving it prominence. Published over months and in high density across daily newspapers, these colonial reports appeared several times a day in the UK press, before the same colonial narrations of the event were disseminated globally mostly repeating the same narratives, terminologies, and headlines, such as, for example, "The Benin Massacre," "The Benin Disaster" or "City of Blood."[15] The dissemination of buzzwords like "crucifixion" and "human sacrifices" as framings for "a peaceful British mission" and "punitive expeditions" accompanied the trope of missions executed to end the African slave trade and were often applied strategies to downplay and legitimize supposed civilizing interventions.[16] This spread of colonial propaganda on a massive scale, discursively re-enacting the successful war against Benin via the public press, was supplemented by reports in specialized journals, in detailed drawings in illustrated newspapers, and in (semi-)fictional reports combined with eye-witness accounts in novels and ethnographic studies, or in the form of re-enactments of the battle as a theater play in British Royal Military Tournaments.[17] The mass and repeated

15 The phrasing "The Benin Disaster" was repeatedly used as a title by several newspapers from January until March. See, for example, on the same day, *The Belfast News-Letter*, "The Benin Disaster," January 13, 1897; *The Western Mail*, "The Benin Disaster," January 13, 1897; and *The Times*, "The Benin Disaster," January 13, 1897. Also, Nigerian newspapers like *The Lagos Weekly Record* adapted this framing. See, for example, "The Benin Disaster," February 27, 1897. Even more popular was the title "The Benin Massacre," with local and international newspapers choosing this title from January 13, 1897, until at least July 27, 1901. See additionally, *The Australian Express and Telegraph*, "A City of Blood," February 20, 1897; *The Australian Week*, "Benin Massacre," February 26, 1897; and *The Arizona Sentinel,* "The Blood-Stained Kingdom of Benin."

16 For example, in *The Times*, "The Benin Expedition"; *The Daily News*, "The Benin Expedition"; *The Illustrated London News*, "The Benin Disaster," 107 and 122; and *The Manchester Guardian*, "The Benin Massacre. Narrative of Mr. Locke."

17 See Boisragon, *The Benin Massacre*, 1897. Boisragon made use of the framing already distributed widely in the press. *The Times* reported annually on the Royal Tournament, as in May 1898 with a large section on the "evening performance" which ended "with the vivid presentment of

mobilization of certain terms and the recurrent drawing on popular stories, as well as the combining of texts and images were calculated and effective juxtapositions used in the illustrated and daily press to widely distribute stereotypical and discriminatory narratives. These often greatly exaggerated tropes still partly persist in contemporary publications.[18]

In the European and American press, only rare critical statements on colonial endeavors and propaganda can be found. Most likely, these originate from actors that were not directly involved in colonial endeavors. In a very different light to the British press, the US-American newspapers *The Sun* and *The Boston Journal* reported in January 1897 on what was expected to be included in the Queen's speech at the opening of parliament. It was reported that "she will express regret at the Benin disaster and at the necessity for a punitive expedition."[19] Even without being part of the final speech, such an expected statement should be read in the context of an increasing public and critical awareness through press reports on the violent wars in the colonies overseas. Fierce colonial critical statements were sometimes also expressed in parliamentary speeches by the political opposition that were reprinted in newspapers. Most critical reports were less direct, such as, for example, a report from the US-American newspaper *The Daily Picayune* mentioning the large stock of ivory the Benin king possessed, noting that "he is not likely to escape the civilizing influences of the Maxim guns which have been sent to reform him."[20] A similar direction was taken by *The Sun* in its report on the expected British invasion of Benin City: "The country is said to be very rich and it would not be surprising to find that one result of the punitive expedition would be the annexation of the whole territory to the British possessions in West Africa."[21]

The otherwise mostly uniform voice of the press was mainly due to the reprinting of press releases distributed by the news agency Reuters: newspapers on a global scale adopted the production of degrading stereotypes and justification strategies. Following these press reports on the colonial endeavors in Benin City, a refocusing away from reports on war and violence to reports on civilizing development can be noticed beginning in the mid of 1897: In the same way, the British press illustrated in such reports its 'colonial successes' using the narrative of order

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the taking of Benin City, which may be described without hesitation as the most successful 'combined display' of recent years." See *The Times*, "The Royal Tournament"; and *The Times*, "Some Colonial Books."

18 Coombes, "Ethnography, Popular Culture, and Institutional Power," 145.

19 *The Boston Journal*, "Uncommonly Brief"; and *The Sun*, "The Queen's Speech."

20 *The Daily Picayune*, "Personal and General News."

21 *The Sun*, "The Massacre in Africa."

by introducing bureaucratic processes, in an article from May the *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* used the same framings promoting these colonial enterprises in Germany: "The British Post Office announces that it is now possible to send more money orders directly to Benin. Only a few months ago, the fetish service (*Fetisch-Dienst*) there claimed its bloody victims. This announcement is indeed proof of the rapid progress of civilization (Fortschritt der Gesittung) in those areas."[22] Similar 'salvation narrations' were distributed by the British press even as late as October 1897 in two articles on the same day. One puts it as follows:

> A report from Benin city on the present condition of that region shows some remarkable results of the British military expedition of the early part of this year. The so-called 'City of blood' is as peaceful as an English village, there are regular sittings of the 'Council of Chiefs,' [of] whom the British Resident presides, a mail is [patched] to Europe once a fortnight, and – to complete the pleasing picture – golf links have [gradually] been established. The reign of terror is said to have ceased the day the city was taken.[23]

4 Counter-Discourses in Lagos Press

In part as a product of the effects of colonial rule itself, from the 1880s onwards an increasing intellectual as well as political resistance to colonialism in the colonies by the colonized prevailed. Violent oppression, and social and economic degradation created a resistance that used the knowledge imparted from colonial educational institutions, as well as the proliferation of newspapers, to fight colonial rule.[24] In the process, anticolonial resistance increasingly articulated itself in the press and through publishing, especially in Lagos which was a central location for a distinctive anticolonial discourse.[25] In the absence of a democratically elected government, the press was seen by many as the most effective constitutional weapon to battle colonial governments, expose grievances, and influence

22 *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, "Großbritannien," (translation mine).

23 *The Manchester Guardian*, "Foreign." The second article shows only slight changes to the form of the narration, highlighting central and frequently addressed public colonial actors, and repeating popular narratives around human sacrifices; see *The Manchester Guardian*, "Affairs in Benin. Results of the British Expedition."

24 Young, *Postcolonialism*, 100. On the dialectic of colonialism, see Osterhammel and Jansen, *Kolonialismus*, 102 and 126; and Reinhard, *Geschichte Der Europäischen Expansion, Band 4: Dritte Welt Afrika*, 204.

25 Young, *Postcolonialism*, 162; Peterson, Hunter, and Newell, *African Print Cultures*; Ugboajah, *Mass Communication, Culture, and Society in West Africa*; and Uche, *Mass Media, People, and Politics in Nigeria*.

the course of events.[26] The power of the opposition press, in turn, alarmed the colonial government. In the form of imposing taxation on the local newspaper, the Governor of Lagos Colony exercised control over the freedom of the press, which he saw as a "dangerous instrument" in the hands of the colonized.[27] The High Commissioner of the Protectorate in Southern Nigeria, Ralph Moor, also disapproved of the influence of the Lagos press and moved between 1901 and 1902 for a press act to control the growth of newspapers in his jurisdiction.[28]

As a counter-hegemonic reaction, an intense nationalist campaign developed in Lagos from the 1890s onwards, inspired in part by widespread resentment against the social and political effects of British imperial expansion. Nigeria's political actors frequently used the local press as propaganda organs to disseminate their respective political agendas and for their party or ideological struggles.[29] Pan-African and Black newspapers developed discursive anticolonial networks, (re-) printed colonial critical articles, and commented on and critically contextualized colonial propaganda.[30] Reports on developments on the "colour question" of the United States, or 'ballads' "upon British methods of imperial expansion" were printed.[31] The *Lagos Weekly Record* cited and commented on articles from the *The New York Age* or the *Aborigines Friend*, and reprinted W.E.B. Du Bois' "The Conservation of Races," extending the target group and reach of its anticolonial discourse.[32] It was part of an intense network of counter-hegemonic discourses that was mostly excluded from distribution by leading European press agencies. The power of leading news agencies, journalists, and politicians advocating their discourses as the dominant narrative led to the persistence of colonial, racial, and stereotypical thought patterns which became hegemonic despite being constantly countered. In addition to commentaries and articles in newspapers, in the twentieth century political cartoons played an increasing role in anticolonial discursive struggles, as they critically illustrated and therefore contributed to power-political

26 Omu, "The Dilemma of Press Freedom in Colonial Africa," 279.

27 Omu, "The Dilemma of Press Freedom in Colonial Africa," 279, citation from 288, where it states that press freedom was seen as a "'dangerous instrument in the hands of semi-civilized Negroes'"; Omu refers to C.O. 147/1 H. S, Freeman (Governor Lagos Colony) to Newcastle, December 6, 1862; see also Omu, "The Anglo-African, 1863–65."

28 Omu, "The Dilemma of Press Freedom in Colonial Africa," 290.

29 Olaniyan, "Cartooning Nigerian Anticolonial Nationalism," 124, 125, and 133.

30 See, for example, *The Lagos Weekly Record*, "The New York Chronicle" promoting this new newspaper in the field of "Negro journalism."

31 *The Lagos Weekly Record*, "The Future of the Black Man."

32 *The Lagos Weekly Record*, "Africa for the African" is citing from and commenting on *The New York Age*; *The Lagos Weekly Record*, "The Conversation of Races," July 17, 1897; and *The Lagos Weekly Record*, "The Conversation of Races," July 31, 1897.

struggles. As Olaniyan Omu shows, Nigerian cartoons make dialectical processes of Westernization visible, as Western expressions and characteristics were adapted, and assimilated. But through the reproduction and artistic transmission of visual as well as linguistic 'Western' codes, even counter-hegemonic discourses partly contributed to the reinforcement of imperialism. As Omu puts it, "[i]t was what structured the colonial experience, wherever the colonized subject, even when speaking out against the colonizer, had to use the tools of the latter; it was a process of constructing subjectivity out of subjection, and agency out of subordination."[33]

On January 16, the *Lagos Weekly Record* republished a lengthy article from the *Aborigines' Friend* more than 2,000 words long, harshly criticizing colonial rule: "Whether this European rule is excusable or justifiable, whether nations calling themselves civilized have any good warrant for forcing, what they call civilization upon savage races, for seizing their lands and making servants of them is a question by itself."[34] Preceding this article, the newspaper printed an article on the "Reported Shooting of British Officials at Benin." It was referring to the events that occurred in January before the Benin invasion and which had been used by the colonial forces as justification for the British overthrow of Benin in February.[35] This presentation of the invasion against Benin, which was received globally mostly framed by colonial propaganda, shows the *Lagos Weekly Record's* editors offering an extensive critical contextualization of the event which for the author "illustrates the imperiousness generally displayed by the British official in his attitude towards the native African ruler, and is an indication also of the contempt and disregard in which he holds him and in nine cases out of ten is at the bottom of most troubles arising in Africa." Such critiques of current, disruptive events were often framed by articles articulating a general criticism of British imperial expansion politics and the strategies of foreign domination applied in West Africa as the reprint from the *Aborigines' Friend* further shows:

> So long as they [local middlemen] are serviceable and convenient or necessary as intermediaries for the trade with the interior which is nearly all that English exploiters of West Africa care about and are anxious to enlarge, they are humoured. So soon as they are found troublesome they are, trampled on, and their savage ways, from which we have done little or nothing to convert them, are made excuses for the trampling. This, in brief, is the meaning and method of nearly every one of the dozens of 'little wars' that we have been waging in West Africa for years past.[36]

33 Olaniyan, "Cartooning Nigerian Anticolonial Nationalism," 124, 125, and 133.
34 *The Lagos Weekly Record*, "The Extension of British Rule in Africa."
35 *The Lagos Weekly Record*, "Reported Shooting of British Officials at Benin."
36 *The Lagos Weekly Record*, "The Extension of British Rule in Africa."

With these reports in local newspapers, anticolonial voices in Lagos could educate and raise critical awareness in the broader reading public by disseminating critical analyses and by deconstructing colonial acts, the accompanying colonial propaganda, and its application of strategies of justification distributed by the British press and press agencies globally. While most Euro-American newspapers framed the so-called "punitive expedition against Benin" as a success, the reports in the *Lagos Weekly Record* mostly put the colonial operations against Benin in a different light.[37] Its critical analyses of the colonial press discourse are thus a public disclosure of propagandistic representations, exposing linguistic phenomena, racist framings, and the stereotypes used. The *Lagos Weekly Record* becomes remarkably clear in its critique of colonial atrocities happening in Benin in an article titled "The Capture of Benin City." Here, the hope is expressed that the so-called "Benin and Niger affairs" will end "these expeditionary incidents in West Africa," stating that "commercial greed is at the bottom of these aggressive and oppressive operations against natives." It claims that colonial merchants following their commercial enterprises are supplied by the tools of the missionaries, stating that the interventions of the colonial government were leading to "the native being bombarded with shot and shell and his country laid bare to be rampaged as will by the mercenary evangelist and cupidious merchant." British colonial propaganda with its typical tropes is sharply exposed in the following passage: "The African is unhappily made the victim of missionary adventure and commercial enterprise. The missionary in order to give effect and zest to his adventure begins by representing the native as a criminal of the deepest dye whose only occupation is to indulge in orgies of human blood and sacrificial rites. Such embellished stories add piquancy to his missionary reports and help to fill the coffers from which he draws his pay."[38]

5 (Dis)Continuities and the Language of the Other

On the linguistic level, Louis-Jean Calvet claims, colonialism creates a field of exclusions in two ways: the exclusion of local language as well as the exclusion of the speakers.[39] As Walter Mignolo puts it, "[t]he magic trick was to make the own geo and body politics of knowledge, successfully disappear and to make it forgotten that modernity as a historical epoch is told by figures who inhabit it and who can

37 War propaganda and colonial terminology were in some cases adapted by anticolonial Lagos newspapers.

38 *The Lagos Weekly Record*, "The Capture of Benin City."

39 Calvet, *Die Sprachenfresser*, 54.

speak. . . ."[40] Discourses and "dispositifs," actors, institutions, and material carriers of discourse, like the press, reinforce constellations of power and facilitate the reproduction of a linguistic suprastructure.[41] The African continent became a surface onto which were projected the fantasies of others, of it as a 'miracle continent,' as a source of barbarism that returns civilized countries to their primordial state, where "[d]ifference is expressed as degeneration."[42] Regarding self-justification and presentation, in dictatorships control of representation is often considered more important than the control of ideology.[43] The decisive colonial battle might not be won with technical superiority, but primarily by planting ideas of human progress in the collective imaginary of others.[44] Part of these implemented ideas are stereotypes, which are, following Homi K. Bhabha, "a complex, ambivalent, contradictory mode of representation, as anxious as it is assertive." The difference inherent in colonial discourse is that it is "an apparatus of power" and "[i]ts predominant strategic function is the creation of a space for a 'subject peoples' through the production of knowledges in terms of which surveillance is exercised and a complex form of pleasure/ unpleasure is incited."[45] Ambivalent double standards effectively produce and maintain oppressive structures. A central mechanism of imperial difference and generating assertive discourses functions by producing 'truths' in discourse, acting as if what is said corresponds to the description of what is said. On this level of linguistic oppression and mass distribution of persuasion, the exclusion of dissident participation in the form of statements and counter-narrations from the ones talked about, are key strategies in the successful imposition of supposed truths and the enforcement of a discursive hegemony. While excluded from a subjectivized discourse, the act of analysis and deconstruction of the 'other discourse,' which are often applied strategies in discursive struggles and war propaganda are then used as counter-hegemonic strategies of revolt and a form of discursive self-defense for those 'oppressed bodies' made bodyless.[46] Its discursive arena is mainly that of public discourse where the deconstruction of fictions is juxtaposed against the construction of supposed truths that are both distributed widely. Public discourse is the location where topics can be publicly addressed and criticized, and where public meaning can be shaped and influenced.

40 Mignolo, *Epistemischer Ungehorsam*, 113 (translation mine).

41 Calvet, *Die Sprachenfresser*, 51 and 62; see also Sarasin, "Diskurstheorie und Geschichtswissenschaft," 37; and Foucault, *Dispositive der Macht*, 119–120.

42 Cited by Oyěwùmí, *African Gender Studies*, 3; Sarr, *Afrotopia* 9 and 10; and Mignolo, *Epistemischer Ungehorsam*, 191.

43 Sasse, "Unsere Bührle-Welt." Sasse refers to Arendt, *Wahrheit und Lüge in der Politik*, 1968.

44 Sarr, *Afrotopia,* 13–14.

45 Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 70.

46 Mignolo, *Epistemischer Ungehorsam*, 132; Klemperer, *LTI*, 19 (translation mine); and Oyěwùmí, *African Gender Studies*, 5.

Closely linked to the idea of giving the oppressed and silenced a voice, and acting as a correcting 'balancing pole,' journalism and the fight for press freedom are consequently crucial for the defense of self-esteem and democratic principles. In such a positively connotated reading of counter-hegemonic discourses, these forms of protest can be seen as forms of political participation and emancipation, enhancing freedom, and challenging hegemonic processes or threats to democracy.[47]

6 Creating Solidarities and Discursive Self-Defense in Counter Hegemonic Narratives

Decolonial subversion is according to Walter Mignolo a project of epistemic decoupling in the realm of the social: a decolonization of thought means exchanging not only the content but also "the terms of discourse, the *shift* in the geography of reason. . . ."[48] Understanding the 'decolonial overthrow' begins with the decolonization of the epistemic, a liberation from imperial categories of thought, the separation, detachment, and disengagement from the tyranny of the 'colonial matrix.' Mignolo established the "colonial matrix of power" as a reference point for the coloniality of power that rests on three pillars: cognition (epistemology), understanding or apprehension (hermeneutics), and perception (aisthesis).[49] Deconstructive anticolonial newspaper reports, such as those from Lagos on the Benin incidents of 1897, disrupt the exclusionary scheme and disenchant the propagandistic subjectification processes. They reveal how the subjects become witnesses and spectators to a discursive construction, and, while observing, deliver an analytical critique at the same time. The histories and memories of coloniality, the wounds and narratives of humiliation are the points of reference for political-epistemic decolonial projects and their ethics.[50] As seen in the Lagos press, protests are not only rational accounts where participants have something material to gain. Beside neutral and objective reporting, emotional statements and rage are commonly used as a productive force to advance freedom from oppression. Hugo Canham invites us to

47 Canham, "Theorising Community Rage for Decolonial Action," 4. Power and freedom of the press are a recurring topic in Nigerian newspapers in the 1970s and 1980s, as, for example, in *The Nigeria Standard*, "Let's Have a Virale Press," by Emma Agbegir, citing the Federal Commissioner for Information, Mr. Ayo Ogunlade, calling the Nigerian press the fourth estate of the realm of power.

48 Mignolo, *Epistemischer Ungehorsam*, 105 (translation mine; emphasis in original).

49 Mignolo, *Epistemischer Ungehorsam*, 50, 54, 66, and 70.

50 Mignolo, *Epistemischer Ungehorsam*, 79.

think about whether the expression of community rage provides an opportunity to work towards a collective decolonization. Rage, defined as an affective response, arises as a consequence of people's limits to 'perceived' oppression and inequality, where protest or violence "entails disruption, disorder, and unsettling of the status quo."[51] Strategic emotional involvement, the production of suspicion, differences, hostility, and anger were all applied by Lagos and British press coverage to create solidarities, contributing to a framework of injustice serving colonial propagandistic purposes. Such creations of solidarities are regarded as crucial for creating networks and mobilizing collective action, as they transform and structure individual aims or grievances into shared problems, and turn anger into a collective emotion. The often-applied strategy of constructing sensibilities and generating moral shock is a rhetorical and performative method to draw people into participation in such collectives.[52] Discursive arenas and networks like the restitution movement offer an effective form of social embeddedness for emotions like "community rage at sedimented oppression" performed in collectives.[53]

7 Consuming the Benin Bronzes: 1977 and the Making of an Emblem

Discourse research tends to aim for the bottom of discourses and the first citing of terms. The origin of the discourses on the Benin Bronzes in a global public context can be found in 1897 when the objects were dispossessed as war booty following the British invasion of the kingdom of Benin. In the course of 1897, the discursive 'career' of the Benin Bronzes encompassed a wide range of processes of semantic attribution. Global prominence on a mass scale appropriated these objects as icons of twenty-first-century restitution discourse. The origin of the process of the 'iconization' of the Benin Bronzes can be identified in the Nigerian public discourse circulating in the second half of the twentieth century, and especially in the context of the communication campaign of the Festac '77 festival, when a certain Benin object, the "Queen Idia Mask" was chosen as an emblem of this Nigerian festival held in Lagos in 1977 (see Fig. 1). With this communication strategy – reproducing and distributing the mask as an icon of the festival *en*

51 Canham, "Theorising Community Rage for Decolonial Action," 2, 3, and 5.

52 Canham, "Theorising Community Rage for Decolonial Action," 2, 3, and 8; and Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans, "The Social Psychology of Protest," 893 and 894.

53 Canham, "Theorising Community Rage for Decolonial Action," 1.

masse in public spaces, combined with moral claims on the restitution of this bronze from the British Museum on public and political stages – the Benin Bronzes became a 'discursive entity,' an icon of the early struggles for the restitution of art and culture from colonial contexts, a status that they have held in the restitution discourse ever since. Especially in contemporary discourses on the restitution of objects dislocated in colonial times, the Benin Bronzes are omnipresent as both symbol and argument, their core message being at once explicit and implicit. The successful implementation of the Benin mask as an emblem of the festival was based on the context of the ambivalence and polysemy of a (post-)colonial discourse, effectively instrumentalized to promote and make visible a discourse on restitution which had gained public awareness in the 1950s in Nigeria. From the twentieth century onwards, the restitution discourse had increasingly become a center of decolonial struggles; the discourse on looted and retained objects in the context of colonial violence presented an especially tangible topos for a symbolic condensation of a wide range of discourses about coming to terms with those legacies of (post-)colonialism, which (re-)produced, left, and maintained immaterial and material gaps, ruptures, oppressions, asymmetrical relationships, and dependencies.

8 Discourse Control through the Production of Successful Icons and Social Collectives

Following their semiotic specification, objects can generally be distinguished into two main categories: commodities, or articles of use, and symbolic objects, which serve as a social code for a meaning or statement.[54] Following this distinction, symbolic objects are especially suitable to communicate and transmit aspects of a culture. While its symbolic status is ascribed and achieved at the same time, icons or emblems have an "identity-forging power," that is even greater than 'ordinary' objects of daily use, carrying with it questions of collective identity at its core.[55] Using the concept of collective symbols, Jürgen Link has drawn particular attention to the important role of these *Kollektivsymbole* as discursive elements that occur in many discourses at a given time and serve as a resource for evidence and explicitness.[56] A collective symbol, Link claims, brings together the most divergent ideological points

54 Habermas, *Geliebte Objekte,* 180–181; following Eco, *Trattato di semiotica generale,* 239.
55 Alexander and Bartmański, "Introduction," 9.
56 Sarasin, *Geschichtswissenschaft und Diskursanalyse*, 35.

of view and the most varied fields of practice together and integrates them.[57] Because of their high cultural reproductive and paraphrastic capacities, collective symbols, including forms of stereotypes, can be used to summarize, repeat, and enact messages or statements. Such collectively generated symbolic systems of meaning or orders of knowledge form people's relations to the world.[58] Beyond rigid structures of categorizations, iconic visuals and objects can be consumed in discourse and gain the status of symbols and commodities at the same time. Consumed within discourse, material or visual objects can make moral values of society tangible, and can thus be understood as collective representations which can communicate meanings, or generate intense forms of emotional identification.[59] When representation is a performance of presentation, then icons, which re-present something, are cultural performers that, under propitious conditions can define and crystallize "cultural cleavages."[60] What Jeffrey C. Alexander, Dominik Bartmański, and Bernhard Giesen call "iconic power," is like Hubert Knoblauch's "topical power," a form of hegemony where the perception of reality is defined by a social group, directing social attention and systems of relevance. Icons act as symbolic markers for topoi which are used repeatedly in communication as markers for what is made relevant in certain target groups, and about what is considered 'true' or 'real' in the context of a shared body of knowledge.[61] The shared discursive use and interaction with objects and topoi mark and signal social identities, norms, and practices, stabilizing social structure, strengthening a sense of community, and symbolizing an affiliation to a larger social category.[62] Interaction with such condensed kernels of collectives of meaning and statements allows members of societies to experience a feeling of participation, control, management, or structurization of experience.[63] By conserving and collecting complex realities, meanings, and attributions, objects thus fulfil a collective memory function.[64] While they make an immediate and sensual reference to abstract concepts and social realities and structures possible, aesthetic and symbolic objects and especially icons are read and responded to in more unreflective

57 Link, "Kollektivsymbolik und Mediendiskurse," 9.

58 Keller, *Diskursforschung*; Koselleck, "Ereignis und Struktur"; Koselleck, *Begriffsgeschichten*; and Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*.

59 Alexander, "Iconic Power and Performance," 25–26; Alexander following Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*.

60 Alexander and Bartmański, "Introduction," 9; and Boehm, "Representation, Presentation, Presence," 16.

61 Knoblauch, "Diskurs, Kommunikation und Wissenssoziologie," 221 and 217.

62 Habermas, *Geliebte Objekte*, 187–188.

63 Alexander and Bartmański, "Introduction," 2, 3; and Habermas, *Geliebte Objekte*, 200.

64 Habermas, *Geliebte Objekte*, 184.

and self-evident ways. Messages conveyed by objects are therefore more difficult to question than those conveyed by language. Following this thesis, icons, symbols, or objects as material or visual carriers of meaning can thus possibly be particularly suited to symbolize and transport generally comprehensible and conscious fundamental social values, discourses, 'truths,' and 'fictions.'[65]

On the basis of such discursive signifiers providing rapid orientation and creating connections and categorizations, agendas can be formed through which the media influence society and guide the reception of the media's consumers.[66] Social differences in consumption indicate that consumer goods are selected for the implications they carry for social status, as the consumed icon is used to express a position or attitude. A freedom to consume is then linked to the freedom to dispose of one's social identity and not to be defined by others.[67] Communicative 'success' is what an icon needs to be 'powerful' or likely consumable. Alexander states that this success, related to iconicity and performative power, depends on the power of design and *mise-en-scène*, the power of (re-)production and distribution, and a 'hermeneutical power' – the understanding and evaluations offered by independent interpretation. A combination of the generic, by typifying, and the unique, by singularizing, enhances the discursive efficacy of the icon.[68] Experienced by its consumers morally, sensually, or aesthetically, objects or icons with inherited symbolic power in turn also generate aesthetic and performative power as they link and interact between surface and depth, the fine and structural fiber of discourses. As such it is a form of aesthetic contact with encoded meanings and the inherited emotional and metaphoric power of the icon that commodifies and objectifies an object, statement, emotion, event, or social reality.[69] Such 'iconic performances' can effectively constitute "international communities of moral indignation and political *outrage*."[70] Their ambivalence and openness to attributions of meaning enable the integration of mutually contradictory statements in their simultaneous representation by a single or collective symbol, which in turn facilitates appropriation as well as ideologization.[71] However, that a (discursive)

65 Alexander and Bartmański, "Introduction," 1; and Habermas, *Geliebte Objekte*, 195–197. Susan Sontag describes the deeper effect of photography in contrast to the nonstop imaginary (television, streaming video, movies) by referring to memory working with still pictures or memory freeze-frames; see Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 22 and 29.

66 Knoblauch, "Diskurs, Kommunikation und Wissenssoziologie," 216, 219, and 220.

67 Habermas, *Geliebte Objekte*, 186 and 187.

68 Alexander, "Iconic Power and Performance," 27–28.

69 Alexander and Bartmański, "Introduction," 1–3, 7.

70 Alexander and Bartmański, "Introduction," 8.

71 Habermas, *Geliebte Objekte*, 197 and 199; and McCracken, *Culture and Consumption*, 69.

battle can be fought at all in a three-act 'veni vidi vici,' presupposes, as Reinhart Koselleck claims, certain forms of domination, the technical disposal of natural conditions, as well as a manageable friend-foe situation.[72] An example of this shall be shown in the following section.

Fig. 1: The ivory mask of the Queen Idia in *The Nigeria Standard* newspaper.[73]

9 Festac '77 and the Making of an Emblem

> It is, we are told, to confirm and reaffirm to the world that black people have a culture and that they are proud of it. If culture were to be considered as a weapon for defence against the whites' onslaught surely you do not win a war merely by telling the enemy that you too, have a weapon and are proud of it. You shoot with it and kill. Could it be said therefore, that FESTAC will help to make black cultures shooting cultures? . . . In other words the appropriate direction is not to hold ineffectual dance festivities while back in our nation-states we remain outposts of European and American systems. It is self deluding for any country to go to Lagos and celebrate the triumph of black culture when back home the same country has failed in the battle against cultural or even economic imperialism. Even Europe must be having a

72 Koselleck, "Ereignis und Struktur," 563 and 564, "(discursive)" was added by the author.
73 *The Nigeria Standard*, "Festac Shines On." The photo was taken by the author in the National Archives of Nigeria, Ibadan.

> field day of laughter at a man who takes pleasure at his acrobatic abilities and goes away dancing for a month only to return home and be caught up in the trappings of European civilization.[74]

The Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture, Festac '77, was the follow-up event to the First World Festival of Negro Arts in Dakar in 1966. These events embodied postcolonial modernism in Africa, from mid-century onward, and were inspired by Black and African projects like the new negro movement, Negritude, or the Jamaican art movement.[75] According to Nigeria's then Head of State, General Obasanjo, the goal of the major month-long event was to "recover the origins and authenticity of African heritage" through conferences, exhibitions, concerts, dance, and theater performances.[76] But the event was accompanied by massive public critical disputes on several levels. *The Sunday Times of Zambia* pointed to the hypocrisy, ineffectiveness, or inappropriateness of such cultural events against the backdrop of the hegemony of European and American imperial systems. Especially in Nigeria, the organization of an event closely linked to a disputed military regime devouring millions of dollars met strong criticism in the light of increasing social divisions in the country due to social inequality and poverty.[77] Nigeria was able to host such an extravagant and costly mass event due to the oil deposits that brought the state rapid economic growth in the 1970s and thus signaled its position as a major player on the global capitalist stage.[78] This "Petro Naira" allowed the organizers of the multi-million dollar event to build a national festival theater and invite prominent guests, such as the President of Senegal, Léopold Sédar Senghor, the Director-General of UNESCO, Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, and pop stars such as Stevie Wonder and Miriam Makeba.[79] Fueled by an "oil boom

74 *The Sunday Times of Zambia*, "What Did the Lagos Festival Achieve?"

75 Nzewi, "Mapping Pan-African Artistic Modernism at FESTAC '77," 151; and Chimurenga, *FESTAC '77*, 91.

76 Apter, "The Pan-African Nation," 441; for the quote by General Olusegun Obasanjo, Nigeria's then Head of State and Festac '77's Grand Patron, during the official opening ceremony, see *West Africa*, "No Title," January 24, 1977, 172.

77 *The Nigeria Standard* countered the criticism of the festival expressed by many newspapers; see Aliyu, "Irresponsible Journalism," 4.

78 This critical introductory statement by *The Times of Zambia* should be seen in the context of the oil price shock in 1973; Albeit belated, Zambia was hit hard by the oil crisis in mid-1974 and was forced to take out a loan with the IMF (International Monetary Fund) of over 62 million 'Special Drawing Rights', what the IMF's unit of account is called, with relatively hard repayment modalities. See Kreienbaum, "Der verspätete Schock," 622, 623, and 628.

79 Apter, "The Pan-African Nation," 441; Monroe, "Festac 77 - The Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture," 35; Savoy, *Afrikas Kampf um seine Kunst*, 84 and 85; and *The Nigeria Standard*, "Super Show of Stevie Wonder."

and cultural fantasia," the festival was accompanied by a massive advertising campaign including brand production and promotion of the festival's symbol, an ivory mask from the Benin Bronze stock.[80]

The "commodification of culture" in the context of Festac '77, took place not only in the context of "fast capitalism" at the National Theater in Lagos.[81] It was a commodification through which culture was not only realized in the form of an event, where performances, colloquiums, music, and arts were rendered consumable, but also through the promotion of the Benin mask as the festival's brand. The large-scale communication strategy that positioned the ivory mask as a ubiquitous trademark against the backdrop of debates around restitution at the social, media, and political levels, shifted the value of the Benin Bronzes and added to it the semantic attribution of a consumable icon, moving it into the status of a commodity. With the decision to use the so-called "Queen Idia Mask" as the festival's brand, the organizers of Festac '77 had chosen a symbol visually charged with an emotionally loaded history and meaning, condensing decades of struggles around the restitution of African art dispossessed as loot in colonial times, including anti- and postcolonial movements of solidarity addressing ongoing oppression, degradation, and inequality in mostly pan-African contexts.[82] The chosen symbol was one of the many thousands of Benin Bronzes looted from the Kingdom of Benin in 1897 and scattered around the world, where they ended up in private and public collections. Like many other looted objects, the mask had been brought to the British Museum in London, and despite being claimed by Nigerian actors, the restitution of the highly valued and disputed object was rejected by the museum. Embodying widely circulated restitution discourses as part of broader postcolonial struggles, the status of the mask was beyond that of an advertising trademark. It was the successful implementation of a visualization of a political and social statement in a recorded history which had the ability to capture and form collective solidarities and identification processes over a long period.

10 Restitution Discourses and the Benin Bronzes

The ivory mask used as Festac's symbol had already been brought into the spotlight in 1966 as an illustration for the cover of a 40-page special edition titled "Our Cultural Heritage" of *Nigeria Today*. On the occasion of the "First World Festival

80 Apter, *The Pan-African Nation*, 2.
81 Apter, "The Pan-African Nation," 442.
82 For more textual and illustrative insights into Festac '77, see Chimurenga, *FESTAC '77*.

of Negro Arts" the magazine addressed colonial theft of Nigerian works of art and their significance as historical and identity-forming testimonies of cultural history. While important works of classical African art, including some Benin Bronzes, were exhibited as part of the Dakar festival, the photograph of the mask on the cover of the widely circulated magazine drew attention to the object's absence from the exhibition.[83] In 1958, another such Benin mask had been sold in the United Kingdom for £20,000 and shortly thereafter exhibited in New York, whereupon Chief Omo Osagie, parliamentary secretary in the Nigerian Ministry of Finance, had appealed in strong language to the British government to buy back the ivory mask or pay 20,000 British pounds to the Benin Divisional Council, the local government of Benin: "I must point out that the mask and many others which were great works of Benin art were stolen by the British in 1897, when the punitive expedition occupied Benin. I accuse the British of stealing and in order to redeem the good name of the nation which is fair and just – they must repurchase the mask."[84] Public statements like these prominently raised the profile of the mask and thus its symbolic capital as an icon of restitution. The decision of the Festac Committee and the Nigerian artist Erhabor Emokpae to choose the ivory mask as the symbol of Festac '77 built on just such intense discussions on the restitution of African cultural assets especially recognizable in Nigerian discourses from the 1950s onwards.

The impact and distribution of these discursive struggles were reflected and enhanced not only in public discourses via print media, but also in visual discourses, at events, and in debates on political and cultural levels.[85] Following the decision to use the "Queen Idia Mask" as a symbol for the festival, the Nigerian side used it as leverage and requested the British Museum to return it or make it available on loan. Accompanying efforts extended to the political level of international organizations, but also diplomatic restraint did not yield any advantage.[86] Unaffected by UNESCO resolutions and the political pressure accompanying the insistent

83 Malaquais and Vincent, "Three Takes and a Mask," 53; and Savoy, *Afrikas Kampf um seine Kunst*, 18.

84 F.I.S. News, "Chief Omo Osagie Asks Britain to Return Ivory Mask."

85 For example, at the Pan-African Festival in Algiers in 1969; on the level of the International Council of Museums by the General Assembly in Grenoble in 1971; UNESCO in 1973. See, for example, Zwernemann, "Gedanken zur Rückforderung von Kulturgut," 344; Paczensky and Ganslmayr, *Nofretete will nach Hause*, 132; and Malaquais and Vincent, "Three Takes and a Mask," 53.

86 Nigeria presented a resolution to authorize the Director-General of UNESCO to appeal to the British government to return the mask in time for the Festac Festival in January 1977; see UNESCO, 19C/Resolutions 4.127, 4.128, 47–48. See also M'Bow, "A Plea for the Return of an Irreplaceable Cultural Heritage to Those Who Created It," 4f.; M'Bow, "Address by Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, Director General of UNESCO"; Ganslmayr, "Wem gehört die Benin-Maske?"; and Savoy, *Afrikas Kampf um seine Kunst*, 8.

requests from the Nigerian festival committee, which were heeded and received globally, the British Museum still refused to cooperate over a loan or return. Rumors in the public press indicated that the British Museum had considered loaning the mask for a high fee, and that even Nigeria's willingness to pay did not lead to a loan or restitution.[87] In the wake of the British Museum's refusal to return the mask, the *Nigerian Observer* quoted Oba Akenzua II in calling on all Nigerian journalists and newspapers to join the "crusade" to recover all Nigerian artworks that adorned foreign museums. The lengthy article ends with a description of the events of 1897 and the looting and distribution of the Benin Bronzes: "Most of them were distributed in auctions between the British Museum, the Pitt Rivers Museum, Farnham, Dorset, and the Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin; and these museums issued the first European publications on the art of Benin: all weighty quasi-scientific, academic illustrated catalogs: expensive and of small circulation."[88] As in 1897, authors used

Fig. 2: "Nigeria's looted historic carvings was recovered at the cost of ₦800,000. / The fakes or the original?".[89]
Fig. 3: "Nigeria moves to regain looted carvings / Another Festac on the way?".[90]

87 See *The Washington Post*, "The Controversial Mask of Benin."
88 Onyemem, "Brass Mask's Real!," 1.
89 *National Concord*, "'Kabiyesi'," June 21, 1980. The photo was taken by the author in the Archives of the National Museum, Lagos.
90 *National Concord*, "'Omoba," June 24, 1980. The caricature was created by the Nigerian comic artist Tayo Fatunla, who worked for Nigerian and British newspapers; see Fisher, "Tayo Fatunla – Nigerian Cartoon Characters with Points of View"; and Jimoh, *Interview with Tayo Fatunla*. The photo was taken by the author in the Archives of the National Museum, Lagos.

newspapers to publicly criticize and deconstruct the West's production of distorting representations and the exclusion of others from discourses – a critique of the politics and social relations of knowledge and its production. As Nigerian cartoonists had used these controversies over returning the Benin Bronzes in their illustrations in the 1980s, it can be assumed that the discourse was still widely known and decodable by the broader public and readers of these Nigerian newspapers (see Figs. 2 and 3).

11 Symbolizing Controversies

Following the failure of negotiations, the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Information commissioned artists from Benin City to create a replica of the mask and distributed it abundantly in public spaces. This mass distribution of the Festac symbol in newspapers, booklets, or as material copies in urban spaces was a deliberately applied strategy referring to the British Museum's retention of the original, revealing the arbitrary perpetuation of (post-)colonial oppression (see Figs. 4 and 5). The controversy between Nigeria and Great Britain on the reclaimed and retained Benin Bronze, combined with the massive communication strategy led to the dispute being widely circulated by the international media. The absent original of the ivory mask had thus amplified the impact of the discourse and the symbolism it had gained. With the mass dissemination of the iconic mask in public space, the ongoing injustice, and continuation of colonial dependencies had gained a representative face. The mask brought the image of a plundering Europe into the sharp focus of a broad public and under the gaze of the watching eyes of the Queen Mother of a past Benin kingdom.[91]

The iconic symbol and discourse first gained notoriety and reached a broad international public when the interest of the global press was aroused. According to an article in the US newspaper *The Washington Post* in 1977, the festival's emblem was omnipresent during the event: "The lady with the brooding hollow eyes – the ivory mask from Benin – is everywhere: on bronze brooches, on toilet paper rolls, on street lamp decorations, and in copies in the National Museum of Nigeria."[92] Titled "The Controversial Mask of Benin," the article points to and discusses in detail the discursive struggles between Nigeria and Great Britain on the claimed restitution and loan of the Benin Bronze, long after its deposition in 1897 in the British Museum. The ivory mask from Benin as a symbol for the festival,

91 Ekpo, "Culture and Modernity since FESTAC '77," 51.

92 See *The Washington Post*, "The Controversial Mask of Benin."

embedded in a debate around the request for restitution or loan that was covered by print media globally, thus allowed the mask to become a long-lasting collective symbol and a discursive entity of ongoing struggles with postcolonial legacies and discourses around the restitution of looted art and cultural objects stolen during the colonial period.

12 Producing a Hegemonic Visual Discourse with the Benin Mask

The several discursive controversies around the Festac event embedded in anticolonial struggles and restitution movements enhanced the effectiveness of the symbolic discourse and reached a wide target group as it covered a multiplicity of disputed discourses and actor groups. More than an instrumentalization of art to political ends, the communication campaign managed to form wide-ranging and long-lasting social solidarities by appropriating and re-interpreting the degrading tools and strategies of the oppressors. With this recreation, production, and enhancement of the Benin Bronzes as a collective symbol for a decolonial claim, the strategy and mask itself became a hegemonic tool of discursive self-defense.

The successful process of turning the Benin Bronzes into a powerful emblem illustrates the previously mentioned three main pillars from which the power of icons supposedly derives: the power of (1) aesthetics and staging; (2) the ability to be reproduced and distributed; and (3) a reception, interpretation, and understanding on hermeneutic levels.[93] It could thus be seen as an "inner nexus of representation, presentation, and presence [that] is necessarily a science of performance and experience" and serves as a basis for discursive potency.[94] The minimalistic appearance and reduction of the mask into a pictogram-like sign, aesthetically pleasant and recognizable, made it possible for it to be distributed *en masse*, communicating a meaningful message that was easily readable. The artistic design of the mask, the formal properties of the material object as well as the aesthetic staging of its image as a mass reproduced representation, led to the production of a durable and reproducible aesthetic experience, and of an iconic discursive emblem that became more well-known and meaningful through distribution.[95]

93 Alexander, "Iconic Power and Performance," 27–28.
94 Boehm, "Representation, Presentation, Presence," 22.
95 Alexander, "Iconic Power and Performance," 26.

Figs. 4 and 5: Two examples of the mass circulation of the Festac '77 symbol as stampings in *The Nigeria Standard* newspaper.[96]

13 Reception, Interpretion, and Understanding: Naming and Subjectification

It was not only the aesthetic and staging effect of the symbol that in turn invited the public press to dramatize statements about and reproductions of it. The iconic effect was enhanced by the use of a singularized and individualized mask showing a face, and carrying a name, transporting cultural values and history by depicting and representing a woman, the Queen Mother, and therefore an object closely linked to the King of Benin, who was main target of the personal and degrading colonial discourses in 1897.[97] As *The Washington Post* called the mask as "the lady with the brooding hollow eyes" that is everywhere, the US-American magazine *Ebony* also used its 11-page long Festac report to historically contextualize the narration animating the object, staring down at the public:

96 On the left: *The Nigeria Standard, "Festac Kicks Off Today"*; on the right: *The Nigeria Standard, "Here Comes Festac Durbar."* The photos were taken by the author in the National Archives of Nigeria, Ibadan.

97 The mask was originally worn by the Benin king around his waist during annual celebrations. At least five such masks are known, of which three depict 'Queen Mothers' of the Benin kingdom. In addition to the mask in the British Museum, another mask is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and one in the Lindenmuseum Stuttgart. See Paczensky and Ganslmayr, *Nofretete will nach Hause*, 133. For personified degradings in the press, see, for example, *The Boston Daily Globe*, "After Perfidious King Benin"; see also *The Morning News*, "A Royal Monster."

> Golden replicas of a 16th-century ivory mask stare from hundreds of lampposts and public buildings in Lagos, Nigeria. Resting in the sweltering heat of the city, mystical, enigmatic, these copies of the mask – once worn by the kings of Benin – are official symbols of the second World Festival of Black and African Arts and Culture.[98]

Of these thousands of Benin objects, the "Queen Idia Mask," was the only Benin bronze given a publicly and widely known name, identity, and history.[99] In an article in the *Nigerian Observer* in 1956, the *Oba*, the King of Benin, Akenzua II, had publicly identified the ivory mask as a representation of the Queen Mother (*Iy'Oba*) Idia, whose son Oba Esigie had ruled the Kingdom of Benin from 1504 to 1550.[100] Named objects, as Bjarne Rogan points out, become "invested with more meaning than most artefacts."[101] Naming an object requires and enhances its recognizability and individualization, and, through singularization, the object becomes identifiable and more valuable in the economy of discourse.[102] As the mask in question depicts a deceased person, the signified simultaneously serves as a signifier, one that will not enter the realm of the forgotten.[103] As a result of this 'provenance research' conducted by the Nigerian owners, the naming, and attribution of meaning as a representation of the *Iy'Oba*, the mask was no longer perceived by the interested Nigerian public as an anonymous object, but as a representative of concrete ancestral history.[104] Followed by Chief Omo Osagie's appeal in the form of memorable rhyme two years after the naming of the mask, the symbolic and personified object had been publicly moved into the colonial context of the injustice of the violent suppression and looting of Benin City, and thus the Benin Bronzes became increasingly known and named as looted property. The enforcement of ambivalence was an important driver in the production of attention. The already well-known "Queen Idia Mask" with its high visual rec-

98 Bénédicte Savoy describes that the fashion magazine *Ebony* had since its foundation in 1945 formulated strengthening the self-esteem of Afro-Americans as its explicit goal; see Savoy, *Afrikas Kampf um seine Kunst*, 95; Poinsett, "Festac '77 – Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture Draws 17,000 Participants to Lagos," 33; and see *The Washington Post*, "The Controversial Mask of Benin."

99 At the beginning of the twentieth century, one of the Benin masks was named the "Seligman mask" – a Western attribution named after a Western trader and mostly used in specialized circles.

100 Bodenstein, "Queen Idia on the Market," 44; Onyemem, "Brass Mask's Real!"; and Savoy, *Afrikas Kampf um seine Kunst*, 18 and 207.

101 Rogan, "On the Custom of Naming Artefacts," 58.

102 Habermas, *Geliebte Objekte*, 190 and 191; Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things"; and Rogan, "On the Custom of Naming Artefacts," 54, 55, 57, and 58.

103 Boehm, "Representation, Presentation, Presence," 21.

104 Bodenstein, "Queen Idia on the Market," 44.

ognition value, was on the one hand made consumable as a mass replicated public good and distributed freely in public space, while, on the other hand, it was guaranteed to function as an individualized and personified thing by having a widely known name. With its surplus of historical narration and biography, the mask with its symbolic status functioned as a structuring element of a particular (hi)story and an iconic event, playing a powerful and performative role. Following Rogan's notion, that the naming of an artifact is a form of poetic license,[105] the naming of the Benin Bronze and the public distribution of this knowledge constituted an act of discursive and symbolic appropriation. It claimed an entitlement as an object existing only in the context of ongoing colonial retention. In turn, the act of naming an object expressed the vital importance of the artifact to its owner – it could be interpreted as "an attempt to make this dependency a bit less insecure, as a strategy to gain control over physical surroundings by a symbolic act."

As visual representations allow a repeated performance, to be turned back to and be reminded of the meanings attributed, the possibly mutual act of the production of meaning captures the idea of 'what is looked at looks back.'[106] As Bhabha puts it:

> In the objectification of the scopic drive there is always the threatened return of the look; in the identification of the imaginary relation there is always the alienating other (or mirror) which crucially turns its image to the subject; and in that form of substitution and fixation that is fetishism there is always the trace of loss, absence. To put it succinctly, the recognition and disavowal of "difference" is always disturbed by the question of its re-presentation or construction.[107]

The possibility of a repetition of a performed visualization and subjectification consequently allows its inversion, re-interpretation, and utilization by the ones looked at. As in 1977, the "hollow eyes" of the mask on lamps all over the city looked down at the people on the street. The inverted gaze was not only produced on a meta-symbolical level of an image that is looked at and that looks back at its observers, the process is vividly expressed with the dramatically staged mask, a face, which indeed can be made to look back at the ones who reclaim it, and the ones who subjectified and retained it, thus becoming a hortatory memorial and *Mahnmal* in public space. The mass production and distribution of the replicated mask inverted the roles of seeing and being seen. When, as Roland Barthes ar-

105 Rogan, "On the Custom of Naming Artefacts," 48.

106 Alexander, Bartmanski, and Giesen, *Iconic Power*, 3; and Boehm, "Representation, Presentation, Presence," 16 and 23.

107 Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 81.

gues, the process of objectivation through the voyeuristic gaze is experienced as a small death, then the inversion of this gaze can be read as a rebellion against and reversion of this objectification, subjectification, and fetishization.[108] Choosing this mask as symbol was a re-appropriation and re-interpretation of a racialized and exoticized object as well as a representation and production of the discursively subjectified. It is the ambivalence of the stereotype and the fetish, of the desire and fear, that was appropriated in the Nigerian strategy of using the Benin Bronzes as a symbol, and thus raising awareness of a public claim to restitution and of colonial atrocities. With the iconization of the Benin Bronzes, the objects became a subject of a "politicization of the means of representation," and by choosing this 'African mask' symbolizing the stereotypical fetish of Western attributions as festival symbol, the communication strategy successfully fed a "narrative economy of voyeurism and fetishism," satisfying both the power/pleasure economies.[109] The surface of the ivory mask feeds both the colonial fantasy and the "appetite of the imperial eye."[110]

13 Re-Appropriating and Consuming Aestheticized Collective Symbols

The re-interpretation and use of the Benin Bronzes as an icon in communication strategies beginning in the 1960s is an example of their re-appropriation from a Euro-American canon of high (African) culture and art into a Nigerian discourse and commodity circle. The Western discursive appropriation through classification of the Benin Bronzes as 'high art' was thus turned upside down when the Benin mask was re-invented and mass distributed as a brand. By bearing the moral anticolonial message of a restitution claim, symbolizing a reaction to past and continuing (post-)colonial atrocities, this strategy of discursive revaluation, reappropriation, and symbolization was amplified. The (im-)material symbolic and symbolized reappropriation of a material object that was appropriated and retained by hegemonic colonial oppressors as a copy, was a successful discursive strategy, simulating and imitating restitution, and putting the object in the rank

108 Dorlin, *Selbstverteidigung*, 202; and Barthes, *Die helle Kammer*, 22.
109 Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 68 and 69.
110 Mercer, "Reading Racial Fetishism," 438.

of simulacres.[111] The 'ivory mask' furthermore refers to the material of which it is made – a resource in high demand in colonial times occasionally used to cover the costs of colonial wars. The recategorization of this Benin ivory carving can therefore be read not only as a reinterpretation of attributed colonial semantics from a canon of Western high art, but also as an openly distributed festival souvenir, tourist art, or pop art. It was thus taken out of a colonial economization cycle, from where a highly demanded and mass plundered material was reread and recast as a mass consumable material and brand product.

The most potent act in this discourse strategy of appropriation and iconization was probably the instrumentalization of the ambivalence of the colonial discourse, the stereotype, and the Western fetish, captured in the Benin ivory mask, an African mask being perhaps the most fetishized object. It can instead be read as a manipulative deployment of the object and its fetishistic character in a discourse that utilizes the voyeuristic colonial gaze and desire, a powerful counter-hegemonic act appropriating exactly the same system that was used to oppress others. The combined distribution of the restitution topoi on political and cultural levels and the visual in the public sphere made the product's propaganda especially effective. The mass distribution of replica, image, and topoi supported the process of appropriation and gaining of control over the restitution discourse and producing a globally received discourse and led *ad absurdum* rejected returns on basis of nation-state boundaries. The restitution topic transgressed its limitation to discussions on retained material objects, becoming included by debates coming to terms with the (post-)colonial past. As an object "enslaved as an icon in the representational space of white male imaginary, historically at the center of colonial fantasy,"[112] through the advertising campaign the icon became translated into a subject of mass consumption in the context of a Nigerian event celebrating "Black and African Culture and Arts." The voyeuristic colonial gaze and the discourse exoticizing and aestheticizing the female ivory face from Benin were used to de-exoticize the object by ascribing to it the status of an icon in a counter-discourse. This ambiguity and tug-of-war over the appropriation of hegemony in discourse are part of what makes this symbol such a communicatively effective and long-lasting icon, one that regained popularity during the restitution discourse in the twenty-first century. The meaningful political anticolonial claims enhanced a collective solidarity, and with the creation of the emblematic status of the Benin Bronzes, a durable symbol for a powerful protest and collective solidarity was

111 See Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*; and Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, 6.

112 Mercer, "Reading Racial Fetishism," 438.

produced. As Dominique Malaquais and Cédric Vincent put it, "Idia was deployed by the Nigerian government to tell a very particular story: The story of a nation destined to act as a beacon for all Black people and as the economic powerhouse of a Global South shorn of its colonial shackles."[113] This production of Queen Idia as a cult figure and a mass symbol combined with appeals on public and political levels, forming collectives, educating people about colonial history, and claiming restitution, led to the discourse on restitution with the Benin Bronzes as its emblem becoming part of a broad decolonial movement in the twenty-first century.

14 Restituting the Benin Bronzes: The Twenty-first-century Restitution Discourse

Following the peak of restitution discourses in the 1970s and 1980s, and its failure to achieve restitution, the public discourse on the retained objects lost its momentum and was only rarely taken up again until the twenty-first century. Fueled by influential Western actors and political decisions, the debate over the return of objects looted in colonial times was revived around 2017 and grew in the years that followed to become a widely known discourse. In recent years, the discourse on the Benin Bronzes and their restitution has thus reached a new peak in public global media discussions, and in 2021 it changed from the metalevel of talking about restitution to action on a wider scale. Waves of announcements of planned restitutions of Benin Bronzes and other reclaimed objects in Euro-American museums and collections were posted, and restitutions were gradually implemented by various states and institutions. On July 1, 2022, the governments of Nigeria and Germany held a signing ceremony for the "unconditional transfer of ownership of 1,130 cultural pieces from the 1897 Benin bronzes" – for Yusuf Maitama Tuggar, Nigeria's Ambassador to Germany, this was a "new era in cultural diplomacy" and set the bar high for the "righting of colonial wrongs."[114]

The twenty-first-century restitution discourse is marked by a global public focus on the iconic Benin Bronzes in terms of content and visual imagery.[115] As vessels containing multiple semantic attributions and embodying value exchange processes, the objects from Benin take on the form of a subjectivized body, "a

113 Malaquais and Vincent, "Three Takes and a Mask," 56.

114 Tuggar, [Tweet on Signing Ceremony in Germany].

115 Regaining and amplifying the Benin Bronzes' emblematic status in this twenty-first century restitution movement, their massive iconic presence overshadows the many narratives concerning other retained and reclaimed objects.

text, a system of signs, to be deciphered, read, and read into," and a "storehouse of inscriptions and messages."[116] The multiple layers of identities and semantic meaning the Benin Bronzes encompass are condensed discursively and visually in their emblematic status. The communication campaign around Festac '77 was the beginning of the transformation of the Benin objects into a consumable pan-African emblem and as valuable memorabilia in public discourse that saw them regain their iconic status in the twenty-first century. The communication strategies of 1977 established the Benin Bronzes' status as durable popular objects and carriers of memory and collective remembering in public space, as material cultural assets close to the status of monuments.[117] With the reestablishment of the objects' iconic status, public space could be played with by these multilayered discursive monuments, performing a useful three-step of material culture, discourse, and memory, where the act of restitution performs as a discursive toppling of monuments. More than just a store of historic and semantic meaning, with their empowering and performative characteristics and as discursive entities and powerful tools, the Benin Bronzes took and still take part in an active manipulation of social reality, forming solidarities, and repositioning identity struggles. While accompanied by mass movements, the symbolic objects enabled the participants of these social movements to encounter a "flow experience" that is strengthening the self-perception and self-esteem of certain social groups.[118] Since the concept of restitution permits the emergence of deterritorialized links and global networks, it confers meaning on a collective reality and allows the "basing and maintaining of an identity despite distance" as well as expressing the "territorial discontinuity" of identity.[119] As plundered and translocated objects, the Benin Bronzes are linked to the vision of belonging to a certain territory, a claimed future return, and a claim for a privileged relationship between "the West and the Rest," or a "new relational ethics," as Felwine Sarr puts it.[120] The iconic objects create global connections, link identities to networks, individuals to collectives, and produce a discursive community that keeps in touch with those objects and maintains rebellion through discourse.

116 Oyěwùmí, *African Gender Studies*; Oyěwùmí citing Grosz, "Bodies and Knowledges," 198.

117 Hahn, *Vom Eigensinn der Dinge*, 47; Hahn referring to Shils, *Tradition*. See also Middleton and Edwards, *Collective Remembering*.

118 Hahn, *Vom Eigensinn der Dinge*, 50; Hahn referring to Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, *The Meaning of Things*, who developed the so-called "flow experience" (a positive mental state of full concentration, a frenzy of creation) as a schematic model.

119 Dufoix, *The Dispersion*, 16.

120 Dufoix, *The Dispersion*, 19; Hall, "The West and the Rest"; and Sarr and Savoy, *The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage*, 39–41.

In premodern European corporeal politics, bodies were punished publicly and spectacularly, when prescriptions for their body's places were violated. While the 1977 restitution discourse was mostly a Nigerian struggle to raise awareness of historic demands, the restitution discourse of the twenty-first century can be read as a show trial of punishment and self-defense against European ethnological museums. This performance of a public spectacle of penalty sees the Benin Bronzes act as an iconic discourse marker, torn between discursive struggles of appropriation, interpretation, and subjectification.[121] The discourse on restitution and even more the act itself are tantamount to a castration of the ethnological museum, as an institutionalized symbol of colonial atrocities.[122] One is inclined to have sympathy for the narration of the finally victorious power from below, the successful anticolonial discourse, telling a desirable fable of the prey chasing the huntsman.[123] But the central figures enforcing the twenty-first-century restitution discourse, which was originally a Nigerian counter-hegemonic restitution discourse, were not the ones who had battled for decades. Instead, it was mainly influential Western actors that pushed forward and appropriated a decolonial discourse.[124]

It is a certain *Zeitgeist* that paves the way for a successful re-enforcement of the restitution discourse and the concept of the restitution of objects dislocated in colonial contexts.[125] The democratization of and access to knowledge challenges traditional perspectives, leading to an increasing demand for distribution, and access to and usage of immaterial and material resources. In the early 2000s, Karl-Heinz Kohl turned to museums to demonstrate their embodiment of a need for a material embodiment of the transcendent under the conditions of secularization. In museums as cult sites of modernity, he stated that the cult of the object was experiencing a surprising return. The public museum counteracts the loss of meaning attributed

121 For public punishments of bodies, see Oyěwùmí, *African Gender Studies*, 4; here citing Scheman, *Engenderings*, 186.

122 On castration, see Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 74; and Freud, *Fetishism*.

123 On the torture of Damien, see Dorlin, *Selbstverteidigung*, 7–12; and Foucault, *Überwachen und Strafen*, 9–12.

124 The starting point of the current restitution debate as mass discourse is mostly linked to the speech by French president Emmanuel Macron in Ouagadougou on the restitution of objects from colonial contexts, and the subsequently ordered restitution report. See, for example, Sarr and Savoy, *The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage*; and Savoy, *Afrikas Kampf um seine Kunst*.

125 In the twenty-first century, it was also the so-called "Gurlitt" case, which was extensively covered in German media, and raised awareness of the topic of looted art and restitution, but in context of National Socialism. In November 2013, the German magazine *Focus* reported on the confiscation of 1,400 artworks in the collection of Hildebrandt Gurlitt; see, for example, Deutscher Bundestag, "Raubkunst und Restitution;" and Oelze and dpa, "Der Fall Gurlitt – Eine Chronologie."

to objects by giving them their own aura.[126] The reversion of this cult is the fertile soil on which the assertiveness of the restitution discourse grew – a changing or absent desire to hoard objects in Western museums justified as a cult or as protective sites of world art. Following Sigmund Freud's fetish concept, if transferred to the restitution discourse on the Benin Bronzes, the desire for the object is satisfied by talking about it, through the discursive struggles played out through it, and no longer in the museum in front of the material object itself. The discourse on the Benin Bronzes is thus a substitute for the missing material object of presentation and restitution. As George J. Sefa Dei and Alireza Asgharzadeh state, "nothing represents the wretched of the earth except for a terrifying lack."[127] The void was given a form of representation as a discursive emblem. This emblematic materialization of these social and cultural gaps is aligned with the restitution discourse as a materialized essence, as an assertive discourse forming with its successful implementation in the wider public domain of pop culture and media discourses an effective symbol for illustrating an anticolonial struggle. As the Benin objects were used as visual images for press reports on restitution claims from formerly colonized states, confronting persistent stereotypical perceptions of African art, their iconic effect and the discourse were amplified by feeding a desire for the ambivalence of the stereotype. With the restitution discourse embedded in broad decolonial movements, the reproduction and distribution of exoticized and fetishized visuals and illustrations gained momentum and, together with the coverage on the Benin Bronzes achieved a new fame through public press reports. Thus, while the Benin Bronzes as a discursive entity and as a perceived 'visual' emblem have become a commodity consumable in public discourses, their symbolic meaning goes beyond a visual satisfaction of desire and enjoyment to a claim for the re-evaluation and re-positioning of powerful discursive actors, targeting social change and equality on the basis of moral values – a demand for a movement away from monopolistic ownership and adherence to materiality, the aura of the original and the fixation on the thing for the purposes of study, towards a "transmateriality," the democratization of access to knowledge, of perception, and enjoyment.[128]

Following global waves of announcements of restitution in 2021, a movement that had lasted for epochs and across centuries seems to have reached a climax and a moment of closure. While as part of advertising strategies products are made to seem "desirable-yet-reachable" as Arjun Appadurai puts it,[129] meaning

126 Kohl, *Die Macht Der Dinge*, 12.

127 Dei and Asgharzadeh, "The Power of Social Theory," 317.

128 Hahn, *Vom Eigensinn der Dinge*, 2015; and Schmidt and Spieß, *Die Kommerzialisierung der Kommunikation*, 78.

129 Appadurai, "Introduction," 55.

that goods are placed in a "pseudo enclaved zone *as if* they were not available to anyone who can pay the price," the act of restitution of objects that were desirable-not-reachable inverts this process. With the fulfillment of the claim, by making the object of desire through restitution finally reachable, the 'advertising' of restitution and its discourse loses its *raison d'être*, and discourse and demands became decelerated. While the effective 'iconization' of the discourse produced a powerful impetus for the debate, with the return of the iconic symbol its effective power is undermined, and the discussion seems to lose its impact. As Dei and Asgharzadeh point out in their theory concerning the need for a "non-essentializing gaze," "[a]ny attempt to subsume the autonomous desires for the emancipation of individuals and groups under a single category such as class struggle can, in and of itself, become an act of colonialism and marginalization, albeit under the banner of fighting oppression."[130] Western appropriation and commodification of critique and discourses are used as central tools to gain control at social and political levels and in highly disputed discourse arenas, where not all parties share the same interests in this specific 'regime of value.' "It is in the interests of those in power to completely freeze the flow of commodities," as Appadurai reminds us in what he describes as a "common paradox, . . . by creating a closed universe of commodities and a rigid set of regulations about how they are to move."[131]

15 Discursive Violence and Subjectification

"From now on, the prey hunts. This fable of the revenge of the powerless, defenseless, and fragile is not a novel of resentment, but a fictional illustration of the historicity of power relations (the prey does not always remain the prey) based on a phenomenology of violence."[132] When the discourse of restitution registered a turning point in 2021, as the very thing that had been struggled for was achieved, it appeared like a fable of the revenge of the oppressed – a discursive illustration with the Benin Bronzes as an icon of the historicity of power relations based on this idea of repelled and adopted colonial violence and shifted hegemony. Critical voices and postcolonial movements have criticized the way the current restitution discourse has been performed and who its dominant actors are. They point to the Western appropriation of anticolonial discourses and strategies, the "colonization of the de-

130 Dei and Asgharzadeh, "The Power of Social Theory," 313.
131 Appadurai, "Introduction," 57.
132 Dorlin, *Selbstverteidigung*, 218–219.

colonial," or to the need for a utopian and more future-oriented thinking to recognize the emotional levels and epistemic violence attached to it.[133] It was repeatedly asserted that Western and institutionalized discourses focused on hegemonic structures that disguised, delayed, and reduced restitution to a matter of a business exchange of commodities between states. This led to a focus on bureaucratization and rationalization that suppressed emotional and utopian approaches. This performance of order and structure conveys security and limits, and guides discourses in sharply drawn lines of institutional or state regulations. Any critical analysis of subjectivation/subjection, Judith Butler writes, includes an account of those ways in which regulatory power holds subjects in subordination. It does so, she continues, by generating and harnessing the desire for continuity, visibility, and space.[134] With the violent act of looting, collecting, and retaining the trophies of the suppressed comes the ongoing alienation and fetishization, the fabrication and representation of asymmetric relational structures. The restitution discourse as part of decolonial struggles exposes and highlights these power relations and dynamics embedded in the production, interrogation, validation, and dissemination of global knowledge and anticolonial struggles.[135] At the same time, with resisting degradation, the discursive struggles and counter-movements themselves are sustaining these dichotomies.[136] Illustrations and narrations of colonial violence, once part of clear colonial propaganda, tend to be perpetuated in current restitution discourses and get blurred in reproductions in the form of anticolonial struggles, as they are reproduced in contextualizations of the restitution discourse in the public space, exhibitions, or press reports. The repetition of detailed narratives of colonial violence, featuring Maxim guns, colonizers, photographs of accumulated loot and

133 Referring here to public claims and critiques made, for example, by Mirjam Brusius, who phrased it on Twitter as "colonization of decolonization"; see Brusius, [Tweet on Colonization of Decolonization]. See also Nana Oforiatta Ayim, who stated that "[t]he restitution debate [is] reinforcing the colonial dynamic w[ith] Western academics, museum directors, etc continuing to talk for & on behalf of us" [Tweet on the Restitution Debate Reinforcing Colonial Dynamic]. See also Hall on the share that feelings as attachments and emotions have in culture, Hall, *Representation*, 2; claims on the inclusion of emotions were made in oral accounts at workshops, for example, by Cornilius Refem Fogha at the Round Table "Plunder in German Togo," January 21, 2022, organized as part of the research project "The Restitution of Knowledge"; or by Sharon Dodua Otoo at the workshop "Restitution – Absolution? Die Benin Bronzen und das Koloniale Erbe," November 8, 2021, at the research center "Hamburg's (post-)colonial legacy."

134 Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*, 29.

135 Dei and Asgharzadeh, "The Power of Social Theory," 304; the authors point to the problem of the concept of the colonial and postcolonial as a signifier of an artificial "break from the colonial past" in the sense of a progression.

136 Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*, 11.

looters, multiplied over years and decades are told under the guise of threatening finger-pointing at the perpetrators of violence or as a strategy of enlightenment regarding the country's own violent past. However, it only consolidates a fixation on a discursively produced victim status, that is repeatedly renewed and codified.[137] The visualizations presented in such interactions "exhaust all the visual possibilities of the technical dispositive," and the means of visual culture, from photographs to drawings illustrating British colonial propaganda, "create exaggerated reality effects" performing simulations, obfuscations, and deceptions.[138] Such campaigns repeat and reproduce violence despite sometimes sincere efforts to enlighten instead of being banal, in trying to avoid colonial apologetic statements and to produce colonial critical perspectives.[139] Those affected by this psychological violence are confronted with the recurring reproduction of and fixation on a victimized status. In such discursive processes of subjectivation, the Benin Bronzes are staged as a victim, torn between discursive struggles, enhancing their othering. Following Butler, "the subject is the effect of power in recoil."[140] Subjection signifies the process of becoming subordinated by power as well as the process of becoming a subject.[141] In the act of opposition to subordination, the subject seems to repeat its own subjugation.[142] Therefore, not only discursive struggles but also (supposed) counter-hegemonic acts themselves may sustain dichotomies and asymmetrical relationships.

Postcolonial movements attack and make supposedly stable and long-established hegemonic structures insecure. The restitution discourse as a target and part of this movement has proven to be especially powerful, as it has been able to attack the heart of the materialization of continuing colonial and hegemonic structures – the identity and *raison d'être* of those museums retaining the reclaimed objects looted in colonial times. Restitution is an effective topos in the presentation of the will-to-power and the fixation on domination regarding the fetishization of power.[143] To sustain, strengthen, and re-establish those hegemonic symbolic, social, and material structures that were attacked by postcolonial movements surrounding the restitution discourses, the re-interpretation of the narrative of restitution was used as a success-

137 In a tweet Nana Oforiatta Ayim criticizes "Action for Restitution to Africa" convened by Dan Hicks as "colonial violence masked as liberal activism even in spaces that are supposedly allied"; see Ayim, [Tweet on Colonial Violence Masked as Liberal Activism].

138 Dorlin, *Selbstverteidigung*, 201.

139 Dorlin, *Selbstverteidigung*, 199–202.

140 Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*, 6; and Dorlin, *Selbstverteidigung*, 200.

141 Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*, 2.

142 Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*, 100.

143 Dussel, *Twenty Theses on Politics*, 33. Following Dussel's theory, the fetishization of power consists of the "will-to-power" as a domination of a majority over the weakest.

ful counteraction. In the restitution discourse and the appropriation of its counter-hegemonic movement, the West can be seen to be paying homage to itself, illustrating its own role as a leading figure in the act of restitution and the worship of this fetish.[144] Even if the act of restitution castrates the ethnological museums, the over 100 year-old postcolonial claim was still successfully translated into a Western act of self-promotion and salvation, countering the counter-discourse by transforming it into a discursive hegemonic monument that acts in the discursive public space like an admonishing and relieving reminder of a violent past that has finally been overcome.[145] The discursive struggle and violent appropriation again results in a narration of dissolution, following the pacifying, civilizing, and limiting of a counter-hegemonic discourse that disturbs the maintenance of asymmetrical hierarchies. As an object of postcolonial discourse, the Benin Bronzes' productive ambivalence is its otherness, the simultaneous state of being both an object of desire and derision, an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity.[146] With these attributions they are a vehicle not only for the restitution discourse but also for the continuation of stereotypical debates spreading, sometimes glorifying, or white-washing colonial narratives, reproducing narrations of suppression and violence. While in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century a Western fetish under the colonial gaze – as it was by the West fetishized object of so-called 'primitive art' –, the symbolized and facsimiled objects were then in the late twentieth century re-interpreted, appropriated, and transformed into a fetishized symbol of an anticolonial discourse, a counter-discourse that requires Western attention, reconstruction, and redemption, to be re-appropriated again by influential Western actors in the contemporary restitution discourse of the twenty-first century. As discursive entities and iconic substitutes of colonial and anticolonial discourses, the Benin Bronzes have been read here as a powerful tool for gaining hegemony. The dialectic of colonialism as Wolfgang Reinhard described it – where the suppressing force at the same time offers the tools for combating it – seems to form an ellipse to become a dialectic of decolonialism, where the tools of the counter-hegemonic actors have been adopted in order to maintain hegemony. Thus, the process is less a linear sequence of colonial to anticolonial, and more of a steady struggle over discourse control through subjectivation, appropriation, and re-interpretation.

144 As Endres notes, in Baudrillard's exact reversal of the Marxist interpretation, it is not that the fetishist denies his own labor and his involvement in the production of the fetish. On the contrary: in the worship of his fetish he primarily pays homage to himself.

145 Endres, *Fetischismus*, 303; especially on Baudrillard's interpretation of the fetish, Freud, Lacan, and the fear of castration.

146 Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 99.

Museum campaigns appropriate the emblematic Benin Bronzes as advertising, promoting their museums, and communicating their enlightenment regarding the violent appropriation of objects in the past. In this way, they paint over their *Geschichtsvergessenheit* and years of collaboration in the production of degradation and discrimination.[147] As "fetishized power expects compensation,"[148] with the act of restitution, the symbol of a fetishized trophy with values attached is passed on, a publicly recognized honor is awarded, and with it, the hegemony of the West is maintained. The reclaimed objects do not enter a new state of definition, as they still maintain the status of war trophies, now not given up, but mercifully handed over in a purifying ritual of restitution. This reproduction of victim status is reflected in the discourse of restitution and appropriation of a long-standing counter-discourse as a form of self-defense. It is a kind of double oppression, the reproduction of victimization, as well as the appropriation of the counter-hegemonic discourse that finds its redemption in the act of restitution, the discursive act that turns the original anticolonial liberating act of restitution into an act of (neo-)colonial oppression. Semantic violence is disguised by a focus on institutional structures and ignorance over emotion – a bureaucratization and repeated announcing of narrations of redemption which disguise the violence and colonization of an anticolonial discourse, with its narrations, symbols, origin, and "colonial violence masked as liberal activism."[149] By making it visible and ensuring that the same stories remain both told and untold, asymmetrical power dynamics and epistemic violence are maintained. The more momentous event might not be the restitution of the objects themselves, but the value exchange in discourses in the form of the appropriation and commodification of (counter-)hegemonic discourses.

16 Closing Remarks

With its symbolic status in the restitution discourses, the Benin objects present a useful case for a study of the history and formation of the restitution debate and how discourses take part in the construction of social reality – and not only because the discourse claiming restitution led to actual acts of restitution. Discourse analysis research is a method applied by a wide variety of disciplines.[150] As it

147 For example, as seen on a billboard advertisement by the museum MARKK in Hamburg, Germany, in January 2022.

148 Dussel, *Twenty Theses on Politics*, 34.

149 Ayim, [Tweet on Colonial Violence Masked as Liberal Activism].

150 For example, see Foucault, *Archäologie des Wissens*; and Keller, *Doing Discourse Research.*

comes with different emphases and orientations within the method itself, regarding regional or departmental origins, the methodological basis is a favorable one for reflecting on overlaps with provenance research and including it into a mixed-method approach.

Researching provenance in these three case studies of the role of Benin discourses can be understood as the study of the origins and outcomes of those discourses, by studying the use made of a material absence, including the restitution and production of knowledge, and the restitution process of the objects in the twenty-first century. Such a provenance of a discourse needs to be addressed to understand the biography of an object and the narrations around it. The 1897 discourse on Benin can be framed as its biographical provenance and the starting point of its transnational history of attributed levels of semantic meaning. But it is not only the city's violent colonial overthrow that forms the moral core of the restitution process; it is also the anticolonial counter narrations that raised and maintained awareness on these topoi until today. Nigerian 'provenance research' on the "Queen Idia Mask" and the naming of the object supported the iconic efficacy of the Benin Bronzes as a symbol in social and public spaces. The dissemination of historical and contemporary knowledge on the status of the object and the raising of awareness about cultural and artistic history in society are central processes accompanying the Nigerian strategies of re-appropriation and interpretation of a material gap of the absent Benin Bronzes, and transforming this absence into a contemporary emblem of restitution.

In these last years of the Benin discourses, provenance research has been repeatedly brought into the focus of public controversy in the context of the question of restitution – sometimes as a useful tool for tactical delays, sometimes as a necessary means of investigating the origins of theft and production. The current processes around the restitution discourses invite questions about how discourse analysis can extend the methodological tools of a provenance research that is often very narrowly conceived and denigrated as a *museale Hilfswissenschaft* ('museum auxiliary science') in the shadow of conservative rhetorical arguments What are the links, limits, and differences between provenance research and discourse research? If object biographies do include meanings, narrations, and discourses, does provenance research have to include discourse research? If being a methodological tool for museums mobilized because of a lack of knowledge and/or restitution claims, should not only the origin of the removal and its removers, but also the discursive coming into being of the objects and their restitution claims be included in this provenance research? With provenance research acknowledging discourse studies which de-center the hegemonic colonizer, differ-

ing perspectives on produced, added, and the changing semantics of objects can be followed. Their role in identity construction and affective collective solidarities can thus be examined in a qualitative analysis that goes beyond studies that are in danger of becoming rigid, bureaucratic, and quantified studies of object data.

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Patrick C. Hege

‘Trophy Colonialism’ and the East African Collections in the Übersee-Museum Bremen, 1882–1939

1 Introduction

On January 19, 1907, Hugo Schauinsland of the Übersee-Museum (Overseas-Museum) Bremen wrote Felix von Luschan at the Royal Museum for Ethnology, inquiring about Berlin’s willingness to pass along any “*Dubletten* [doublets] in their collections from the German colonies.”[1] When Luschan urged patience due to an impending shipment of “war loot” from German East Africa, the Übersee-Museum (ÜM) head of ethnography and prehistory, Johannes Weißenborn, responded to Luschan: “Since we have pretty much nothing from German East Africa, we would greatly appreciate the most extensive selection possible from your expected shipment from Daressalam.”[2] Before this collection from the Maji Maji war eventually arrived in January 1908, however, the German colonial officers responsible for the ÜM East African collections had already conducted most of the “collecting” in German East Africa.

This chapter provides historical context for German colonization and collection by a handful of German colonial officers and officials. Including a few researchers and one settler, their collections in the Übersee-Museum (718 objects, 16 collections) are embedded in this history. It is a collection history that highlights

1 This chapter derives from a paper written in early spring 2020. It represents the core research findings for the Übersee-Museum’s East Africa collection conducted in 2019. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, a four-month field research trip to Tanzania was postponed indefinitely. Object analysis and oral histories are central to a long-term project, Provenance of “*Kolonialdubletten*”: Actor Networks and Infrastructures of Accumulation in colonial East and Central Africa (1880–1939), with the National Museum of Tanzania and in cooperation with the Ethnological Museum Berlin, the Grassi Museum in Leipzig, and the MARKK in Hamburg.

SMB-PK, Ethnologisches Museum, I/MV 0801, “Acta betreffend die bei der Niederwerfung des Aufstandes in Ostafrika erbeuteten Gegenstände. (‘Kriegsbeute’),” Schauinsland or Weißenborn to Luschan at Royal Museum for Ethnology in Berlin, 19.01.1907, 10f. All translations mine unless otherwise cited.

2 SMB-PK, Ethnologisches Museum, I/MV 0801, “Acta betreffend die bei der Niederwerfung des Aufstandes in Ostafrika erbeuteten Gegenstände. (‘Kriegsbeute’),” Schauinsland or Weißenborn to Luschan at Royal Museum for Ethnology in Berlin, 19.01.1907, 10f.

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the entanglements and interplay between colonial expansion and collecting practices. The following argues that colonial collections remain inherent constructs that eliminated African identities and reduced them to aggregates.[3] Moreover, assembling the collection entailed the practices of occupying, collecting, and categorizing people. The practices of reducing the objects of individuals into "native" African or "Arab" collections, as seen through the particularities of the ÜM East African collections, did not begin with the "war loot" from the Maji Maji war (1905–1907), as implied by Weißenborn above. It started with the arrival of its very first East African collection in 1889. This collection consisted of looted trophies from Germany's first colonial war in East Africa – constructed as an "Arab" insurgency – in the late 1880s.[4] As the Übersee-Museum's primary East African collection until 1908, the collection mirrored specific power relations between German colonial officers and those who resisted occupation.

The historical contexts of the acquisition of many trophy objects, which eventually found their way to the Übersee-Museum in Bremen between 1919 and 1939, reflect more than uneven power relations as articulated by many German-speaking scholars of Postcolonial Provenance Research.[5] This chapter emphasizes that these objects were acquired within colonial, that is, racialized power relations. As collections, they reinforced them in turn. This examination of the collecting practices of multiple agents of 'trophy colonialism'[6] in German East Africa (today Tanzania, Burundi, and Rwanda) reveals that colonial othering was not a static or monolithic process. Like the colonial state and its shifting notions of the colonized other between 1885 and 1914, how it occupied people and appropriated culture changed over time.

3 Provenance research at the level of the collection concisely articulated here: Jarling, "Afrika-Sammlungen als Gegenstand der Provenienzforschung."

4 For discussion of colonial discourse of the Abushiri revolt or coastal community uprisings as an "Arab rebellion," see Glassman, *Feasts and Riot*.

5 The following works cast colonialism as a system of uneven power-relations: Förster, Edenheiser, Fründt, and Hartmann, *Provenienzforschung zu ethnografischen Sammlungen der Kolonialzeit*; and Ivanov, Reyels, and Weber-Sinn, *Humboldt Lab Tanzania*. The following work directly addresses the inseparability of race and colonialism in the context of provenance research: Stocker, Schnalke, and Winkemann, *Sammeln, Erforschen, Zurückgeben?*

6 I use this concept of 'trophy colonialism' as an overarching period of colonial collecting dominated by a newly established German colonial army. I situate over a dozen colonial officers, whose collections are found in the Übersee-Museum, within this framework to show how they were agents of official and 'scientific' othering. For an essential discussion of "trophy collecting" in the context of human remains, see Brockmeyer, *Geteilte Geschichte, Geraubte Geschichte*, 315–323.

2 'Trophy Colonialism' and Violence in East Africa, 1882–1907

In the late 1880s, German incursions along coastal East Africa escalated into pervasive violence, defeat, and humiliation. In short, the German East Africa Company self-destructed after its agents – Carl Peters, especially – attempted to enforce their collection of treaties through acts of intimidation and threats of violence. To save face, Otto von Bismarck signed off on creating a new set of colonial actors subordinate to a new Imperial Commissar, Hermann Wissmann. As many German East African Company agents joined the ranks of the Imperial Commissary, unofficially known as the "*Wissmanntruppe*," the German Empire officially took charge on January 1, 1891. To counter recent violence, the Foreign Office in Berlin appointed Julius von Soden, a purported advocate of economic colonization, to become the colony's civilian governor. However, as colonial expansion resulted in endless punitive expeditions and anticolonial offshoots,[7] the Foreign Office in Berlin turned to its celebrated hero, Hermann Wissmann, to serve as military governor of German East Africa.

In 1895, Wissmann augmented the military character of German colonialism and recruited a new cohort of colonial officers. With a growing colonial administration, Wissmann was now equipped with a host of colonial civil servants to meet the demand to amass collections logistically – not just to become imperial trophies but to satisfy the "collecting mania" of Luschan at the Royal Museum in Berlin.[8] While Wissmann's officers acquired honors and notoriety,[9] a growing class of civil servants was being trained in the cultures and languages of East Africa, generating interest not only in acquiring trophy curios but also ethnographic souvenirs.[10] Despite the growing bureaucracy, the militarist and authori-

7 The military governor, Friedrich von Schele, especially through punitive expeditions and military campaigns against the Wagogo and Wahehe peoples, exacerbated anticolonial resistance. See also Pizzo, "To Devour the Land of Mkwawa," 117–139.

8 Laukötter, "Die 'Sammelwut' der Anthropologen," 24–44.

9 Many of this first wave of German colonial officers authored "great man" histories of German – rather, autobiographical – military triumphs in East Africa. A few notable examples include Behr, *Kriegsbilder aus dem Araberaufstand*; Richelmann, *Meine Erlebnisse in der Wissmann-Truppe*; and Schmidt, *Geschichte des Araberaufstandes in Ost-Afrika*.

10 Here I am referring to the colonial customs officer Maximilian Weyher (1895–1898) as well as E. Schultze-Rudorff (ca. 1902–1914). It is not yet known which of these collectors participated in the Oriental Seminar in Berlin prior to their sojourns in East Africa. However, correspondence between Weyher and the Übersee-Museum in 1919 indicated the formers enthusiasm and knowledge for East African languages, history, and ethnic variations: ÜM 163, vol. 2, "erh. Korr. 1919."

tarian character of this second wave of German colonial officers and officials prevailed for a decade under military Governors Eduard Liebert and Gustav von Götzen. It would then take a brutal large-scale war to usher in a third and final wave of colonial collectors.

In the wake of the Maji Maji war (1905–1907), Berlin hoped to save the colony, once again, from being expelled from East Africa. Under the banner of 'scientific colonialism,' institutes were built, and advocates of "colonial sciences," or "*Kolonialwissenschaften*," emerged from their roles on the periphery of colonial matters.[11] From the beginning, German colonization in East Africa was accompanied by military men such as Franz Stuhlmann, who oversaw cultural issues. In contrast to previous collectors, this wave of military scientists became the accumulators of whole collections of entire populations. Within the nebulous binaries between colonizers and colonized, efforts to fill in the "gaps" of collections of the territory's many ethnic "tribes" became paramount. For German colonial officers, the practice of collecting material culture was now tantamount to seizing power and amassing people under colonial occupation.

As we will see below, colonial entanglements of ethnography and anthropology helped propel a collecting mania to "save" innumerable ethnic lineages before they were absorbed within an unintelligible mass of racial others. Institutions such as the Royal Museum for Ethnology in Berlin attempted to realize this aspiration by educating colonial officials to deliver a totality of African material culture. In due time, everything from spoons, bowls, tools, and woodcrafts to clothing arrived in Berlin in unmanageable dimensions. The following examples show this historical and gradual infusion of colonial science.

2.1 Early Conquest of Coastal East Africa

The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 inaugurated unprecedented imperial expansion between Europe and the Indian Ocean. As a result, East Africa witnessed a growing number of European consulates, naval recognizance missions, and geographic exploration along the coast and inland. This was the era of heroic "great man" explorers of the last blank spots on the imperial map.[12] Within the ÜM East Africa collections, roughly 40 objects from this early period exist today. This collection stems from Captain Oscar Boeters of the German imperial navy. The fact

11 Grimmer-Solem, "The Professor's Africa," 313–347.

12 Wissmann, *Unter deutscher Flagge quer durch Afrika;* and Pesek, *Koloniale Herrschaft in Deutsch-Ostafrika.*

that Boeters' collection was entered four decades later in an ÜM entry book only as "Ethnographica" was one of several reasons for the collection's obscurity.[13] Biographical research revealed that "Corvette-Capitan Boeters" participated in the opening ceremony of the Suez Canal in 1869. After reconstructing the voyages of the ships on which Boeters had served, it became clear that his diverse collection corresponded to the many locations he had visited during the 1870s.[14] By the end of his career, Boeters was the commander of the cruiser SMS Möwe, omnipresent along the East African coastline in the mid-1880s. The letters "O.Afr" illegibly scribbled in an ÜM inventory book is the only written record pertinent to the origins of this collection.[15] Further research revealed that Oscar Boeters had visited the island of Zanzibar in 1882.[16] The newly formed German East Africa Company began its notorious treaty-collecting missions two years later.

In both memoirs, Carl Peters told brief histories of the German conquest of a greater East Africa, including German Somalia and Wituland (see Fig. 1).[17] With the assistance of the SMS Möwe, Peters recalled, "[m]y dear friend Corvette Capitan Boeters" was a tremendous help in scouting out all coastal harbors for future German colonial stations. At Lindi's coastal harbor (nearing the border of Portuguese Mozambique), Boeters' assistance "proved extraordinary."[18] During Peters' collecting frenzy of dubious treaties, he sent Boeters to conduct harbor surveys beginning from the most northern tip of Somalia (Ras halule) down the entire coast of East Africa in the south.[19] These missions were corroborated by reports published by Oscar Boeters in the semi-official periodical *Annalen der Hydrographie* between 1886 and 1888. In the reports, Boeters described extant buildings, fortifications, and types of weapons and assessed "Arab" affiliations

13 ÜM 511, Aktuelles Eingangsbuch 1908–1996, 14.04.1923, 252.

14 Henriot, and Hildebrand, *Deutschlands Admirale 1849–1945*, vol. 1; and "Rang und Quartierliste der Kaiserlichen Deutschen Marine f. d. J." (Unpublished family research). In addition, Susan Boeters pointed me to the *Berliner Börsen-Zeitung* and *Allgemeine Zeitung*'s numerous references to the movements of ships on which Boeters had served or commanded. A systematic search of the movements of the Möwe was made possible by published telegram notifications in the *Allgemeine Zeitung* and published reports in the *Annalen der Hydrographie*.

15 Boeters object lists in ÜM, Listen Binder; and ÜM 513, Sachverzeichnis der Völkerkundlichen Sammlung, 99. See also correspondence between Dr. Schauinsland and Max Boeters: ÜM 193, vol.1, Briefdurchschläge vom 1. Juli 1922 bis 31. März 1926.

16 Afterward, he circumvented South Africa and assisted a German trading company in Dahomey, West Africa (today southern Benin). Wislicenus, *Deutschlands Seemacht*, 75. I am very grateful to Ernst and Susan Boeters for providing this source and family history.

17 Peters, *Die Gründung von Deutsch-Ostafrika*; and Peters, *Wie Deutsch-Ostafrika entstand*.

18 Peters, *Die Gründung von Deutsch-Ostafrika*, 225.

19 Peters, *Wie Deutsch-Ostafrika entstand*, 75.

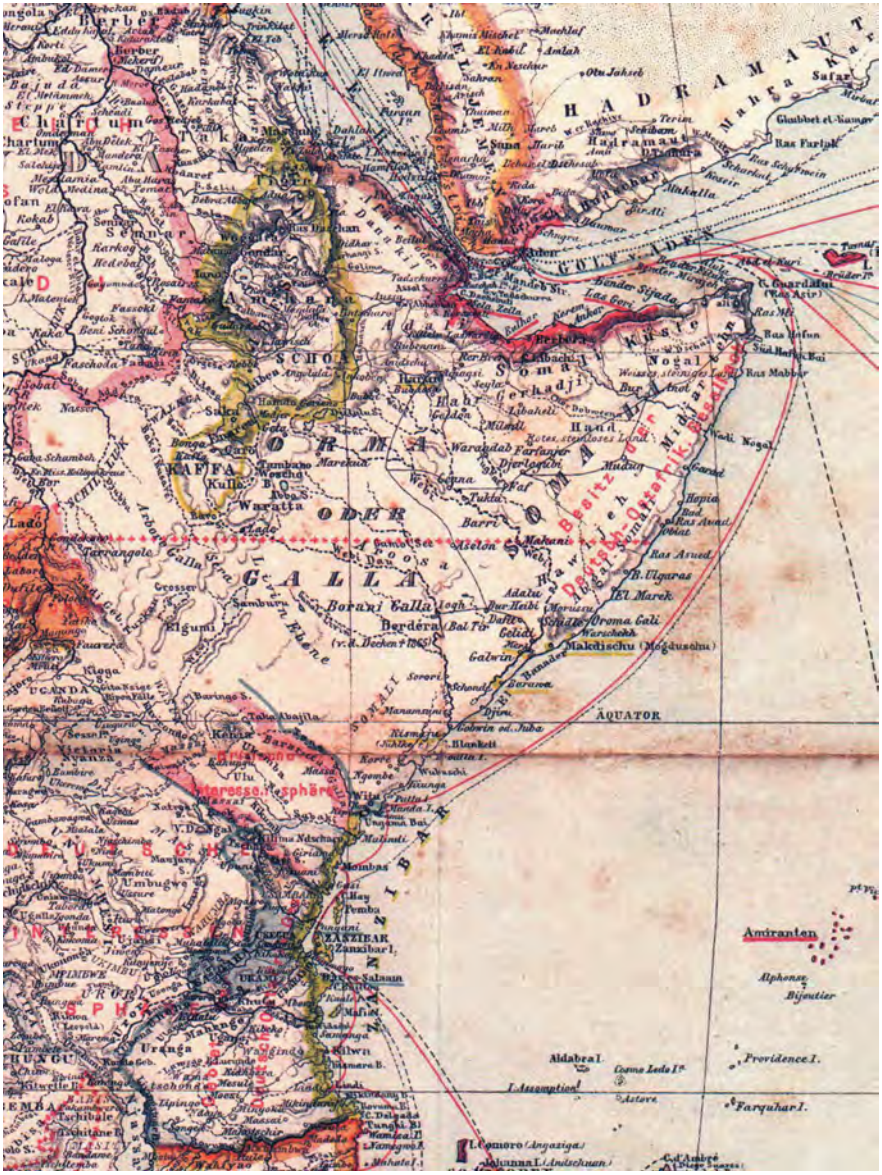

Fig. 1: German Somalia and Wituland. Source: Brockhaus 1887.

among locals.[20] After landing at successive harbors from the tip of Africa to Mozambique, Oscar Boeters acquired his East African collection.[21]

By 1887, the German East Africa Company was desperate to control customs into the East African trading ports of Pangani and Daressalam. Both were under the control of Sultan Bargash bin Said of Zanzibar. The colonial upstarts needed a monopoly of violence. Without it, Peters recalled, "[w]e would have remained exposed to every sort of torment on the part of the Arabs."[22] For virtually any transaction, Peters conceded, the *Reitpeitsche* ['riding whip'] was one of the only means "with which one can change the nature of these creatures in one direction or the other."[23] As it turns out, Oscar Boeters likely delivered the whips and directed the cannons: "My friend, Capitan Lieutenant Boeters, commandant of the 'Möwe,' which he ingratiatingly made available, transported me in early June to Daressalam with some 20 of my officials. . . ." After appointing August Leue to be "the chief of a German station," he paid a visit to the representative of Sultan Bargash "at the head of all of my armed troops. . . ."[24] In the subsequent absence of the new German station chief's armed entourage, Leue complained about acts of intimidation he received from the Sultan's soldiers during all hours of the night.[25] Peters counteracted with threats of violence in a personal meeting with Sultan Bargash: "I made him aware of the seriousness of the situation and . . . showed him both of the German canon boats just outside of his window and suggested how defenseless his palace was against a bombardment from European warships."[26] According to Peters, they collected their treaty.

20 Anonymous, "Zur Küstenbeschreibung und Hydrographie Ostafrikas," 225–232; Boeters, "Beiträge zur Küstenbeschreibung von Ostafrikas," 482; and Boeters, "Die Juba-Mündung," 429.

21 Unfortunately, we can only speculate about the means in which Boeters acquired objects from these various coastal settlements. Likely, Boeters objects were acquired through trade, exchanging gifts to form political alliances, or purchased at Aden's world market of ethnographic shops. Oscar was not interested in everyday ethnographic items. For the explorers of the time and at the pinnacle of European orientalism, these men were largely gathering exotic memorabilia and trophies of the so-called oriental other, especially peoples claiming or ascribed to Arab descent.

22 Peters, *Wie Deutsch-Ostafrika entstand*, 88.

23 Peters, *Die Gründung von Deutsch-Ostafrika*, 192.

24 Peters, *Wie Deutsch-Ostafrika entstand*, 88.

25 Leue, *Dar-es-Salaam*, 7.

26 Peters, *Die Gründung von Deutsch-Ostafrika*, 192.

2.2 'Trophy Colonialism' and Arab Spoils, 1889–1892

In this context, a close network of German officers exercised unprecedented violence in crushing a fabled "Arab" insurgency on the East African coast. Attempts to realize Carl Peter's new treaty in the coastal trading hub of Bagamoyo resulted in widespread resistance to the new German occupiers and against their ambivalent backer, Sultan Bargash, in Zanzibar. Populations were displaced, settlements destroyed, and homes burned to the ground. Although this resistance to German colonial incursion represented a broader movement of East Africans, German foreign policy and the imperial press constructed their adversaries as an "Arab revolt" or "Arab instigation."[27] In the context of German Orientalism and the construction of a formidable "Oriental foe,"[28] colonial officers collected weapons and various souvenirs in conflict situations – all of which are heavily represented in the ÜM East Africa collection. In the wake of the highly publicized 1889 assault on the fortifications of Bushiri bin Salim in Pangani, Wissmann's officers quibbled over who was the first to scale Bushiri's palisades and seize its Arabic flag as a trophy.

The memoirs of these early German colonial officers often celebrated that their invasion produced extensive "spoils of war."[29] But more importantly, the German accumulation of "Arab" trophy weapons revealed that their memorabilia was also prized back in Germany. Wissmann assembled a forbidding collection of war trophies, and he continued to collect them in these early years for the *Ruhmeshalle* ['Hall of Glory'] in Berlin.[30] Lieutenant Eduard Sulzer sold his colonial trophies to be displayed in 1890 at the Bremen "Trade and Colonial Exhibition."[31] At the opening ceremony, Commissar Wissmann was a guest of honor for his "recent and absolute suppression of the Arab revolt" in German East Africa.[32] Sulzer's collection, likely donated after his death two years later, represented almost the en-

27 See Hege, *Sights and Sites of Colonial Construction*. According to Germany's first narrators of their colonial conquest in East Africa, former colonial officers Rochus Schmidt, von Behr, et al. glorified these military victories over formidable Arab counterparts. To get the largest slice of East Africa, the so-called Arab coastal and hinterland elites had to be eliminated or forced into submission.

28 See Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire*; and Said, *Orientalism*.

29 For one vivid example after overrunning Bushiri's fortification near Pangani: Schmidt, *Geschichte des Araberaufstands*, 63.

30 Wissmann, "Befehls-Buch," 71.

31 Werner Sombart stressed the centrality of colonialism in the introduction to the official exhibition catalogue and noted its strategy in naming it a "The Northwest-German Trade and Industrial Exhibition in Bremen." Anonymous, *Officieller Katalog der Handels-Ausstellung in Bremen*.

32 Lindemann, "Die Nordwest-deutsche Gewerbe- und Industrie-Ausstellung in Bremen," 236.

tirety of the ÜM East Africa collection when the museum opened in 1896 (see Fig. 2).[33] The catalog for the Bremen trade exhibition listed objects from Sulzer's collection from East Africa: "The trophies above the table contained: fetish staff, Mafiti arrow holder, Somali dagger" and "various trophies" consisting of spears, swords, shields, flints, arrow holders, sabers and the like. "As especially noteworthy among these trophies is the flag of the rebel Bushiri, that the new age has punished justly."[34] For the anonymous author, Sulzer's collection from East Africa was a perfect showcase of colonial victory.[35]

Fig. 2: Eduard Sulzer's trophy collection from coastal uprisings, AE396/5. Images: ÜM Beinhorn.

Accounts by other officers revealed the pervasiveness in which open conflict or threats of violence resulted in trophies that simply "fell into their hands." By contrast, they described their non-European foes as "slaving" and "plundering Arabs" or as

33 ÜM 506, Allgemeiner Eingangskatalog 1889–1895, 01.1894, Afr. 396, 21; and ÜM 506, Allgemeiner Eingangskatalog 1893–1900, 01.1894, Afr. 396, 71–91.

34 Anonymous, Officieller Katalog (1890), 144.

35 For Sulzer's collection: ÜM 513, Sachverzeichnis [Inventarbuch] der Völkerkundlichen Sammlung/Abt. B Afrika, 81. However, the Übersee-Museum also acquired a few individual objects before 1887. One stemmed from an engineer from Bremen named Bernhard Münster who had spent time in Zanzibar: ÜM 509, Geschenke an das Museum 1808–1891, 09.1878; and ÜM 505, Realkatalog Ethnographie 1878–1885, no. 837–839, 841–847, and 859. In addition to Münster's small collection, the ÜM received one object from August Fischer in 1887 and one from C. Fasching in 1885, both in ÜM 505.

murderous "native tribes." And while German colonial officers were collecting loot, territory, and honor – so the story goes – their African mercenaries enjoyed the fruits of war by "plundering" local settlements of "entirely worthless housewares." According to Schmidt, it was "particularly the Sudanese, who had a special penchant for accumulating all kinds of worthless stuff."[36] On one occasion, colonial looting seemed to have threatened the honor of the German imperial navy. In a formal complaint, Admiral Karl Deinhard declared that the crew of one of the ships that had participated in the landing operations in Pangani had not taken part in the widespread plundering carried out by the "black troops" under Wissmann.[37] As it turns out, looted possessions from the occupied areas of Pangani also included a sizable sum of money (6,000 Rupies) that Bushiri bin Salim had previously collected as ransom for a captive British missionary.[38] The fact that this loot belonged to Europeans – not to mention that it was "plundered" by African mercenaries – quickly gained the attention of the Foreign Office in Berlin. Deinhard's revelation that "plundering was hence officially sanctioned" was a poorly kept secret among high-ranking commanders.

On July 11, 1889, one day after Deinhard had sent a dispatch to investigate, Wissmann noted the following in his command book: "Plundering in the occupied areas of Pangani is strictly forbidden." But six days later, Wissmann gave the order to collect trophies: "I command the station chiefs to collect resp[ectively] to acquire objects that are suitable for the Hall of Glory in Berlin, looted prizes like canons, projectiles, rifles, handheld weapons, flags, drums, war and powder

36 Schmidt, *Geschichte des Araberaufstandes in Ost-Afrika*, 63. For similar references, see Schmidt, *Aus Kolonialer Frühzeit*, 105.

37 After acknowledging that his "police soldiers" had plundered Pangani, Wissmann countered Admiral Deinhard's complaint by accusing Deinhard's sailors and marines of also plundering ordinary objects such as plates, books, rugs, etc. Insinuating the sailors' inglorious collection of spoils in the wake of his "heroic" defeat of Bushiri's forces, Wissmann also accused the white sailors of "raping" his "black troops": They misused the racial divide and authority of "whites" over "blacks" to prevent African mercenaries from plundering, to turn around and plunder everyday objects – meaning, not hard-earned trophies of conquest. Deinhard responded that he had always kept the "black and white soldiers strictly separated" and that the case of sailor plunder consisted of a few copies of the Koran and a birdcage lying on the ground. All of which, Deinhard concluded, did not constitute "Plundering." And in a final response to Bismarck, the absurdity of this dispute (the German sailors plundered Wissmann's spoils) seemed to come full circle. In his final complaint to Bismarck, Wissmann stressed that Admiral Deinhard's marines had confiscated a rifle he had taken from Bushiri's fort, and it had not been returned after multiple requests. BArch 1001/740, Acten betreffend: Entsendung des Hauptmanns Wissmann, 80.

38 Hirschberg, *Neunzehn Monate Kommandant*, 92.

horns, etc. and to send them to me for the purpose of transport to Berlin."[39] Wissmann's order indicates that the highest ranks still endorsed trophy collecting. He also acknowledged the pervasiveness of private collecting among colonial officers. In another order, Wissmann announced that the "Imperial Commissary" would not cover transport costs for "private belongings, frequently collections" from the interior.[40]

Rochus Schmidt and Eugen End were two more officers in this military network whose objects can be found in the ÜM East African collections. Schmidt chronicled their encounters, negotiations, and punitive expeditions between 1889 and 1892. While only a few of Schmidt's objects made their way to Bremen via Berlin and Hamburg as "colonial duplicates," an extensive collection from Eugen End arrived in Bremen largely intact. Indeed, of the 113 objects collected by End "during the conquest of East Africa," at least 96 consisted of looted weapons. In his autobiographical *Geschichte des Araberaufstandes in Ost-Afrika* and his revisionist memoir *Aus Kolonialer Frühzeit*, Schmidt repeatedly referenced Eugen End and the numerous expeditions they both participated in.[41] Although Schmidt was one of the first to join Carl Peters and his German East Africa Company in 1885, he and End were recruited by Wissmann in mid-1889. Subsequently, the two served together in multiple engagements against Bushiri's fortifications near Pangani and rebel leader Bana Heri in Mlembule (hinterland of Sandani); they also coordinated several military and punitive expeditions, particularly during volatile negotiations with the Yao leader Matchemba in 1890, and on an especially brutal military campaign against the Mafiti people in 1891. Before both decided to leave East Africa for good, they were neighboring station chiefs in Lindi and Mikindani from August 1890 to February 1892.[42]

Schmidt had little inclination to downplay the prevalence of looting and plunder. Accompanied by Eugen End on a punitive expedition against the Mafiti, Schmidt was unequivocal about their expedition's treatment of those who did not demonstrate absolute subordination; any local settlements that refused to wave a German flag, Schmidt thoroughly detailed, were to receive a punishment of plunder and wanton arson.[43] Decades later, a weapons dealer named Nikolaus Hof-

39 Wissmann, "Befehls-Buch," 71.

40 Wissmann, "Befehls-Buch," 165; a few sentences later, Wissmann referred to these private belongings specifically as "ethnographic collections."

41 Schmidt, *Aus kolonialer Frühzeit*, 203; and see Schmidt, *Geschichte des Araberaufstands.*

42 Schmidt, *Aus kolonialer Frühzeit*, 170.

43 For the punitive expedition against the Mafiti: Schmidt, *Aus kolonialer Frühzeit*, 205. For several examples of African degradations of the German flag and ensuing punishments: Schmidt, *Geschichte des Araberaufstands*, 244 and 305.

mann in Würzburg, Germany, produced a summary of an alleged Eugen End journal documenting the specific origins of the collection.[44] Despite innumerous inconsistencies in his reconstruction of dates, names, and places,[45] Hoffmann repeatedly asserted that End had "looted" the objects or they had simply "fallen into his hands."[46]

Indeed, these early colonial officers took advantage of their position to accumulate honors, land, and trophies. But they were also becoming aware of the value of African material culture, particularly everyday cultural objects. After the conflict, colonial officers developed several acquisition strategies while operating within colonial power relations.[47] In his 1892 memoir, *Meine Erlebnisse in der Wissmann-Truppe*, the former station chief, Georg Richelmann, revealed that it was not necessarily a context of violence that enabled him to "collect" cultural objects. Nor was it due to his status as a military officer. It was because he was white.

> We Europeans move around among the people, inspecting the private effects that they carry along, and it was in no way seldom that one finds extraordinarily beautiful ethnographic items, notably weapons. . . . Occasionally, the caravan people reject decisively every offer due to the high status the European enjoys; a persistent process is comparable to slight force because the people finally cave in, and they feel raped. . . . But the negros amuse themselves as they notice right away that he [the European] is only having fun, and they become delighted that such a great master, that means any European, has allowed a situation in which their master does not only order them around, but he can also permit a bit of human closeness. . . . Masterfully, during such opportunities, some of us figured out rather quickly how to finagle a whole collection of things together, among which were often pieces a museum would fawn over.[48]

Joint statements such as those above make clear that German colonial officers were aware of the many advantages of negotiating from the European side of a racial division between colonizers and colonized. Encounters between German officers and Africans in everyday colonial situations indicate that some officers knew African cultural objects had become sought-after prizes for German muse-

44 But it hopes of augmenting the value of End's collections, which he had hoped to sell to the Director Roewer of the Übersee-Museum; ÜM, "Afrika" binder, Schriftwechsel mit der Waffen- und Munitions-Centrale [Frankonia] in Würzburg.

45 ÜM, "Afrika" binder, Nikolaus Hoffmann, Geschichte der [End] Sammlung. A few examples include dates such as 1886 during which Eugen End was not yet in the colony. Hoffmann also offered names of locations and various information that directly conflict with numerous contemporary accounts, especially in Schmidt, *Geschichte des Araberaufstandes.*

46 ÜM "Afrika" binder, Nikolaus Hoffmann, Geschichte der [End] Sammlung.

47 Although race is not a central factor in acquisition contexts, see excellent discussions of objects as mirrors of power relations: Weber-Sinn, "Objekte als Spiegel kolonialer Beziehungen," 1–24; and Ivanov, and Weber-Sinn, "Collecting Mania and Violence," 74.

48 Richelmann, *Meine Erlebnisse*, 124.

ums. In other examples, Richelmann blithely reminisced about how the racial position of any European or white person enabled the German colonial official to "purchase" entire collections.[49] In 1892, however, it was still not uncommon for colonial acquisitions to be conducted at gunpoint. August Leue, a station chief appointed by Carl Peters, remarked later that "[a]fter the revolts, one didn't beat around the bush with people. Those that didn't want to sell were confiscated."[50]

A year after the conflict, the imperial press bemoaned the release of several veterans from the first wave of German colonial officials.[51] Writing from Germany, Rochus Schmidt echoed this sentiment and was critical of the intentions of Wissmann's new superior, Julius Soden, to scale back the military character of the new German colonial government. In his prognosis for the future of German East Africa, Schmidt championed continuity and established practices of intimidation and force. He warned that civilian rule of law, namely a new emphasis on trade and transport, was premature due to the realities of German occupation: "It would be more fitting when the native population could be more accustomed to the new order of things in East Africa, which was introduced last year." Schmidt recommended that new civilian servants and legislators spend sufficient time at the remote military stations. There, they could better comprehend the realities of the "natives" under the auspices of seasoned German colonial officers before they served as customs officials in Daressalam. In doing so, "one can better equip them, e.g., for controlling the caravans at the large trading places like Bagamoyo, which several officers have viewed as a place they can enrich their ethnographic collections. . . ."[52] Schmidt lamented this new development. In the following decade, officers collecting "ethnographic" objects were not confined to coastal trading hubs. It became the norm in many places.

2.3 Conquering Frontiers, Collecting Africans, 1893–1906

Colonial expansion and organized collecting necessitated a sizeable central bureaucracy, whether military or civilian. Under Governor Soden (1891–1893), the new colonial territory of German East Africa received an influx of civil servants and a

49 Richelmann, *Meine Erlebnisse*, 124.

50 TNA, G7/208, 189; quoted and translated by Raimbault, "The Evolution of Dar es Salaam's Peri-Urban Space," 33.

51 Thorner Presse, 24:10 (29.011892), 2; Lieutenant Eduard Sulzer was not mentioned in this announcement. Sulzer vanished from colonial sources by the end of 1891 entirely and he is likely to have perished in a covert operation in the Congo basin sometime in 1892.

52 All direct quotations in this paragraph are from Schmidt, *Geschichte des Araberaufstands*, 328.

slowly expanding bureaucracy in the new colonial capital of Daressalam. This change is exemplified in the administrative official Maximilian Weyher and his collection of East African objects in the Übersee-Museum.[53] When Weyher arrived in Daressalam on May 28, 1895, he had not been thrown into the unforgiving realities of remote military stations. Like his direct superior, the returned hero and now third governor, Hermann von Wissmann, Weyher was confined mainly within an expanding colonial bureaucracy. Although the Commissar's return marked a short stint of little more than a year, Weyher directly answered to Wissmann in the central administration building in Daressalam until 1896. As "Commissary Customs Assistant, 1. Class," Weyher likely oversaw Wissmann's inventories and shipments of collections coming through the colonial capital en route to museums in Berlin via the imperial ports of Hamburg and Bremen.[54] Weyher's first year also coincided with the height of ongoing military conflict and punitive expeditions in the region of Uhehe in the heart of German East Africa.[55] During this time, Wissmann forcefully shifted the colonial army's attention to uncontrolled inland populations along all major caravan routes and pressed increasingly west to the territory's furthest peripheries near lakes Tanganyika and Victoria-Victoria (see Fig. 3). The historical trading center of Tabora represented an intersection of these two trends (Hehe wars, interior caravan hubs).

Weyher valued his collection as ethnographic souvenirs. After he donated some 40 cultural objects in 1919, the Übersee-Museum requested additional information about the origins of his collection. In response, Weyher admitted that he purchased the entire collection from an anonymous "German trader" who had spent considerable time in and around Tabora; and he insisted that a significant part of his collection consisted of "uncommon things, which the Negros hardly handed over to Europeans and rarely came to the coast."[56] His claim that the majority of the objects came from interior regions suggests that many of the objects were acquired near the trading hub of Tabora. However, if a mysterious "German trader" acquired the items between 1895 and 1897,[57] it is doubtful that their original owners coughed them up willfully. Given the increasing German military presence along central caravan routes and west of Tabora during the Hehe wars,

53 Briskorn, *Zur Sammlungsgeschichte afrikanischer Ethnographica*, 331.

54 SMB-PK, Ethnologisches Museum, I/MV 0776: "Acta betreffend Kolonial-Angelegenheiten," Wissmann to Bastian at Royal Museum for Ethnology in Berlin, 28.04.1896, 193.

55 For the radicalization of German colonial war tactics against the "Wahehe" people, see Pizzo, "To Devour the Land of Mkwawa."

56 Briskorn, *Zur Sammlungsgeschichte afrikanischer Ethnographica*, 331.

57 Richard Kandt also mentioned that he stayed at the former home of "German trader (*deutscher Händler*) at the market of Tabora." Kandt, *Caput Nili*, 25 and 194.

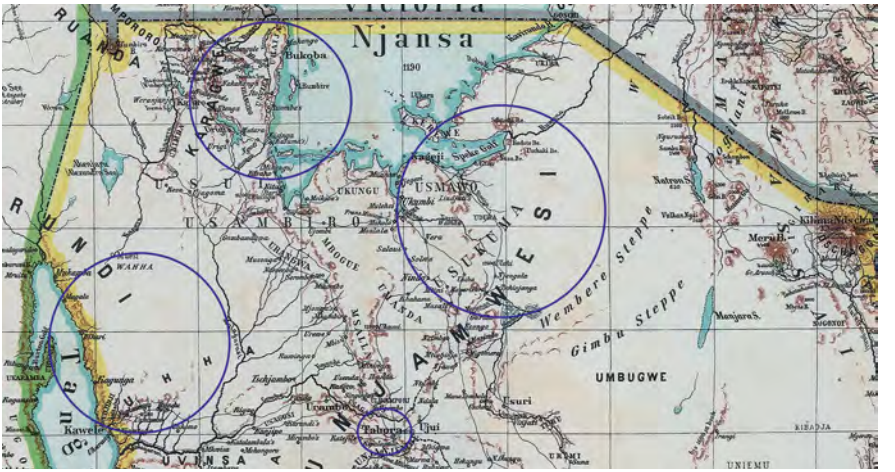

Fig. 3: Triangulation of new frontier collecting. Source: Schmidt, *Geschichte* (1892).

it is likely that this "German trader" was connected at least informally with Germans in the area and German military movements. Within such circumstances, a private European collector would have intimate access to "war plunder" via German officers, colonial soldiers, and secondhand traders. Although dubious trade should account for a chunk of this collection, Weyher's references to ethnic categories such as "Wakanrorro," "Wassukuma," and "Massai" – not to mention some ten arrows and various weapons – suggest that many of these precious objects could have been looted during skirmishes with the "Wassukuma" north of Tabora in 1895 or a punitive expedition led by Kurt Johannes in "Groß-Arusha" in 1896.

Toward the end of the century, it seemed that the military orientation of 'trophy colonialism' was slowly accommodating to the logic of 'collection colonialism.' In 1896, the Royal Museum for Ethnology in Berlin requested Wissmann's successor, Governor Eduard Liebert, to support Berlin's claim as a central preservation site for extensive collections from East Africa. However, given the museum's inundation of looted spears and shields, museum Director Felix Luschan passed along his ten-page "Instruktion für ethnographische Beobachtungen und Sammlungen in Deutsch-Ostafrika" to help civil servants and military personnel scientifically collect and categorize the details of whole collections.[58] The "Instruktion" for all colonial officials did not offer specific reasons for the need to accumulate whole collections of entire peoples. The objective was facile: "Collect as

58 SMB-PK, Ethnologisches Museum, I/MV 0776, "Acta betreffend Kolonial-Angelegenheiten," 172.

much as possible!"[59] In his introduction, Luschan merely offered what he supposed mattered to military men: their feats would be published in an "immensely valuable monograph that will enduringly recognize and enrich the honor of their founders."[60]

On December 28, 1897, Governor Liebert wrote the director of the Royal Museum and requested 50–80 additional "Instruktionen" and any available exemplars of "Beiträge der Ethnographie." Liebert said he would send them to "the large military stations of Moshi, Iringa, Udjidji, Songea, Mwanza, and Tabora." However, he was ultimately writing to inform the Royal Museum of Ethnology he had already sent out an official government order to all military personnel and civil servants in German East Africa as a form of obligatory collecting and appropriation. In January 1898, all station chiefs and officials received Liebert's order entitled "Government Order Nr. 13" and were reminded of the entangled nature of military expansion and colonial collecting:

> From the side of the Government, it has already been pointed out on numerous occasions how important it is to collect the peculiarities of the natives of the colony before they all fall victim to the homogenizing effects of civilization. The more the range of power of the stations expands, the more is lost forever, and it is the highest time to save what can still be saved for the science of humans. . . . Collections from the south of the colony, the territories around Lake Manyara, the east of Nyanza, and the north of Tanganyika are particularly needed. Meticulous descriptions of the objects considerably enhance their value, especially when notes that follow the Instructions of the museum are included. Possessions of everyday use of the respective culture are significantly more important than spears and shields; particular attention must also be given to ornamental collections.[61]

Particularly noteworthy is a new shift or tension within 'trophy colonialism.'[62] In this instance, colonial and metropolitan institutions emphasized that military personnel understood their colonial mission as one of expansion and collection. As with expanding the range of military power over peripheral populations, the work of colonizing was tantamount to acquiring "whole" collections of a particular ethnic group's material culture.[63] Moreover, the colonial state stressed the importance of ethnographic collections and no longer desired military memorabilia such as

59 Luschan, "Instruktionen für ethnographische Beobachtungen und Sammlungen," vol. 9, 91.

60 Luschan, "Instruktionen für ethnographische Beobachtungen und Sammlungen," vol. 9, 89.

61 TNA, G1/188, Gouvernementsbefehle und Runderlasse, 13.

62 The language of "saving" or discourses of "salvaging" culture have been widely discussed in secondary literature. For a good quote from A. Bastian to Governor Schele in the context of the Hehe war, see Ivanov, and Weber-Sinn, "Collecting Mania and Violence," 76.

63 Several colonial officers had complained about the porosity of the colonial map and range of military power, which Luschan articulated as the Berlin museum's "incomplete (*lückenhaft*)"

spears and shields. For colonial bureaucrats such as Maximilian Weyher or incoming colonial officers, ordinary African possessions increasingly represented cultural artifacts, unadulterated by the forces of history.

This development, however, does not suggest that German officers and officials abandoned the collecting practices of the earliest military conflicts since the late 1880's. Among this second wave were also several colonial officers from the beginning, who continued business as usual through endless military expansion and punitive expeditions.[64] As we will see, the accelerating colonial practices of authoritarianism culminated in unprecedented anticolonial resistance as well as the conquest of entire peoples and possessions.

2.4 Maji Maji Spoils as "Mere Trophy"

The Maji Maji war (1905–1907) represented a tremendous rupture and acceleration of German colonial occupation. The conflict, which began in the southern and southwest regions of the colony, quickly escalated into an existential struggle for the German colonial state. Complex issues about the myriad causes, to be sure, lie well beyond the scope of this chapter.[65] However, a few of the primary initiators of the war are worth mentioning because they are intimately related to the continuity in military policy and practice that led up to Governor Götzen (1901–1906). Since the turn of the century, critics excoriated Governor Liebert and the "revolver politics" that had allegedly transformed the local administration into a colonial autocracy.[66] Governor Götzen, like his predecessor, attempted to downplay his publicized brutality and blamed "false humanists" – a pejorative for progressives or colonial reformists in the German Reichstag – for purportedly blocking his efforts to modernize the colony.[67] Götzen's adherence to the established practice of force and intimidation since the days of Carl Peters – namely,

knowledge and collections of peripheral East Africans. Luschan, "Instruktionen für ethnographische Beobachtungen," 89.

64 For a conceptualization of the punitive expedition and centrality of "presence" for colonial troops, see Pesek, "The Boma and the Peripatetic Ruler."

65 For overviews of the history of the Maji Maji war, see Clement, and Gwassa, "The Outbreak and Development of the Maji Maji War"; and more recently, Giblin and Monson, *Maji Maji: Lifting the Fog of War*.

66 An exceedingly harsh critique of Liebert's "revolver politics" stemmed from the colonial publicist, Hans Wagner, who also happened to work at the Übersee-Museum in the 1920s; see Wagner, *Falsche Propheten*.

67 More specifically by building railroad construction proposals; see Liebert, *Aus einem bewegten Leben*, 159.

excessive uses of the riding whip, his widespread practices of forced labor, unbridled land expropriations, and the egregious "hut taxes" for African underclasses – was an unequivocal catalyst to widespread unrest among East Africans.[68]

After the Maji Maji war, Governor Götzen admitted that the war produced unfathomable destruction and plunder.[69] In his memoir, he emphasized that this was not a European war. It was "colonial warfare," and it was grotesquely brutal. While the earliest conflicts were constructed as "Arab revolts," the Maji Maji war was fabricated as an "African" or "native war" (*Eingeborenenkrieg*).[70] As such, he constructed the wild and vicious realities of African rebel hordes that "plundered and burned" everything in their path, compelling African colonial soldiers to counter with the same barbarities.[71] Everywhere colonial forces encountered locals, it transpired "an unavoidable fate in all colonial wars, in which villages, supplies and other items of value went up in flames." The specific situation Götzen was casting as typical "colonial warfare" in 1905 occurred during an expedition from August 20 to September 22 in the region of Donde, particularly in the Matumbi Mountains and along the Lukokiro River (northwest of Kilwa Kivindje today). After defeating some 400 rebels, normal colonial fighting produced unavoidable war loot: "A large number of rifles, bows, and poisonous arrows fell into the hands of the victors."[72] According to Götzen, the victors were unmistakably the "valiant leaders" Werner von Grawert and Johannes Lincke, whose colonial collections are prevalent in Berlin and Bremen today.

Johannes Lincke participated in numerous scenes, such as the ones above. He later served as a station chief until he departed from the colony in 1909.[73] Lincke's ÜM East Africa collection reflects his whereabouts in East Africa and his position as a latecomer to colonial collecting. Many of Lincke's 55 objects consist of weapons, which suggests that they were acquired as souvenirs during his encounters with African subversives. In contrast to the "Government Order Nr. 13," Lincke

68 As the colonial state was accumulating power, or filling the many holes thereof, Götzen's radical policies of accumulating so-called "unclaimed [*Herrenloses*] land" and resources in East Africa were unprecedented. Whole expanses of land belonging to East Africans which did not fall under the category of "settled" or "developed" were appropriated as either trophies for Kaiser Wilhelm II (e.g., Kaiser Wilhelmsland), or were parceled off into huge tracts of land for sale to plantation investors back in Germany; for a case of the latter, see the discussion of Adolph Collenbusch in Section 3.3 of this chapter.

69 See Götzen, *Deutsch-Ostafrika im Aufstand.*

70 See Götzen, *Deutsch-Ostafrika im Aufstand.* In addition, see early reports of the war during the month of September 1905 in the *Deutsch-Ostafrikanische Zeitung* and the *Deutsche Kolonialzeitung.*

71 Moyd, "'All people were barbarians to the Askari,'" 149–182.

72 Götzen, *Deutsch-Ostafrika im Aufstand*, 68.

73 Anonymous, "Unruhe in Kilimatinde," 587.

did not take notes about the ethnic origins and cultures of these objects. Quite simply, Lincke's objects were not intended for the Royal Museum for Ethnology in Berlin. His trophies were a victory collection, and they were his. Like the nameless "native mass," Lincke's trophies were later sold to the ÜM as mere "Ethnographica from German East Africa."[74] Beyond a hastily formulated ÜM list from the 1920s, the original note, "Collected primarily in areas near Lake Tanganyika," suggests that their presumed origins in the westerly reaches of the colony (proximity to the Congo) enhanced their value.[75] After all, this was a colonial frontier that needed to be "saved" by colonial science.

But Lincke's ÜM collection also reflects his position as a late-coming colonial officer who was familiar with the emergence of 'collection colonialism,' which was lobbied heavily by ethnologists and anthropologists.[76] Although Lincke did not collect objects for the Royal Museum of Ethnology in Berlin, the contents of his ÜM collection exemplify a confluence between trophy and scientific collecting. It is unclear whether Lincke's widow provided the Bremen Museum with any information about his collection. Still, three wooden sculptures among them have traces of the Maji Maji war and rare acknowledgment of their original owners. The ÜM stores several "ritual objects," originally listed as "5 wooden figures from medicine men."[77] The possessions of African medicine men attest to several strains of colonialism. For instance, the wood figures could have represented valuable trophies from the Maji Maji war – as the figure of the "medicine man" epitomized agitators and ringleaders of anticolonial resistance.[78] But they could have been manufactured for European tourists – a few of the replicas Maximilian Weyher lamented were circulating before the end of the nineteenth century.

Overall, the Maji Maji war represented the apex of 'trophy colonialism.' As the depots of the Royal Museum for Ethnology in Berlin attest, the colonial officers and officials delivered an extraordinary number of objects from East Africa

74 ÜM 511, Aktuelles Eingangsbuch 1908–1996 (05.09.1919), 219; ÜM 513, Sachverzeichnis der Völkerkundlichen Sammlung/Abt. B Afrika, 84.

75 ÜM, "Afrika" binder, 05.09.1919, "sämtl. Gegenstände . . . v. Hauptmann A. Lincke, zuletzt in I. R. 75 [Hanseatisches Infanterie-Regiment Nr. 75], in Deutsch-Ost Afrika, vorwiegend in den Gegenden am Tanganyika See gesammelt."

76 Colonial synergies between ethnologists and anthropologists are discussed in more detail in Section 3.2.

77 ÜM, "Afrika" binder, "5 Holzfiguren von Medizinmännern aus dem Kongo." Original citation in Briskorn, *Zur Sammlungsgeschichte afrikanischer Ethnographica*, 259.

78 Mapunda, "Symbolism and Ritualism in Pre-Colonial African Context"; see also Ivanov and Weber-Sinn, *Humboldt Lab Tanzania*, 84.

before and during the war.[79] The 3,000 objects taken during the Maji Maji war and stored in the depots in Daressalam constituted what ethnologist Karl Weule identified as a "mere trophy" in spears, shields, bows and arrows, war drums, and the like.[80] In a letter to the Royal Museum for Ethnology and the Foreign Office in Berlin, Weule viewed the fruits of military collecting as unscientific:

> It is fair to say that the items are perfectly acceptable in themselves, but how can one view a collection as scientifically important when it represents only five or six categories of the material culture of the natives and, in addition, furnishes no exact information whatsoever as to the precise provenance of the items! Its significance is that of a mere trophy, which will probably most likely be treated as such.[81]

Within this context of violence, the scientific agenda of "Government Order Nr. 13" seemed to have given way to the necessities of military victory and survival. Also, it is unclear whether the specific objects Johannes Lincke looted in the Matumbi Mountains became parts of this "mere trophy" inspected by Weule in Daressalam. That his collection circumvented Berlin and made it to Bremen is quite suggestive. But most pertinent here is that Linke, a late colonial officer, assembled a colonial collection that reflects overlapping collecting contexts. It consisted of not only looted weapons but also spiritual objects and those of everyday use.

3 The Ascendency of 'Collection Colonialism,' 1907–1919

When Johannes Weißenborn of the Übersee-Museum requested possible "duplicates" from the Royal Museum's ethnographic collections in Berlin, it was not an accident that such a request transpired as late as 1907. As mentioned earlier, the extant East Africa collection in Bremen consisted of Eduard Sulzer's collection of trophies from the late 1880s. In the immediate aftermath of the Maji Maji war, Berlin offered the Übersee-Museum Bremen objects from an impending shipment of "war loot" from the recent conflict in German East Africa. In January 1908, the Übersee-Museum received Berlin's shipment of objects from multiple German col-

79 For a glimpse of the formidable dimensions of collecting and accumulation of human remains and material culture, see Laukötter, "Die 'Sammelwut' der Anthropologen," 26.

80 SMB-PK, Ethnologisches Museum, I/MV 0801, "Acta betreffend die bei der Niederwerfung des Aufstandes in Ostafrika erbeuteten Gegenstände (Kriegsbeute)," Weule's inspection trip to German East Africa to evaluate "war loot" from Maji Maji war, 30.12.1906, 4.

81 Cited and translated by Ivanov and Weber-Sinn, *Humboldt Lab Tanzania*, 80.

onies. Among "prehistoric" items from the German colonies in the South Sea and Togoland was a collection of *Kriegsbeute* ['war spoils'] from the hinterlands of Lindi (southeastern Tanzania), where the Maji Maji war had primarily originated. The contents of the war loot from German East Africa – namely, weapons such as spears, bows, and arrows[82] – indicated that as of 1908, the entire ÜM East Africa collection now consisted of two collections of war loot. The first originated from Eduard Sulzer and his participation in the Wissmann war of colonial conquest between 1889 and 1890, and now the second collection was looted during the Maji Maji war from 1905 to 1907. As an ethnologist and paleontologist, Johannes Weißenborn accepted the collection with reservation. It was not for its research value but because it might enhance the display value of the museum's East Africa collection for its new colonial exhibits in 1911.[83]

From then on, the Bremen Museum would actively expand its ÜM East Africa collection. In the context of the colonial reforms propagated as 'scientific colonialism,' the museum was in a new position to help facilitate the ascendency of 'collection colonialism' and construct and order objects into collections of ostensible races.

3.1 'Scientific Colonialism': Racial Others

In 1907, the first colonial secretary, Bernhard Dernburg, promised to save German colonialism by replacing "revolver politics" with ostensible rational reforms, economic development, and the priority of science or "colonial sciences."[84] Dernburg's program would finally give a wide range of scholars, especially economists, biologists, chemists, ethnographers, and anthropologists, the podium in colonial matters. As noted, the colonial military commissioned several academic figures to bridge the previous science-military divide. Franz Stuhlmann was there from the beginning and was likely the ghostwriter of Liebert's "Government Order Nr. 13" in 1897.[85] Another colonial officer, Moritz Merker (1895–1908), was an ethnologist who

82 SMB-PK, Ethnologisches Museum, I/MV 0801, "Acta betreffend die bei der Niederwerfung des Aufstandes in Ostafrika erbeuteten Gegenstände. ('Kriegsbeute')," Schauinsland or Weißenborn to Luschan at Royal Museum for Ethnology in Berlin, 11.01.1908, 18.

83 SMB-PK, Ethnologisches Museum, I/MV 0801, "Acta betreffend die bei der Niederwerfung des Aufstandes in Ostafrika erbeuteten Gegenstände. ('Kriegsbeute')," Weißenborn to Luschan, 31.05.1907, 15. For Übersee-Museum expansion and planning of a permanent colonial exhibition from 1907 to 1911: Briskorn, *Zur Sammlungsgeschichte afrikanischer Ethnographica*, 69.

84 Dernburg, *Zielpunkte des deutschen Kolonialwesens*, 13.

85 The language and the importance of German East Africa's so-called Department of Culture (*Kulturabteilung*) in Liebert's "Government Order Nr. 13" strongly suggests that this was an order

helped develop 'collection colonialism' and put it in a position to emerge after the Maji Maji war.[86] As opposed to previous decades of brute force via the "riding whip," the colonial press announced that colonial officials and private colonists needed to familiarize themselves with new scientific findings, especially those of ethnologist Karl Weule: "Who does not know the essence and way of the coloreds, cannot rule and colonize them."[87]

Despite the policy shift to 'scientific colonialism,' it did not fundamentally alter the longstanding rule of colonial difference.[88] This fact was made most apparent after 1907 and following Dernburg's inspection tours to German East Africa. On February 18, 1908, Dernburg gave a widely publicized speech to the Reichstag on the new limits of 'scientific colonialism.' In a surprising change of heart, the touted progressive admitted that reforms in German East Africa would remain rooted in "*Rassenjustiz*" ['racial justice'].[89] The new colonial program, Dernburg seemed to regret, should no longer seek to eradicate the ordinary brutalities of European colonial power over "negros" – namely, the ubiquitous use of "riding whips" in disciplining the latter.[90] Due to the "inner nature of the negros," Dernburg confessed, rational colonial rule should overcome the "haphazardness" – not necessarily the brutality – of the racial domination of Europeans over Africans.[91] His first-hand observations in German East Africa, it would follow, led

written directly or indirectly by the head of the Department of Culture, Franz Stuhlmann. In addition, Stuhlmann had a long history and deep connections with the Royal Museum for Ethnology in Berlin, as indicated by internal records between both directors Bastian and Luschan from 1888 to 1898; see also TNA, G1/188, Gouvernementsbefehle und Runderlasse, "Gouvernements-Befehl No. 13," 28.12.1897, 13.

86 For object information regarding a *Giftbüchse* ['poisonous arrow canister'] likely looted by Moritz Merker in 1896 during the infamous Groß-Arusha punitive expedition: ÜM 511, Aktuelles Eingangsbuch, 1908–1996 (1938), 440; ÜM 513, Sachverzeichnis der Völkerkundlichen Sammlung/Abt. B Afrika, 306.

87 Review of Weule's published research findings, DKZ 25:49 (5 Dec. 1908), 85.

88 For Partha Chatterjee's concept of the "rule of difference" and discussion thereof, see Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*; Steinmetz, *The Devil's Handwriting*; and Eckert, *Kolonialismus*. Most recently, Eckert emphasized this continuity in colonial discourse after the Maji Maji war; see Ivanov and Reyels, "Conference Report."

89 Dernburg, *Rede Seiner Exzellenz,* 220. See also Rathenau, "Erwägungen über die Erschlieszung [sic] des Deutsch-Ostafrikanischen Schutzgebietes," 159.

90 Dernburg, *Rede Seiner Exzellenz*, 200.

91 From Rathenau, "Erwägungen über die Erschlieszung": "In der Natur der Neger liegt es, daß die bestehende Rassenjustiz auf längere Zeit nicht wird geändert werden und daß gewisse Züchtigungsmittel [Reitpeitsche], welche die Heimat perhorresziert, auch nicht abgeschafft werden können," 159.

him back to tradition and the rule of colonial difference.[92] However, in contrast to the chronic violence of German colonial officers, scientific colonization assumed that a more profound knowledge of African "inner natures" would invariably refine colonial domination and enhance productivity.

Shifts in reform discourse on the so-called "native question" also undergirded a process of increased racialization.[93] As a tool for colonial practice, the ethnologist's clean separation of populations could better help German colonizers "protect" Africans from the forces of civilization and divide them based on ethnic distinctions.[94] In short, earlier practices of state othering, to which 'trophy colonialism' belonged, finally gave way to scientific ordering.

3.2 'Collection Colonialism': Ethnic Others

The colonial categories of "natives" and *Naturvölker* ['natural peoples'] were now progressively put under the microscope: differentiated and essentialized by civilian academics, especially semi-state sponsored scientific expeditions. Colonial officers such as Franz Stuhlmann and Moritz Merker played an important role in this development. Both had participated in numerous research and military expeditions to understand the so-called "natives" better, but also to account for cultural and physiological diversity. As such, 'collection colonialism' was directed by a symbiotic relationship between the disciplines of ethnology and anthropology.[95] Academic-minded colonial officers were interested not only in mere racial differences between Europeans and Africans but also in understanding racial variation

92 Naranch, "'Colonized Body,'" 299–338.

93 Also growing practices of "native protectionism."

94 For a discussion of this development of ethnic zones and protection barriers, see Hege, *Sights and Sites*, chapter eight; and for a good example of this development regarding an expedition led by Hans Meyer in 1911, see "Eisenbahnprojekte," *DOAZ* 15:62 (1913), 1.

95 Although the intellectual history of these disciplines reveals a far more complicated relationship, especially within European metropoles, as shown by Zimmerman, *Anthropology and Antihumanism*. However, taking a cue from George Steinmetz (2007) and his application of Pierre Bourdieu's concept of fields as practice, the discussion above assumes that disciplinary boundaries within the colonial field – especially about scientific expeditions – rendered them exceedingly more fluid. This is especially the case for "scientists" in the colonial setting, as they were invariably confronted with innumerable challenges and empirical inconsistencies to basic metropolitan assumptions about African difference, culture, and history. Also, rarely did scholars such as Karl Weule, Franz Stuhlmann, or Richard Kandt, to name a few, identify themselves within a strict discipline such as ethnography or anthropology. For an example of colonial entanglement of Ethnography and Anthropology in the colonial setting of German East Africa, see Pesek, "Die Kunst des Reisens," 70.

among the colony's African population. Since the 1880s, ethnographers wanted to know why some groups seemed fixed in pre-historic collectivities and why others appeared to embody similarities with *Kulturvölker* ['cultured peoples']. The wide acceptance of Hamitic racial theory was at the core of this anthro-ethnographical current.[96] Within this context, colonial scientists sought to explain African diversity by measuring an ethnic group's historical origins and relations with alleged foreign lineages.[97] These were often caste as Hamitic or Semitic peoples and ostensibly belonging to superior "cultured peoples." Moreover, dominant groups of Africans were constructed as racial hybrids with foreign blood. By contrast, Bantu-speaking "negros" were considered less adulterated yet not as primordial as so-called "bush men" and "pygmies."

By the end of the nineteenth century, academic studies dedicated to specific ethnic groups proliferated. Literature on East Africans expanded geographically with numerous works dedicated to individual ethnic groups such as the "Massai," "Dschagga," "Wassukuma," "Warundi," and "Wanya-Ruanda."[98] These trends – notwithstanding Luschan's "Instruktionen" and Liebert's "Government Order Nr. 13" – coincided with the very first expedition of Richard Kandt to the western frontier of German East Africa. In 1897, Kandt, the medical doctor and close friend of Luschan, embarked on a scientific expedition in the remote northwestern regions of the colony (present-day Burundi, Rwanda, and Uganda).[99] When Kandt returned to East Africa in 1907, his scientific pedigree made him a desirable candidate for local administration. Shortly after, Kandt began his tenure as *Resident* ['district representative'] in Kigali for the next seven years. His collection in the Übersee-Museum starkly reflects the trends and spatiality of collecting during this new era of 'scientific colonialism.' His collection consisted of 22 everyday objects such as clothing, jewelry, musical instruments, various tools, and housing models for ethnic types.[100] Compared with the object lists and information provided by the military officers discussed above, it is worth noting that Kandt deliv-

96 Brockmeyer, Edward, and Stoecker, "The Mkwawa complex," 131.

97 In addition to the prevalent Hamitic racial theory, some German anthropologists, especially geographer Friedrich Ratzel had challenged the ahistorical frameworks and typologies of German anthropology after the turn of the nineteenth century; see Zimmerman, *Anthropology and Antihumanism*, 21.

98 For a few examples during this period and for these regions: Widenmann, *Die Kilimandscharo-Bevölkerung*; and Merker, *Die Massai*.

99 Kandt, *Caput Nili*. Kandt had previously spent the years between 1897 and 1901 in these regions.

100 Included in the ÜM entry book description of the collection were "drei afrikanische Hüttenmodelle (Massai-Kraal, Tamberna-Burg, ostafrikanische Tembe)," ÜM 511, Aktuelles Eingangsbuch, 1908–1996, (16.12.1936), 420.

ered an array of provenance information, such as geographic signifiers and ethnic categories.

The quest to collect and categorize "natural people" corresponded with scientific expeditions of natural scientists in search of the earliest history of all life. During this period, one of the most important scientific expeditions was the "German Tendaguru-Expedition" in southern Tanzania (1909–1913).[101] While paleontologists chased natural history artifacts in the so-called "scramble for dinosaurs," their quest coincided with a scramble for African material culture. It was assumed that these objects were made by the direct descendants of "pre-historic" humans.[102] One expedition leader, Hans Reck, collected 110 cultural objects of the different "children of nature," as referred to by colonial author and spouse, Ina Reck.[103] Years later, in the *Koloniale Rundschau*, Hans Reck indicated the transdisciplinary significance of the Tendaguru-Expedition: "It showed us populations and ways of life, whose primitive naturalism had yet to be destroyed by coastal civilization, and it produced treasures and fossilized documents of natural history right in front of our eyes . . . out there in the bush and at home in the rooms of the museum. . . ."[104]

Like Kandt, the ethno-geographic provenance of each object was recorded by Hans and/or Ina Reck in notes and added to individual object tags.[105] The Reck collection contained numerous ethnic categories, especially for objects acquired from "Wayao" and "Wamuera" in the surrounding areas of Tendaguru (see Fig. 5).[106] About a quarter of the Reck collection was attributed to the ethnic categories "Massai," "Waha," and "Wasiome," which can be directly linked to the Recks' participation in the Oldaway-Expedition (Olduvai Gorge, Serengeti) in the northern regions between Arusha and Lake Victoria (1913–1914). In the context of post-Maji Maji violence, the Recks did not plunder monolithic collections of weapons from a single

101 For important insights into the history of the Tendaguru-Expedition as well as colonial provenance of natural history artifacts and the reconstruction of a *Brachiosaurus* (*Giraffatitan*) *brancai* at the Natural History Museum in Berlin, see the recent work, see Heumann, Stoecker, Tamborini, and Vennen, *Dinosaurierfragmente*.

102 See Reck, *Grabungen auf fossile Wirbeltiere*; and Reck, *Oldoway*.

103 Reck, *Mit der Tendaguru-Expedition im Süden von Deutsch-Ostafrika*, 16 and 39.

104 Reck, "Die Tendaguru-Ausgrabungen," 194.

105 ÜM 185, Ina Reck to Roewer, 19.03.1938; the handwriting of Ina Reck (von Grumbkow) matches that of the original collection lists, and she might have played an important role in generating provenance information for "her ethnographic collection." Ina likely derived object information from her own recollections and in consultation with Hans Reck's original etiquettes or original notes.

106 For Ina Reck's accounts of "Wayao" and "Wamuera" near Tendaguru, see Reck, *Mit der Tendaguru-Expedition im Süden von Deusch-Ostafrika*, 40.

population. Behind the facade of civilized and moral scientists,[107] they did not need to use violence directly to fill the holes in museum collections. In the regions of Tendaguru and Oldoway, the Recks knew what they wanted, and with the recent past, their entourages of African soldiers, and influential local intermediaries, acquiring a few cultural objects was significantly less complicated than acquiring whole tracks of East African land.[108]

Fig. 4: "Bambu thicket in Tendaguru" (left) and "The Bush in Tendaguru" (right).
Source: Reck, *Mit der Tendaguru-Expedition* (1924), page 44, and title page, respectively.

But more than any other time, the collecting contexts for the Recks and Kandt were primarily discursive. Against the backdrop of unprecedented violence, their collections were products of professionalized collecting for museums and personal study. They did not put together extensive collections of everyday objects merely to verify the cultural primitivism of Africans. Ethnographic collecting con-

107 Penny, *Objects of Culture*, 99.
108 For an excellent discussion of the "sale" of Tendaguru land for systematic excavation, see Stoecker, "Maji-Maji-Krieg und Mineralien."

ducted under the influence of medical science and paleontology increasingly severed to better map racial differentiation, according to the "modern" anthropology espoused by Felix Luschan.[109] When lacking specifics concerning an object's original owner, producer, or geographic origin, it was nonetheless imperative for Hans or Ina Reck to distinguish it as either "native" or "non-native," as an authentic African artifact or a product of foreigners and mixed races (see Fig. 4 for Ina Reck's renditions of the former). For example, in cases of uncertain ethnicity, an object's authenticity was suggested by the vague geographical references "from the interior" or *Eingeborenenarbeit* ['native craftsmanship'].[110] By contrast, objects collected in Zanzibar and Lindi were signified as either "Arab," "Swahili," or "Indian," making an important distinction – and perhaps serving as a foil – to *Kulturvölker* ['foreign civilizations'] and cultures historically entangled with them.[111] As such, ethnographic categorization served the general purpose of 'collection colonialism': Variations in cultural practices and technologies could only be explained through notions of historical isolation and seeming resemblances to prehistorical man.

Thus, any objects that displayed innovation, sophistication, or similarity with those of North Africa, the Middle East, or South Asia were considered "worthless," as they – so it was believed – no longer represented authentic embodiments of ancient human culture. Not surprisingly, after Ina Reck listed objects with written inscriptions or weapons with detailed metal work – an "Arab curved dagger from Zanzibar," for example – the head of ethnography and prehistory in Bremen responded that for such objects, they "attach absolutely no value."[112]

109 This observation about the 'colonial' intersections between ethnography and anthropology diverges from previously established notions of the history of German ethnology and ethnographic museums put forth by Glenn Penny (2001). For more on the concept of race and racialization in the field of anthropology of imperial Germany and collecting of human remains, see Zimmerman, *Anthropology and Antihumanism*, and Laukötter, "Die 'Sammelwut' der Anthroprologen," 24–44, respectively.

110 ÜM, "Listen" binder, original list "Verzeichnis der Ethnographica. Coll. Reck. – Ost-Afrika, 19.04.1938."

111 For Ina Reck's notions of indigenous purity and historical naturalism as opposed to the "grotesque" racial mixing and cultural appropriations in East African coastal towns, see Reck, *Mit der Tendaguru-Expedition im Süden*, 14, 17, 27, 34, and 39.

112 ÜM 185, Weißenborn or Roewer to Ina Reck, 23.04.1938.

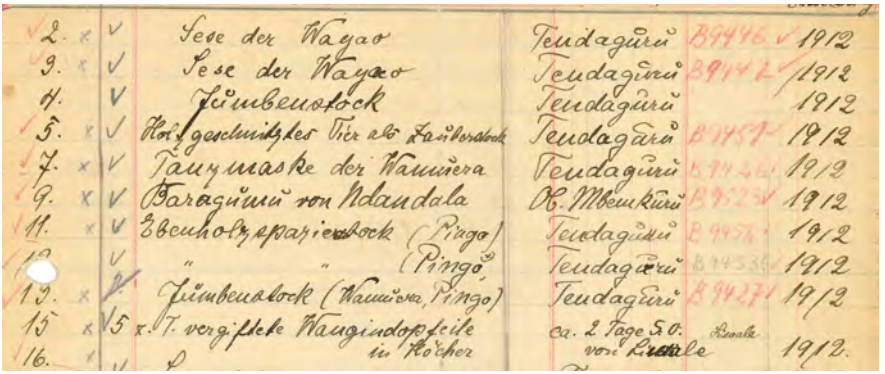

Fig. 5: Excerpt of the original list of the Reck collection, ÜM "Listen".

3.3 'Collection Colonialism': Secondhand Acquisitions

The ascendency of 'collection colonialism' witnessed an increase in private collecting among tourists in German East Africa.[113] Between 1911 and 1914,[114] Adolph Collenbusch, an investor in the East African Agave and Sisal Company, traveled to German East Africa and inspected his land holdings – properties likely to have once belonged to rebel leader Bushiri bin Salim.[115] As a businessman, his tour of the areas around his plantation in Pongwe (hinterland of Tanga and Pangani) also included acquisitions of everyday objects, which the ÜM subsequently categorized as "ethnographica, trading goods, zoologica."[116] Though it is not known whether Collenbusch ever took notes on the origins or means by which he acquired some 101 objects of woodwork and clothing, they reflected the demand for cultural objects not just for the Übersee-Museum Bremen but also among ethnographic dealers and private collectors in Germany. In contrast to Recks and Kandt, Adolph Collenbusch was not affiliated with the colonial administration, and he is not likely to have ventured very far into the interior on a larger, more expensive expedition. Considering his overall collection, Collenbusch likely remained on the northeastern coast near Tanga – notwithstanding likely stopovers

113 A proposal by Luschan to return Maji Maji "war loot" back to Dar es Salaam in 1907 underscores the prevalence of private collecting and tourism in major coastal ports; see Zimmermann, "What Do You Really Want in German East-Africa, Herr Professor?," 458.

114 StAB, Bremer Stadtarchiv, Die Maus digital database; Collenbusch applied for a passport, which he received in late 1910.

115 Baumann, *Durch Massailand zur Nilquelle*, 127.

116 ÜM 511, Aktuelles Eingangsbuch, 1908–1996, 16.10.1918, 210.

in Daressalam or Zanzibar. Aside from some 20 weapons,[117] it is very plausible that local East Africans, who sold woodwork, embroidery, and crafts at the central markets in these colonial cities, manufactured most of Collenbusch's collection. Compared to other interior station towns, the coastal cities of Tanga and Daressalam, especially by 1911, had the colony's largest European populations and were the most frequented among Europeans on long-distance voyages. Although there is virtually no information or internal ÜM records about the origins of these objects, the ÜM's distinction of "trading products" also underscores the likelihood that Collenbusch's objects stemmed from African artisans selling their goods to unwitting German tourists.[118]

Despite its lack of ethnic categories and relatively "inauthentic" character, Director Schauinsland accepted the donated Collenbusch collection for several reasons. As mentioned above, the ÜM East Africa collection consisted primarily of two collections of war trophies before 1918. As such, the incorporation of cultural objects – however inauthentic they might have seemed to museum staff – was at least a step in the right direction, especially since the Übersee-Museum had not possessed direct connections with collectors such as Richard Kandt and Hans Reck. However, since the objects could not represent objective evidence or embody truths about a specific ethnic group or persons, five wooden figures of both female and male Africans were novel additions. Beyond their potential to represent a generic African, these "East African figures" had potential display value for museum visitors – and they represent the very few objects from East Africa still on display in the Übersee-Museum (see Fig. 6).[119] While it was assumed that spoons, bowls, tools, and clothing could reveal the ostensible "essences" and differences among "actual" Africans, such items were overly abstract and unspectacular for public display. But in 1918, the Askari figures fell somewhere within the categories of "ethnographica" and "trading goods."[120] They came from a colonial context that differed immensely from those of Carl Peters and earlier colonial officers. The many items Collenbusch purchased circa 1911 to 1914 were rooted in a context that was indelibly colonial. However, as we have seen from the evolution

117 ÜM 513, Sachverzeichnis der Völkerkundlichen Sammlung/Abt. B Afrika, 75.

118 Maximillian Weyher noted that such items were already ubiquitous in European coastal enclaves.

119 Further research on the spectacles and exhibition practices would further support such claims. Christian Jarling has pointed out that it remains uncertain if or when specific objects from the ÜM Namibia, ÜM Cameroon and ÜM East Africa collections had been on display to the public.

120 For an analysis of colonial "trade," see Manase's chapter in this book. For Collenbusch and Lincke entries, respectively, see ÜM 511, Aktuelles Eingangsbuch, 1908–1996, 16.10.1918, 210; ÜM 511, Aktuelles Eingangsbuch, 1908–1996, 5.9.1919, 219.

and parallel processes of colonial expansion, the local economy of "inauthentic" crafts was a product and outcome of decades of colonial rule. In response to years of rampant violence and colonial militarism, many East African artisans negotiated new livelihoods within a system built, run, and organized around racial power.

Fig. 6: East African and Askari wood figures, E03479. Images: ÜM Beinhorn.

4 "Race without Living Space" or "Room in its Living Rooms," 1919–1939

The loss in the First World War and the Treaty of Versailles ushered in a new colonial context for Germany. No longer an imperial power and lacking territorial possessions, the inseparability of colonialism and human difference lived in the German imagination and memory sites.[121] But for many of the German colonial officers discussed above, the physical objects of German colonialism in East Africa came back to their grieving family members, occupying needed space and reminding them of German colonialism with its material presence.

After the war, the father of Adolph Collenbusch and the widow of Johannes Lincke contacted the Übersee-Museum and donated their "German East Africa" collections to the Department of Prehistory and Ethnography.[122] Both had served

121 Zimmerer, *Kein Platz an der Sonne*, 17.

122 ÜM 192, vol. 1, "Briefdurchschläge 01.07.1918–30.06.1922," for a copy of a terse thank you letter to Collenbusch's father.

in Bremen's "Hanseatic Regiment" and fell on France's western front in 1914 and 1915, respectively.[123] After serving on the eastern front, Richard Kandt died in 1918. His collection would take up space among friends until it reached Bremen. Oscar Boeters' collection would occupy space in his widow's apartment near the Übersee-Museum until she donated it just before she died in 1922. Eugen End's collection found its way to relatives in Würzburg after his death that same year, periodically stored at a local trophy weapons shop, a local natural history museum, and finally in the storage depot of the Übersee-Museum Bremen.[124]

Maximilian Weyher, one of the few to survive the war and its tumults, informed the Übersee-Museum that he wished to donate his collection in 1919. According to Weyher, his collection from German East Africa held sentimental value above all else. But his objects were more than mere reminders of German colonialism confronted with its new "colonial context" in postcolonial Germany. Quite simply, Weyher confessed, "[a]ll of these objects are making it exceedingly difficult to find an apartment."[125] Whether they were personal trophies or cultural souvenirs, it didn't matter. The German empire had come home. While colonialism lived on, resonating with German slogans such as a "*Volk ohne Raum*" ['Race without Living Space'],[126] there was often little room for them back home and in their apartments.

The postwar economic austerity of public institutions and the financial crises of the 1920s put the Übersee-Museum Bremen in an unfavorable position to proactively acquire "ethnographic" collections.[127] While many relatives donated trophy collections or "inauthentic" objects – contaminated ostensibly by "Arab" influences, cultural innovation, or mimicry – Director Schauinsland seemed to agree to stockpile them more as an act of condolence than out of genuine scholarly interest. Donated collections usually arrived without information about their contents. Rarely can one find substantial written correspondence or archival documentation regarding an object's provenance or original owners. In ÜM entry

123 StAB, Bremer Stadtarchiv, Die Maus digital database.

124 ÜM, "Afrika" binder, "Schriftwechsel mit der Waffen- und Munitions-Centrale [Frankonia] in Würzburg." According to Nikolaus Hoffmann, the collection of Eugen End had been on loan and stored at the erstwhile "Naturhistorisches Museum" in Würzburg.

125 ÜM 163, vol. 2, "erh. Korr. 1919," Weyher to Übersee-Museum. Also quoted in Briskorn, *Zur Sammlungsgeschichte afrikanischer Ethnografica*, 330; ÜM 511, Aktuelles Eingangsbuch, 1908–1996, 13.09.1919, 220; and ÜM 513, Sachverzeichnis der Völkerkundlichen Sammlung/Abt. B Afrika, 82.

126 The popularized German slogan of a *Volk ohne Raum* ['Race without Living Space'] stems from the bestselling *völkischer* ['colonial racialist'] novel by Hans Grimm first published in 1926.

127 During the 1920s Schauinsland was purportedly unenthusiastic about allocating limited resources for expanding the museum's African collections. Briskorn, *Zur Sammlungsgeschichte afrikanischer Ethnographica*, 80.

books, donated objects arrived as collections, only to be categorically reduced to mere "ethnographica." ÜM inventory lists followed this pattern, and their pages remained empty for decades.[128]

Conversely, the "postcolonial" house cleaning of the interwar period seemed to activate secondhand collectors and auctioneers. In the 1920s, private collectors such as Julius Konietzko could preempt the financially restricted institutions such as the Übersee-Museum and accumulate collection fragments and duplicates of colonial objects in Germany. Envisioning future demand, private collectors acquired homeless objects or partial collections of former colonial officers.[129] Ethnographic middlemen increasingly refashioned object convolutes into ethnic collections from "various German colonial officers," (see Fig. 7) – suggesting authenticity and value – and approached the Übersee-Museum on several occasions in the late 1920s and 1930s. Within this context, especially with the help of colonial revivalism, the Übersee-Museum could belatedly pursue ethnocentric 'collection colonialism' and acquire collections of specific "tribes."[130]

But not until 1936 was the newly renamed Deutsches Kolonial- und Übersee-Museum able to establish a direct connection with what NSDAP Director Roewer continued to refer to as "German East Africa (Tanganyika Territory)."[131] As a remnant of settler colonialism in the highlands of Usambara and Kilimanjaro, the remaining German settlers lamented their tenuous existence in the now British-mandated colony. In 1936, the wife of "farmer" Ludwig Hartmann, whom Roewer referred to as an "*alter Kolonialdeutscher*" ['old colonial German'][132] approached the Übersee-Museum to seek its financial assistance during her visit to her home city of Bremen.[133] On multiple occasions, Ludwig Hartmann emphasized their fi-

128 See also Briskorn, *Zur Sammlungsgeschichte afrikanischer Ethnographica*, 45.

129 Konietzko's sales catalogue for one "Collection of the Massai" whose subtitle states: "The collection was put together by different German colonial officers in the years 1887–1906"; ÜM 511, Aktuelles Eingangsbuch, 1908–1996, 06.1935, 398; see also Briskorn, *Zur Sammlungsgeschichte afrikanischer Ethnographica*, 250.

130 In the mid-1930s, the Übersee-Museum purchased two separate collections from Julius Konietzko of objects that he assembled as "Massai" and "Wagogo" collections. See note 129 for the former. According to Konietzko, the latter collection stemmed from one "German colonial officer" and was acquired during a military campaign: "Feldzug gegen die Wagogo 1893," ÜM 511, Aktuelles Eingangsbuch, 1908–1996, 9.10.1936, 416.

131 In numerous forms and correspondence with various customs' offices (*Überwachungsstellen*), Roewer usually indicated that shipments from Ludwig Hartman were from "Deutsch-Ostafrika (Brit. Mandat Tanganyika Territ.)," ÜM 33, Roewer to Überwachungsstelle für Rauchwaren in Leipzig, 03.08.1937.

132 ÜM 33, Roewer to Customs Office (*Überwachungsstelle für Lederwirtschaft*) in Berlin, 31.01.1939.

133 Briskorn, *Zur Sammlungsgeschichte afrikanischer Ethnographica*, 233.

Fig. 7: "Collection of the Massai," Sales catalog, Julius Konietzko (1930).

nancial ruin because of British land seizures. Subsequent correspondence revealed that Hartmann's "Frau Gemahlin" had propositioned Übersee-Museum assistance in the form of on-demand collecting in East Africa. As both men worked out the details, Ludwig stressed that by 1929, he had already assembled a "very beautiful collection" but complained that he had to compete with several local upstarts contracted by the well-known Hamburg dealer Johann Gustav Umlauff.[134] Eager to secure this rare opportunity, Roewer was emphatic that Hartmann cut all ties to the competing Hamburg enterprise and that he should keep their budding arrangement strictly secret.[135] The extensive yet mostly blank inventory pages allotted for objects that Hartmann would be sending to Bremen attest not only to Roewer's willingness to accommodate Hartmann's wish to receive "*recht umfangreiche Aufträge*" ['amply large-scale orders'] from Bremen, but the empty

134 ÜM 33, Hartmann to Weißenborn, 14.09.1936.
135 ÜM 33, Roewer to Hartmann, 24.12.1936.

catalog attests to the importance Roewer ascribed to the rare opportunity to collect biological and cultural specimens from East Africa directly.[136]

In January 1939, the Deutsches Kolonial- und Übersee-Museum received two installments of "Diverse Ethnographica, Massai."[137] Director Roewer wrote a letter to Hartmann in Moshi, East Africa, to confirm the arrival of his shipment of ten more objects from the Steppe and Pare Mountains just south of Kilimanjaro. Roewer was unimpressed with the inauthentic "*Massaisachen*" ['Massai things'] collected by the struggling Hartmann, as they "were essentially quite new in origin."[138] Nonetheless, the director of the Deutsches Kolonial-Museum unwaveringly pulled all strings imaginable in support of the German settler: He cleared Hartmann's substantial debts in Berlin and abroad, routed funds furtively through Nazi party channels to Moshi, East Africa, and wrote copiously to multiple state agencies on his behalf. For Roewer, it was a simple matter of course to "save" an ethnic German without land and occupied by a foreign colonial power. Unfortunately, he didn't see the irony.

5 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that colonial collections reflect a two-fold history of German colonial expansion and cultural accumulation. The chapter diverges slightly from the tendency of postcolonial researchers to portray colonial acquisitions as reflections of uneven power relations. By reinserting the centrality of race for colonialism – and for acts of violence or threats thereof – the chapter stresses that colonial collections were acquired and constructed through racialized power relations. During what I refer to as 'trophy colonialism,' one of two overarching collecting contexts, the chapter showed that military collecting followed and reproduced a crude pattern of colonial othering and racial dualism. However, this chapter's focus on the collections of over a dozen German colonial officers shows how evolving colonial situations and increasingly differentiated conceptions of African diversity shaped military collecting practices. It also shows how the Maji Maji war and the emergence of 'scientific colonialism' ushered in particularized approaches to colonial occupation and collecting, namely what I refer to as 'collection colonialism.' It was not only a collecting context but a con-

136 ÜM 33, Roewer to Hartmann, 24.12.1936.

137 The events of 1939 limited this new enterprise to the following transactions: ÜM 511, Aktuelles Eingangsbuch, 1908–1996, 30.10.1937, 431. Compare with ÜM 513, Sachverzeichnis der Völkerkundlichen Sammlung/Abt. B Afrika, 275.

138 ÜM 33, Roewer to Hartmann, 31.01.1939.

text of museum acquisitions and scientific othering. Perhaps short-lived in Africa, this latter development became a dominant and long-lasting program that reified hierarchies of racial and ethnic differentiation.

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Outlook

Flower Manase

‘Terms’ of Trade, and the Acquisition of Cultural Properties. A Reflection from Tanzania on Terminology in European Museums

1 Introduction

Over the past ten years, cultural institutions and museums have been encouraged to change their exhibition narratives as part of efforts to confront the legacy of colonialism. In addressing this matter, many museums in Europe, especially in France and later Germany, started to face their respective colonial pasts by calling for collaborations with their former colonies and engaging in solo or joint provenance research on relevant cultural objects. The prevailing European/African debates on the restitution of cultural objects to their communities of origin have further evolved. In response, certain European museums are actively examining their collections, with some currently presenting the first findings of their museum database research and collaborative provenance research.

Museum databases rely heavily on inventory records to refer to sources and provenances of colonial cultural objects. In most of these cases, database documentation refers to “trade/exchange” and “gifts” as modes of acquisition or how they were presented by collectors to museums.[1]

However, prior to ongoing restitution debates and provenance research of colonial objects such terminologies were never seen as a problematic issue. In this chapter the discussion revolves around critically questioning the colonial acquisition concepts of “trade” and/or “gifts.” To this end, it is essential to highlight that the cultural properties under discussion were collected during German colonial rule in the late nineteenth century, a context marked by violence. Museums in Europe acquired such objects and sometimes engaged in the business of buying cultural artefacts through military plunder, trade of looted objects and antiquities,

1 As Dan Hicks puts it: “These museums are filled with cultural heritage from Africa and across the Global South and American First Nations, taken under the conditions of duress that were ever-present under colonialism. . . . With no hint of irony, in the first week of class each year, we anthropologists and museum curators introduce our students to the field of material culture studies through the foundational concept of ‘the gift.’ . . . And yet those institutions that anthropology has built for material culture research are filled with objects that have not been given, but taken.” Hicks, *The Brutish Museums*, 18–24.

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donations and purchases from smugglers, dealers, auction houses, and collectors.[2] Therefore, to avoid a misconceived use of such concepts, it is important to understand their historical background and contextual meaning. The colonial history and development of social relationships in colonized territories raise questions about whether it was manifested as an all-encompassing "systematic colonization" to the extent that it structured trade, gift-giving and the exchange of cultural objects among the colonizers and the colonized.

Even if we accept information in museum databases on the modes of acquisition of cultural properties to be true – even though it is often still based on the documentation of colonial collectors –, the question remains as to whether colonial trade was fair, equal, and consensual in the case of European buyers and African sellers. Furthermore, in the context of gift-giving, it is crucial to scrutinize the erstwhile social relations between East African communities and colonial administrators.

I argue that it is fruitful to interrogate central concepts such as "gifts" or "purchases" and to contrast them with a historical analysis of the environments in which cultural objects and materials were exchanged and which were not free of force or coercion. I put forward the hypothesis that trade exchanges would have led to the creation of a broader social demographic of African higher and lower middle classes had the situation been otherwise. That the situation was in fact one of great inequality of power and access to resources has long been confirmed by historical research, which I assess in this chapter. However, I also consider the possibility of "gifts" being exchanged among the affluent African upper class and colonial administrators. Nevertheless, the essay recognizes the prevalence of illicit colonial trade involving cultural properties in colonial contexts.[3] My aim is to show that it is imperative that provenance research take this seriously when operating with concepts coined as part of colonial discourse. I ground these arguments in a broader reflection on current debates on provenance research and the restitution of "objects from colonial contexts."

2 See, for instance, Oswald, *Working Through Colonial Collections*, 234; Kim, "Colonial Plunder and the Failure of Restitution in Postwar Korea," 609.

3 Roodt, "Restitution of Art and Cultural Objects and Its Limits."

2 Contested Museum Acquisitions and the Restitution of Colonial Objects

The restitution debate is built on how much information is shared among the parties concerned, including proper information surrounding the question of colonial acquisitions of cultural objects. For the past 20 years the restitution and decolonization debates in Germany have revolved around the question of objects' ownership in museum storage facilities. In 2018, the German Museums Association provided a set of guidelines for German museums to facilitate provenance research of objects from "colonial contexts."[4] In addition, the German government offered funding for provenance research projects between German museums and communities of origin in Africa. Most museums holding collections with colonial origins were called on to revamp their internal databases and collection inventories. In response, the majority of museums indicated the challenges they have faced due to a lack of proper documentation not only within their established museum databases in general, but specifically lamenting the dearth of archival source materials.[5] The lack of internal museum documentation has made it easier over the years for museums to look the other way in the face of uncomfortable possibilities, namely, that many of their collections from Africa had been acquired as a result of colonial violence and plunder. Employing convenient phrases such as "lack of acquisition context" is to simply shy away from tackling the apparent issues, and of returning items of colonial heritage to their owners. The politics of restitution and the conscious neglect of ethical concerns about returning looted objects from colonial contexts has re-occurred in state relations between former colonizers and colonized since the end of the Second World War.[6]

In this chapter, I claim that restitution debates should question the institutional frameworks of museums and their day to day undertakings in relation to provenance research. These are supposedly designed to lead to restitution and not just to new exhibitions. There should be a prerequisite condition – in terms of expected results and mutual benefits – to consider throughout the process of undertaking provenance research in former colonies. Provenance research should

4 German Museum Association, *Guidelines for German Museums*.

5 Despite museum staff's efforts, colonial authorities rarely provided details about objects sent to Berlin's Museum. This lack of information suggests that Berlin's Africa collections were predominantly acquired through colonial practices, contrasting with scientific collecting; see Oswald, "Troubling Colonial Epistemologies in Berlin's Ethnologisches Museum," 116.

6 "While calls for the opening of inventories have been voiced publicly . . . efforts to render the collections' histories transparent and accessible have been pushed further since my departure from the museum in 2015." Oswald, "Troubling Colonial Epistemologies in Berlin's Ethnologisches Museum," 123. For the open letter Oswald is refering to see "Öffnet die Inventare!"

not be taken as another way of making indigenous knowledge leave its countries or states of origin as it was with anthropological works and the looting of "objects" in colonial times. Provenance research should instead address related social issues and allow enquiries into the process and its results from states of origin. The experts and communities from the states of origin should be allowed a postcolonial self-determination on such projects and the associated meaning of their own heritage.[7] On the other hand, host institutions need to be transparent in sharing the background information on how museums have acquired and kept such objects, for instance by providing reports on the lists of objects that were acquired from colonial states but in turn were destroyed in the World Wars, stolen from museums, or damaged due to improper conservation procedures.[8]

Acknowledging the complexity of the restitution process, the debates are transitioning from professional and ethical considerations to the realm of soft power politics and economic relationships. This transition is reflected in the signed bilateral cooperation agreements between colonizing powers and formerly colonized states. These political and economic atmospheres overshadow the issues of cultural heritage and particularly of restitution by forming a very bureaucratic structure in the chain of command that renders most of the well-intentioned museum experts, cultural practitioners, activists, and diaspora communities powerless. The politics of cultural heritage play a significant role in creating a division among the states of origin and their own communities when it comes to restitution. This strategy promotes direct communication from museums and institutions with communities (non-expert groups). In this approach, one partner (European partners) keeps their motives for cooperation confidential, while portraying the other partner (communities of origin) as having misguided ambitions.

Despite the absence of concrete, officially defined "African restitution principles," there should be a respectful way of approaching communities and states of origin. Space should be given to decide independently what to restitute and for

7 Kim, "Colonial Plunder and the Failure of Restitution in Postwar Korea," 609.

8 "We wanted to visually implement our argument by installing the objects in their storage setting. More particularly, we planned to display the objects in the exact way in which we had first encountered them. . . . With strings attached to their heads, around their bodies, and with object labels wrapped around their necks, the figures were dangling inside the museum storage cupboards. . . . This image of the lynched object, deprived of life by its move to the museum and kept like this for decades. . . . However, one conservator was shocked when we talked about our plans: the way of storing the objects was obviously derogatory according to basic standards. The conservator claimed that there was a risk of losing a good reputation if colleagues were to see that the objects were stored like this in the Ethnological Museum. The following day, we found the objects arranged in new boxes, wrapped in silky, acid-free paper, laid down horizontally to prevent any damage from hanging, and protected from light." Oswald, *Working Through Colonial Collections*, 220.

what purposes and when to do so. In the case of restitution demands on national heritage, proposals to merely reproduce a cast or copy (e.g., of the Tendaguru dinosaur from Tanzania) or to simply "loan" ethnographic objects as a gesture toward mutual exchange and restitution appears protective of the reputation of states of origin and could stir internal political divisions.[9] In general, on the side of former colonizers there still exists a hubris in power relations towards former colonized states, as well as archaic dichotomizing notions of worldly European metropoles contrasted by the supposedly primitive and backward "states of nature." These notions find their unsavory continuities in the unethical procedures of restitution; simply put, the former imperial metropolises of Berlin, Paris, and London market themselves as ideal-types of the "global city," whereby they privilege their so-called "global audiences" (e.g., visitors to their museums of world cultures) over the returning of museum loot to their rightful owners/homes.[10]

Many of Germany's partnership projects with states and communities of origin – particularly those affiliated with the Humboldt Forum – are hardly succeeding in correcting colonial wrongs while they replicate imperial rule in the partnership process. The always reiterated question of where to return, who to ask, and who should receive "colonial loot" are remarkably odd considerations that reflect the influence of imperial soft power, as the same institutions keep signing national contracts and working with states/communities of origin in multiple projects. In the context of heritage politics, it is important to note that restitution processes can be emotionally charged; therefore, both parties should consider the sensitivity surrounding decisions and procedures made for the sake of respective communities.[11] I strongly believe, as do others, that restitution demands should not only stimulate further partnership, but they should also position communities of origin at the center of mutual benefit.[12]

As the restitution of cultural heritage to national museums arguably replicates colonial frameworks, it is important to note that the liberation of African countries went hand in hand with the rebuilding and redefining of national museums to gain the acceptance of local communities.[13] Since independence in 1961, for instance, Tanzania has been using cultural heritage to unify Tanzanians that were divided into "tribes" and "ethnicities" in colonial times. Colonialism and practices of rule have used heritage to promote conceptions of African inferiority and primitivism. Therefore, liberation movements and post-colonial discourse in heritage centers, especially in museums, have been focused on undoing the long-

9 Jones, "Restitution," 152.
10 Jones, "Restitution," 156.
11 Jones, "Restitution," 151.
12 See Jones, "Restitution."
13 See Manase, "Museum of the Future."

term colonial legacies of anthropology on our cultural heritage. The management of cultural heritage in the Tanzanian network of national museums continues to play a role in nation-building and redefining state identity. In contrast to some provenance research projects, they avoid the reproduction of cultural structures.

In the context of unifying the country, I believe, Tanzania and its communities should be allowed to use the restitution process to reconcile and heal their colonial pasts, while using "restituted cultural materials" to help strengthen national identity among younger and future generations. Astonishingly, most Tanzanian civilians and political leaders are aware of the national significance of their Tendaguru dinosaur, located in the National History Museum in Berlin, and have repeatedly demanded its restitution.[14] Yet few Tanzanians (non-experts) are aware of the existence and whereabouts of ancestral human remains, ethnographic objects, and related natural history collections in Europe.[15]

Despite restitution challenges, much has been achieved in terms of raising awareness among Tanzanian communities about their cultural heritage stored away in Europe and especially in Germany. The initiation of collaborative projects and joint work among museums – and increasingly by universities – activists and diaspora communities in Tanzania and Germany have already raised awareness in regions such as Dar es Salaam, Kilimanjaro, Arusha, Iringa, and Ruvuma about the existence of their cultural heritage in Germany's former colonial museums. For instance, the mobile exhibition project by Flinn Works about cultural heritage from the regions of Kilimanjaro and Meru (Arusha) was a collaboration between the Ethnological Museum of Berlin, the National Museum of Tanzania, and the University of Dar es Salaam, in addition to the Humboldt Forum partnership exhibition project with the Tanzanian government through the National Museum of Tanzania. Other efforts are seen through university scholarships for master's and doctoral level research, conferences, workshops, and provenance research with specific communities or states of origin.

Yet with all the collective efforts, there has been no public report on returning/restitution of colonial looted objects or dubiously "traded" objects from Ger-

14 See Ubwani, "Tanzania Tendaguru dinosaur site gets World heritage nomination."

15 "The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), 'Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums,' issued in October 2005, with the explicit support of the National Museum Directors' Conference and the Museums Association recognized that 'some [human remains] were acquired between 100 and 200 years ago from Indigenous peoples in colonial circumstances, where there was a very uneven divide of power' and recommended meticulous provenance research with open public access to the resulting information. It also provided a step-by-step guide to dealing with claims for return." Jones, "Restitution," 158. For the document cited by Jones see Department for Culture, Media and Sport, *Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums*.

many to Tanzania. As a provenance researcher, I have witnessed very little interest in Germany in dealing with colonial loot in private museums and collections, such as objects in smaller museums under municipalities, in Christian missions or in dealer galleries. On a basic level, Germany has not yet determined to prioritize the return of ancestral remains as a moral obligation and finally showcase the so-called "friendly partnerships" that German institutions are so eager to publicize. The successful restitution of colonial material back to African countries will only be possible if it becomes a national agenda for Germany. The return of colonial loot must also involve a collective responsibility not only for government institutions but especially for private institutions and individual collectors, dealers, and traders.

At the root of all this is the knowledge about the provenance of objects. Here, everything rests on the categorization of the terms of the exchange: "gift," "purchase" or "robbery." In the following, I will question the very notion of gift and purchase, making some observations on the trade and its forms in East Africa prior and in the early days of German colonial rule.

3 Complexities of East Africa's Precolonial Trade

Prior to the Berlin conference of 1884/1885, sub-Saharan Africa had not yet been mapped according to European standards of political boundaries and modern territorial states.[16] The early archaeological findings and writings referred to the land according to its geographical location; Tanganyika was known as part of East Africa and through the Indian Ocean neighboring Arabia, Persia, and India.[17] The Bantu speaking communities in East Africa were agriculturalists, fishermen, and pastoralists.[18] Some cultural groups like Nyamwezi (Tanzania), Kamba (Kenya) and Yao (Tanzania and Mozambique) engaged in diverse economic activities, specializing in trade following the demands of goods and services among other social cultural groups.[19] Pre-colonial trade in the East Africa region manifested into two categories: First, the local trade within the interior that started in the form of barter trade and later developed into long distance trade to include the hinterland and the coastal region; second, there were the international trade links between the coast and the Far East regions of Persia, Arabia, and India via the Indian ocean coast.

16 See Chami and Msemwa, *New Look at Culture and Trade on the Azanian Coast*.
17 Clarke, *A Short History of Tanganyika*, 10.
18 See Chami and Msemwa, *A New Look at Culture and Trade on the Azanian*.
19 See Clarke, *A Short History of Tanganyika*.

Trade with Far East countries involved early traders from, amongst others, the Assyrians, Phoenicians, Chinese, Arabs, Egyptians, and Indonesians who visited the East African Indian Ocean coast with the assistance of monsoon winds and dhows.[20]

The early travelers and traders from the Greek and Roman empires had participated in the trade on the coast of East Africa since the early antiquity. The economic development of the early trade is evidenced in archaeological materials of towns and cities that were developed out of such trade including the early pre-Islamic towns of fourth century "Rhapta" and "Azania."[21] The Greeks and Romans are mentioned as having visited these developed trading centers through the Indian Ocean and Mediterranean Sea around 500 A.D.[22] In the fifteenth century, Kilwa Kisiwani, Mafia, and Sofala emerged as important settlements and (Islamic) trading centers under "Afro-Arabs."[23] The rise of "Kilwa" as an important trading center in East Africa came as the result of the control of the Sofala gold trade in the fourteenth century.[24] By that time, as the trading center of East Africa, Sofala extended trade in gold via the sea with Mogadishu city in Somalia, which can be identified as a cultural center, and trade routes were connected to Zimbabwe.[25] The records of the famous Arab traveler, Ibn Battuta, who had already been in East Africa by 1332, depicted Kilwa as the commercial center of the coast dominating the Mafia Islands, Mozambique Island, and Kerimba Island (south of Cape Delgado).[26] At that time there was enormous competition within and from the outside for Kilwa to maintain her position of commercial dominance. Later, Mombasa and Lamu began developing into trading centers on the East African coast. On the other hand, Eurocentric literature documents the Indian Ocean trade – and particularly the Islamic trading centers – as isolated from the interior, and the early coastal civilizations is credited to Persians and not Africans.[27] For instance the great town of Kilwa under "Afro-Arabs" is mentioned as more connected with Arabia and the Persian Gulf. Apart from Kilwa there is archaeological evidence from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries showing other developed East Africa settlements and trading towns such as Kaole (Bagamoyo), Utondwe (Wami river), Tongoni (Tanga), Kunduchi (Dar es Salaam), Ras Malibe, Mbwamaji, and Kisiju (Rufiji). The historical accounts of these towns suggest

20 Marsh and Kingsnorth, *An Introduction to the History of East Africa*, 1.
21 See Chami and Msemwa, *New Look at Culture and Trade on the Azanian Coast.*
22 See Clarke, *A Short History of Tanganyika*, 14.
23 Alpers, "The Coast and the Development of the Caravan Trade," 35.
24 Alpers, "The Coast and the Development of the Caravan Trade," 37.
25 Alpers, "The Coast and the Development of the Caravan Trade," 37–38.
26 Alpers, "The Coast and the Development of the Caravan Trade," 37 and 39.
27 Alpers, "The Coast and the Development of the Caravan Trade," 37 and 39.

trading links might have been developed with major commercial centers on the East African coast including Kilwa and Zanzibar by the fifteenth century.[28]

Nineteenth-century European literature outlines how coastal trade in East Africa had been interfered with the Europeans since the fifteenth century. The Portuguese waged war with so-called "natives" and coastal traders in order to take control of commerce after the French benefited from the slave trade for their East Africa island plantations in Mauritius and Madagascar.[29] European contacts in the region contributed to the collapse of coastal civilizations and the development of trade in the interior.[30] East African civilization was also shaped by the concept of "intermarriages" of Africans and foreigners, such as Persians and Arabs.[31] As a result, Swahili communities and the Swahili civilization emerged as a coastal identity. The idea of wealth creation and material accumulation through trade (capitalism) infused the new type of trade (slavery) in the interior. The slave trade was conducted in the interior by some African chiefs in the context of kingdom and chiefdom expansionism, whereas alliances and commercial relationships were formed with Arabs and coastal Swahili traders.[32] In East Africa the concept of wealth, accomplishment, and formation of stronger kingdoms economically, politically, and socially depended highly on trade (e.g., gold, ivory, and slaves) and war. By the eighteenth century, the slave trade proved to be more beneficial than the existing barter trade not only to powerful African kingdoms but also to major dealers like Arabs and international buyers who were European, especially the French and Portuguese.[33]

All the historical evidence of East Africa's pre-colonial trade is embedded within the Swahili civilization and its cultures in terms of architecture, blended families, languages, and cultural properties. Arabic and Swahili architectural styles can currently be found in the early coastal settlements of Kilwa, Sofala, Pate, Mombasa, Zanzibar, Dar es Salaam (Kunduchi), and Bagamoyo (Kaole).[34] East African trade and civilizations started to collapse following the arrival of European expeditions in Africa by the nineteenth century. Those expeditions were followed by the "scramble for Africa" and the convening of the Berlin conference

28 Alpers, "The Coast and the Development of the Caravan Trade," 37 and 39.

29 Alpers, "The Coast and the Development of the Caravan Trade," 37 and 39; and Campbell, "The East African Slave Trade, 1861–1895," 1–26.

30 See Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa.*

31 Marsh and Kingsnorth, *An Introduction to the History of East Africa*, 9; and see Clarke, *A Short History of Tanganyika.*

32 Alpers, *The East African Slave Trade*, 23.

33 See Collister, *The Last Days of Slavery.*

34 See Clarke, *A Short History of Tanganyika.*

in 1884/1885 among the Europeans powers.[35] The aftermath of colonization has been studied by scholars of Africa in the twentieth century who argued that European colonization in the nineteenth century marked the beginning of the underdevelopment of Africa in the social, political, and economic spheres.[36]

4 Social Connections and Commercial Exchanges of "cultural properties" in German East Africa

As has been shown, East Africa had strong commercial ties within and beyond the Indian Ocean.[37] The trade exchange expanded to include the international trading systems with commerce from abroad with local traders on the coast and in the interior of present-day Tanzania and Kenya.[38] Trade connections and caravan routes were also developed to reach trade centers in present-day Angola, Malawi, Kenya, Zambia, Rwanda, Uganda, Mozambique, Congo (Kinshasa), and Burundi.[39] The trade goods were mainly commercial items for domestic usage, military purposes (defense), ammunition, ivory, and slaves.[40] It should be noted that trade in the East African territories that would be colonized by imperial Germany and Great Britain was carried out by both foreigners and locals, such as the Nyamwezi and Yao, between the interior and the coast.[41] Numerous traders were also chiefs who controlled and benefited from trade within their regions.[42] For instance, historical accounts prior to the German colonization of East Africa in the nineteenth century depict African leaders (chiefs), renowned traders, and controllers of trade within their areas of jurisdiction.[43] In most cases, relationships developed in the process of trade exchange were connected to authorities, independence, and sovereignties.[44]

Early German colonization through traders and trading companies conflicted with local trade interests and existing commercial exchange. Imperial expansion and the colonial administration of East Africa following the Berlin conference

35 See Förster, Mommsen, and Robinson, *Bismarck, Europe and Africa*.
36 See Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*.
37 Glassman, *Feasts and Riot*, 29.
38 See Alpers, "The Coast and the Development of the Caravan Trade."
39 See Alpers, "The Coast and the Development of the Caravan Trade."
40 See Roberts, "Political Change in the Nineteenth Century."
41 Roberts, "Political Change in the Nineteenth Century," 61; and Owens "The Shomvi," 727.
42 See Owens, "The Shomvi."
43 See Owens, "The Shomvi"; and see Ingham, *A History of East Africa*.
44 For instance, the Pazi's (administrators) of the coastal region of Bagamoyo received tributes from traders in his territory. Owens, "The Shomvi," 727.

rested with the German East Africa Company (DOAG).[45] The feebleness of the German company in its administration capacity was revealed through the company's leaders and traders, i.e., Carl Peters and colleagues, who prioritized their own trading interests over colonial state affairs and administration.[46] As a result of this unethical and problematic administration, the DOAG formed a plan of war in Bagamoyo which was coordinated by the coastal traders. The Abushiri resistance (1888–1889) was the first anti-colonial war to emerge in the coastal area of Dar es Salaam, Bagamoyo, and Panganihen followed by other passive and active forms of resistance in the interior which later culminated in the Maji Maji resistances between 1905 and 1907.[47] The atmosphere of colonial antagonism manifested in attacks on German-funded caravans from the coast to the interior by powerful chiefs, i.e., Mkwawa of Hehe.[48]

5 Gifts or Purchases? An Interrogation of the "concepts" of Colonial Acquisition of Cultural Properties in the Former Colony of German East Africa

Discussions on the possibilities of "object acquisitions" point out the question of colonial violence as part of the colonial intrusion. Considering the uncertain nature of trade and commerce, this chapter cross-examines the question of the acquisition of cultural heritage in "colonial contexts,"[49] particularly the period of German colonization in East Africa (1884–1919).

45 For clarity and to avoid confusion, I use the familiar abbreviation (DOAG) for the company's original name: *Deutsch-Ostafrikanische Gesellschaft*.

46 "Colonialism was not a uniform process but varied regarding when it occurred, where it occurred and who was the colonizing power . . . colonization manifested itself in a great variety of ways. The three main forms of colonies were settlement colonies, trade and military enclaves, and exploitation colonies." German Museums Association, *Guidelines for German Museums*, 24.

47 See Ingham, *A History of East Africa*; and see Gwassa, "The German Intervention and African Resistance in Tanzania."

48 See Redmayne, "Mkwawa and the Hehe Wars."

49 "The term 'colonial context' describes much more than 'only' formal colonial rule, such as German or British, French, or Dutch colonial rule. Colonial context did not end in 1918/19 when the German Empire lost its colonies. Nor did they end in 1960s with the decolonization of large parts of Africa. Furthermore, they did not begin in 1884, but all the way back in the 15th century when the European explored the world." German Museum Association, *Guidelines for German Museums*, 26.

Contrary to the information circulated by colonial sources such as inventory books, the history of collecting African cultural heritage during German colonial rule in East Africa was linked more often to colonial violence than to trade.[50] However, there is an acknowledgement in the documentation relating to the acquisition of cultural properties in the context of evangelism (missions) and colonial relationships.[51] The term "cultural properties" in this chapter is broadly defined to encompass a diversity of mediums: wood, iron, metal, fabric pieces; human remains, i.e., hair, nails; materials with animal remains, i.e., skins, feathers; carvings, masks, ancestral figures, power figures, funeral figures, ceremonial dresses, weaving, household equipment, and crafts that were already in use or in possession by certain individuals or cultures.[52] These cultural properties were/are seen to reflect social, political and economic activities of the existing cultural groups or community setups.

To further interrogate the acquisition concepts of "purchases" and "gifts," this chapter explores current provenance research findings on the colonial cultural properties from the former colony of German East Africa.

There have been provenance research findings that contradict the colonial documentation of the acquisition of cultural properties. The provenance of one piece of the Maji Maji war loot in the Berlin Ethnological Museum was presented as part of the Humboldt Lab Tanzania project. The object, a "great drum" weighing 37 kilos and inscribed with a Kiswahili epigraph in Arabic lettering was presented to the Berlin Museum in 1897 by the former governor of German East Africa, Herman von Wissmann.[53] The drum was highly valued by curators while in exhibitions and no one questioned its provenance since it was donated by such a prominent figure. The context of the acquisition or ownership of the drum by the former German colonial administrator was attributed to friendly colonial relationships with locals. However, the presented provenance findings reveal that the "valuable and beautiful drum" could be a war flag drum.[54] As Felix von Luschan noted in 1897, the drum was likely used in

> very special and important occasions, like the outbreak of war or upon the death of a ruler, and otherwise stored with care, shrouded and guarded like holy relics[;] . . . the loss of a drum during the battle would be considered the worst calamity. . . . All the more evident however is the value of this unique, magnificent specimen, in more than one respect, that certainly dates back to one of the indigenous sultans who ruled over Mrima in preceding century.[55]

50 See, for example, Hege's chapter in this volume.

51 See Silvester, "The Africa Accessioned Network."

52 See Silvester, "The Africa Accessioned Network."

53 Ivanov and Weber-Sinn, "Collecting Mania and Violence," 66–148.

54 Ivanov and Weber-Sinn, "Collecting Mania and Violence," 93–94.

55 See Luschan, *Beiträge zur Völkerkunde der deutschen Schutzgebiete*, 64, as cited in Ivanov and Weber-Sinn, "Collecting Mania and Violence," 93–94.

Due to the sensitivity of the drum and its contextual functions, this kind of instrument appeared to have been used to protect the whole community during interactions with foreigners for trade exchange or through long route trade caravans. According to the provenance research (Humboldt Lab Tanzania project), the drum was attributed to be collected during 1888 and 1890 in the coastal region of present-day Tanzania.[56] However, this was the time when Herman von Wissmann was involved in suppressing the Abushiri resistances against DOAG.

The acquisition of colonial objects was often seen as evidence of evangelism's success in converting "pagans" from traditional belief systems.[57] Missionaries were to send cultural objects as evidence of the impact of Christianity in Africa.[58] The early established missions were the British Protestant missionary societies, the Evangelical missionary society for German East Africa, the Berlin Missionary society, and the Evangelical Lutheran mission of Leipzig.[59] Before the end of German rule in East Africa, there were German Catholic and Protestant missions in Moshi, Tanga, West Usambara, Uzaramo, Konde, Uhehe, Nyamwezi, Nyasa, Kilimanjaro, and Meru. Christianity as well as missionaries seem to have played significant roles in the acquisition of cultural objects because, on the one side, they gained community trust and on the other side confiscated cultural properties from new converts.[60] Missionaries assumed spiritual roles and sometimes political and administrative roles in making sure Africans submitted to European authority. It is through their multi-engagement in different roles that enabled missionaries to act as educators and collectors of African cultural objects, especially those with spiritual significance. Missionaries like Bruno Gutmann (1876–1966) acted as ethnographers in Kilimanjaro, Moshi, where he recorded through photographs, manuscripts, and books the Chagga lifestyle, cultural practices, and material culture.[61] Religion was used by missionaries to suppress local African resistance to colonial administrations.[62] Conversion to Christianity was largely a

56 Ivanov and Weber-Sinn, "Collecting Mania and Violence," 94.

57 Silvester, "The Africa Accessioned Network."

58 Eckert, "Missionary Work and Colonialism in Tanzania," 322–327.

59 Eckert, "Missionary Work and Colonialism in Tanzania," 322–327. It is interesting to note that missionaries often spent their lives in colonies even after independence and continued to collect and document Africa. After the end of German colonialism, German missionaries returned to what was now officially renamed as "Tanganyika" in 1925 and continued acquiring cultural property under the new British colonial regime.

60 Eckert, "Missionary Work and Colonialism in Tanzania," 322.

61 Eckert, "Missionary Work and Colonialism in Tanzania," 325.

62 This not only refers to German colonialism, but also to the ensuing phase of British colonialism.

strategy for countering the influence of African spiritualism, which colonists considered to be a catalyst to local resistance.

Missionary strategies included the application of pressure and supervision of African systems of worship, while also teaching about the "horror afterlife" of pagans.[63] German missionaries deemed traditional African worship to be exceedingly "primitive" since it lacked the concepts of salvation, resurrection, and messianic return.[64] In many respects, Christianity was associated with the confiscation of cultural property from the new converts, and as colonial resistance was linked to some of the cultural properties, hence missionaries taking them away was a way of weakening African belief systems and ideologies of divine protection from colonial harm. For instance, the reasons for the rise of a major colonial resistance movement, i.e., Maji Maji among the Ngindo and Ngoni communities were links to spiritual beliefs in traditional religions.[65] Sometimes the missionaries were trying to balance Christian motives with those interests of colonial government in the exploitation of economic, natural, and cultural resources.[66] However, the spiritual conquest manifested new colonial orders that limited the performance of medicine men, spiritual, and religious leaders, and at times coerced community members to convert to Christianity. The traditional education system was replaced with formal education that also impacted the development of traditional knowledge and education systems. Much of the missionary work in the colonies led to the founding of the field of African studies and a linguistic documentation of the diversity of local languages. Missionary interest in documenting and acquiring East African material culture, however, significantly contributed to colonial epistemologies and racist theories that dehumanized Africans. There is a considerable number of works by missionaries that name/rename the cultural groups by "tribal names" and advocate for colonial boundaries among the states and communities. Missionaries often submitted investigative reports and documentation, comprised of notes mapping social groups in the colonies and indicating names, locations, and organization of "tribes," population statistics, weapons and warfare capabilities, wealth and traditions, language, housing, and economic activities.[67]

In post-colonial discourse, it is important to question the legality of the acquisition of cultural objects in a context of peace, friendship gifts or trade. The uncer-

63 See Larson, "The Ngindo."

64 Best, "Godly, International, and Independent," 588–589.

65 Larson, "The Ngindo," 78–84.

66 Beidelman, "Contradictions between the Sacred and the Secular Life," 77.

67 Beidelman, "Contradictions between the Sacred and the Secular Life," 77.

tainty of trade as the source of acquisition points to the larger question of how collectors get hold of objects when their community owners are in a state of grievance. The acquisition question is further problematic because of a lack of proper documentation of collectors purchases and the controversial historical relationship among the communities and colonizing powers. The order to collect and document objects from colonial crime scenes has to a large extent undermined the question of faith and value, while presenting African cultural objects as nonprogressive. The monetary value and price tags placed upon the objects by European collectors may not necessarily reflect the spiritual values and meaning of such objects to the communities of origin.

The ethical and equal exchange of trade goods and cultural properties between the colonized and the colonial state or institutions in Germany is highly questionable. The manipulation of colonial governments (under the auspices of DOAG) and flipping of African pre-colonial trade remains the only existing explanation of how collectors acquired objects through trade. The monetary market introduced by German colonial rule facilitated an unequal exchange of goods including agricultural produce, i.e., food, sisals, rubber, and other cultural and natural goods sometimes through markets halls (*Markthallenzwang*) in colonies.[68]

The acquisition of cultural goods for European institutions was undertaken not only by Christian missionaries but also by a multitude of European scientists in the nineteenth century. For instance, academic associations such as the Berlin Society for Anthropology, Ethnology, and Prehistory, or the Commission for Geographic Exploration of the German Protectorates (*Kommission für die Landeskundliche Erforschung der deutschen Schutztgebiete*) played significant roles in the colonial project as they increasingly organized and established scientific (collecting) expeditions in Africa.[69]

Scientific research in the late nineteenth century benefitted from colonial models in territories and the colonial office in Berlin.[70] The intersection of science and the state not only facilitated travel and access to colonies in Africa, it also enabled the substantial acquisition of material culture.[71] It was a privilege of the colonial office in Berlin to facilitate the acquisition of African cultural properties by tasking colonial officers in territories to support or directly engage in colonial

68 Koponen, *Development for Exploitation*, 186.
69 See Lewis, "Anthropology and Colonialism."
70 See Lewis, "Anthropology and Colonialism."
71 See Koponen, *Development for Exploitation*.

scientific investigations/collections and expeditions.[72] A high number of collectors were both scientists and military officers engaging in military expeditions against anti-colonial resistance in East Africa.

The newly established (colonial) scientific disciplines of anthropology, ethnology, and archaeology are linked to the study of "material culture" and "materialization" that developed racist (racial) scientific theories of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[73] Colonialism as a socio-economic and political event played a significant role in founding the colonial scientific disciplines by supplying necessary cultural materials of the so-called "primitive societies."[74] The pervasive racist theories were representing and shaping the thinking and understanding of colonized territories. In the museological view of a "primitive society," culture was viewed in relation to how cultural objects were produced, destroyed, and salvaged.[75] Anthropology thus played a significant role in fostering and cementing colonial ideologies through their anti-humanist tendencies and "empirical" methods (such as their "collecting mania" for human remains).[76] The cultural materials were salvaged, i.e., collected in the name of saving the so-called "primitive cultures" of the world from disappearing due to colonization.[77]

During colonial expansion and expeditions to Africa, which was considered "exotic," private collectors (art dealers) chose to collect or steal cultural objects as memorabilia and for purposes of sale.[78] The colonial administrators such as Carl Peters and von Wissmann used the opportunity of anti-colonial resistances in the coast of Dar es Salaam, Pangani, and Kilwa to employ a militant group as collectors of trophies.[79] Military trophies were not necessarily linked with scientific studies or the idea of preserving them for the future but rather for personal ambitions and what is referred today as a "collecting mania."[80] The religious leaders, particularly the missionaries, who were sent to territories were collecting evidence of vindication and scientists were only collecting scientific specimens of

72 See Ivanov and Weber-Sinn, "Collecting Mania and Violence." See chapter in this volume by Hege, and especially his discussion of top-down orders for all military officers to "collect" ethnographic objects for Berlin.

73 See Harrison, "An Artefact of Colonial Desire?"

74 See Lewis, "Anthropology and Colonialism."

75 See Hicks, *The Brutish Museums.*

76 See Lewis, "Anthropology and Colonialism."

77 See Lewis, "Anthropology and Colonialism"; and Hicks, *The Brutish Museums.*

78 See Van Beurden, "Colonial Objects in Trade and in Private Ownership."

79 See the chapter by Hege in this volume for a differentiation between military collecting, or "trophy colonialism," and collecting professionalization that accompanied territorial expansion.

80 See Ivanov and Weber-Sinn, "Collecting Mania and Violence."

their interests.[81] There were other collectors who were commissioned for the work including photographers and landscape artists who mainly sketched landscapes and social interactions in the colonial societies. These actors were then told to acquire materials that could reconstruct the history – or, in their minds, to document ancient cultures before the "European" advent of history – of the region being destroyed by acculturalization, globalization, and colonization.[82] However, what was considered a socio-cultural exchange and interaction ended up being part of the economic, political, social, and cultural exploitation of people and their assets in the territory.

Most of the acquisitions of cultural heritage in the nineteenth century were performed under colonial dispossessions and the fiction of "terra nullius."[83] Colonizers deprived the locals of their ownership rights to their own produced heritage by invading their social spaces and appropriating their cultural materials.[84] On the other hand, colonial anthropologists played a significant role in academic colonization by developing theories that "objectified" and "dehumanized" local people for their alleged inability to care for or protect their own cultural creations.[85] Most colonial anthropologists were disassociated from the communities studied. As a consequence, today, provenance researchers are burdened by the challenge to redeem the position and knowledge of those communities who once produced, possessed, and used the objects in question. Provenance research findings have disclosed research gaps of documented object life spans, functions, performances, and symbolism in the context of creators' initial values and beliefs. Today, European anthropologists who wish to re-examine the appropriated colonial cultural properties from Africa should first reform their old anthropological methodologies and concepts to ensure the provenance findings do not perpetuate neo-colonial systems and further work in favor of those in powers. These massive information gaps – and the historical silences/erasures of African artists and artisans as property owning individuals – that were produced by "objective anthropologists" should now be used to form the basis of post-colonial dialogues and the decolonization of anthropology and related disciplines. Echoing this point, the contemporary anthropologist, Dan Hicks, recently stated that "the theory of taking requires us to talk not just about the life histories of objects, but also about killing of the people, of object, of culture, the death histories of objects."[86]

81 See Eckert, "Missionary Work and Colonialism in Tanzania"; and Bell and Geismar, "Materialising Oceania."

82 See Bell and Geismar, "Materialising Oceania."

83 See Hicks, *The Brutish Museums.*

84 See Hicks, *The Brutish Museums*; and Lewis, "Anthropology and Colonialism."

85 See Lewis, "Anthropology and Colonialism."

86 See Hicks, *The Brutish Museums.*

In recent years there have been multiple efforts from a variety of disciplinary approaches to review the fate of colonial science and anthropological fieldwork on cultural objects and human remains that were acquired during colonial rule. It has been quite a journey for European institutions, particularly universities and museums, as they are still learning how to handle, engage, and host colonial cultural heritage.[87] For experts from countries and societies of origin (like myself), the lingering question has been 'Why did Germans collect hundreds of thousands of objects and what principles guided the so-called scientific study of 'culture and nature'?[88] The same question appeared from audiences during the Human Rights Film Festival Berlin (2022): "Can we learn about cultures without taking from them?"[89] The question of "taking" and "collecting" from "foreign cultures" is currently forming a fundamental framework in studying colonial collections in the field of provenance research.

The framework of (colonial) provenance research problematically remains enmeshed in the colonial categories for objects and is largely dependent on their historical sources of transfer from individual European collectors. Historically, especially in colonial history, museum practices of acquisition and documentation of objects had given precedence to individuals (white male collectors) over objects and their African donors.[90] A philosophy of collecting was lacking among many funding institutions as there was an absence of any clear priorities of what and what not to collect, particularly in the context of trade or exchange of so-called "purchased objects." As discussed by Patrick Hege in this volume, central agitators for military collecting emphasized that German colonial officers should simply "collect everything!" and not even mention how or if these German officers should "purchase" cultural objects. That was never a high priority for museums. In addition to the pervasiveness of colonial violence, massacres, plunder, and loot from innumerable communities, I strongly detest lingering presumptions (e.g., historical collection documentation) of equal trade and purchases of cultural

87 Learning more about cultural objects through the lenses of communities of origin: "The care of collections from colonial context requires a dialogue with communities of origin and other representatives which is characterized by respect, responsibility, and sensitivity." German Museam Association, *Guidelines for German Museums*, 4.

88 "For Germans, culture was not a universal human property, but rather the exclusive possession of Europeans and other 'historical peoples' or 'cultural peoples' (Kulturvölker). Africa, as well as most of the rest of the world was a static realm of natural peoples (Naturvölker) and objects." Zimmerman, "'What do you really want in German East Africa, Herr Professor?,'" 11–12.

89 Human Rights Film Festival Berlin, Tweet, October 14, 2022, https://twitter.com/hrfilmfestival/status/1580984567204179968.

90 Lewis, "Anthropology and Colonialism," 582.

heritage in East Africa during German colonial rule.[91] Provenance research findings reveal that objects were collected and used from an aesthetic point of view. However, the essence and components of objects, i.e., epistemology, logic, and ethics were disregarded in field work during "collecting" and later in museum practices and teaching.[92]

As twenty-first century practitioners are working to revive the epistemologies, logics, and ethics of cultural objects which were disregarded in colonial contexts, it is also vital to consider the question of whether there is a universal heritage to which everyone has a claim?[93] In providing the narratives and communities' voices to cultural objects it is important to consider the positionality of the "orator" towards ownership claims not only of objects under discussion but also the associated knowledge production. Ongoing provenance research on colonial objects should thus justify the unresolved question in museum databases on how cultural objects were purchased in the context of violence and colonial antagonism.

6 Conclusion

East African claims for restitution or the return of colonial loot (European plunder) have a long history and gained steam in the wake of African independence movements in the second half of the twentieth century.[94] However, many such claims fell on deaf ears due to bureaucratic systems, economic and political priorities, and assumptions about whether newly independent African states were able to preserve – let alone appreciate – their very own cultural heritage.[95] On top of that, European governments and institutions used such time of dallying to build on the so-called "paradigm of conservation" of looted cultural objects, and they have continued to empower the idea of incapability in conservation facilities among former colonized states when cultural materials were to be returned.[96] Museums, however, have shared little on how cultural materials taken from colonial contexts have been conserved or on conservation practices – such as different uses of chemicals – have been employed. The topic of chemical conservation

91 Zimmerman, "'What do you really want in German East Africa, Herr Professor?,'" 433–461.
92 Oswald, *Working Through Colonial Collections*, 107.
93 See Matthes, "The Ethics of Cultural Heritage."
94 See Manase, "Restitution and Repatriation of Objects of Colonial Context."
95 Kim, "Colonial Plunder and the Failure of Restitution in Postwar Korea," 608–609.
96 Oswald, *Working Through Colonial Collections*, 220; and see Jones, "Restitution."

has come to the fore in public during ongoing restitution debates and provenance research. Nevertheless, there is still no public statement on how museums are destabilizing the contaminated objects during provenance research and ongoing tandem projects between experts/communities from countries of origin.[97]

I cannot exclude my position and engagement in previous as well as ongoing provenance research projects between Germany and Tanzania. As a researcher from a state of origin (Tanzania), I found myself in a precarious position, especially when confronted by European ways of dealing with "objects from colonial contexts" studied by provenance researchers. I had internal conflicts regarding methodological approaches, ethical and moral practices behind provenance research, and their ambivalences toward the practical facilitation of restitution. I believe the following questions are worthy of our consideration if we wish to overcome the ambivalences and ambiguous relationships between provenance research and practices of restitution: Is the goal of our research to exhibit or to restitute collections? Or is it first and foremost to publish and circulate research findings? And whose primary interests should we have in mind when conducting research projects? How are findings of provenance research being shared/exchanged for the purposes of fostering restitution? What is the position of states/communities of origin in decision-making processes related to research and/or restitution? And is twenty-first century provenance research another technique of remaking European museums as centers of colonial knowledge in postcolonial discourses?

Finally, returning to the central thrust of this chapter, the question of acquisition of colonial collections, specifically by way of so-called "trade," should be further investigated in provenance research; however, acquisition contexts should be critically defined and colonial exchange and illegal, coercive trade should be given more attention (in digitally accessible) research reports. Considering the background of German colonialism in East Africa, these considerations should be grounded in basic ethical and moral terms that we should all strive to meet.

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97 Oswald, *Working Through Colonial Collections*, 233.

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