



Guidelines for German Museums

## Care of Collections from Colonial Contexts



# IMPRINT

**Guidelines for German Museums  
Care of Collections from Colonial Contexts**  
3rd Edition 2021

Publisher: German Museums Association

Text: see "Contributors"

English Translation: TechniText Translations

Editing (English Edition): TechniText Translations

Editing (German Edition): Sabine Lang

Design: MATTHIES WEBER & SCHNEGG, Berlin  
Print: medialis Offsetdruck GmbH

Cover photo: Provenance researcher Ndzodo Awono with a leopard figurine from Cameroon, Übersee-Museum Bremen  
Photograph: Volker Beinhorn

The content of these Guidelines has been revised and these Guidelines thus replace all previous editions.

The Guidelines are also published in German and French.

Funded by



Federal Government Commissioner  
for Culture and the Media

© German Museums Association, Berlin, February 2021  
**ISBN 978-3-9819866-6-2**



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

These Guidelines are a practical aid for all German museums on the care of collections from colonial contexts. They additionally provide an information base for international professional colleagues, political decision makers, as well as representatives of post-colonial initiatives and diaspora communities. The Guidelines do not represent a position paper or legally binding instructions, however.

## **The Guidelines enhance sensitivity**

Those in positions of responsibility at the museum should be aware that most of the items in their collections were not created or produced as a 'museum exhibit'. They are a testimony of different cultures, with their own significances anchored in their communities of origin.

In colonial contexts, the acquisition or creation of collection items can be associated with the use of force and/or pronounced dependency relationships. In addition, collection items which can be assigned to colonial contexts can reflect discriminatory representations and colonial or racist ideologies. The experiences which societies have gained in and with colonial structures are often part of their shared recollection. They can have an impact on discussion and examination processes.

The care of collections from colonial contexts requires a dialogue with communities of origin and other representatives which is characterised by respect, responsibility, and sensitivity.

## **The Guidelines offer practical support**

Cases of colonial contexts are defined and illustrated with brief examples to help readers to work with the Guidelines. They do not represent a hierarchisation or categorisation, but serve only as an aid for provenance research. These cases moreover illustrate the bandwidth and complex causes and interrelationships of colonial contexts.

They provide answers to questions about the care of collections from colonial contexts from all areas of museum work – collecting, preserving, researching, exhibiting and educating, as well as returning collection items. Provenance research and digitisation are key elements here to learn more about the collections and to facilitate a sustainable exchange of experience and knowledge, primarily with the communities of origin as well.

The Guidelines describe the legal framework conditions for handling requests for the return of collection items and illustrate fundamental approaches to how returns may be managed. It must again be emphasised, however, that they are not legal instructions. The complexity of colonial contexts means that considering cases on an

individual basis is usually the only way to do justice to the needs and requirements of all parties involved and the significance of the collection items. Each individual museum has to define its own stance and its own approach to the care of collection items from colonial contexts. These Guidelines provide fundamental starting points.

The Guidelines hope to encourage all museums to enter into a transparent and constructive dialogue about colonial inheritance – on both the national and the international level.

### **The Guidelines inform**

The Guidelines provide fundamental information on the topic of “colonialism and museums” from various disciplines and perspectives. In addition to articles on European colonialism and the history of collections from various genres of museums, they also examine legal aspects and the different understanding of ownership and law from an ethnological perspective. The article on provenance research illustrates methods which can be used to investigate the origin and acquisition context of collection items. International perspectives illustrate the significance of items in communities of origin and decolonisation opportunities in the management of collections and exhibitions.

# CONTENTS

- 8 FOREWORD TO THE THIRD EDITION –  
RESPONSIBILITY, AWARENESS, AND FUTURE-ORIENTED DIALOGUE**
- 10 POLITICAL DEMANDS**
- 12 INTRODUCTION – AN INTERDISCIPLINARY GUIDE TO ACTIVE  
ENGAGEMENT WITH COLLECTIONS FROM COLONIAL CONTEXTS**
- 17 ADDRESSES AND TERMINOLOGY**
- 18 For Whom are these Guidelines Intended?
- 19 What do the Guidelines Class as Historically and  
Culturally Sensitive Collection Items?
- 21 What is Understood by Community of Origin?
- 23 What is the Geographic Scope and the Time Frame of these Guidelines?
- 23 What do the Guidelines mean by “Colonial Contexts”?
- 29 PRACTICAL GUIDANCE:  
CASES OF COLONIAL CONTEXTS**
- 31 Case 1: Collections from Formal Colonial Rule Contexts
- 36 Case 2: Collections from Regions which were not Subject to  
Formal Colonial Rule
- 39 Case 3: Objects that Reflect Colonialism
- 42 Conclusion
- 42 Prioritisation when Examining Collections
- 45 PRACTICAL GUIDANCE:  
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CARE OF COLLECTIONS  
FROM COLONIAL CONTEXTS**
- 46 Collaboration with Communities of Origin
- 49 General Recommendations
- 57 Questions and Answers
- 57 Case 1: Collections from Formal Colonial Rule Contexts
- 73 Case 2: Collections from Regions which were not Subject to  
Formal Colonial Rule
- 76 Case 3: Objects that Reflect Colonialism
- 80 Recommendations for the Returning of Collection Items

## **93 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 94** European Colonialism: Political, Economic and Cultural Aspects of Early Globalisation  
*J. Zimmerer*
- 105** Collection History: The Different Types of Museums and Their “(Post-) Colonial Heritage”  
*L. Förster, M. Glaubrecht, K. Horst, S. Reuther, H.-J. Czech, V. Didczuneit, C. Grunenberg*
- 123** The Significance of the Art and At.óow of the Tlingit of Southeast Alaska  
*R. Worl*
- 129** Decolonising Collections and Exhibition Management  
*S. Akeli, Z. Rimmer, N. Kautondokwa, F. Pereira*
- 147** Provenance Research – Research Sources, Methods, Possibilities  
*J. Fine & H. Thode-Arora*
- 153** Collections from Colonial Contexts: Legal Aspects  
*C. Thielecke & M. Geißdorf*
- 165** Remarks to Legal Questions from the Perspective of Social/Cultural Anthropology  
*L. Förster*

## **171 OVERVIEW OF FORMAL COLONIAL RULES**

## **202 ABOUT THE GERMAN MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION**

## **204 THE FEDERAL SYSTEM IN GERMANY**

## **206 ANNEX**

### **207** References and Selected Further Literature

### **211** Credits

### **212** Index

### **215** Contributors

## FOREWORD TO THE THIRD EDITION RESPONSIBILITY, AWARENESS, AND FUTURE- ORIENTED DIALOGUE

Today's world is networked on the global level, and this gives rise to fundamental questions about the form and the quality of international relations. For a fair coexistence on an equal footing, it is imperative that the colonial systems of the past be reappraised. Questions relating to the care of collections from colonial contexts have therefore been central to a global societal discourse since the 1970s, and this discourse has grown in recent years, based on a communication and knowledge architecture which is becoming more and more accessible, but also challenged by new global problems.

Communities of origin and countries of origin would like to know where key parts of their cultural heritage are located, and would like this heritage to be accessible to them. They demand a transparent dialogue on the care of the items concerned, a discernible willingness to critically examine the colonial heritage, and an open-minded attitude towards the return of collection items. Post-colonial initiatives and representatives of diaspora communities are championing this as well. Participation on an equal footing, multi-perspectivity, and future-oriented forms of collaboration are fundamental aspects in the discussions.

The German Museums Association would like to provide supporting information to help German museums critically examine the complex topic of "colonialism and collections". To this end, the German Museums Association in collaboration with an interdisciplinary working group has drawn up the Guidelines on "Care of collections from colonial contexts". The Guidelines are intended to play a part in making those in positions of responsibility more aware of the issue by providing information, and sensitising them to the perspectives of the communities of origin. In addition, practical recommendations for action are given. For representatives of interest groups outside the museums, the Guidelines also provide in-depth insights into the tasks and issues associated with the care of collections from colonial contexts that German museums have to deal with.

This publication is the third and final edition of these Guidelines. It is the result of a four-year review process, which was designed from the start to be transparent and without any preconceived results. Professional colleagues and other representatives of interest groups were able to make an active contribution to the revision of the texts by means of reviews or comments. In addition, the Guidelines were discussed in detail at an in-house workshop with twelve experts from Australia (Tasmania), Bolivia, Namibia, Nigeria, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Samoa, Taiwan, Tanzania, Turkey, and the USA (Alaska) so as to be able to provide appropriate scope for their perspectives and suggestions.

The numerous discussions which took place to further improve the Guidelines showed: only those who are prepared to change their perspectives and take note of nuances will become more familiar with the actual dimensions and issues relating to the colonial past of the museums. This was the starting point not only for the museums themselves, but also for the bodies which oversee the museums. In a joint initiative between the German government, federal states, and municipalities, which also involved the German Museums Association and ICOM Germany, “Framework Principles for dealing with collections from colonial contexts” were formulated and concrete projects were implemented. They include the support of provenance research on colonial collections by the *Deutsches Zentrum Kulturgutverluste* (German Lost Art Foundation), and the central contact point, which was requested by the German Museums Association, among others, and which was realised at the *Kulturstiftung der Länder* (Cultural Foundation of the German Federal States). The services provided by the contact point are aimed at people and institutions from the countries and communities of origin, to whom it should provide contacts and access to information. The German Museums Association greatly welcomes this development, which brings together the museum expertise on the collections and the communities of origin and further international academic partners via an active exchange of information.

The objective has to be to anchor the care of colonial heritage and its reappraisal and multi-perspective accessibility as a permanent duty at the museums. This can only succeed when the museums are able to undertake their fundamental work, and research is always a fundamental component of this work. In addition, the international exchange with representatives and researchers from the countries of origin must not only be facilitated; this exchange requires a new form of being open to discussion on all levels. Ultimately, the museums will succeed only when society and politicians, too, align their actions overall according to moral principles which are so urgently demanded for the field of cultural exchange. This is the only way to create credibility, which is the fundamental requirement for respectful coexistence on an equal footing.

In conclusion, I wish to express my heartfelt thanks – on behalf of the German Museums Association as well – to the working group for the commitment it has shown over the past four years, and these thanks also extend to the international experts and reviewers as well as professional colleagues in Germany. You all made lasting contributions to the development of these Guidelines with the constructive criticism which resulted from your intense discussions. My special thanks are due to Wiebke Ahrndt, who was responsible for the specialist management during the development of the Guidelines, and also to Anne Wesche for the academic coordination of the project.

The further revision of the Guidelines was supported by the German Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media. I extend my special thanks to her also.

**Prof. Eckart Köhne, President of the German Museums Association**

## POLITICAL DEMANDS

The German Museums Association considers it essential that the colonial past of museums and their collections be reappraised. Most museums are aware of their responsibility and willing to undertake an intensive critical analysis of the topic of colonialism. To be able to do this with the necessary professionalism and sustainability, the museums have to rely on extensive support.

To implement the measures demanded in the key issues paper presented by the Bund-Länder-Kommission in 2019<sup>1</sup>, the political decision-makers and the bodies which oversee the museums must play their part by facilitating the fulfilment of the following tasks:

### Provenance research

- (Provenance) research on their own collections is a core task of museums. Scientific staff and the resources needed for sustainable work on the collections have often been lost because of structural budget cuts. In addition to sufficient funding for the *Deutsches Zentrum Kulturgutverluste* (German Lost Art Foundation), the financial and staffing resources of the museums in this field have therefore to be improved permanently and significantly.

### Transparency

- The digitisation of and online access to the collection holdings lay the foundations for greater transparency and an international exchange of information. The technical as well as the staffing resources require an appropriate amount of funding.
- Ways of accessing existing data at one central point should be developed.

### Collaboration

- Museums require financial support to carry out collaborative projects with communities of origin relating to research and exhibitions.
- The German Museums Association welcomes the establishment of the German Contact Point for Collections from Colonial Contexts at the Cultural Foundation of the German Federal States<sup>2</sup>. The collaboration with the museums and the *Deutsches Zentrum Kulturgutverluste* (German Lost Art Foundation) should be expanded at the earliest opportunity and the Contact Point should avail itself of the expertise available in the museums.

1 Framework Principles at <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/blob/2210152/b2731f8b59210c77c68177cdcd3d03de/190412-stm-m-sammlungsgut-kolonial-kontext-en-data.pdf>.

2 Concept available at <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/blob/2262748/5450242f5fd46b343b32919aab9c11a6/191016-kol-kulturgueter-pdf-en-data.pdf>.

Insofar as they do not yet exist, the legal and financial foundations must be created to enable museums to return collection items to countries and communities of origin when this is considered appropriate.

Political representatives and museums can do justice to their social responsibility in respect of this issue only by working together. In addition, this will create a sustainable basis for the intercultural exchange and the sustainable collaboration with communities and countries of origin. The objective has to be a permanent dialogue and mutual participation. Short-term activities cannot replace this long-term perspective.

# INTRODUCTION

## AN INTERDISCIPLINARY GUIDE TO ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT WITH COLLECTIONS FROM COLONIAL CONTEXTS

Colonialism has shaped the modern world, defining today's structures and perspectives, and is therefore not a footnote of history. These Guidelines are the result of the realisation that collections from colonial contexts not only have their own history,

but also have to be seen in a wider historical context. They bear witness to a value system in which, on the basis of an assumed superiority, colonial powers placed themselves above other states and their populations or parts of the population, exploiting and oppressing them. The German Museums

Association believes that the discussion about

the colonial past of museums and their collections is essential. These Guidelines have two main objectives: to sensitise and inform the institutions concerned and their staff, and also to provide assistance with the practical aspects. They are primarily intended for museums and (university) collections in Germany.

The discussion about the colonial past of museums and their collections is essential.

### International perspective and collaboration

As far as the colonial era is concerned, representatives of the communities of origin would like to discuss their issues with the museums on an equal footing. They would like to know which of their items of cultural and natural heritage are where, and what information about them is available in the museum archives. It is by no means always simply a matter of returning these items, but mostly about participation, involvement, negotiation processes, the prerogative to interpret the past, and knowledge transfer. This provides a tremendous opportunity to learn more about the collection items and their contexts, and to shape the future of both the German and the international museum landscape together.

### Interdisciplinary work

The ethnological museums are seen by many as the embodiment of colonial exploitation. But many other museums also have their roots in the colonial era. A large number of museum collections in Germany and other European countries were built up between the 17th and early 20th centuries – a period marked by European expansion. Thus, almost all genres of museums have collections from colonial contexts and a lot of different types of items must be considered.

Collection items that can be assigned a colonial context originate from all over the world. Collections in German museums do not only come from the former German colonies. In addition, there are collection items that originally served the advancement of colonialism, such as technical equipment for transportation as well as weapons and uniforms. Moreover, there are collection items which reflect colonial situations or which positively anchored colonialism in the public's perception. Advertising should be mentioned here as well as works of the visual and performing arts. The museums also have to realise that colonial situations rarely ended with formal decolonisation and can have a lasting effect to the present day. These Guidelines therefore aim to create awareness that a colonial context can even be assigned to collection items made or acquired after decolonisation or to items from those countries that were themselves never subjected to formal colonial rule.

Communities of origin demand transparency, access to collections and discussions on an equal footing. Cooperation with representatives of communities of origin enriches the work of museums in Germany and Europe.

### Enhancing awareness of the problem

Even assigning a collection item to a colonial context may sometimes not be easy. Furthermore, establishing that there is a colonial context does not mean that the provenance should be categorised as problematic or that consideration should always be given to returning the item. Rather it is an indication that sensitivity and scrutiny are needed. The Guidelines are intended to facilitate the recognition of collection items from colonial contexts and the making of decisions about how to deal with them responsibly. The museums thus strengthen their awareness of history and problems relating to colonial and post-colonial contexts in their work. The actual recommendations for action are preceded by general comments that serve to improve understanding and raise awareness.

Collections from colonial contexts are not only found in ethnological museums, but in almost all genres of museums.

### Structure of the Guidelines

First, general information explains key terminology and definitions which are used in the Guidelines. The next chapter "Practical Guidance: Cases of Colonial Contexts" defines the different cases of colonial contexts. By virtue of these definitions, the Guidelines provide an important tool for provenance research. The chapter "Practical Guidance: Recommendations for the Care of Collections from Colonial Contexts" provides a catalogue of questions and answers involving the main duties of a museum – collecting, preserving, researching, exhibiting and educating. The discussions about the return of collection items have led to a separate chapter being dedicated to this complex of topics. It presents preliminary considerations and also answers

questions. At this point, attention is drawn to the fact that general statements about when it is necessary to return collection items are not possible due to the heterogeneity of the cases. The museums are called upon to examine each individual case and context in a transparent way.

The specialist articles in the chapter “Background Information” provide in-depth explanations of European colonialism, how different genres of museums acquired their collections, the general principles of provenance research, the legal aspects, and the different understandings of ownership

The Guidelines are intended to facilitate the recognition of collections from colonial context and the making of decisions about how to deal with them responsibly.

and law from an ethnological perspective. In addition, two contributions by external experts from communities of origin explain the significance of sensitive collection items for such communities and illustrate methods of decolonisation in collection and exhibition management which involve the communities of origin.

An overview of formal colonial rules at the end of the Guidelines illustrates the global dimension of the “colonialism” phenomenon.

The German Museums Association is repeatedly confronted with the question as to why it is not able to participate fully in political decision-making and why it does not have the authority to issue binding directives to German museums. An explanation of the tasks of the German Museums Association and a brief introduction to the federal system in Germany can be found in the Appendix.

The Guidelines use various symbols to facilitate handling. The symbols mark core statements of the Guidelines, the cases of colonial contexts used in the publication and the individual areas of a museum’s work in the catalogue of questions and answers.

### Working group at the German Museums Association

This publication has been prepared by a multidisciplinary working group, consisting of ethnologists, archaeologists, natural scientists, art historians, historians, lawyers, and conservators, as well as external experts from communities of origin. The intense discussions and the personal exchanges with the international experts, in particular, made crucial contributions to the further development of the Guidelines.

The members of the working group are available as contact persons for further specialist questions and are able to advise on conflicts but will not make any decisions or act as an ethics committee. Names and contact details can be found at the end of these Guidelines. When negotiations on the return of collection items prove to be difficult, museums, and claimants as well, can moreover contact the International Museums Council ICOM or its Ethics Committee, the latter particularly in respect of

the application and interpretation of the international ICOM Code of Ethics<sup>3</sup>. Disputes may also be settled by alternative methods, such as those provided by the *ICOM-WIPO Art and Cultural Heritage Mediation Service*.

The Guidelines were developed in a four-year work process by an interdisciplinary working group and in exchange with international experts.

### Active and individual critical examination

It is advisable for every museum and every collection to formulate its own stance and its own guidelines on the care of collections from colonial contexts. Moreover, the museums are called upon to actively engage with the topic of colonialism in their exhibition and educational work. Irrespective of whether they have collection items from colonial contexts in their collections, a dialogue with communities affected by colonialism and their descendants can open up new perspectives.

The content of these Guidelines has been revised. The reviews and specialist advice contributed by German and international experts provided crucial support for the working group in this endeavour. This edition therefore replaces all previous editions (2019, 2018).

### Further information

Additional information to these Guidelines (referred to as the **E-reader** in the Guidelines) is available in three languages from the website of the German Museums Association. Some practical examples on the care of collections from colonial contexts which have been taken from all areas of museum work are outlined in brief. In addition, a list of national and international guidelines and recommendations, guidelines of individual museums, legal regulations, and an overview of online databases and literature is also available. References to additional information in the **E-reader** are marked with a corresponding symbol.

Each museum is encouraged to actively engage with the topic of colonialism in its work.

## LEGEND OF THE SYMBOLS USED



COLLECTING



RESEARCHING



EDUCATING



PRESERVING



EXHIBITING



E-READER

3 Cf. Peters 2018.



# ADDRESSEES AND TERMINOLOGY

# ADDRESSEES AND TERMINOLOGY

## FOR WHOM ARE THESE GUIDELINES INTENDED?



All genres of museums and (university) collections and the bodies which oversee them, too, have a responsibility to critically examine collections from colonial contexts. The communities of origin in particular, and other special interest groups as well, should be involved where possible.

### **Museums and collections in Germany**

These Guidelines explicitly address all German museums and (university) collections as well as the bodies which oversee them. They include ethnological, natural history, historical (including local and military history), art and cultural history, archaeological and anthropological museums and collections, as well as art, technology, and folklore museums. In the following text, for the sake of simplicity, the term “museum” is used throughout.

Almost all genres of museums have items from colonial contexts. For example, the natural history museums largely created their non-European collections before 1960, many archaeological materials came from countries that once belonged to the Ottoman Empire, while collections in technical museums include the equipment with which colonial regions were opened up, such as locomotives or telecommunications equipment. In addition, there are objects such as advertising posters or advertising figures for so-called colonial goods.

It follows that different genres of collections must be considered. Hence it is not – as often assumed – only the ethnological collections bear a responsibility. These collections in particular (but not exclusively) contain not only collection items which can be considered to be historically sensitive, but also those which could be culturally sensitive, which makes the issue even more complex (see below).

### **International discussion**

It is by no means the case that questions concerning the care of collections from colonial contexts affect only the interests of German museums and the bodies that oversee them. Representatives of the communities and countries of origin from whence the collection items originate, in particular, are very interested in finding out where parts of their cultural heritage are located. This offers opportunities for participation and knowledge transfer, and also the return of collection items. The

issue of colonialism and the responsibility of museums are also being discussed in the public domain, on the political level, and in post-colonial initiatives in Germany, so a discourse which involves the whole of society is important.

The Guidelines have been translated because international networking is an important aspect of engaging with this topic. It means that museums and interest groups outside the German-speaking world are afforded an opportunity to learn about the issues facing German museums in respect of the care of collections from colonial contexts. Moreover, the Guidelines provide an insight into the work of the museums, pose questions which the museums have to address, and illustrate the competing stipulations and procedures, and the legal and the ethical principles which museums (must) consider in their actions.

## WHAT DO THE GUIDELINES CLASS AS HISTORICALLY AND CULTURALLY SENSITIVE COLLECTION ITEMS?



The significance of the collection items for the communities of origin and the contexts of their creation and acquisition are fundamental.

### Significance of collection items can differ

Collections can consist of very diverse classes of items: human remains and associated grave goods, religious and ceremonial objects, regalia, ritual objects, and also works of art, propaganda, promotional articles, everyday articles, or models created especially for museums. Those who bear responsibility in the museums should be aware that most collection items were not created or produced as “museum exhibits”. They are testimonies of different cultures, with their own significances anchored in the communities of origin.

In these communities of origin, specific types of items can have a very close association with their forebears or be seen as their equal, and have great social and religious significance<sup>4</sup> (cf. from p. 123).

### Historically sensitive collection items

The circumstances under which items were/are collected, acquired, or produced can mean that they have to be treated with particular sensitivity. In such cases, the

---

4 E.g. *At.óow* of the Tlingit (Southeast Alaska).

Guidelines use the term historically sensitive collection items. Historically sensitive collection items can be deemed to be items from all genres of collections which have been collected, acquired, or created in colonial times, the National Socialist era, states of civil war, or systems of apartheid<sup>5</sup>, for example. Collection items from colonial contexts<sup>6</sup> are therefore historically sensitive items, whose history and character have to be actively examined by museums. Their acquisition often involved the use of force and/or pronounced dependency relationships. In addition, these collection items may contain discriminatory images and reflect colonial or racist ideologies.

### Culturally sensitive collection items

The Guidelines use the term culturally sensitive collection items for human remains and associated grave goods, religious and ceremonial collection items<sup>7</sup>, and also regalia. They usually have a special significance, which is why caring for them can be subject to justified restrictions on access in the community of origin. For example, some items (e.g. bullroarers of Australian Aborigines, certain statues of Hindu gods) may not be viewed or touched by women, uninitiated or low-ranking persons, or members of certain social groups. The items are considered taboo for these groups, especially controversial, or even potentially dangerous. According to some communities of origin, such as those in Oceania, all items that, for example, are connected to religion, ancestors, or imperial insignia contain Mana, a highly potent force, which can be potentially dangerous and require rituals prior to handling them. Objects used in daily life could/can also become culturally sensitive collection items, for example when they were/are incorporated into religious or ceremonial activities. Human remains are always sensitive. The significance and the care of the dead is anchored in the ethical value systems and world views of societies. These can be culturally different.

### Images of the dead

For some societies, images of the dead are also a sensitive issue, something which may be relevant for access to historical film and photographic collections. Photographs, drawings<sup>8</sup>, impressions, anthropometric data, film and sound recordings<sup>9</sup> of members of the communities of origin may therefore also be regarded as culturally sensitive items for ethical reasons. Such forms of documentation were, and in some

---

5 Apartheid: internationally defined crime against humanity. cf. International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid, New York 1973.

6 Explanation of the term "colonial contexts" from p. 27 onwards.

7 They may also incorporate human remains.

8 During the Hamburg South Sea Expedition, for example, Elisabeth Krämer-Bannow drew tattoo designs of Micronesian women. The publication of these images is considered an affront and breach of trust by today's Micronesian women (personal statement by Susanne Kühling).

9 Some Australian cinema and television films, and public libraries and archives, too, indicate per disclaimer in the opening credits or on their websites and in their brochures that the film or the collections and archives contain images and sound recordings of persons who are now deceased, as Torres Strait Islanders, and certain Australian Aboriginal groups, consider it offensive to mention the deceased, or it may even be forbidden (e.g. ATSLIRN: Protocols for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Collections).

cases still are, totally incompatible with the world view and value system of some communities of origin. In the colonial context, these forms of documentation were sometimes created by exerting pressure or the use of force. The subjects had to endure degrading practices sometimes, such as exposing the head or body. In addition, anthropometric data was used to substantiate theories of racial anthropology, for example.

### Significance of collection items for communities of origin

Owing to the way in which many European museums acquired their collections (cf. also background information from p. 105 onwards), a very large overlap of historically and culturally sensitive collection items from colonial contexts can be found in the institutions. Museums should be aware that the special significance of culturally sensitive collection items is, as a rule, not based on the colonial context, but primarily on the items themselves and thus on their significance for the community of origin. This attribution is carried out by the community of origin concerned. Here, it should also be pointed out that communities of origin may view classification systems for collection items far removed from their cultural significance (particularly for culturally sensitive items, cf. p. 19) as degrading or disrespectful. The designation of human remains as 'objects' and thus their dehumanisation is ethically problematic as well.

Culturally sensitive collection items make up only part of the collections, however. Most collections rather consist of everyday items (some of them without signs of use or not/no longer functional), supplemented by obvious souvenirs and models of all kinds.

Aspects and issues regarding the care of human remains in museums are illustrated in the "Guidelines on the Care of Human Remains in Museums and Collections" (DMB 2021).

## WHAT IS UNDERSTOOD BY COMMUNITY OF ORIGIN?



Ethnic categorisations often fail to reflect the complexity and changing nature of historical and contemporary social identities sufficiently well.

The term community of origin is understood to be the community in which an object was created or originally used (i.e. the community to which creators and users of the object felt they belonged) and/or which views this object as part of its cultural heritage.

The term "community of origin" is therefore not synonymous with "country or nation

of origin”, since communities of origin are often sub-national groups, such as ethnic minorities or indigenous<sup>10</sup> communities whose members consider themselves to be the descendants of the creators of the object. Now as in the past, such social groups can be heterogeneous: membership can come about or have come about through shared knowledge and shared values, shared practices and living situations, and shared interests, too – and not simply through a shared language and ethnic/cultural origin. This also applies to those who consider themselves to be descendants of a community of origin in this sense.

### European categorisations

The “ethnicities” or “ethnic groups” recorded in museum holdings<sup>11</sup> initially reflect European categorisations, as were also sometimes created by colonial practices, for example by ethnic groups being assigned specific “styles” without paying sufficient heed to artistic variations and processes of social change and exchange. Ethnic categorisations therefore do not reflect the complexity and changing nature of historical and contemporary social identities in the field of tension between self-ascription and external ascription sufficiently well. Ethnic labels, as indeed all historical sources, must therefore be handled with caution and sources subjected to critical analysis – even when they often form the only clues to identify a community of origin.

### Potentials for conflict

A community of origin may have transferred the authority to represent its interests in whole or in part to the political bodies and institutions of the state into which it is now integrated; this is frequently not the case, however. The community of origin must therefore not be seen as identical to the higher national authorities which represent it and can sometimes be in a state of conflict with them. A community of origin can itself also be organised as an institution and have been granted corresponding authorities by the state (e.g. Native Americans in the USA, First Nations in Canada). Different interpretations of value systems, sovereignty of interpretation, and authorities among different actors and interest groups within a community of origin (for example descendants and successors, local artists and historians, staff of cultural heritage institutions, and political representations) can likewise harbour the potential for conflict.

---

10 The term ‘indigenous’ is not undisputed, since it appears to be a scientifically veiled reissue of discriminatory colonial terms such as natives, aborigines or primitive peoples, and follows the same characteristic style, by carrying out an external specific categorisation of people and delineating them from other peoples on the basis of unclear and imagined characteristics. ‘Indigenous’ has meanwhile also a positive connotation, however: The United Nations Declaration of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) established the term in international law contexts. UNDRIP codifies comprehensive rights for these so-called indigenous communities (including the right to the return of human remains, for example, see below). In consequence, many individuals and communities identify themselves with this term and use it in political contexts – this also includes the international repatriation movement, in which actors often deliberately position themselves on the global level as representatives of indigenous peoples against the surrounding majority societies and exchange similar experiences. The term ‘indigenous’ is used in this text in connection with these relationships. (abbreviated text from Fründt and Förster 2018).

11 Ethnic group: a category of persons which – based on the ideology of a common origin and culture – delineates itself from other pluralities of people and/or which is delineated by others as being different. Certain cultural characteristics serve as markers of this delineation (cf. Thode-Arora 1999).

## WHAT IS THE GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE AND THE TIME FRAME OF THESE GUIDELINES?



Colonial contexts do not only mean formal colonial rule.

Colonial contexts existed in different regions and countries (cf. also Colonialism from p. 24, cases from p. 29). The Guidelines therefore do not make geographic limitations. They take European expansion as the basis for their time frame. It should be borne in mind, however, that any time frame for momentous developments is always arbitrary. The year 1415 is an obvious choice for the start of European expansion, for example, when Portuguese troops conquered a city outside Europe – Ceuta in North Africa – for the first time since antiquity. Another important date is 1492, when Christopher Columbus landed on islands off the Atlantic coast of what later came to be called America and thus ushered in the exploitation, colonisation, and settlement by Europeans (cf. background information from p. 94). The Guidelines define colonial contexts not only as periods with formal colonial rule (cf. pp. 26 ff. and pp. 29 ff.). Since this results in a multitude of geographic possibilities and time frames for colonial contexts, it makes no sense to name specific years here.

## WHAT DO THE GUIDELINES MEAN BY “COLONIAL CONTEXTS”?



Colonial contexts are characterised by unequal power relationships and a self-image of the cultural superiority of those in power.

To answer this question, let us begin by explaining the terms colonialism, post-colonialism, and racism:

### **Colonialism**

Basically, colonialism is a relationship marked by domination, in which the colonised are limited in their self-determination, are subject to heteronomy, and forced to adapt to the needs and interests of the colonisers, especially as far as politics and economic aspects are concerned. What most colonisers had in common was

an unwillingness to accept or even accommodate societies they subjugated, either culturally or politically, or to adapt to local circumstances<sup>12</sup>.

Colonialism was not a uniform process, but varied with regard to when it occurred, where it occurred, and who was the colonising power. It had global significance. Colonisation often began with exploration, the establishment of trade links, or missionary work. Settlement or formal subordination to the colonial power might follow, as might informal penetration. In more than a few cases, colonisation culminated in violent conquest and the subjugation of the regions in question.

Colonisation manifested itself in a great variety of ways. The three main forms of colonies were settlement colonies, trade and military enclaves, and exploitation colonies (see also background information on European colonialism from p. 94)<sup>13</sup>. The characteristics of colonialism and the transitions between the various forms were geographically and temporally very different and often fluid, as were the transitions from formal colonial rule with claims to territorial ownership to an informal dominion without direct territorial claims (cf. imperialism<sup>14</sup>). Existing politico-social structures were frequently ignored in the course of colonial conquests.

Even after the end of formal colonial rule, colonial structures had lasting effects.

Firstly, they continued to have a regional impact because the elites in many states that had become independent resorted to a form of politics that differed little<sup>15</sup> from that of the colonial period, and in particular often practised a nationalist policy that continued to marginalise certain ethnic groups<sup>16</sup>. Secondly, there was a supraregional impact because economic and cultural exploitation structures continued to exist. For example, independence from Spain did not change or even improve the situation of indigenous peoples in Latin America. Many North American Native Americans, on the other hand, did not come under American dominance until decades after US independence. There are comparable examples for all continents. Most of those affected are minorities who define themselves as an ethnic group<sup>17</sup> or are defined by others as such.

The term “colonial” refers to the actual exercise of rule, as well as to the ideologies, discourses (also racial discourses), knowledge systems, aesthetics, and perspectives which preceded formal or actual rule and which supported and safeguarded it for colonisation and can have an impact beyond it. They not only have an effect in colonial territories but also worldwide and are interrelated (see also “Post-colonialism” below).

---

<sup>12</sup> According to Osterhammel and Jansen 2017.

<sup>13</sup> Since the beginning of the 20th century, the term “Non-Self-Governing Territories” has been used as a synonym for colonies/protectorates in international law (cf. also UN <https://www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/en/nsgrt>).

<sup>14</sup> Imperialism describes the policy of states to extend their power far beyond their own borders. This can take the form of quite specifically exerting a political, economic, or cultural influence on other countries or by other means and making them dependent (German Federal Agency for Civic Education).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Conrad 2012.

<sup>16</sup> The various marginalised groups, in their entirety, may constitute the numerical majority of the population in some countries.

<sup>17</sup> Ethnicity: a category of individuals which, based on the ideology of a common descent and culture, is set apart from other categories of people by social processes of exclusion and/or incorporation. Ethnic belonging and ethnic boundaries are marked and signalled by certain (almost random) cultural traits and patterns: often territorial references, religion, or socio-political organisation. (cf. Thode-Arora 1999).

Colonial ideologies, even in states without a formal colonial history, have led to structures in which parts of the population were or are exposed to domestic power imbalances. The westward expansion of the United States, which resulted in conflicts with indigenous Americans, is one example of this. At the time of this expansion, the former British colony on North American soil had gained its independence. The newly acquired areas were successively integrated into its own territory and not managed as colonies. Nevertheless, the seizure of its land brought the indigenous population into a colonial situation (cf. further examples at case 2, p. 36). Colonial ideologies are also reflected in objects and portrayals of European origin (examples cf. case 3: objects that reflect colonialism, p. 39).

### Post-colonialism

Firstly, post-colonial refers to the situation and period after the formal end of colonialism, and secondly, it also means a theoretical framework and a programmatic demand. Post-colonial perspectives rely on a critical and differentiated examination of role models and power structures that have their origins in colonialism. They are based on the assumption that mental structures and knowledge storage are important to the imposition of colonialism and also see this as one of the long-term effects. Post-colonial approaches reinforce the general awareness that colonialism took very different forms, having a lasting effect on both the colonised and the colonisers. The dialogue incorporates the experiences of both sides on an equal footing. The goal is to overcome the Eurocentric way of thinking<sup>18</sup> and highlight the reciprocity in the historical developments.

The article “Decolonising Collections and Exhibition Management” (see from p. 129) presents examples given by experts from communities of origin as to how museums can give their collections decolonised perspectives through collaborative processes with communities of origin.

### Racism

The European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) defines racism<sup>19</sup> as “the belief that a ground such as race, colour, language, religion, nationality, or national or ethnic origin justifies contempt for a person or a group of persons or the notion of the superiority of a person or a group of persons.” This includes the attribution of cultural and psychological characteristics due to certain outward features such as skin colour.

---

<sup>18</sup> Assessment of non-European cultures from the perspective of European values and norms (Said, 1978).

<sup>19</sup> Since all people belong to the same species, ECRI rejects theories that are based on the existence of different “races”. However, ECRI uses this term to ensure that people commonly and incorrectly referred to as members of a “different race” are not excluded from the protection of legislation (ECRI 2003). Discussions are currently being held on different levels to completely ban the term “race” and remove it from the German Constitution or the EU Directive 2000/43/EG (Race Equality Directive), for example. The argument being put forward is that its use leads to the assumption that there is tacit recognition of the existence of “races”, although this is completely untenable from a biological perspective.

Colonialism and racism intersect and overlap. Modern colonialism (from about the 15th century) was increasingly influenced by the self-perception of cultural superiority (theological, technological, biological) of the members of the colonial powers. The idea that people outside Europe had different mental and physical attributes and were thus not capable of high (cultural) achievements and, consequently, were not equal to other (European) cultures was anchored in the colonial mind-set. As a result, European colonial powers, for their part, believed it was their mission to civilise and lead the “savages” and “barbarians” in other parts of the world<sup>20</sup>. In practice, however, this thinking was used to justify heteronomy and exploitation. Many colonial powers developed a multi-faceted racial supremacy mind-set, culminating in the racial teachings of the 19th and 20th centuries<sup>21</sup>. Further explanations can be found in the background information “European Colonialism: Political, Economic, and Cultural Aspects of Early Globalisation” from p. 94.

### Definition of the term “colonial context”

The term “colonial context” describes much more than “only” formal colonial rule, such as German or British, French or Dutch colonial rule. Colonial contexts did not end in 1918/19 when the German Empire lost its colonies. Nor did they end in the 1960s with the decolonisation of large parts of Africa. Furthermore, they did not begin in 1884, but all the way back in the 15th century, when the Europeans explored the world and, for example, Spanish colonial rule in America began. It had not even started in other parts of the world when it ended there in the early 19th century. On the basis of the preceding explanatory notes, these Guidelines draw the following conclusion regarding the definition of the term “colonial context”:

- Colonial context as the term is used in these Guidelines is initially regarded as circumstances and processes that have their roots either in formal colonial rule or in colonial structures outside formal colonial rule. At such times, structures of great political power imbalance may have arisen both between and within states or other political entities. This created networks and practices that also supported the collection and procurement practices of European museums (cf. from p. 105). The history of European colonial expansion forms the starting point for the considerations for these Guidelines.
- Colonial contexts, however, also led to the emergence of objects and depictions which reflected colonial thinking.
- Common to colonial contexts is an ideology of cultural superiority to colonised or ethnic minority populations<sup>22</sup> (cf. “Colonialism” and “Racism”, pp. 23 ff) and the right to oppress and exploit. This also raises doubts about the legality of its use to

---

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Osterhammel and Jansen 2017.

<sup>21</sup> Also cf. Geulen 2016.

<sup>22</sup> The various indigenous groups as a whole can also constitute the numerical majority of the population of a country.

justify acquiring collections. In some public debates, acquisition of any item in the colonial context is considered wrong per se. This is justified by the assumption that there was such a power gap between the ruled and the rulers under colonial rule or in colonial structures that the legality of the acquisition of any items is absolutely inconceivable. These Guidelines are based on the conviction that the full range of historical and local acquisition and negotiation processes must be included. The broad spectrum and the contexts resulting from this as well as the scope for action must be taken into account.



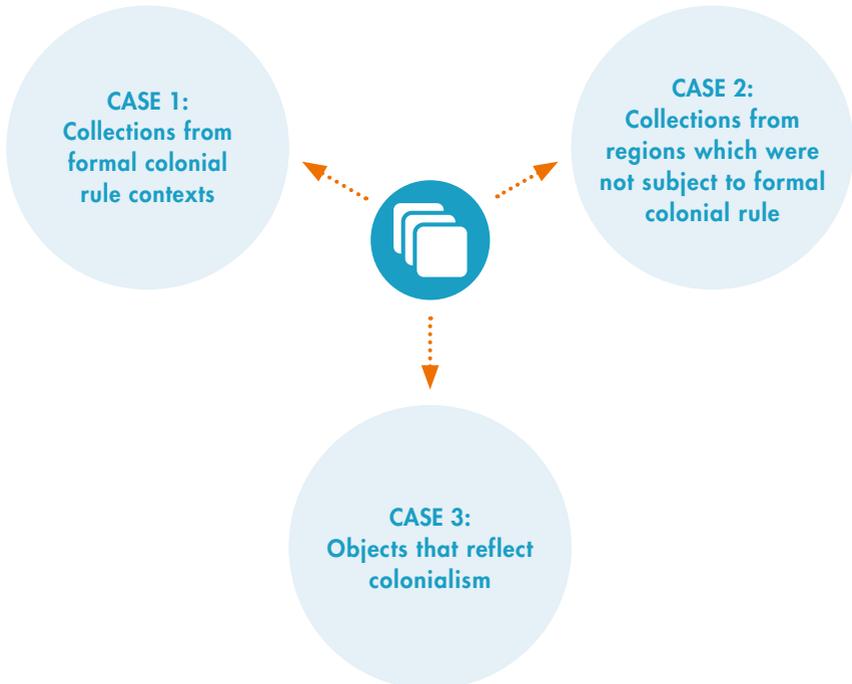
# **PRACTICAL GUIDANCE: CASES OF COLONIAL CONTEXTS**

## PRACTICAL GUIDANCE: CASES OF COLONIAL CONTEXTS



The cases defined for the Guidelines represent neither a hierarchisation nor categories of collection items, but serve only as an initial indication and as guidance in provenance research.

Three cases of colonial contexts are defined for these Guidelines. These cases are intended to sensitise those who use the Guidelines to the complex causes and inter-relationships of colonial contexts.



If collection items can be classified into one of the cases, a colonial context as defined by these Guidelines can definitely be assumed.

## CASE 1: COLLECTIONS FROM FORMAL COLONIAL RULE CONTEXTS

An overview of formal colonial rules can be found in the Annex starting on p. 171. In order to assess whether an item belongs to this case, it is also advisable to take into consideration the development of colonial rule in any given case.



**Case 1a:** The collection item is from an area that was under formal colonial rule at the time of collection<sup>23</sup> or manufacture, acquisition, or export of the item.

### EXAMPLE 1: Ethnographic items from Namibia and the Kingdom of Benin

Most ethnographic items from present-day Namibia kept in German museums and collections were collected or acquired by European missionaries, settlers, colonial officials, or military personnel during the colonial occupation and administration of “German South West Africa” (1884 -1919). Ethnographic items that were collected between 1904 and 1908 in central and southern Namibia were acquired or appropriated during the genocidal colonial war of the German Empire against the Herero and Nama peoples. It is thus possible that such items came from victims of this genocide. Collection items appropriated while a region was being conquered or as a result of its conquest should be considered historically sensitive. An example of such items are works of art from the Edo Kingdom of Benin (in present-day Nigeria) that were appropriated in 1897 during a British “punitive expedition” and which today are in many European and North American museum collections.

### EXAMPLE 2: Syrian glass

Ancient glassware from Syria was excavated at the beginning of the 20th century during the construction of the Baghdad Railway, which was to pass through the Ottoman Empire from the Konya region in what is now Turkey to Baghdad. Various German companies were involved in the construction of this railway line on behalf of the Ottoman Empire. Under their direction, there were also large numbers of Armenian forced labourers, who sifted through the rubble for valuable objects. The Ottoman authorities also permitted archaeological excavations up to 10 km to the left and right of the railway line. Antique items and thus the antique glassware as well came to Germany through intermediaries.

<sup>23</sup> Here, collection means the process of collecting objects from where they originated, e.g. natural history objects as part of field research.



III



V



#### TO EXAMPLE 1

- I Corset belt of a Herero woman, Namibia, Collection August Engelbert Wulff, 1901
  - II Calabash, Herero, Namibia, Collection Eduard Hälbich, 1909
  - III Head of a Queen Mother, Edo Kingdom of Benin, Nigeria, Collection Hans Meyer, 1936
  - IV Looted art? The Benin Bronzes in the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg
- 

#### TO EXAMPLE 2

- V Syrian glasses, collected by the Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum between 1912 and 1914. They may have been found during the construction of the Baghdad railway.
- 

### EXAMPLE 3: Samoan objects

The western part of the Samoan Islands in the Pacific became a German colony in 1899. Colonial officials and settlers often bought objects such as kava bowls, fly-whisks, or bark cloth as souvenirs. The great demand for some of these artefacts meant they were also made especially for sale as souvenirs. However, the pieces actually used were significant objects of Samoan culture and society: flywhisks, in addition to their obvious function, are the insignia of an orator chief. Kava, the drink from the root of the pepper bush, is ceremonially prepared and served in kava bowls at official gatherings. The order in which the drink is served reflects a complex balancing of hierarchies. Germans often received these items as a gift or in exchange. In Samoa, important and long-lasting social relationships are established and confirmed through spontaneous but in the long-term reciprocity-oriented gift-giving, and above all through a ritualised exchange of articles of value.

### EXAMPLE 4: Natural history objects from Australia and New Guinea

Collectors commissioned by the Godeffroy Museum in Hamburg, such as Amalie Dietrich between 1862 and 1872, amassed significant botanical and zoological collections in British colonial territory along the east coast of Australia. Also, in Kaiser Wilhelm's Land, a "protectorate" created by the German New Guinea Company in the northern half of New Guinea in 1885, natural history objects (often together with ethnological items) were collected until the early 20th century. Local helpers were deployed and colonial networks were used.

### EXAMPLE 5: Colonial goods and raw materials as well as products manufactured from them

Colonial goods included first and foremost overseas semi-luxury and standard foodstuffs (e.g. cocoa, coffee, tea, sugar, tobacco, rice, spices). Other commodities of commercial interest from former colonised areas included gold, ivory, coconut, bird feathers, hunting and forest products, rubber. At first, natural products and animals, such as birds of paradise, were frequently taken from their natural habitat or hunted



I



II



III



IV



V



VI



#### TO EXAMPLE 4

- I Central: King brown snake, collected in Queensland/Australia, lateral: Fiji Ground Frogs collected on the Fiji Islands for the Museum Godeffroy
- 

#### TO CASE 1b

- II Knife with sheath of Wilhelm Behrens (1881-1956), Inscription "*Deutsch-Süd-West-Afrika*" (German South West Africa) and "*Zur Erinnerung an meine Dienstzeit*" (In memory of my period of service). From 1904-1907, Behrens was with the mounted troops in the former German South West Africa, Collection Susanne Siepl-Coates, 2016
  - III Medal bar of Wilhelm Behrens (1881-1956), The braces "*Grossnamaland*", "*Hereroland*", "*Omaheke*" on the commemorative medal "*Südwest-Afrika 1904-06*" (Southwest Africa), for example, document the battles in which he took part with the mounted troops. Kaiser Wilhelm II. donated this 1907, Collection Susanne Siepl-Coates, 2016
  - IV Rupee German East Africa 1916, obverse side
  - V Rupee German East Africa 1916, reverse side
  - VI Official seal of the Windhoek post office
- 

without any consideration being given to the protection of endangered species<sup>24</sup>. In the colonial trade, the local population was often used as labour for the cultivation, harvesting, extraction, and often also for the production or transport of the merchandise.

**Case 1b:** The collection item was used in an area under formal colonial rule. This use was related to colonial rule, colonial commerce, or colonial life.

These collection items include weapons, uniforms, flags, decorations and other military items, vehicles, ships (and parts thereof), as well as other infrastructure elements (rails, wharves etc.), files and documents, production and agricultural equipment, European emblems, signs (signposts etc.), instruments and anthropometric photographs from the field of medicine and "racial doctrine", transport containers (barrels etc.), architecture (fragments), colonial coins, memorabilia of all kinds.

---

<sup>24</sup> The colonial administrations sometimes had hunting regulations, however, which also contained special provisions for the collection of natural history objects. There were hunting licences for birds of paradise and the German colonial administration of Kaiser Wilhelm's Land held the monopoly over their export, for example. The shooting of birds of paradise was not banned until 1914 (Gißibl 2005).

## CASE 2: COLLECTIONS FROM REGIONS WHICH WERE NOT SUBJECT TO FORMAL COLONIAL RULE



The collection item comes from an area that was not under formal colonial rule at the time of collection<sup>25</sup>, manufacture, acquisition, or export of the item, but in which there were informal colonial structures or which was under the informal influence of colonial powers (cf. p. 94).

### EXAMPLE 1: Textiles from Guatemala

Guatemala became independent as early as 1821, but the indigenous population continued to live in a colonial situation in which their rights of co-determination were largely denied by the political elite. In the early 1980s, there was a civil war in Guatemala, during which the Mayas in particular suffered. There were massacres and mass refugee movements. Owing to economic hardship, the refugees sold their traditional costumes/parts of their costumes and pre-Spanish ceramics plundered from archaeological sites to Europeans working in the country (e.g. teachers at German schools). Also, the women began to weave belts for sale.

These purchases have been offered by the returnees to German museums since the 1990s, and, in the case of textiles, collected by them (the pre-Hispanic ceramics imported after 2007 fall under the UNESCO Convention of 1970, or since 2016 under the Act on the Protection of Cultural Property).

### EXAMPLE 2: Porcelain from China

The import of Chinese porcelain into Europe started in the late 16th century via Portugal and Spain. In the 17th century, the Dutch East India Company (VOC) took over these trade links to the Far East and subsequently became the main importer of Chinese porcelain for Europe. This led to the development of export porcelain. The porcelain was made to meet the requirements of European culinary habits, and European ideas were also reflected in the decoration (e.g. Chinese porcelain in underglaze blue with Dutch tulips or genre scenes). The trade in Chinese porcelain and the influence of European taste suggest there was a flourishing Chinese porcelain business. China was not a colony at this time.

In the 19th century, China was under informal colonial rule as a consequence of the Opium Wars (1839–1842 and 1856–1860), and this was accompanied by the removal of a considerable number of cultural items. One incident was the looting of the imperial *Yuanmingyuan* garden by British and French troops in 1860. The stolen works of art were sold via the European art trade.

<sup>25</sup> Here, collection means the process of collecting objects from where they originated, e.g. natural history objects as part of field research.

Since its defeat in the Sino-Japanese War in 1895, China was partly under Japanese formal colonial rule as well and the Jiaozhou region (with Tsingtao as the capital) was under formal German colonial rule from 1898. Great Britain, France, and Russia also established leased territories, concessions, and settlements. Even informal control resulted in key aspects of politics in the Middle Kingdom being determined by foreign powers. At that time, more and more Chinese porcelain reached Germany. However, it was mostly everyday utensils, burial objects, antiques, and imperial porcelain rather than export porcelain.

As a consequence of the “Boxer Rebellion” (Chin. *Yihétuán Yùndòng*) in early summer 1900, too, which was directed at the Eight-Nation Alliance (German Empire, France, Britain, Italy, Japan, Austria-Hungary, Russia, the United States), there was looting and the removal of cultural items as well. At the beginning of the 20th century, when China was faced with economic collapse due to the Boxer Indemnity, this resulted in unimaginable quantities of Chinese art from private homes and palaces coming on to the market. Entire areas of Chinese cities were engaged in the art trade. China became a destination for art agents and art dealers, including German soldiers. The peak in Far Eastern trade was in the period after the German colonial era, in the 1920s and 1930s. All this was also reflected in museum collections.

---

TO EXAMPLE 2

- I Porcelain vase with cherry blossoms, China, 17th/18th century
- 

TO EXAMPLE 5

- II Bird skins, collected in Oceania on behalf of the Museum Godeffroy



### EXAMPLE 3: Archaeological items from Latin America

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, many archaeological finds from former Spanish colonies in Latin America found their way into European museums. This often happened with the knowledge or involvement of local governments. The objects came from both excavations and looting. An appreciation of the pre-colonial heritage in the countries themselves began only in the course of the 20th century and resulted in export bans. The trade in such items was first prohibited internationally by the UNESCO Convention of 1970. Exports deemed to be illegal under the legislation of the countries of origin continued, however, and items often found their way into European museums. Since 2016, the Act on the Protection of Cultural Property (KGSG) has imposed a ban in Germany on the import into Germany of collection items which have been exported illegally from other countries which are signatories to the convention after the deadline of 26 April 2007.

### EXAMPLE 4: Religious objects from America and Oceania

Owing to Christian evangelisation, people gave religious objects from their old faiths to Europeans, in some cases because they still feared their power despite their conversion to the Christian faith. This occurred, among other places, on the north-west coast of America, where in addition to the activities of missionaries, diseases were introduced that the shamans could not heal. What is more, the persecution of shamans by the Canadian Government led to the decline of shamanism and subsequently the giving away of shamanic objects.

Similar examples are also known from Polynesia and Micronesia: after indigenous peoples were converted to Christianity, figures depicting an ancestor or a god, for example from Tahiti, the Cook Islands, Easter Island (Rapa Nui), or from Nukuoro, were sold in large numbers to Europeans, or even burned. Due to their Mana<sup>26</sup>, however, they were also integrated into church buildings or placed in secret hiding places. For example, during his research on Easter Island in the 1950s – decades after the missionary work had ended – Thor Heyerdahl was offered such religious objects which had been kept in hidden caves.

### EXAMPLE 5: Natural history objects from Oceania

Collectors commissioned by the Godeffroy Museum in Hamburg, as well as captains in the service of the Godeffroy trading house, brought not only ethnographic items but also botanical and zoological specimens from Australia and New Guinea to Germany. The Godeffroy trading house also established trading bases in Oceania, for example in Fiji, Samoa, Palau, the Caroline, Marshall, and Marquesas Islands. These areas were only granted “protectorate status”, and only in part, by various colonial powers at a later date.

---

<sup>26</sup> A highly effective force.

## CASE 3: OBJECTS THAT REFLECT COLONIALISM



The object reflects colonial thinking or conveys stereotypes based on colonial racism. In the most serious cases, these objects are intended for openly propagandistic purposes, such as the promotion, legitimisation, or even glorification of colonial systems of rule, as well as their actions and actors. In ways which were often more subtle, defamatory racist ways of thinking or portrayals of colonial contexts found their way into product advertising or commercial art advertising, especially in relation to colonial goods or the travel industry. Also, in works of the visual and performing arts, there are references to colonial contexts or intellectual discourses of them.

Objects that reflect colonialism can be roughly divided into three groups, which can also overlap. For example, images from the 19th century (or from before or after) have often been shaped by colonial ways of thinking, racism, and stereotypes, and thus are also objects of propaganda:

- Colonial propaganda
- Advertising products
- Works of the visual and performing arts

### EXAMPLE 1: Colonial and revisionist propaganda

Postcards played a significant role in the propaganda for the German colonial system, showing the “new masters” and/or their “new subjects” with photographs or (caricatured) drawings, with the intention of demonstrating the perceived cultural superiority of the German colonial power. After the First World War and the surrender of the German colonies enforced by the Treaty of Versailles, former actors such as Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck in particular propagated the return of the former colonies to Germany and idealised the colonial past in an abundance of writings as well as in memorial meetings. The Nazi Party incorporated this cause into its state propaganda and combined it with its own iconography and goals in posters and other types of propaganda.

### EXAMPLE 2: Advertising posters for ethnic shows

Ethnic shows involved putting people from foreign cultures on display; these people were recruited for a period of several months or years in order to demonstrate activities that were perceived in Europe as “typical” of their culture to paying audiences. From the beginning of the 19th century and in increasing numbers from the 1870s, this genre of entertainment spread throughout the entire Western world (e.g. Europe, the United States, Australia, New Zealand) and even to Japan. Since long-distance



### TO EXAMPLE 1

- I Wall map for schools „*Deutschlands Kolonien*“ (Germany's colonies)
- 

### TO EXAMPLE 2

- II Advertising poster for an ethnic show with Sami people, Poster of A. Friedländer No. 468
  - III/IV Impressions from an ethnic show by Hagenbeck, Hamburg, Atelier J. Hamann, Johann Hinrich W. Hamann
- 

travel was uncommon and books, newspapers, and magazines showed only a limited number of illustrations, if any at all, the physical presence of (mostly) non-European people was fascinating for the spectators. Unlike Britain and France, there were only a few ethnic shows in Germany with individuals recruited from its own colonial territories. Colonial exhibitions with ethnic shows were also much rarer in Germany. Usually, ethnic shows were commercial enterprises and, despite paying lip service to educating people about issues of colonialism, focused primarily on entertainment and the public's taste, although some promoters sought a high level of ethnographic authenticity, based on academic perceptions of their time. Ethnic shows usually went on tour and reached an audience of millions. They are therefore closely linked to the formation or perpetuation of stereotypes about people from foreign cultures. Not all ethnic shows had a clear imbalance of power: in some cases, non-European participants took the recruitment into their own hands, organised what should (and should not) be shown to visitors, or became impresarios who toured with their own ethnic shows.

Advertising posters for ethnic shows reflect all these facets: in addition to sensational depictions of non-European people in action and caricatures of them, the Carl Hagenbeck company, for example, used ethnographic-like village scenes, a head and shoulder portrait of a Sioux man, or an original Ethiopian painting as poster motifs.

### EXAMPLE 3: Works of the visual and performing arts

From the 16th century onwards, representations of distant exotic territories and cultures played an increasingly prominent role in the range of motifs used in the visual arts in Europe. European artists helped present figurative portrayals of the “New World”, Africa, and other overseas territories. Their works served the interest of the local audience in “foreign culture.” The artists' views were often strongly influenced by the colonial perspectives of the European “explorers,” colonists, or merchants in whose milieu the artists moved. Sometimes they even travelled abroad. Their work was often the starting point for the emergence of widespread stereotypical iconographies such as “the savage” or “the Indian”, which were found, for example, in many baroque allegories relating to non-European parts of the world. Later, Orientalism<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> Eurocentric view of the societies of the Middle East or the Arab world, which is expressed in a feeling of superiority towards the Orient (cf. Said 2009).

and Exoticism<sup>28</sup>, and from the 19th century onwards the growing importation of objects from the colonies to Europe, fostered the spread of motifs with a colonial background in the fine arts. It also inspired dance and theatre, as well as scenery and costume design.

Case 3 also includes works of performing arts (including theatre, dance, film), literature (including books, leaflets), and music.

## CONCLUSION



The fact that a collection item is assigned to a case is an indication that sensitivity and more detailed examination are necessary, but it does not say anything about the actual circumstances under which the particular collection item was acquired.

Assigning a collection item to case 1 or case 2 does not indicate whether the provenance should be classified as problematic, or even that consideration should be given to returning the collection item. Rather, it is merely an indication that heightened awareness and a more precise examination are required. It is clear that in museums with predominantly non-European collections, large parts of the collections can fall into case 1 and case 2. While assignment to case 1 is largely based on the origin and date of the item, assignment to case 2 is only possible through further investigation of the particular situation in the country of origin at the given time. Assignment to case 3 usually requires an assessment of the purpose, intent, and impact of the object.

## PRIORITISATION WHEN EXAMINING COLLECTIONS



The prioritisation depends on the composition of the collection holding of the particular museum. Priority must be given to clarifying the provenance of human remains, however.

A museum with large collections of heterogeneous origins may face the question of prioritisation when it comes to examining its collection. It is not possible to give a

<sup>28</sup> Eurocentric view which sees foreign cultures in quite a positive light and attaches a special fascination to them. All things foreign are endowed exclusively with features which appear unusual and manifest themselves as projections of western wishful fantasies. This perspective is reflected to a very small extent through to not at all (cf. ikud-seminare.de).

generally valid piece of advice regarding the best procedure to adopt when examining colonial contexts. Each museum must decide on the stance it is to take here and work out its own strategy. Interests, expectations, and guidelines of the countries of origin and/or communities of origin should be complied with – if known.

In this respect, the Guidelines can only make suggestions for possible starting points for a museum to set its priorities. The suggestions do not create a hierarchy. All those concerned should be aware that points of view on prioritisation can differ:

- Collection items from a violent colonial context<sup>29</sup>
- Significant/exhibited collection items
- Collection items from former German colonies (overview of formal colonial rules from p. 171)
- Collection items of types known to be problematic (i.e. culturally sensitive collection items, explanation cf. p. 19)
- Genres of collections for which demands for their return have already been made in Germany or in other countries (possibly also in the countries of origin) or which have a special significance for other reasons
- Collection items related to local actors and local history at the museum's location
- Collection items in respect of which contacts have already been established with specialists and communities in the countries of origin

Priority must be given to clarifying the provenance of human remains as a matter of principle. Further information and concrete issues on the care of human remains are provided in the “Guidelines on the Care of Human Remains in Museums and Collections” (DMB).

---

<sup>29</sup> Violence in the colonial context can be considered to be armed conflicts between the colonised and the colonisers, severe oppression of (parts of) the indigenous population, through to enslavement, internment in camps, punitive campaigns, or genocide, for example. Collection items could have been acquired, produced, or taken out of the country during the course of such contexts of violence or by utilising structures resulting therefrom.



**PRACTICAL GUIDANCE:  
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CARE  
OF COLLECTIONS FROM COLONIAL  
CONTEXTS**

## PRACTICAL GUIDANCE: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CARE OF COLLECTIONS FROM COLONIAL CONTEXTS

The recommendations refer to a museum's four areas of responsibility – collecting, preserving, researching, exhibiting and educating – as well as the topic of returning collection items.

The questions and answers listed here are intended to outline the issues surrounding collection items from colonial contexts and to help raise awareness. They provide suggestions for differentiated assessments as well as assistance in forming opinions. They are recommendations and not (legally) binding regulations.

In the current debates on colonial history and dealing with collections from colonial contexts, each museum has to find a position tailored to its own needs and formulate it. A transparent presentation of this point of view is recommended. What is important is the willingness to actively engage with the colonial history and how collections from colonial contexts should be cared for. Museums should not shy away from starting with low-level approaches and often with only limited resources at their disposal.

### COLLABORATION WITH COMMUNITIES OF ORIGIN

Collection items from colonial contexts are sensitive due to the historical circumstances under which they were created and acquired (cf. p. 105). In some non-European communities, museums are seen as colonial institutions. This is one of the reasons that a collaboration on an equal footing with communities of origin (see p. 21 for explanation of community of origin) which is based on collections and exhibitions is seen by many parties as a respectful, productive, and sustainable form of engaging with colonial contexts. It supports the establishment of trust through the participation and inclusion of various expertises and points of view. It promotes mutual esteem through networking and the exchange of knowledge, and can lead to the formation of long-term partnerships.

#### Collaboration in all areas of work

The work being undertaken today in museums should consider opportunities for collaboration with communities of origin over the whole range of a museum's tasks when caring for collections from colonial contexts.

In countries where indigenous communities are at home historically, an often very sustainable collaboration has developed in recent decades (e.g. Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Nordic countries, USA). Here, collections can be conserved, curated, and researched by appropriate specialists from the communities of origin, and exhi-

bitions can be designed in direct collaboration with representatives of communities of origin<sup>30</sup>.

Their collection history (cf. background information p. 105) means that German museums are being required to engage with a large number of non-European communities of origin. In many (large) museums, the exchange with international colleagues (from communities of origin as well) has been part of their professional work for many years, and can be expanded with the possibilities available and appropriate support of the bodies which oversee them (e.g. through fellowship programmes or similar). Small museums may possibly be able to initially access the expertise of larger museums when examining their collections, or also examine the feasibility of collaborative projects.

### Active and respectful exchange

In general, museums should consider they have an ethical responsibility to open up access to the collections for representatives of communities of origin. An interest in collection items which is closely related to the personal and/or collective (cultural) identity and history, is basically always justified<sup>31</sup>. Responses to enquiries should be provided without delay and with respect. The museum should always promote active engagement and take a favourable view when considering enquiries. The mutual exchange of views on and knowledge of collection items can lead to important findings on both sides and should take place regardless of whether items are being returned. Representatives, initiatives, and institutions, or academic and non-academic specialists from communities of origin are not only able to provide handed-down information on the collection items themselves (e.g. information on authors/artists/creators, manufacture, material, function, context, meaning), but also assist in the identification of locations and persons in images and assist with translations. Museums should make available the knowledge on the collection item which is contained in their archives and databases. They should also examine whether opportunities for joint examination of the collection – in research, exhibition and education, as well as questions of preservation and restoration – can be established.

### Contacts to communities of origin

As far as opportunities for international projects and especially direct collaborations with communities of origin are concerned, it is not only museums in Germany which are reaching their staffing and financial limits. Establishing contacts to communities of origin<sup>32</sup> is frequently not an easy task. In some communities, repeated or ongoing colonial situations may mean that the collaboration with local national institutions

---

<sup>30</sup> Cf. for example specialist article “Decolonising Collections and Exhibition Management” from p. 129; Engagement Policies and Practical Examples in the [E-reader](#).

<sup>31</sup> Cf. UN resolution 61/295 with the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007.

<sup>32</sup> E.g. authorised/elected representatives of communities of origin, indigenous museum specialists (“knowledge holders”, “elders”, “practitioners”).



or museums may even go against the interests and cultural sensitivities of the communities of origin. It is also necessary to take into account the fact that there could be different or even competing interpretations, degrees of specialist knowledge, or social attitudes ('traditionalists' versus 'modernisers') on the care of collections in the communities of origin as well. And the debates at the local level can always change as well. Every museum must carefully consider and decide which (possibly competing) ethical yardsticks it applies to the care of collections from colonial contexts, including indigenous criteria<sup>33</sup> and/or western criteria<sup>34</sup>. Its position must be justified in a transparent way.

A limited number of possible contacts from the communities of origin and in the German museums, too, can lead to conflicts when more cooperations are to be set up and expanded, but insufficient specialists are available on both sides. Visits to the countries in question or invitations of professional colleagues and representatives of communities of origin are often associated with financial and sometimes bureaucratic obstacles. When the digitisation of and online access to museum holdings is still partially incomplete, this impedes the opportunities for mutual exchange of information and contact.

Despite possible difficulties, museums should attempt to develop ways of collaboration to establish relationships with communities of origin. Fixed-term projects can and should, where possible, also generate long-term partnerships with continued cultivation of the relationship.

The contact point for collections from colonial contexts<sup>35</sup> which was established in Germany in 2020 can provide assistance with the networking (cf. p. 10).



The **E-reader** contains a collection of examples for recommendations for engaging indigenous communities (Indigenous Engagement Policies) in the work of the museum and practical examples from different areas. The article "Decolonising Collections and Exhibition Management" from p. 129 onwards also illustrates standpoints from Samoa, Tasmania, Namibia, and New Zealand.

---

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Ryker-Crawford 2017, Schorch and McCarthy 2018.

<sup>34</sup> E.g. access for men and for women, access for all population groups and classes.

<sup>35</sup> Located at the *Kulturstiftung der Länder* (Cultural Foundation of the German Federal States).

## GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The Code of Ethics for Museums prepared by the International Council of Museums (ICOM 2017) is fundamental to the work of museums. For collections from colonial contexts (cf. definition from p. 23), these recognised standards for the work of the museum apply equally to all areas.

Where possible, all tasks should always be conducted by appropriately trained and qualified museum specialists to ensure collections are cared for properly<sup>36</sup> and should always be conducted with respect for the original, its history, and the communities of origin.

The revised guidelines *“Umgang mit menschlichen Überresten in Museen und Sammlungen”* (Care of Human Remains in Museums and Collections) published by the German Museums Association in 2021 supplements these Guidelines. The Guidelines contain more detailed information and address more specific issues relating to the care of human remains. The questions and answers provided therein are also relevant for human remains which have to be assigned to colonial contexts.

### Provenance research as prerequisite

The classification into one of the three cases of colonial contexts defined in these Guidelines (cf. cases from p. 29) presupposes some knowledge of the origin and age of the collection item as well as of the historical circumstances in which it was acquired. Names of traders, people providing the item, or of those who had the item in their possession are also helpful. If there are no clues in the museum documentation, only more extensive provenance research (cf. Researching from p. 63, background information “Provenance Research” from p. 147) can provide insights into whether there are colonial contexts. Provenance research not only looks at the path the item took to get into the collection, but also includes associated questions about the function, the context of the production and use, as well as the materiality of artefacts and ethnographic objects. It is of key significance for the modern-day work of museums and should be integrated into the routine work and professionalised as much as possible.

Prioritisation can be helpful (cf. p. 42) when it comes to proactively examining large collections of very heterogeneous geographical origins, with the aim of identifying colonial contexts of items and identifying the acquisition contexts. However, these Guidelines cannot provide a generally valid approach. Each museum is required to develop its own concept and to present this concept in a transparent way.

---

<sup>36</sup> *“Standards für Museen”* (Standards for museums, in German), German Museums Association 2006.

## Collecting, preserving, researching, exhibiting and educating, returning

The fundamental recommendations relevant to all three cases of colonial contexts (for explanations of the cases cf. pp. 31 ff.) within the scope of a museum are briefly described below:



### Collecting

In general, museums should develop a collection concept as well as a complete inventory accessible to staff with careful documentation of all items (cf. also *“Leitfaden Nachhaltiges Sammeln. Ein Leitfaden zum Sammeln und Abgeben von Museumsgut”* [Sustainable Collecting. Guidelines on Collecting and Deaccessioning Museum Property], German Museums Association 2011). Collection concepts should use a transparent approach to show how collections in a colonial context are dealt with in each museum.

Further sources with suggestions on acquisition policy and acquisition ethics are provided in the *“Leitfaden zum Erwerb von Museumsgut”* (Guidelines on the Acquisition of Museum Property, of the Lower Saxony Ministry of Science and Culture, 2013), or the publications *“Besitz- und Eigentumsfragen”* (Possession and Ownership Issues, 2015) and *“Empfehlungen zu Aussonderung und Deakzession in wissenschaftlichen Universitäts-sammlungen”* (Recommendations on Removal and Deaccessioning in Scientific Collections, 2018) by the Coordination Centre for Scientific University Collections in Germany.



Practical examples and an overview of the collection guidelines of various international museums are available on the [E-reader](#).



### Preserving

The Guidelines consider preserving collections to be essentially the aspects of preventing (preventive conservation), conserving, restoring, and taxidermy work, as well as documenting (condition reporting, detailed documentation). Concepts for accessing and handling the collections/storage should also fall within the scope of this task. To this end, authorities and responsibilities are defined as they result from the work of the museum. Access and handling restrictions which result from the significance and the status of the collection item for the community of origin (cf. culturally sensitive collection items p. 19), should also be taken into account as far as possible, however. Here, the museum may possibly be confronted with conflicting views which require the museum to decide on its position (cf. also *“Collaboration with communities of origin”* p. 46).

Condition reporting as part of the documentation upon receipt of an item, inventory, as well as digitisation and conservation are tasks which interface with research activities<sup>37</sup>. The Guidelines includes these aspects under preservation work<sup>38</sup>, since the boundaries may not be clear cut.

<sup>37</sup> E.g. in the case of material analyses.

<sup>38</sup> Unlike the Guidelines *“Standards für Museen”*, German Museums Association 2006.

## Prevention and conservation

A detailed record of the condition is fundamental to the conservation so that appropriate preservation conditions can be created with the conservation standards<sup>39</sup> on environmental conditions, light and lighting, pollutants and material emissions, pests and microorganisms, as well as measuring equipment and monitoring, which are selected according to the material of the collection item, among other things. Providing and controlling suitable environmental conditions, storage, and presentation commensurate with the condition of the collection item, ensure that it is preserved in the long-term without damage, and ageing processes are slowed down as much as possible (preventive conservation)<sup>40</sup>.

Analyses and research relating to the condition and material should be carried out in close collaboration with the appropriate specialist staff – curators, conservators and taxidermists, etc. – where possible, and also involve the community of origin.

## Conservation and restoration

Conservatory or taxidermal safeguarding measures because collection items are in a very bad condition and there is thus an immediate danger they will be lost, are carried out in a minimally invasive way and with good documentation. When active conservation and restoration measures are planned, e.g. for the purpose of an exhibition, which exceed the character of (emergency) stabilising measures, the aim should be to collaborate (where possible) with representatives of the communities of origin in question. This is justified by the fact that restoration measures can always emphasise specific aspects of the collection item. Conservation and restoration measures may possibly be seen as a Eurocentric judgement<sup>41</sup>. Such measures thus have a direct impact on how collection items are assessed and perceived<sup>42</sup>. Research on views and practices in the communities of origin can provide some insight here. Some institutions already provide recommendations on such issues<sup>43</sup>.

---

39 The AIC-Wiki (American Institute for Conservation provides information on materials and techniques for conserving and restoring works of art and historical artefacts: [http://www.conservation-wiki.com/wiki/Main\\_Page](http://www.conservation-wiki.com/wiki/Main_Page); CCI Notes provide practical advice on issues of care, handling, and storage of cultural assets: <https://www.canada.ca/en/conservation-institute/services/conservation-preservation-publications/canadian-conservation-institute-notes.html>.

40 Cf. e.g. Elkin and Norris 2019; e. V., DIN. (2014): *Erhaltung des kulturellen Erbes (DIN-Taschenbuch, 409)*, e.V., DIN.; *Erhaltung des kulturellen Erbes 2 (DIN-Taschenbuch, 410)*.

41 Wharton 2005, p. 200.

42 Cf. De la Torre 2013.

43 E.g. Australian Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Protocol, Museum of Art and Applied Sciences, 2018; Principles and guidelines for Australian museums working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage, Museums Australia, 2005; A Guide to Guardians of Iwi Treasures, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, 2001; Preventive conservation guidelines for collections, Government of Canada; further examples are listed in the E-reader.



## Documentation

Those responsible for the collection should be aware that labelling and categorising collection items originated in western museums. Today, this might be interpreted in the communities of origin as a judgement of these communities according to western knowledge systems (cf. Eurocentric way of thinking). The “ethnic groups” constructed in the colonial era can be deeply engrained in the documentation of collections and have now first to be painstakingly deconstructed. Labelling may contain discriminatory or racist designations.

The revision of the classification and designation principles together with specialists from communities of origin can pave the way for collaborations and promote mutual understanding (cf. “Decolonising Collections and Exhibition Management” from p. 129, “Collaboration with communities of origin” p. 46). Historical designations must nevertheless always be taken into consideration, carried on, and continue to remain documented, because they are possibly anchored in literature or museum documentation and are important for a classification.



Practical examples in the **E-reader** illustrate approaches which can be used to revise the terminology used by the museum.

The “*Leitfaden für die Dokumentation von Museumsobjekten*” (Guidelines for the Documentation of Museum Objects, 2011) published by the German Museums Association lists the principles of documentation. A documentation includes the initial documentation upon receipt of an item, inventory, and the scientific cataloguing. These overlap with a range of research tasks.

Basically, all results and findings are documented. The fact that there is no information or there are no comments at any given time should also be documented. All documentation should be neutral and sources subjected to an objective and critical evaluation.

## Cataloguing

The inventory includes all documents and records associated with the collection as well as sources of additional references (e.g. collector biographies, journal entries, itineraries, reports, and dealer directories) and a record of any restrictions on access. The museum should develop a system of querying the necessary points for the cataloguing. The provenance research working group provides assistance for drawing up standardised provenance information in the “*Leitfaden zur Standardisierung von Provenienzangaben*” (Guidelines for the standardisation of provenance information, 2018)<sup>44</sup>.

---

<sup>44</sup> [https://www.arbeitskreis-provenienzforschung.org/data/uploads/Leitfaden\\_APFeV\\_online.pdf](https://www.arbeitskreis-provenienzforschung.org/data/uploads/Leitfaden_APFeV_online.pdf).

Ideally, the documentation for the collection holdings should be digital and multilingual<sup>45</sup>. Options for the multilingual documentation of geo-references should also be examined. Even though multilingual documentation initially means more work, it does promote accessibility, transfer of data, and networking with colleagues (worldwide) and communities of origin as a matter of principle. Representatives of communities of origin would like to know where items from their culture are located. The dialogue can be significantly fostered when the entry in the collection database is not only in German.

Access and handling restrictions, whose justification is based on the significance of the collections for the community of origin (see sensitive collection items p. 19), should, if known, also be noted and appropriately taken into consideration in the work with and on the collections. Restrictions on viewing, handling, and examining can also be extended to the associated archive materials, if necessary.

### Digitisation

The digitisation process must observe the general stipulations of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), copyright law, and the right to one's own image<sup>46</sup>. Access restrictions and the views of communities of origin have to be taken into account as far as possible in the depiction (photographs) and description of sensitive collection items (cf. p. 19, sensitive collection items). In the event of possibly competing ethical ideas on this, the museum should adopt a position (cf. p. 46 "Collaboration with communities of origin").

The designation should already mention the nomenclature used in the communities of origin, if this is known. Each museum should compile transparent standards for the digital recording of the collection items and the (online) access to them. There is also a need to raise awareness that copyrights/usage rights for cultural heritage (e.g. for patterns) may exist.

From today's point of view, historical inventory lists and archives may contain inappropriate designations and incorrect information. Online access should draw attention to this problem and, in the case of (accompanying) photographs, to the possible existence of images and/or descriptions of deceased persons<sup>47</sup>.

The possibility of 3/4-D digitisation has also made it much easier to produce replicas. Consideration should also be given to whether this requires the community of origin to be consulted, however.

---

<sup>45</sup> Bilingually in German/English or French, if appl. also Spanish and Portuguese.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. e.g. *Leitfaden Universitätssammlungen und Urheberrecht* (Guidelines for University Collections and Copyright of the Coordination Centre for Scientific University Collections in Germany (2015), [https://wissenschaftliche-sammlungen.de/files/2815/7555/9408/HR\\_Leitfaden-Universitaetssammlungen-und-Urheberrecht\\_201912.pdf](https://wissenschaftliche-sammlungen.de/files/2815/7555/9408/HR_Leitfaden-Universitaetssammlungen-und-Urheberrecht_201912.pdf)).

<sup>47</sup> Some Australian cinema and television films, and public libraries and archives, too, indicate per disclaimer in the opening credits or on their websites and in their brochures that the film or the collections and archives contain images and sound recordings of persons who are now deceased, as Torres Strait Islanders, and certain Australian Aboriginal groups, consider it offensive to mention the deceased, or it may even be forbidden (e.g. ATSLIRN: Protocols for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Collections).



## Researching

Academic freedom is a fundamental principle, but should also conform to the principles of academic ethics and demonstrate responsibility towards the communities from which the collection items originate. Ideally, research shall be conducted together with specialists and representatives of the communities of origin (cf. background “Provenance Research” from p. 147). It is desirable that people, initiatives, and institutions from the communities of origin become involved in the formulation of research agendas at an early stage. With culturally sensitive items in particular, projects should be discussed in detail in advance and permission should be obtained from representatives of the communities of origin who are authorised to talk about these items and address any issues arising. The museum should be aware that collection items from colonial contexts have to be considered as historically sensitive items (cf. p. 19). This means on the one hand that the museum has an ethical responsibility for how it deals with the biographies and provenances of the collection items, and on the other, that the museum is encouraged to reflect on its own history and the contexts in which acquisitions were made. The museum should also be aware that the research could produce contradictory findings and conflicts. Projects and their possible findings should therefore be discussed and documented in advance with the authorised members of the communities of origin.

Care must be taken that the questions on which the research is based and the research results are always presented without any preconceptions and do not represent a basis for discriminatory interpretations. Provenance research is not a completed process of clarification. It should be considered more as a research process, which often provides only preliminary results due to gaps in the documentation or in the information handed down. Museums are therefore encouraged to share the findings of provenance research with third parties so as to be able to find further important information in other institutions and archives.

However, museums should be aware that the publication of findings on items from colonial contexts can also become the source of tension between the indigenous parties involved, especially when competing interpretations exist between them. This possibility should be discussed with the parties concerned before the research project begins. Contradictory findings possibly require further examination and an additional process of discussion to resolve these questions.

The question of copyright for the joint findings of the provenance research and in publications with and in the communities of origin and countries of origin has to be taken into account.

In all research projects and their publication, or when curating an exhibition on the project findings, it is of crucial importance to recognise and respect the rights of the community of origin to self-determination. Museums should take this as a foregone conclusion and ask themselves how this can be integrated as a fundamental prin-

ciple into the practical work of the museum. Any research focus or the designation of an item of cultural heritage as an “artefact” based on its market value, academic, historical, or curiosity value can be deemed to be a problematic representation in the communities of origin, for example. An open dialogue and transparent ways of presentation are recommended.

Research results and publications on collection items must also be made available to the relevant community of origin.

Examples of recommendations and projects to engage indigenous communities (Indigenous Engagement Policies) in the museum work are summarised in the [E-reader](#).



### Funding possibilities

The *Deutsches Zentrum Kulturgutverluste* (German Lost Art Foundation) funds provenance research on collection items from colonial contexts according to its own guidelines on funding<sup>48</sup>. Institutions in Germany which hold collections and wish to submit an application, can and should obtain comprehensive advice from the German Lost Art Foundation on this matter. Moreover, applications for provenance research can also be submitted to several other funding institutions.

### Exhibiting and educating

The museum is responsible for dealing with collection items from colonial contexts appropriately and also helps raise awareness. In any event, stereotypes and discrimination should be avoided in all depictions, presentations, and publications.



All in all, the museum has little influence on why people come to the museum, the attitude with which the visitors stand in front of the exhibits, and the effect these exhibits have on the observer. Therefore, it cannot be ruled out that collection items from colonial contexts will have an emotional impact to a greater or lesser degree and this should be taken into account when designing the exhibition.

Every museum should define how to draw attention to the (possibly unaccounted for) provenance of collections from colonial contexts. Possible starting points on the ways in which this can be done are given on page 71. Every museum should be open to forms of communication that allow collection items from colonial contexts to be seen from different perspectives, that make it possible to discuss tensions and con-

<sup>48</sup> [https://www.kulturgutverluste.de/Content/08\\_Downloads/DE/Projektfoerderung\\_Koloniale-Kontexte/Foerderrichtlinie\\_Kulturgueter\\_koloniale\\_Kontexte.pdf?jsessionid=7E7B2833D90782B4DD3BFAC68D25F587.m7?\\_blob=publicationFile&v=2](https://www.kulturgutverluste.de/Content/08_Downloads/DE/Projektfoerderung_Koloniale-Kontexte/Foerderrichtlinie_Kulturgueter_koloniale_Kontexte.pdf?jsessionid=7E7B2833D90782B4DD3BFAC68D25F587.m7?_blob=publicationFile&v=2).



traditions, and to seek dialogue with the communities of origin.

Practical examples in the [E-reader](#) illustrate exhibitions dealing with colonialism.

The museum should develop a strategy for open access to databases and online publications that conforms to the mission statement and ensure that this strategy is transparent. The museum should critically examine whether a freely accessible representation of a collection item can be discriminatory, whether copyright and/or personal rights or data protection legislation is/are violated, or whether content could be used in questionable ways, and communicate its position.

Replicas of collection items are useful for didactic reasons and as representatives. They are never a substitute for the original, however.

In the case of exhibition-related loans, the museum, in addition to the general requirements, should examine whether the planned exhibition concept is ethical. The content, context, and purpose of the presentation must meet the criteria laid down. The context of the exhibition should not hinder a critical examination of colonialism.

Collection items from colonial contexts may be used for academic teaching. The same criteria apply as for exhibiting. The content, context, and goal of the course or seminar should not prevent a critical examination of colonialism.

New approaches to exhibition design, which evolve, for example, in collaboration with representatives of communities of origin, diasporic communities, or groups in civil society which address post-colonial issues, promote the inclusion of different perspectives, and provide an active opportunity to be involved in the design (see background information “Decolonising Collections and Exhibition Management”, from p. 129). Interpretations of the community of origin must be treated with the appropriate respect.

### Returning

The subject of returning collection items is not relevant to all cases of colonial contexts as defined in these Guidelines. Therefore, the recommendations here and some initial considerations are presented from p. 80 in detail.



Practical examples on the return of collection items are summarised in the [E-reader](#).

## ?? QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The questions and answers relating to the collection items are set out separately for each case. This catalogue of questions and answers is by no means exhaustive. Each colonial context must be judged differently. What is more, questions and answers other than those presented here can also arise. The concrete explanations of the cases can be found starting on p. 31.

### CASE 1: COLLECTIONS FROM FORMAL COLONIAL RULE CONTEXTS



**Case 1a:** The collection item is from an area that was under formal colonial rule at the time of collection<sup>49</sup>, manufacture, acquisition, or export of the item.

**Case 1b:** The collection item was used in an area under formal colonial rule. Its use was related to colonial rule, colonial commerce, or colonial life.

An overview of formal colonial rules can be found from p. 171.

The following questions can usually be applied equally to collection items of cases 1a and 1b. The text indicates whether differentiations will be necessary.

### Collecting

The following section deals only with questions that may arise when the museum is offered collection items from colonial contexts today. For a retrospective review of how items came to the museum in the past, see the background information on collection history on pp. 105 ff.



General recommendations on collecting can be found on p. 50.

**?** With regard to imminent acquisitions, should a museum ask whether the items have a connection to formal colonial rule? Does this have a legal effect on the acquisition?

Collection items that are acquired today, whether by purchase (on the open market, at auction, etc.) or in the form of donations and bequests, or acquisitions from other

<sup>49</sup> Here, collection means the process of collecting objects from where they originated, e.g. natural history objects as part of field research.

public collections, can also be assigned to cases 1a or 1b. The colonial history of the collection items rarely affects the legal validity of the acquisition. It would only be affected if the original acquisition under formal colonial rule in accordance with the law at the time had been ineffective and no subsequent acquisition of ownership has taken place.

Example: An item in a German colony was stolen from the owner in 1901 by a German collector travelling privately. He then “donated” it to a museum and provided extensive information on the acquisition circumstances, which are also documented. The item would then not have been either the property of the collector or the property of the museum. Nor if the collection item is passed on to another museum will it acquire effective ownership.

Normally, however, the museum will become the owner despite the collection item’s colonial history. The problem of such an acquisition lies in the ethics. The general stipulations of civil law apply to the acquisition of collection items in Germany (e.g. purchase, donation), regardless of the provenance of the collection items. In any case, it should be self-evident that the provenance has to be clarified as far as possible, not only with a view to identifying any connections with colonialism but also, for example, any connections with losses related to persecution during the National Socialist regime.

 Should a museum refrain from making an acquisition if the examination of the collection item’s provenance reveals its connections with formal colonial rule?

A generally binding answer to this question is not possible. A differentiated approach is required due to the length of colonial rule and the vast geographic extent of the colonial territories.

With regard to case 1a<sup>50</sup> collection items, it should be remembered that a wide range of manufacturing and trade contexts existed. At one end of this spectrum are items made especially for sale to collectors and traded on markets. At the other end are items whose acquisition was in breach of the colonial legal concepts and morality of the period<sup>51</sup>. While the working group assumes that the acquisition of the former collection item is generally harmless, it would advise against acquiring the latter. Ultimately, however, as far as possible each museum, after the most comprehensive examination possible and taking into consideration its own collection concept, must decide for itself whether to accept or acquire an item.

With regard to collection items in case 1b<sup>52</sup>, it is crucial that any connection to formal colonial rule be taken into account in any decision on acquisition. Indeed, the mu-

---

<sup>50</sup> Case 1a: The collection item comes from an area that was under formal colonial rule at the time of collection, manufacture, acquisition, or export of the item.

<sup>51</sup> Collectors of that time were well aware of this, but often considered scientific interest to be more important.

<sup>52</sup> Case 1b: The collection item was used in an area that was under formal colonial rule.

seum should take special care to clarify the provenance as the basis for deciding for or against acceptance. It should be noted that the context in which an item was used rather than the one in which it was manufactured may be problematic here.

**?** Museums can collect items that were collected during formal colonial rules, as well as those that changed hands during formal colonial rule but were collected or created before that time. Do these collection items raise different questions?

Yes. For older collection items (e.g. archaeological items, but also items produced before colonial rule, etc.), the crucial question is whether there were changes of ownership during formal colonial rule, how they were effected, and how they are to be evaluated. On the other hand, for collection items which were taken from a natural setting in a colonial territory during a formal colonial rule (e.g. objects of natural history) or were manufactured there, the actual conditions and circumstances of the collection and acquisition in each case must always be reconstructed and assessed. It was often the case that established colonial structures were used when hunting and collecting<sup>53</sup>, for example the support of local rulers and assistants as well as colonial administrations. These framework conditions, which ranged from hunting regulations and collection permits through to the use of slaves, for example, can throw up additional questions, e.g. when the collection or production was by means of forced labour/done under coercion.

**?** Should a museum refrain from making an acquisition if the provenance cannot be completely clarified?

In many cases, the provenance is incomplete or impossible to clarify. In these cases, too, the museum must make a decision on an individual basis. Generally speaking, caution should be exercised. Where an acquisition does not fill a gap in the collection because similar collection items have already been acquired, the acquisition should not be made. In any event, the decision on acquisition should be documented in detail.

**?** Should collection items in case 1a<sup>54</sup> be acquired in order to withdraw them from the (art) market?

Sometimes demands are made that public cultural institutions should accept collection items with unknown or difficult provenance (as a donation or bequest) or buy them in order to withdraw them from the (art) market<sup>55</sup>. Great caution is advised here.

---

<sup>53</sup> Here, collection means the process of collecting objects from where they originated, e.g. natural history objects as part of field research.

<sup>54</sup> Case 1a: The collection item is from an area that was under formal colonial rule at the time of collection, manufacture, acquisition, or export of the item.

<sup>55</sup> Museums can be custodians of items confiscated by customs. There are clear restrictions on storage (cf. Engelhardt 2013).

It may already be difficult under budgetary regulations to buy a collection item when it is already clear at the time of acquisition that it may have to be handed over to a third party. Cultural institutions should therefore not see themselves as a “safe haven”, especially as a purchase does not stop the illegal art trade, but merely absolves the collector of any responsibility. The situation may be different if, for example, the acquisition is made at the express request of the country of origin or of persons from the respective ethnic group who have the prerogative of interpretation in relation to an item<sup>56</sup>. The museum can also purchase items which the vendor has demonstrated were obtained lawfully. Museums should inform communities of origin – if known – when culturally sensitive items (cf. p. 19) are being offered for sale on the (art) market.

### ? Which national regulations come into play for the acquisition of items from formal colonial rule contexts?

It is self-evident that the general legal requirements for the acquisition of such collection items must be observed for each acquisition. There are as yet no legal regulations, in particular under international law, which have an effect on the acquisition of collections from formal colonial rule contexts.

### ? Can a museum of its own accord transfer collection items from formal colonial rule contexts in its own collection to another museum by way of deaccession?

A museum can transfer collection items from formal colonial rule contexts to other museums through deaccession of its own accord. The requirements of the Act on the Protection of Cultural Property (KGSG)<sup>57</sup> must be observed. The reasons for the deaccession should be documented and accepted by both sides. When collection items are deaccessioned, care must always be taken that the transfer to another institution does not lead to less transparency with regard to provenance, thus making the public discourse on the collection items more difficult. What is more, care must be taken that the documentation on provenance is not separated from the items in a way that hinders subsequent research. The museum handing over the collection item(s) should therefore conclude a written agreement with the accepting institution on the transfer. It should list all important data on the collection items and a copy of the existing documents at least should be handed over with it. The documentation should additionally be done in the relevant inventories of the institutions, i.e. by making deletions or entries.

<sup>56</sup> For example, repurchase of Hopi items by a foundation (<https://www.survivalinternational.org/news/9829>).

<sup>57</sup> The handing over of collection items from one museum to another museum constitutes placing goods on the market under Section 2 Para. 1 No. 9 KGSG (Cultural Property Protection Act). The museum handing over the item(s) must therefore observe the due diligence requirements pursuant to Section 41 KGSG. These comprise the examination of the lawful import after the cutoff date of 26 April 2016 as well as the examination of the lawful import pursuant to Directive (EC) No. 1210/2003 of 7 July 2003 on certain specific restrictions in the economic and financial relationships with Iraq (legal export before 6 August 1990) and Directive (EU) No. 1323/2013 of 13 December 2013 on the amendment of Directive (EU) No. 36/2012 on restrictive measures given the situation in Syria (legal export before 9 May 2011).

## Preserving

Please first consult the general recommendations on preservation (p. 50).



- ❓ Which ethical aspects should be taken into consideration to ensure that collection items from formal colonial rule contexts are stored in the appropriate manner?

Any ethically relevant aspects stem first of all from the nature of the item itself and its significance for the community of origin. In the case of culturally sensitive collection items (cf. p. 19), it is always necessary to examine whether the storage of the collection items corresponds to the ideas of the communities of origin. The museum must develop its own preservation concept for this purpose and present it in an appropriate way. If individual communities of origin have developed guidelines on the preservation and conservation of sensitive collection items, these should be complied with if at all possible.

- ❓ Which special stipulations apply to preserving human remains from formal colonial rule contexts?

For human remains and collection items into which human remains have been incorporated, the revised guidelines “Care of Human Remains in Museums and Collections” of the German Museums Association should be consulted.

The publication “*Menschliche Überreste im Depot. Empfehlungen für Betreuung und Nutzung*” (Human Remains in Collections. Recommendations for their Care and Use) of the Coordination Centre for Scientific University Collections (2020) provides comprehensive information on issues of conservation and restoration when dealing with human remains.

Although special storage conditions based on ethical issues do not appear to be always necessary for photographs, drawings, impressions, anthropometric data, film and sound recordings of members of communities of origin which came into existence under formal colonial rule, access restrictions may sometimes make sense (cf. sensitive collection items, p. 19). This may require further research on the views regarding such records within the community of origin.

- ❓ How should access to collections be regulated?

Rules for access to the collections should be developed by the museum and communicated in a transparent manner. Access restrictions for culturally sensitive collection items (cf. p. 19) are usually unrelated to the acquisition in a colonial context. If members of communities of origin wish to inspect collection items with access restrictions, the museum may be confronted with demands or wishes that do not conform with western customs (e.g. no female museum employees in the collections). The

museum should therefore seek a dialogue on demands and wishes in advance in order to agree on conditions that are acceptable to all parties involved. If necessary, the museum should inform representatives from the communities of origin of the presence of culturally sensitive collection items before they visit the collections.

Each museum should examine whether it can implement an open access strategy for its inventory lists or collection database – both in respect of a participation in a centralised collection database as well as an individual solution. A multilingual<sup>58</sup> item designation and, where possible, the use of the designation used in the community of origin promote accessibility to the collections for communities of origin. Restrictions on access to and depictions of culturally sensitive collection items (cf. p. 19) should be considered in the same way as data protection regulations and rights of the individual.

 **Is it necessary to note any links to formal colonial rule in a basic inventory?**  
● If yes, how?

As far as possible and known, it should be noted during the basic inventory whether the item has links to formal colonial rule. This information can be useful for further research. The museum should develop a system to work out whether and how items from formal colonial rule contexts can be appropriately labelled.

 **Are there any specific criteria and particulars that must be taken into consideration in the inventory?**

The usual rules apply to an inventory (cf. p. 52).

All information about the link to formal colonial rule should be noted<sup>59</sup>. An indication of possible cultural sensitivity and resulting restrictions on access, handling, or exhibition should be part of the inventory for the relevant collection items.

 **What is collaborative collection care and conservation?**

Collaborative collection care and conservation means that different interpretations of a collection item are considered and combined in a constructive way<sup>60</sup>. A concept for the preservation of collection items is developed in close collaboration with representatives of the community of origin, attention being paid not only to the conservation of the material, but also the importance of the collection today. Further literature recommendations on conservation ethics and general information

---

<sup>58</sup> Bilingual in German and English or French, also in Spanish and Portuguese if appl.

<sup>59</sup> These include, among other things, provenance data with factual commentary on the colonial context, references from literature, reports.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Muñoz Viñas 2005, pp. 212-214.

on collection care in collaboration with representatives of communities of origin are contained in the [E-reader](#).



## What should be taken into consideration in respect of conservation and restoration in collaboration with representatives of communities of origin?

Demands and requests made by representatives of the communities of origin in dialogue with the museum's conservators represent an important basis for measures to be developed. Solving complex conservation issues requires a dialogue on an equal footing. There are cases where the demands and requests of the communities of origin (e.g. in connection with certain rituals) conflict with conservation guidelines of the museum. A negotiation process is then necessary to arrive at solutions which are acceptable to both sides. Long-term partnerships help to create the necessary trust.

A practical example from conservation and restoration in collaboration with representatives of communities of origin is included in the [E-reader](#).



## Researching

Please consult the general recommendations on researching (cf. p. 54) as well as the background information on provenance research (pp. 147 ff.).



## What should be taken into consideration before beginning research on non-European collection items?

The first thing which has to be clarified is whether they are historically or culturally sensitive collection items (cf. p. 19). All museums should be aware that restrictions on research into culturally sensitive collection items may exist. If small museums are still in doubt, they should first contact other museums which specialise in a specific field for further expertise. These colleagues can help plan the further course of action.

In the case of culturally sensitive collection items, it is important to carefully weigh up whether a consultation with the parties involved from the respective community of origin should be sought before or during the research (e.g. in connection with invasive examination methods or publications containing depictions of the item). As a starting point, the German contact point can provide information about possible contacts. In some cases, (national) museums in the countries of origin, and possibly embassies of the countries of origin in Germany as well, can provide initial information about cultural protocols or assist in the search for authorised persons (in Oceania this applies especially to New Zealand, Vanuatu, and Hawai'i, in the case of the United States the Smithsonian Institution can be contacted). Often, however, representatives authorised by the communities of origin to handle the items in question must be identified and localised in another way.

## Provenance research

Against the background of debates on the legitimate acquisition and possession of collection items, items seized illegally or through plunder (*Raub- und Beutekunst*), the illegal trade in art and antiquities, and ethical standards, museums should regard provenance research as a moral obligation and as a prerequisite for handling their collection items responsibly. Questions regarding provenance should therefore be included in any scientific or restorative work on collection items, and should be covered systematically, particularly in the case of larger-scale research projects.

Provenance research is a way of gaining better knowledge of the history of an item/ collection, an institution, or a discipline, and its involvement with the colonial project. It should therefore be considered separately from claims for restitution and does not inevitably have to result in a return – for even if the unlawful acquisition of one or more collection items is detected, there may be grounds for them to remain in the collection, as the application of NAGPRA<sup>61</sup> in the United States has shown. Provenance research should not only be conducted after a claim for restitution has been made. Ideally, the museum should be carrying it out proactively and on an ongoing basis.

### Are there differences in provenance research between collection items from formal colonial rule contexts and other collection items?

Essentially, provenance research on collection items from formal colonial rule contexts does not differ from provenance research on collection items from other contexts (cf. Provenance Research from p. 147). The circumstances under which an item was collected, sold, acquired, or appropriated must be accurately reconstructed in order to establish the situation in respect of possession and ownership against the social and cultural background in question. The knowledge and expertise of people from countries of origin or communities of origin on certain sections of provenance should be regarded not only as an important source, but also as a relevant perspective on the collection item and as a starting point for transnational cooperation in provenance research. For certain sections of the provenance, such as those prior to acquisition by Europeans, ethnological methods and oral history research may be important. Against the backdrop of the situation with regard to source material, which is often particularly difficult in the case of colonial rule for various reasons, classifications, interpretations, and evaluations should be particularly well-substantiated, while any gaps or unanswered questions and speculations should be explicitly named.

---

<sup>61</sup> NAGPRA (Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act) is a 1990 US federal law for the protection of the graves, bodies, and grave goods of indigenous peoples. NAGPRA requires publicly-funded collections to proactively approach Native American communities of which they have human remains, grave goods, and/or ceremonial objects, and, if desired by the communities, to initiate a return. NAGPRA has led to numerous returns. However, some communities have decided to leave objects or collections – in some cases under special conditions – in the possession of the respective museums. NAGPRA does not consider everyday objects to be the subject of returns, for example, since they do not fall within the culturally significant groups of items.

## Should the museum prioritise the examination of collection holdings with regard to colonialism?

A generally binding answer to this question is not possible. Many museums have a research concept and should work out a concept and a strategy for working through their holdings. Those responsible should be aware that the points of view regarding prioritisation can be different, since different interests may be involved here.

The provenance of human remains must usually be clarified as a matter of priority (cf. "Guidelines. Care of Human Remains in Museums and Collections", DMB). Another practical guide which can provide further assistance here is the publication *"Interdisziplinäre Provenienzforschung zu menschlichen Überresten aus kolonialen Kontexten"* (Interdisciplinary provenance research on human remains from colonial contexts)<sup>62</sup>.

Regarding possible further starting points for a prioritisation see p. 42.

The prioritisation strategy should be tailored to the museum in question and its research programme and be coordinated in particular with any ongoing collaboration projects with the countries of origin.

Requests by countries/communities of origin/individuals from a community of origin should always be dealt with expeditiously. It must be ascertained whether there have already been any contacts, enquiries, or requests for return in respect of the collection item concerned. However, if the collection holdings relating to the request have not yet been processed, this is not a reason for failing to provide information.

## Which questions should be answered concerning the provenance research on collection items to evaluate links to formal colonial rule?

The answers to the following questions should be part of the research and, as far as possible, underpinned by supporting documents:

- How was the item collected and/or acquired by European actors? Which courses of action are recorded? With what intentions was the item collected/acquired or given away? (cf. p. 148)
- Is it a culturally sensitive collection item? (Information on this can be found from p. 19)
- By whom, how, and in what context was the item made and first used? Are the biographies of artists or users known or can they be ascertained?
- Which local networks can be identified in relation to the collection item? Which trading networks were involved in the transfer of the item to Europe? Are intermediaries and traders and their biographies known?
- How was the collection item eventually acquired by the museum?

62 Medizinhistorisches Museum Berlin, ICOM Germany, German Lost Art Foundation (eds.), Berlin in prep.

It should be borne in mind that the museum's own sources on the acquisition of a collection item often do not include or even conceal previous acquisitions. Sources found outside the museum are therefore indispensable. At the same time, the credibility of historical, especially colonial, sources must be critically examined.

If the search for information on the acquisition or the production of the item reveals any illegal or ethically questionable circumstances, the aim and use of other research questions (i.e. material analysis, geographical origin) outside of provenance research should be examined more critically.

### Which actors and events should be critically questioned regarding the acquisition of collection items from formal colonial rule contexts?

The following groups of actors from the side of the former colonial power are relevant to provenance research. Their significance may vary from collection to collection, so the order given does not imply any kind of ranking. The groups are listed alphabetically:

- Colonial officials (who were specifically invited to create collections) and members of the diplomatic corps (those belonging to embassy circles were almost expected to create a collection)
- Colonial trade (this was often – except for the German colonies of course – not with the colonies directly, but via merchants, for example, in the Netherlands or England)
- Merchants trading in ethnographica, art, antiquities, and natural history objects (this may overlap with provenance research for the period 1933–1945) and their collaborators (e.g. captains, agents)
- Military personnel in colonial territories (there was repeated looting during punitive expeditions. The plundered objects found their way into the ethnographic trade or were later donated, etc. The military also built up their own (private) collections or sometimes acted as carriers.)
- Missionaries in colonial territories (missionaries often had collections of their own, frequently with religious objects given to them by converts, for example)
- Museum employees
- Researchers (prospectors, surveyors, but also natural scientists and humanities scholars) who in the course of the colonial expansion – often within the framework of (military) expeditions – collected certain items or in certain regions
- Settlers – especially those who left the colonies again later
- Shipping and trading companies (they acted not only as carriers as the ships' crews also acted as collectors)

Fundamental information on the actors involved and the events should also be exchanged with specialists from the countries/communities of origin from which the

item originates, where possible. The specialists may have access to local archives and sources and also establish contacts to communities.

### What problems can occur in the provenance research of collection items from formal colonial rule contexts?

Different cultural, regional, linguistic, and historical conditions make the research on these collection items very complex. Owing to the varying forms of colonial rule in different regions, their diversity and ambivalence, the concrete circumstances with regard to origin, collection, and/or acquisition are difficult to assess in some cases. In addition, incorrect or incomplete evidence or information about the provenance of collection items may have been knowingly or unknowingly documented. Previous provenance research has shown that sometimes the origin and/or the transferor were not disclosed, because the acquisition was illegal, was considered problematic, or the source of the acquisition was not to be used by others. False provenance information was also used to enhance the origin or identity of the items and thus increase their commercial value.

Another reason for gaps in the documentation is the (subsequent) dividing up of collections with the same origin. They were often split between different museums – for example, in the context of trade, auctions, or the exchange of duplicates. In the case of archaeological excavations and natural history collections, finds were divided up from the outset. Items or parts of collections of the same origin were distributed to different museums (sometimes also to different genres of museums or to different countries). What is more, the accompanying documentation and correspondence were not always duplicated, so that sometimes only a part of the collection ultimately had documentation. Therefore, it is advisable to reconstruct the dividing up of these collections/finds in the provenance research and to look specifically for the documentation that may be in the possession of other museums.

Practical examples of cooperative research projects are briefly illustrated in the [E-reader](#).



### **Other research projects that do not directly affect the provenance of the collection item:**

#### Is authorisation of the community of origin/country of origin necessary for research on collection items from formal colonial times?

Legal permission from communities of origin/countries of origin is not required for the research on collection items from formal colonial rule contexts. There are no regulations on this under either national or international law at present.

Nonetheless, a dialogue – as well as collaboration/cooperation – on issues which concern or could concern communities of origin should be sought as soon as

possible (before the research starts). Transparent discussions should be held on the objectives, content, scope, and possible results, and the agreements thereon documented.

It should be noted in this context that the necessary research permits may have to be obtained for research in the country of origin.

### ? Are there any other authorisation requirements?

The same rules apply here which apply generally. It may be advisable to be guided by the Nagoya Protocol (incl. Access and Benefit Sharing – ABS<sup>63</sup>) for natural history objects from formal colonial rule contexts, even if it is not yet legally binding. This protocol primarily relates to the taking and analysis of genetic material (DNA) from collections/acquisitions after October 2014, however. The act on the implementation of the obligations under the Nagoya Protocol was additionally only implemented in German law in 2015<sup>64</sup>.

### ? What should be taken into consideration in publications containing results on collections from formal colonial rule contexts?

Careful thought should be given to whether to depict items, especially in the case of publications on culturally sensitive items from formal colonial rule contexts (cf. p. 19). It may be advisable to choose the cover image for publications carefully and to add “warnings” or corresponding markers at the beginning of the publication out of respect for the community of origin<sup>65</sup>. The museum should be particularly aware of its responsibility to protect the data privacy and personal confidentiality of the information providers.

### ? Are there constellations which forbid research on collections from formal colonial rule contexts as a matter of principle?

In the case of collection items which are still in the possession of the museum, but which have already been deaccessioned, any further research should exclusively be conducted in consultation with the new owners. The same applies to collection items which are the subject of return negotiations. Collection items for which the current state of knowledge indicates a future return (pro-active offer on the part of the museum, but also as a result of a demand from the community of origin/country of origin)

63 <https://www.bfn.de/fileadmin/ABS/documents/0.451.43.de.pdf>.

64 <https://www.bmu.de/gesetz/gesetz-zur-umsetzung-der-verpflichtungen-nach-dem-nagoya-protokoll-und-zur-durchfuehrung-der-verordnu/>.

65 Among others Margaret Daure, Sacred Information should remain Secret, Papua New Guinea Workshop hears, Pacific Islands Report 2000; National Museums Scotland (ed.), Introduction to Pacific Collections: Cultural Considerations, <https://www.nms.ac.uk/media/497076/32-introduction-to-pacific-collections-cultural-considerations.pdf>; Moira G. Simpson, Making Representations: Museums in the Post-colonial Era. Routledge: London – New York 2001; South Australian Museum, Statement on the Secret/Sacred Collection, Adelaide 1986 (<https://docs.samuseum.sa.gov.au/pkfoxcm8q>).

is very likely, should not be the subject of unilateral research (exception: provenance research). Research which goes beyond provenance research on collection items which originate from a situation of extreme violence and which have not been able to be returned to anyone to date, should be afforded particularly careful consideration.

### Which aspects have to be considered when undertaking conservation research on collections from colonial contexts?

The conservation research provides answers to issues including questions concerning the material and changes to the collection items and thus supports the conservation of collections. A variety of analytical methods can also be used to clarify the chronological classification or the geographic reference, for example. In addition, questions could be whether the collection items consist of human remains (e.g. human hair) or not, for example. This can have far-reaching consequences for the significance in the community of origin and for a return<sup>66</sup>. Conservation issues can also be addressed with knowledge of the material and its condition, e.g. which conditions should prevail in the depository.

Accurate analyses can usually only be obtained with invasive methods. These are sometimes not accepted by non-European societies, however, particularly when culturally sensitive collection items are involved. When contacts already exist, it is advisable to jointly work out research projects or framework conditions. Decision-making processes which have led to invasive methods being applied should always be documented so as to be understandable.

### How should lending be regulated in research projects?

General guidelines on lending in connection with research projects are regulated by the museum's standardised loan agreement. There may be concerns and sensitivities relating to collection items from formal colonial rule contexts that require individual, additional museum and collection-specific regulations (i.e. issuing a guarantee that the items will be returned to the lender, agreement on guidelines for the handling of culturally sensitive items, agreements on the procedure for invasive examination methods). This also applies to planned publications (see above). Individual supplementary regulations may include provisions on how research is conducted, the structure of publications, and the documentation and accessibility of research results.

---

<sup>66</sup> For example, is a Marquesan fan bead really made of human bone, or is it animal bone and the piece therefore possibly manufactured for Europeans? Does a fly whisk contain strands of human or horse hair?

## Exhibiting and educating

Please consult the general recommendations on exhibiting and educating (p. 55).



- ❓ May collection items from formal colonial rule contexts be placed in a context other than the colonial one?

Yes. Even if a collection item originates from a formal colonial rule context, it should not be considered one-dimensional. Museums are called upon to present these items in other contexts, and not exclusively in that of colonialism. The museum should make its visitors more aware of the problem of the colonial context (see more details below). This should also be done in the awareness that collection items from colonial contexts can trigger a less than positive reaction among visitors (not only those from communities of origin).

- ❓ Is it possible to exhibit collection items if the circumstances of their acquisition are unknown, but whose dating and origin suggest they are connected to formal colonial rule?

Yes. The answer above applies to the form of presentation.

However, presentation in an exhibition does not release the museum from its obligation to further explore the provenance of the collection items. For further clarification of the provenance, the active involvement of the public may be helpful if visitors (online or in the exhibition) are given the opportunity to provide information. To this end, information about the year of acquisition and previous owners or collectors may provide clues which can help further clarify the origins of collection items.

- ❓ Can collection items from formal colonial rule contexts be exhibited even if their provenance is problematic?

Yes. A problematic provenance is not a criterion for ruling out an item's presentation. The museum must, however, suitably address this problematic provenance or consider whether presentation should focus exclusively on this provenance.

- ❓ How can the connection of items to/the origin of collection items from formal colonial rule contexts be presented in exhibitions?

The museum should also think about this issue when designing an exhibition if collection items from formal colonial rule contexts are to be presented. A general recommendation on how this should be done cannot be given due to the heterogeneity of the exhibition themes and practices. The museum should examine suitable options and show visitors how it deals with and appraises its own collection history.

Museums should strive for a holistic approach in their efforts to communicate knowledge. The intention to act transparently with regard to the origin of the collection items should be clear in the exhibition. It is recommended that certain data be disclosed to the extent that it is known and as allowed under data protection legislation. This includes, above all, the year of acquisition and information on the provenance.

Ways of communicating information include:

- Additional text panels indicating the state of knowledge about the collection items or their acquisition
- Notes on captions and/or collection item legends (the collector and the year are now often a standard feature), information on the country/site of origin (for example, in the form of “from the former colony...”), possibly also with a reference to unresolved or problematic provenance
- Own exhibition areas in which the colonial collection and the acquisition history of the museum or of individual collection items is presented
- Explanations regarding the provenance of specific collection items which are representative of others
- Awareness-raising and training of attendants and staff responsible for communicating knowledge
- Offer tours on a specific theme and integrate the topic into the work of communicating knowledge and information
- Provide additional background information (for example in audio guides, media stations, additional information in digital form for retrieval, print, and/or online catalogues)
- Highlight the topic on the website or in connection with the online presentation of collections

## How should museums communicate with the public?

In general, a transparent communication strategy with regard to collection items from formal colonial rule contexts in the museum is recommended. Inventory lists or even multilingual databases which are accessible online are desirable. Many communities of origin have a fundamental interest in finding out where their cultural heritage is located – less (frequently) to formulate requests for collection items to be returned, but rather to be able to enter into an exchange of knowledge and a collaboration. Responses to reactions, requests, and criticism should be prompt and respectful.

## ? What, in general, should be taken into account in publications?

Just like other collection items, those from formal colonial rule contexts can be described or depicted in museum publications of any kind (printed and online). In the case of culturally sensitive collection items (cf. p. 19), the museum should consider very carefully before publishing images of the items. Some communities of origin reject images – or descriptions<sup>67</sup> – of certain culturally sensitive items. If in doubt, a picture should be omitted. It may be advisable to include a note at the beginning of the publication indicating that sensitive items are depicted. Please also consult the following paragraph.

## ? What should be taken into consideration in online publications and open access strategies?

The museum should develop ways of making inventories of collections from formal colonial rule contexts accessible to academics and the public (e.g. [online] databases). Out of respect, careful consideration should be given to whether photos/ images and also detailed descriptions of sensitive collection items, especially in the case of non-European collections, are published in online publications and open-access inventories/databases (cf. p. 19).

The museums should draw up their own guidelines on how to indicate the (possibly unclear) provenance of the collection items in online publications.

## ? Are there any loan restrictions concerning collection items from formal colonial rule contexts?

Collection items from formal colonial rule contexts may provoke restitution claims. The borrower's position on such claims should be clarified in advance. A few countries have a state "return guarantee" or legal protection against seizure by the courts/ police (e.g. Switzerland, the United States). The relevant legal framework must be clarified in advance.

---

<sup>67</sup> This applies e.g. for Australian Aboriginal bullroarers.

## CASE 2: COLLECTIONS FROM REGIONS WHICH WERE NOT SUBJECT TO FORMAL COLONIAL RULE



The collection item comes from an area that was not formally under colonial rule at the time of its collection<sup>68</sup>, manufacture, acquisition, or exportation, but which had informal colonial structures or was under the informal influence of colonial powers (cf. p. 23).

**?** Should the creation and acquisition history of case 2 collection items be examined less critically than those of case 1 (= collections from formal colonial rule contexts)?

No. The cases formulated under these recommendations do not represent a hierarchy. Informal colonial structures are based on the same ideology of cultural superiority and the ensuing right to oppression and exploitation as formal colonial rule.

All circumstances relating to production and acquisition of collection items should be examined on a case-by-case basis and the museum should develop and make transparent its own position.

If colonial contexts exist outside formal colonial rule, the questions and answers listed in case 1 are relevant as well (see from pp. 57 ff).

Additionally, some specific questions are raised: in particular, how colonial contexts outside formal colonial rule can be identified and evaluated:

**?** Why are colonial contexts possible even outside formal colonial rule contexts?

Formal colonial rule was mostly the result of a prolonged process of “discovering” an area and increasingly subjecting it to foreign rule, to (more or less) complete incorporation into a colonial empire. Structures and networks were developed in the run-up to formal colonial rule. Therefore, political power imbalances with colonial structures may have already prevailed even before the beginning of formal colonial rule. What is more, colonial structures did not automatically terminate with a state’s attainment of political independence after formal decolonisation. In some cases, they were continued by the local political elite. Dependency, for instance in

<sup>68</sup> Here, collection means the process of collecting objects from where they originated, e.g. natural history objects as part of field research.

an economic way, could continue, as could control over knowledge systems. The discrimination or exploitation of local minorities<sup>69</sup> could/can continue to exist. Political power imbalances and/or colonial dependency relationships have also developed in countries that were never, only informally, or only partially formally colonised<sup>70</sup>. This made it possible for colonial structures to exist in which parts of the population were, or still are (at least temporarily), suppressed and exploited. For examples see the chapter on “cases” pp. 36 ff.

### ? How can colonial contexts outside formal colonial rule be identified and examined?

As a rule, the evaluation can only be carried out in individual cases, taking into account as many factors as possible. The following questions should be asked about the item:

#### ? Where does the collection item come from?

If the collection item originates from an area in which colonial structures existed at the time of its creation, acquisition, or export, a colonial context may exist.

#### ? Who made the collection item?

If with regard to its production or former possession the collection item can be attributed to members of a(n) (ethnic) minority/population group (communities of origin) oppressed by colonial structures, then a colonial context may exist.

#### ? Under what conditions did the community of origin from which the collection item originated live at the time of manufacture, acquisition, or export of the item?

There may be a colonial context if the community of origin was exposed to colonial structures.

#### ? For what purpose was the collection item originally made?

If the collection item is a culturally sensitive item for the community of origin, which was intended for its exclusive use or its exclusive possession on the basis of the values and the world view of that community of origin, it may have been handed over under duress as a consequence of a colonial context.

---

<sup>69</sup> The various indigenous groups as a whole can also constitute the numerical majority of the population of a country.

<sup>70</sup> For example, China in the 19th century, Tonga.

Similarly, there may be a colonial context if the item was made specifically for sale owing to hardship as a result of colonial structures (cf. example Guatemala p. 36).

### ? Under what circumstances did the collection item change hands?

The following in particular should be examined: sale due to hardship, forced sale (including the influence of government agencies), the surrender of religious objects (of the original faith) as a result of proselytising, political and social status of the indigenous heritage, robbery, theft, or misappropriation.

### ? How did the acquisition occur?

If the conditions under which the transaction took place indicate that the parties involved were not on an equal footing (i.e. inadequate price, surrender under duress, or surrender due to hardship), the acquisition may have taken place in a colonial context. Local workers were often used for natural history voyages of discovery and expeditions. Working conditions should be examined to check for coercion or inadequate payment. Museums should also examine whether permissions for removing specimens from their natural habitats existed, for example, and who issued them, or whether there are indications that they were circumvented. They should moreover examine whether the indigenous group living there was asked whether it would allow specimens to be collected on its land.

### CASE 3: OBJECTS THAT REFLECT COLONIALISM



Within the framework of these recommendations, the term “objects that reflect colonialism” serves as a working concept for the demarcation and characterisation of objects with a contextual, in some cases manipulative, often artistic connection with colonial contexts. Objects in this category include objects that actively or passively reflect colonial thinking or convey stereotypes that underlie colonial racism. In the most serious case, these are objects that openly pursue propagandistic intentions, such as the promotion, legitimisation, or even glorification of colonial systems of rule as well as their actions and actors. In often more subtle ways, defamatory racist ways of thinking or portrayals of colonial contexts found their way into advertising material or commercial art work, especially in connection with colonial goods or the travel industry. Connotations of colonial contexts or the reflection of such contexts can also be found in works of the visual and the performing arts.

Against this background, a rough orientation vis-à-vis objects that reflect colonialism can be provided by dividing this case into three sub-groups, namely:

- Colonial propaganda (including monuments inside and outside<sup>71</sup>)
- Advertising products
- Works of the visual and performing arts

Objects of this case may have been created during or after formal colonial rule. They mostly originated in the domestic territories of the colonial powers, but sometimes also in the colonial territories themselves, for example in connection with the demonstration of a claim to power.

It should be noted that a critical analysis of colonial contexts has been taking place for some time now and to an increasing extent in the works of contemporary artists. However, these objects of art, with their post-colonial perspective, form a separate group of critical receptive objects which cannot be ascribed to the objects which fall within this case. The following questions therefore explicitly do not apply to such post-colonial objects.

---

<sup>71</sup> Where the responsibility of the museums is limited to those monuments that lie within their administrative area.

## ? What purpose did objects that reflect colonialism have?

Objects that reflect colonialism propagate, popularise, project, and stylise. They made it possible to popularise colonial images and themes in society and to convey the policies of the colonial powers. Propaganda using images which today would be regarded as racist and/or discriminatory against minorities<sup>72</sup> often promoted, legitimised, or glorified the social acceptance of colonial aspirations within the population of a colonial power, sometimes even in post-colonial times (e.g. the Nazi regime).

But the legitimisation or glorification of colonial aspirations is not always in the foreground. Advertising art (e.g. posters, sales packaging for colonial goods) primarily played (and in some cases still plays today) with the image of the exotic as well as the desire for adventure and discovery. It often used catchy stereotypical image motifs with stereotypical colouring and decoration. The colonial context can often only be detected through a post-colonial perspective, for example, by questioning the effect on the communities of origin that were presented.

## ? When can an object be assumed to reflect colonialism?

Clear rules for answering this question are difficult to define given the variety of objects to be considered. In general, however, any substantive and/or motivic reference to exoticism<sup>73</sup>, orientalism<sup>74</sup>, etc. as well as to historical long-distance trade and basically all aspects of the “discovery”, conquest, and development of foreign continents or territories should at least be grounds for scrutiny in order to detect the possible existence of an even deeper connection to colonial contexts. Where these are perceptible (e.g. ethnic show posters, advertising pamphlets on colonialism), it is recommended that the museum seeks to clarify the relevant colonial context and to fully reveal colonial racism/stereotypes by undertaking an in-depth analysis using information pertaining to the object (above all original context, purpose and intention, effect), as well as by studying the details of the iconography in pictures, thus achieving a thorough evaluation in each individual case. The inclusion of different perspectives (cf. post-colonial perspective, p. 25) is of great importance.

---

<sup>72</sup> The various indigenous groups taken together can also constitute the numerical majority of a country's population.

<sup>73</sup> Exoticism is a Eurocentric basic attitude which assesses things foreign as being quite positive and accords them a particular fascination. Things foreign are perceived only under the “exotic” aspect and this biased perspective is given very little thought through to no thought at all (cf. ikud-seminare.de).

<sup>74</sup> Eurocentric view of the communities of the Middle East or the Arab world, which is expressed in a feeling of superiority towards the Orient (cf. Said 2009).

## ? How can colonial contexts be differentiated from purely advertising stereotypes?

Not every promotional item for colonial goods is automatically an object whose connection to colonial contexts needs special treatment or explanation. Not every historical poster that seeks to awaken wanderlust through depictions of African or oriental views has to be immediately classified as colonial propaganda. Thorough analysis and evaluation are crucial in every individual case to establish whether, in what form, and with what intention actual racist perspectives or stereotypes from a colonial context are being conveyed. Under certain circumstances, it may be necessary to call in external experts, who will help decide whether an individual object represents an advertising commonplace (recurring representation of stereotypes in the advertising context) or reflects specific colonial thinking or representation patterns. The transitions are fluid and can be perceived differently from different perspectives.

## ? How should the colonial context be documented?

The usual standards apply to the documentation (cf. p. 52). Explicit references to recognised colonial contexts in inventory entries or references to possibly hidden or subtle connections with colonial stereotypes (object-intrinsic) or with other collections with a colonial background (collection items in case 1 or case 2, cf. pp. 31 ff.) must also be documented.

## ? What significance does the provenance of the object have?

For museums it is generally important to know as much as possible about the origin of their collection items. Nevertheless, the provenance of objects that reflect colonialism plays a subordinate role, since colonial contexts as a rule do not result from their origin or the history of their acquisition, but primarily from the contents and intentions portrayed (iconography) and the purpose of their creation.

## ? What needs to be considered in respect of digitisation?

As part of the digitisation process, information on the context in which objects that reflect colonialism are to be understood, which is possibly not immediately evident to inexperienced viewers, should also be noted. This includes for example indications of the racist or ideological basis of the iconography or that it was created in a colonial context.

## ? How can colonial contexts be communicated?

The colonial contexts of objects that reflect colonialism should be highlighted whenever possible in the museum's exhibition, educational, and publication work by

addressing the contextual or iconographic connection to colonial thinking as well as the argumentative intentions/purpose of the object. Depending on the nature and extent of this connection, a detailed contextualisation may be necessary, regardless of whether the object is incorporated into a perhaps deviating thematic exhibition or communication context.

In addition, the use of objects with clearly racist representations and ideologies in museums should be weighed up particularly carefully and, if they are used, it should certainly be done with the utmost sensitivity. The museum has little influence on the attitude with which visitors approach the exhibits and how they are affected by them. Objects that reflect colonial thinking or convey colonial racism and ideologies can be perceived by members of the communities of origin as shocking or defamatory. The museum should be open to a dialogue about this. The presentation of (individual) perspectives from the communities of origin on the respective object in publications and exhibitions can foster a multi-dimensional perspective on colonial contexts.

Ways of explaining colonial contexts can be:

- Text panels and/or references to object legends depicting the iconography of the objects
- Thematisation of the colonial reflection aspects of certain objects with transference to others
- Awareness-raising and training of museum attendants and staff responsible for communicating knowledge
- Offer tours on a specific theme and integrate the topic into the work of communicating knowledge and information
- Provision of additional background information (for example in audio guides, media stations, additional information in digital form for retrieval, print, and/or online catalogues)
- Highlight the topic on the website or in connection with the online presentation of collections

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE RETURNING OF COLLECTION ITEMS

Demands for the return of collection items are very much to the fore in the public discussion on colonialism. The return of collection items should not be an end in itself, however. On the contrary, it is one (important) component, when the issue is to review the common history together with people from countries which were once colonised, to make amends for wrongdoings, and find ways to overcome the consequences of colonialism which still endure today. There have been a few isolated requests for the return of collection items from the states and communities of origin, but they are not yet being made on a regular basis. The future will show whether this situation will change due to the establishment of the contact point<sup>75</sup> or the increasing accessibility of inventories in the Internet. Discussions should be conducted with sensitivity right from the start. It is important to bear in mind that a solution does not necessarily have to end solely with the return of the collection item. Some communities of origin do not want to have any collection items from European museums returned to them, others are interested only in specific groups of collection items, e.g. human remains and objects with a religious significance, or their return may be controversial within the possible groups of relevance. They are sometimes more interested in long-term access to the collections, exchanges of knowledge, capacity building, or being provided with digitalised forms of the collection items rather than their physical return. Even when there is a definite desire for collection items to be returned, there could at the same time be an interest in further collaboration and exchange. Additional wishes of different kinds (e.g. compensation payments) can also be expressed, whose fulfilment is demanded instead of or in addition to the return of the collection item. In this context, the needs and interests of the negotiating partners should be determined through discussion on a case-by-case basis. The authors of these Guidelines therefore recommend that museums make clear right from the start that they are prepared to discuss the return of collection items but are also willing and open to talk about other solutions.

The question of whether to return a collection item is a particularly challenging one for museums, both in respect of the decision itself and also its implementation. The decision on returning any collection item is the responsibility of the museums and the bodies which oversee them in each case. This is a delicate situation for all those involved. On the one hand, the museum has an obligation to preserve its collection and must therefore consider each return very carefully, as this always involves the deaccessioning of items from a collection. On the other hand, the concerns of those who approach the museum with a request for the return of an item may be of great political, emotional, or sometimes spiritual significance, and this can have a great impact on the discussions. The following comments should therefore be taken as a

---

<sup>75</sup> German Contact Point for Collections from Colonial Contexts at the Cultural Foundation of the German Federal States, website <https://www.cp3c.org/>.

suggestion as to which aspects may play a role in the decision-making and when the return of an object can be appropriate. Moreover, these Guidelines aim to provide a practical illustration of the procedural steps which are necessary to successfully conduct discussions on the return of collection items and possibly the return itself as smoothly as possible.

## When might it be appropriate to return collection items?

As explained in the chapter on “Collections from Colonial Contexts: Legal Aspects” (from p. 153), only in very rare cases will there be a legally enforceable claim to have an item returned. If, in an individual case, there is nevertheless a legal entitlement to have a collection item returned, the collection item should be handed over if the former owner (or their legal successor) so wishes, even when they have not asserted this right through legal means. If there is a legal claim to restitution, but the persons entitled do not wish to have the item returned, a (written) agreement governing the further handling of the collection item should be made (e.g. a contract of donation or loan). In most cases, legal entitlements, if they exist at all, will have expired due to the statute of limitations. The museum is free to decide whether it wishes to make use of the statute of limitations, however. The authors advise against this. Experts (the museum’s lawyers, the bodies which oversee the museum, or a lawyer specialising in this field) should be consulted when examining possible legal claims.

If there is no legal entitlement to have a collection item returned, consideration must be given as to whether a return or another mutually agreeable solution should be entertained for other reasons.

To approach the problem, some initial considerations as to the cases in which the return of collection items is currently underway or recommended would appear to be helpful. First, the horizon should be extended above and beyond the issue of collection items from colonial contexts. There are essentially two approaches based on ethical or restitution policy considerations as to why the return of collection items may be called for:

### **Collection items removed unlawfully**

The collection item was wrongfully taken from its former owner or keeper. To make amends for this wrongdoing, the collection item must be returned. The type and significance of the collection item are irrelevant here.

This is the approach which was followed in particular by the 1998 “Washington Conference Principles on Nazi-Confiscated Art”<sup>76</sup>. If the removal of the item was an act of Nazi persecution, a fair and just solution has to be sought, irrespective of the type of collection item involved. This was essentially also the approach used in the 2018

---

<sup>76</sup> Washington Principles on Nazi-Confiscated Art on the Website of the German Lost Art Foundation.

report drawn up by F. Sarr and B. Savoy<sup>77</sup>. The “Washington Conference Principles on Nazi-Confiscated Art” put the focus on the circumstances of the acquisition. In each case, the circumstances of the acquisition must be clarified as accurately as possible. The investigation of provenance therefore plays an important role here. If the circumstances of the acquisition appear today to be an unacceptable “wrongdoing”, the collection item must be returned. One difficulty here is to define what should be considered to be such a “wrongdoing”. The heterogeneous history of the colonial period certainly makes this difficult. Problematic are also cases where it is now impossible to clarify the circumstances of the acquisition. Some authors have suggested reversing the burden of proof, exactly as the so-called “Guidelines on the tracing and return of Nazi-confiscated art” recommend in the case of the loss of assets resulting from Nazi persecution<sup>78</sup>: if the acquisition took place in a specific context (Nazi persecution, colonial period), it is assumed that it took place unlawfully, unless the museum can prove the opposite. This approach is also unsatisfactory in that it focuses on overcoming past injustices, which is a German/European concern, and other aspects, such as the significance which the collection items have for the communities of origin, are being lost from sight. Communities of origin sometimes deem it disrespectful when items are perceived solely in the context of colonial events.

### Special significance of collection items

Collection items are returned because they are of special significance for the former owners or keepers.

This is the fundamental idea of the Native American Graves and Repatriation Act of 1990. This US law provides the Native Americans in the USA with a right to the return of human remains, religious/sacral/ritual objects, and those collection items which according to the beliefs of the Native Americans cannot be the property of individuals<sup>79</sup>. This fundamental idea is also found in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People of 2007<sup>80</sup>. The UNESCO convention of 1970<sup>81</sup> does not provide for a right to the return of every illegally exported item either, but only for particularly important cultural objects. This approach places the emphasis more on the community of origin and the role or significance of the item in the community. However, this presents the difficulty of specifying who has the power to define this significance, and whether it is the present significance of the item or the significance at the time the item left the community of origin. One problem with this approach can be that

---

<sup>77</sup> Felwine Sarr, Bénédicte Savoy, *The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage. Toward a New Relational Ethics*, Paris, 2018.

<sup>78</sup> Guidelines for implementing the Statement by the Federal Government, the Länder, and the national associations of local authorities on the tracing and return of Nazi-confiscated art, especially Jewish property, p. 29. [https://www.kulturgutverluste.de/Content/08\\_Downloads/EN/BasicPrinciples/Guidelines/Guidelines.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publication-File&v=8](https://www.kulturgutverluste.de/Content/08_Downloads/EN/BasicPrinciples/Guidelines/Guidelines.pdf?__blob=publication-File&v=8).

<sup>79</sup> Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), Public Law 101 - 601, 101st Congress, 1990.

<sup>80</sup> United Nations, Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Resolution 61/295).

<sup>81</sup> UNESCO, Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property; adopted by the General Conference at its sixteenth session, Paris, 1970.

the aspect of restitution becomes less important and the impression is created that past wrongdoings are not to be discussed at all. This issue is also frequently important to the communities of origin, however.

### Mediatory approach as recommended by these Guidelines

The authors consider a middle course to be the appropriate one, which takes both aspects into account<sup>82</sup>. The return of collection items from colonial contexts should therefore be considered when the circumstances of acquisition appear wrong from today's point of view, and also when it is an item which at the time of its removal from the community of origin was of special religious or cultural significance and it has maintained this significance until today or even regained it.

The authors do not consider it appropriate, at least not at present, to arrive at a final prescription or definition of the circumstances of acquisition which are to be considered as wrongful and could thus lead to the return of a collection item, because of the many different forms of cases and also the very different views of the countries and communities of origin. The fact that colonialism overall represents a system of great structural violence sometimes leads people to conclude that any acquisition during the era of colonialism was wrongful. Most members of the working group cannot subscribe to this view. Ever since contact was first made, objects were manufactured especially for Europeans because of the demand that was identified. Moreover, transfers of objects where all those involved were on equal terms took place even in the colonial setting, with its structural inequality, sometimes embedded in an indigenous system of exchange and the reciprocal presenting of gifts. The authors consider it to be problematic to deny that the communities of origin had any agency and to declare them all to be victims. On the contrary, discussions with the particular community of origin should include asking its view on the historical circumstances and attempts should be made to arrive at a mutually acceptable assessment. Ultimately, every individual case has to be considered according to its own particular merit.

If the legal and ethical standards of the time were already violated when the collection item was acquired, or if the circumstances under which it was acquired fundamentally contravene today's ethical standards for museum acquisitions, a dialogue with the communities of origin should be sought and a willingness to discuss the return of an item indicated.

This applies to cases in which the collector was aware that their actions were wrong when they appropriated the objects, because, for example, they were taken against the will of the owner. This is particularly the case if the object was taken from the original owner by the use of direct violent force. It must be borne in mind that the

---

<sup>82</sup> A corresponding proposal was made by the Nationaal museum van Wereldculturen of the Netherlands in its Guidelines (Return of Cultural Objects: Principles and Process, 2019).

wrongful act does not necessarily have to have been committed by the staff of the museum itself or by German citizens. There are also cases in which wrongful acts were committed within the communities of origin as a result of the colonial situation, e.g. because members of the communities of origin acted on behalf of the colonial masters.

The question of when an item has such significance for the community of origin that this fact alone means a return appears appropriate, cannot be generally defined either. Recent human remains are an exception here. Irrespective of the circumstances of acquisition, these should always be repatriated when the community of origin so desires. Otherwise, mutually acceptable solutions should be sought here as well.

It would be a very welcome development if the institutions made the reasoning behind the return of collection items transparent so that exemplary cases were accessible here, which could serve as a guide for future cases.

**?** What should be taken into consideration to ensure that talks about requests for collection items to be returned can be conducted in a spirit of mutual trust?

The question of whether collection items should be returned can arise as the result of a request for an item to be returned being submitted to the institution by an external party, be it from a community of origin, a country of origin, or individuals/groups of individuals. A museum's own research into items in its collection may bring circumstances to light which call into question whether an item should remain in the museum, and the museum may contact the community of origin proactively. The following suggestions apply to both cases:

**?** Who should be involved on the German side in considerations/talks on the return of collection items?

Good coordination between the German participants is important if the discussions with countries or communities of origin are to run smoothly. The authors therefore recommend the following steps:

- The body which oversees the museum should be involved early on, so that the museum's scope for action can be clarified at an early stage and commitments can be upheld.
- It is also essential to involve the German Federal Foreign Office and the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media (BKM) as early as possible. This is because, on the one hand, the Federal Government bears exclusive responsibility for foreign affairs under Article 73 of the Basic Law and, on the other, because the Government has comprehensive knowledge of the current political and social situation in the countries of the communities of origin. The competent division at the German Federal Foreign Office should be informed, if

necessary via the competent ministry in the appropriate federal state, as should the German embassy responsible. The Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media (BKM) should likewise always be notified.

- In addition, the body which oversees the museum must agree whether and in which way competent authorities of the federal state involved must be informed.

Collection items may not be deaccessioned from the collection holdings without a legal basis. The legal basis may be the legal claim of the community of origin, but may alternatively be the statutory right of the body overseeing the museum to deaccession property without a legal obligation to do so on ethical or moral grounds. In the key issues paper of 13 March 2019<sup>83</sup>, the German Federal Government and the federal states confirmed that they would create the necessary budgetary legal provisions if they did not already exist.

Owing to the significance of the items for the communities of origin, which have, to differing degrees, a bearing on cultural, scientific, religious, economic, or political issues, museums need to be especially sensitive when it comes to responding to requests for collection items to be returned, and initiating and holding discussions thereon. Furthermore, this is also the reason why museums are obliged to critically examine their own holdings and create the greatest possible transparency.

How museums deal with people or groups that contact them and the demands they make should be characterised by the following points:

### Create transparency

In order to ensure a dialogue based on mutual trust about requests for the return of collection items and avoid upsetting the negotiating partners, it is important to establish the greatest possible transparency. This can prevent ill feelings on the part of the applicants. Naturally, this relates first and foremost to the collection items in question and the associated documentation. Access should be as comprehensive as possible, so as not to create the impression that information is being withheld.

In addition, the greatest possible transparency in respect of procedural matters is recommended as well. Information should therefore be provided as early as possible on:

- Who the relevant contacts are at the museum (who should then not be changed unless absolutely necessary)
- What decision-making powers the museum or the body which oversees it has, i.e. who ultimately decides whether a collection item should be returned

---

<sup>83</sup> PDF at <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/blob/2210152/b2731f8b59210c77c68177cdcd3d03de/190412-stm-m-sammlungsgut-kolonial-kontext-en-data.pdf> (German).

- What are the expectations vis-à-vis the negotiating partners. For example, what must the negotiating partners provide to establish that they have the authority within their community of origin to conduct the dialogue (cf. p. 87)
- How long the process is expected to last

Both sides should create transparency. The negotiating partners should be asked to disclose facts and circumstances that may be of importance for the return of collection items.

### Professional and expeditious consideration of applications

The complex attendant circumstances and issues mean that each individual case must always be considered. A request for a collection item to be returned should be processed expeditiously. The bodies which oversee the museums, as the owners of the collection, are called upon to provide the financial resources to ensure that applications can be processed quickly whilst enabling the museum to carry on with its work. This research should be conducted as swiftly as possible, but also as thoroughly as necessary. Museums should not allow themselves to be rushed into making hasty decisions.

Decision-making powers should be clarified as soon as possible in order to ensure the swift processing of applications and, in cases where these powers do not lie with the museum, to involve the competent agencies.

Case-by-case assessment also entails the consultation of specialists (ethnologists, historians, lawyers, doctors, anthropologists, ethicists, etc.) to determine the facts if the necessary expertise is not available in the institution concerned. If possible, specialists from the country of origin should also be involved in the fact-finding process<sup>84</sup>. The case-by-case examination should also include the exercise of discretion and decision-making which is based on the objective criteria of justice, equity, and good conscience (cf. the principle of “justice, equity, and good conscience” in English case law; in Germany, Section 242 of the German Civil Code) and the approaches to a just and fair solution familiar from cases relating to events which occurred in the era of National Socialism.

### Mutual respect and communication on equal terms

The museums should signal that they are prepared to enter into a dialogue, that they take concerns seriously and will treat them with the necessary care. Different attitudes to dealing with such matters from a cultural, religious, or academic point of view, especially in the case of culturally sensitive collection items, should be taken into consideration and openly discussed. The parties making the request/authorised parties must always be treated with respect.

---

<sup>84</sup> This is especially relevant when the museum wishes to identify authorised contact persons in the community/country of origin for the return of the collection item or if the museum decides against returning a collection item.

## Open-ended efforts to find solutions

The physical return of collection items may not be the only solution possible. Alternative solutions to a return (for example “virtual restitution” [providing objects in digital form], academic collaboration projects regarding the holdings identified as being problematic, [joint] exhibition or publication of provenance research results, permanent loan [in both directions], joint ownership, reacquisition, joint research projects, exchange for equivalent collection items, etc.) should be considered and openly discussed. In cases which are legally or factually complex, other options for conflict resolution, such as mediation, may also be considered (e.g. via ICOM-WIPO Art and Cultural Heritage Mediation).

### Who is the right party with whom to discuss the possible return of a collection item?

Irrespective of whether the question of the return of collection items arises from a request submitted to the museum by an external party or is the result of the museum’s own research, it is important to clarify with whom the return is to be negotiated and who is ultimately responsible for taking the item into their custody. This can be one of the most difficult challenges in conducting discussions about the return of collection items. In the countries and communities of origin there are often different views on who is entitled to conduct such discussions and to whom items are to be handed over. Differences in opinion on these authorisations arise time and again between the governments of modern-day states and traditional dignitaries. Sometimes, only one particular individual or one group of persons is authorised to take part in such talks even within a community of origin.

All dialogue partners should be asked for their constructive participation in clarifying this issue; this cannot and should not be the sole responsibility of the museum.

As mentioned above, individuals or groups, entire communities of origin, and also territorial authorities or authorities representing bodies of people/individuals (e.g. states, religious communities) are possible partners for discussions. The other parties should be asked to cooperate on the following points:

- Description of the connections/relationship of the negotiating partner to the collection item
- Competence of the negotiating partners to conduct negotiations
- If the party does not claim to be negotiating on its own behalf, documents showing that they are authorised to negotiate should be provided. These can be powers of attorney for individuals on the one hand, or on the other special interest groups can have a mandate from the state, for example, to negotiate such issues
- If contact is to be made with a foreign state, the initial contact will usually be made to the relevant national embassy in Berlin

## Countries of origin

If a foreign state is a negotiating partner, there must be clarification of whether other states need to be contacted, for example because the collection item can only be assigned to a certain community of origin but not to a geographic area, or the former owner, who is not (no longer) able to assert a claim themselves, cannot be assigned with certainty to a specific modern-day country. Whether the state of origin is (at least also) entitled to assert claims to the collection items must also be clarified.

## Communities of origin

If a museum decides to conduct negotiations with the relevant ethnic group or community of origin, the question of the right to negotiate can be particularly pertinent. This is relatively easy to clarify when there is an elected representation with its own legal status. This is often the case, for example, with the North American First Nations/Native Americans. If the community of origin is not organised or legally recognised in this form, great care must be taken to verify who within the group is entitled to speak on its behalf. In such cases, it will often be advisable to attempt to include government officials from the country in question in the negotiations. This increases the legal certainty in the event of an item being returned and also helps ensure that the museum does not become embroiled in domestic disputes in a country of origin.

In all cases, it is important to carefully examine the connection between the community of origin and the collection items in question. Difficulties may arise because membership of a group has changed over time or communities of origin have merged with other ethnic groups.

## Individuals or groups of individuals

As a rule, these can only be the right negotiating partner if they assert claims as the (former or current) owner or are entitled to assert them. In such cases, ownership or the legal succession (inheritance, purchase, gift, etc.) must be examined.

Please consult the background information (cf. from p. 153) on the fundamental verification of ownership. The question of succession should, wherever possible, be clarified by means of documents, register extracts from registry offices and probate courts or, alternatively, church registers or equivalent agencies authorised to issue such documents. The museum should request that the individuals or groups involved provide this information, as this research would place too much strain on a museum's capacities. Where a different legal and/or cultural understanding of relationship or inheritance prevails in the claimant's home country, the dialogue partners should state and provide evidence of this. Various documents, such as affidavits, academic literature, expert reports, photos, etc., may be considered as proof. Should the museum be unable to assess the quality of the evidence, external advice should be sought; enquiries could be made to the German Federal Foreign Office or the embassy of the country in question, for example.

If an individual discussion partner proves that they have a claim to an item, but other persons also have rights with respect to the item, they should demonstrate that they are authorised by the other rightful claimants. This ensures that the museum is not drawn into any disputes within a group of claimants. In the case of individual claimants from abroad, the museum should insist in cases of doubt that the relevant German embassy legalises and authenticates the foreign documents (Sections 13 and 14 Consular Act).

Where an individual is neither the owner nor entitled to represent all owners, they should only be allowed to negotiate/undertake preliminary negotiations in very exceptional cases.

### What further steps are recommended when a decision has been made to return collection items?

When the museum has decided to return collection items, this should be agreed in writing with the negotiating partner. The question of repatriation costs also needs to be clarified here. It should furthermore be documented that upon return of the items all claims with regard to the specific items are settled.

If relevant, information on how the collection items should be treated from the museum's expert point of view should be included, for example whether they have been restored, damaged, or contaminated with pollutants (see next question also). If applicable, stipulations can be useful which regulate the subsequent access to the item by certain sections of the population.

Many returns of collection items are accompanied by a handover ceremony. This ceremony should be designed and organised with the negotiating parties on an equal footing with regard to both content and procedure. How a restitution ceremony is conducted can be highly charged politically, especially if governments are involved in the negotiations or if the return is used by some of those involved to formulate further political demands, either in relation to the former colonial power or other parties involved in the country of origin.

In order to avoid any disagreements, the expectations of all parties involved with regard to the content and conduct of the handover should be clarified in advance. The following questions should be considered:

-  Who exactly are the parties responsible for the handover and its execution? Is this the museum on the one hand and an individual person or an ethnic or social group on the other? Or is it the Federal Republic of Germany and the modern-day country in which the community of origin lives?
-  Who exactly will take part in the handover, e.g. representatives of the country of origin, representatives of the community of origin? How should these other participants be involved and what role do they play in the handover?

- What are the expectations regarding statements/speeches by the parties involved?
- Is an apology or acknowledgement of wrongdoing expected? Who is authorised to apologise or acknowledge wrongdoing in such a case and on whose behalf (what is the political dimension)?
- What are the expectations regarding ceremonies and can these be fulfilled (e.g. fire prevention, protected flora and fauna)?

Restitution ceremonies will often involve political representatives supported in their work by protocol officers. These representatives or protocol officers can also help museum representatives to prepare the handover.

### ● Which conservation aspects have to be observed when collection items are to be returned?

An agreement on aspects which serve to protect the collection items to be handed over should also form part of the return negotiations. Partners to the negotiations should be fully informed about the current state of knowledge on the collection items as a matter of principle. The various options should be clearly discussed with the other partners and joint agreements on how to proceed should be made. The following points should be discussed:

- Condition of the collection items: hazardous constituents (incl. biocides), risk assessment for the return transport
- Further conservation/restoration measures: incl. cleaning of dust contamination, additional conservation measures to safeguard them during transport, restoration above and beyond safeguarding measures
- Instructions on the handling (who may do so and specific implementation), packaging (materials, methods, and implementation) and the presentation (room, storage location, and visibility) for the handover

### ● May the documentation and archival records of returned collection items be used for further research and publications?

German museums and collections are subject to the principle of transparency, i.e. they are obliged to document and keep all information on the collections and make it available to third parties. Returns are part of the collection history of a museum and must therefore also be documented accordingly. It must be possible to trace all the information concerning returned collection items in the collection even beyond the time of their return.

As a matter of principle, all collection items returned should be accompanied by copies/records of the corresponding documentation and all archive material. The museum should reach a joint agreement with the recipients on the further use of

the documentation and archive material after the return. They should also agree on how image rights to photographs of returned collection items are to be handled. This likewise applies to digital returns of photographs relating to the collection items. The views of those taking receipt of the collection items shall be considered as far as possible. However, care must be taken that any agreements reached do not infringe the principle of transparency.

- ❓ What should be done if the return of a collection item is considered appropriate
- on legal, ethical/moral, or other grounds, but is not possible (e.g. because the rightful owners cannot be identified)?

If the above-described circumstances indicate that the return of a collection item is appropriate but this is not possible, for example because it is not possible to conclusively establish to whom the item would have to be returned, or because the German Federal Foreign Office states that there are compelling social, political, or practical reasons which temporarily or permanently preclude it, the item must remain in the museum collection under conditions which conserve it and are ethically appropriate. The museum can transfer the collection item to another museum (see Collecting p. 60). Whether such collection items are displayed in exhibitions should be decided on a case-by-case basis.

- ❓ What aspects can be relevant when collection items are to remain in the museum after being returned?

It is conceivable that the ownership of collection items from contexts of formal colonial rule is transferred back to the country of origin/community of origin as a result of justified legal and/or ethical demands for their return, but both sides mutually agree that the collection items should nevertheless remain in the museum. It would be particularly conceivable that the parties agree that the items remain on loan, but a reacquisition by purchase or donation would of course also be possible. Here the onus is on the bodies overseeing the museums to provide appropriate funds.

In current discourses, the term “shared/joint custody”, i.e. a shared stewardship of collection items in museums with countries of origin/communities of origin is being discussed. However, this is not a predefined legal construct. What is meant is that both sides – regardless of the actual ownership – assume joint responsibility for the collection items. Both parties enter into a process of negotiation on equal terms and agree on the conditions that shall apply to the storage and presentation of and the research into the collection items in question, with corresponding agreements being concluded. In addition to the establishment of ownership, this also includes any access restrictions, access possibilities for the (former) owners, and stipulations for digitising the collection items.



# BACKGROUND INFORMATION

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### EUROPEAN COLONIALISM: POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND CULTURAL ASPECTS OF EARLY GLOBALISATION

*Jürgen Zimmerer*

#### General: Colonialism and globalisation

European colonialism, striking out across many parts of the globe and their gradual submission to European emissaries, as well as the overcoming of that subjugation, was the hallmark of the second half of the last millennium. This process spans more than 600 years, the entire world, and has left its mark on all areas of culture, science, business, and politics. Its impact is visible in globalisation to this very day, even if it has changed direction to some extent. Where for centuries Europe, then the Global North in general, became the centre of commerce and domination and was one of its greatest beneficiaries, the former colonies have now emancipated themselves and are challenging the former colonial powers. They are pushing aside Europe and, increasingly, the Global North as a whole. All this is taking place in the context of globalisation, European colonialism being its history<sup>85</sup>.

The start and end dates of major developments are always arbitrary. 1415, the year in which Portuguese troops conquered a non-European city for the first time since antiquity, the North African city of Ceuta, could be regarded as the start of European expansion. One of the conquerors' goals was to engage with force in the lucrative gold and slave trade through the West African Sahara. Another important date is 1492, when Christopher Columbus landed on islands off the Atlantic coast of what was later named America, thereby ushering in exploitation, colonisation, and settlement by Europeans. Northern Europeans had already reached North America but, as far as we know, knowledge of this did not penetrate into the European nor into the African, Asian, or American consciousness. Another important symbolic date is 6 September 1522. On this day, the remainder of the Spanish fleet of Ferdinand Magellan (Fernão de Magalhães) reached Seville, from whence it had sailed three years earlier. The earth was thus circumnavigated, proving that it was indeed round, a globe. While this did not mean that people in all parts of the world had become aware of each other, or that their actions were directly influenced, it can be said that over the next few centuries, more and more regions came under ever greater European influence, with the globe becoming a connected communication and imagination space.

---

<sup>85</sup> Forms of colonialism that did not originate in modern Europe are not considered below. This text is based in part on earlier texts by the author, especially: Zimmerer 2012, pp. 10–16; Zimmerer 2013, pp. 9–38.

## What is colonialism?

It is not easy to describe what colonialism actually is, even though there have been numerous attempts to define it that differ according to the geographic or political position and agenda of those defining it and the epoch in which they undertook those definitions. This is not surprising, since it subsumes phenomena that date back up to six hundred years, evolved and changed during that period, and affected the interaction of people from very different societies and “cultures”.

As Jürgen Osterhammel says:

“Colonialism is a relationship of domination between collectives in which the fundamental decisions about the way of life of the colonised are made and imposed by a culturally different minority of colonial rulers, who have little desire to adapt, and whose decisions and actions give priority to external interests. In modern times, this is usually accompanied by ideological justification doctrines based on the colonial rulers’ conviction of their own cultural superiority.”<sup>86</sup>

Common to all “colonial situations” is the dichotomy between colonisers and the colonised, often between Europeans and non-Europeans. From the beginning, the contrast in terms of geography and techniques of domination was accompanied by ideology and philosophical underpinnings. Initially, it was the binary opposition between Christians and “pagans” that justified land-grabbing and exploitation, and later biological-racist arguments.

Other central concepts are the alignment with external interests, mostly those of the colonial motherland in Europe, and the (assumed) cultural otherness. This foreign rule requires a legitimising basis, it requires discursive and ideological justifications. These can precede the phase of formal colonialism or outlast it. In addition, they are often not bound to a particular nation, that is to say, they are common to all European colonial powers. Moreover, colonialism exists as a mental map and as a mental disposition, independent of formal colonial rule.

Knowledge and the production of knowledge are therefore a central component and prerequisite of colonial rule, which in turn assigns colonial collectors and collections an important place in the colonial sphere. Colonialism is not only a social practice (domination), but also a discourse – a discourse on (supposed) differences with the goal of mutual demarcation. “Colonial discourse is thus a system of statements that can be made about the colonies and colonial peoples, about colonising powers, and about the relationship between these two. It is this system of knowledge and beliefs about the world within which acts of colonisation take place.”<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>86</sup> Osterhammel 2006, p. 21.

<sup>87</sup> Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin 2007, p. 35.

These discourses determine the relationship between those who see themselves as colonisers and those who are considered colonised, although terms such as colonisers and the colonised contain problematic homogenisations. The colonial discourse can also exist detached from any concrete formal colonial rule, as a communicative understanding of an unequal world based on essential differences.

Designations such as “savages,” “barbarians,” or “primitives” have considerable credibility with the discourse-makers and often gain a life of their own. “Most importantly, these representations of the ‘Other’ can create not only knowledge, but also the very reality they appear to describe. In time, such knowledge and reality produce a tradition.”<sup>88</sup> And this tradition also extends far beyond the formal end of the colonial era.

### Attempt at a typology

In view of the far-reaching importance of discursive practice, which transcends states and colonial empires, the colonial typology is secondary, especially as the transitions are fluid and numerous hybrids exist. If one wants to try anyway, the tripartite division into trade and military enclaves, settlement, and exploitation colonies seems to make the most sense<sup>89</sup>.

Trade and military enclaves served mainly strategic purposes, that is, as a base for the economic, political, or military penetration of remote regions. In the course of widespread power projection, they also helped to informally control other countries and areas, that is to say, without the establishment of formal rule. Classic examples would be Cape Town in the 17th century (as a central port on the maritime route to India) or Hong Kong and Singapore up until the 20th century.

Exploitation colonies are the type that most strongly influenced the general idea of colonies. British or Dutch India (Indonesia) are well-known examples, as are large parts of Africa. Created for the economic exploitation of resources, for tax revenue, or as a market for their own goods, the exploitation colonies were mostly managed by a very small number of European civil servants and military personnel. The British Indian Civil Service, which controlled large parts of the subcontinent with only a few thousand officials, is legendary. At the end of their service, many of these officials returned to their homeland or were transferred to another colony, which meant that they did not identify closely with the colony. This usually made decolonisation easier. The local elite was usually barely involved in government, though it could be involved in day-to-day administration to varying degrees. Thus, indirect rule, in which indigenous elites governed their own subjects at the behest and under pressure from

---

<sup>88</sup> Said 2009, pp. 114 f.

<sup>89</sup> With different degrees of differentiation, this tripartite division is found among most historians, as a glance at the three most important recent German-language general accounts of colonialism reveals: Eckert 2006; Reinhard 2008; Osterhammel 2006. For detailed reading: Reinhard 2016.

the new masters in a colonial sense – European “advisers” indicated to the traditional rulers how certain decisions were to be made – was a tried and tested means of reducing administrative costs and diverting responsibility. In addition to direct economic gain through access to cheap raw materials or to a market for overpriced and/or unnecessary European products, revenue for the colonial state could be generated in particular through taxation.

The establishment of a tax system was therefore usually flanked by the introduction of a monetary economy. As the local population had to work and operate under the colonial elite, it was often necessary to establish a rudimentary education system, which above all also served to enforce the colonial language as a business and administrative language, in order to increase efficiency. Mostly unintentionally, in the sense of the “dialectic of colonialism”<sup>90</sup>, this led to the emergence of an anti-colonial elite that pushed for independence, as evidenced by the examples of Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Amílcar Cabral, or Aimé Césaire. The colonies were protected by the colonial powers by establishing boundaries. Local voices or sensitivities hardly played a role in the demarcation of these borders. Many of the post-colonial minority problems, wars, and secessions were rooted in the fact that indigenous groups were torn apart by colonial borders or herded together in completely alien and partially hostile newly created states.

Settlement colonies, on the other hand, were characterised by the mass influx of European immigrants, who were not only in charge of the administration, the military, and the economy, but also appropriated and managed the land themselves, often using and exploiting indigenous labour or imported slaves. The Spanish colonies of South and Central America are examples of this. However, the most notable examples were the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, where there was a de facto widespread “displacement of the pre-colonial population”. The direct competition between the new European settlers and their descendants and the local population led to extreme violence in some cases, and in its wake, to the extensive displacement of the latter. This resulted in the dramatic impoverishment and social disintegration of indigenous communities. The colonial state and its settlers even carried out “ethnic cleansing” and genocide. Owing to their European majority population, settlement colonies were granted a high level of independence relatively early on, or fought for such, as in the United States in 1776 or most Latin American countries in the first half of the 19th century. Nevertheless, colonial structures continued to function for a long time both internally and externally. Where European colonisation did not lead to a “white” majority, or even widespread displacement of the indigenous population, as in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Angola, Mozambique, or Algeria, decolonisation was particularly fiercely fought for after the Second World War.

---

90 Reinhard 1992, pp. 5–25.

Whether they were established due to economic interests, an attempt to win military advantages, or a mission to spread civilisation, all of these colonies had one thing in common from the point of view of the colonised: the involuntary, enforced character of European rule. Usually, the colonised population did not accept foreign rule. Moreover, colonialism was a system of extreme, more or less institutionalised inequality, even if the degree of its imposition differed.

Certainly, nowhere could colonial rule be established overnight, and in many cases the cooperation of local authorities was necessary. This meant that the colonised had an agency. There was also resistance, both violent and indirect, which could be described as passive opposition. European colonial rule was not absolute, not total rule, but it often strove for this in the settlement colonies, for example in places where the local population was partly driven out or even annihilated. In the end, the distance from the colonial centres of power often quite literally determined how much individual people were affected by European rule, and of course the nature of the colony. In the settlement colonies, the displacement of the local population took place earlier and more rigidly than in exploitation colonies. In Africa, for example, colonial influence – with the exception of North Africa and South Africa – was limited mainly to the coastal regions up until the last quarter of the 19th century. It was only after the Berlin Congo Conference (1884/85) that an encroachment into the interior took place, since the Congress had defined effective administration as a prerequisite for the registration of claims to power.

In addition to the different forms of formal rule, however, there were also informal types of influence. The ability to project military power – based on a system of global bases (cf. “military enclaves”) – enabled foreign states to be controlled without the formal establishment of a colonial state. A prime example of this is provided by China, which in the 19th century tried in vain to escape the ever-growing influence of the colonial powers, above all Britain. When Beijing attempted to prevent the import of opium from British India for public health reasons around 1839, the Royal Navy forced the lifting of the prohibition in the First Opium War by force of arms. It also ceded Hong Kong, which henceforth played a central role in the British penetration of the “Middle Kingdom” and remained in British possession until 1997. The Ottoman Empire, which remained formally intact until 1918 but was *de facto* under the multifaceted influence of all the European imperial powers, could also be mentioned here.

The caveat applies here too that the forms and methods differed from colonial power to colonial power, from colonised region to colonised region, and even within larger regions, largely depending on the form of rule and economic practices, which likewise underwent enormous development. Regardless of its actual exercise, the threat of colonial power – or even the presumed threat – had an impact on the assertion of European claims, both individually and collectively.

## The first German colonial empire<sup>91</sup>

Germans, or those who would be considered Germans today, were involved in European expansion from the outset. They sailed with Portuguese and Spaniards to India and America, as did Ulrich Schmidl and Hans von Staden: others attempted to found colonies themselves, as did the Welsers in Venezuela or the Great Elector with his Gross Friedrichsburg colony on the West African coast. He was as involved in the slave trade as the founder of today's Hamburg district of Wandsbek, Heinrich Carl von Schimmelmann. Countless people settled in the "New World", went to Africa or Asia as missionaries, or took part in the scientific opening of the world as "armchair explorers", from their desks or studies. Colonialism was a pan-European phenomenon, and as such always included Germans.

Germany did not make its entrance onto the world stage as a formal colonial power until very late, apart from the short interlude of the Brandenburgers in West Africa. Not until 1871 was there a German Empire which could actually play the role of a colonial power. The founding of the empire also gave a decisive boost to the colonial movement, which campaigned for the formal acquisition of colonies for economic, political, and social Darwinist motives. Its representatives not only hoped for a safety valve for the supposed impending overpopulation and a market for industrial over-production, but also for a visible symbol of the desired role as a world power. A certain inferiority complex with regard to Britain played a role, as did the fear of crises and (social) upheavals in the Empire. Colonies appeared to offer an ideal world without the dark side of industrialisation with the growth of the working class and its demands for political participation.

Colonial ownership appeared to be a necessity and a duty to future generations, if only on the basis of the social Darwinist interpretation of the rivalry among the developing imperialist industrialised countries. They wanted to make sure that they were among the winners in this rivalry, in which only the strongest would survive. While the middle classes within European nations were largely convinced that they were a superior class, they felt even more so compared to non-European cultures. Their own superior position led them to believe that they were called upon to "civilise" the supposedly backward and primitive inhabitants of the non-European world and thus had a positive justification for any colonial endeavour. Simultaneously, Germany's superior power, as demonstrated by the successful but brutal conquest of the colonies, as well as the accompanying cultural programme in museums and art, reaffirmed the colonial project.

Since the government of Otto von Bismarck was initially sceptical about the colonial acquisition (the Chancellor regarded colonial engagement as a source of conflict with other colonial powers), the colonial empire was based on the outdated model

---

<sup>91</sup> Recently, three modern overall presentations have been published: van Laak 2005; Speitkamp 2005; Conrad 2008.

of the “chartered company”, that is, as a private enterprise guaranteed by the state. In rapid succession, “colonial pioneers” acquired territories in West, East, and South Africa in 1884 and 1885, which were soon placed under the official protection of the German Empire. Cameroon, Togo, German South West Africa (Namibia), and German East Africa (Tanzania) were created. In addition, there were some islands in the Pacific (German Samoa and German New Guinea) and in 1897 Chinese Jiaozhou, part of the aforementioned informal penetration of China, where Germany now demanded its share. Since these private colonisation companies all failed within a short time, the state had to take their place. The German Empire thus became a colonial power.

It is impossible to summarise the colonial experience of such disparate colonies. Even the administration was different. While Jiaozhou was administered by the navy, the other colonies were administered by the colonial department at the Foreign Office, and later by the Imperial Colonial Office. While Togo, Cameroon, and East Africa, as well as the Pacific possessions, were exploitation colonies, South West Africa was planned and built as a settlement colony. Even though the dreamed-of settlement numbers could not be realised, Namibia has a small German-speaking minority to this day.

Generally, it can be said that the hopes associated with colonial acquisitions were not fulfilled. Apart from the “model colony” Togo, all the colonies were financially subsidised, which was partly a result of the enormous cost of conquest, pacification, and administration. This was due not least to the vehemence of the resistance against the German colonial power in almost all territories and the brutality with which the colonial power put this down. In turn, the problems in the colonies undermined the hoped-for prestige.

The fierce resistance and the at times catastrophic consequences for the original population were also due to Germany’s late start: Germans believed they had to make up for the past and to run colonies in a particularly efficient way. These were to be model colonies, not only for economic reasons, but also to show the other colonial powers how to do things right. There was little time for a gradual adaptation of the living and economic conditions, especially those of Germany’s African subjects, or for an adjustment of colonial practices in the light of experience. In German South West Africa, the colonial utopia even included the establishment of a genuine society of racial privilege<sup>92</sup>. Germans were supposed to form the upper class, while Africans were to be transformed into a homogeneous black working class. Rudimentary education was intended, first and foremost, to increase their productivity. Any “mixing” of the “races” was to be prohibited. Existing marriages between Germans and Africans were retroactively annulled in 1907, all sexual relations stigmatised, and the

---

<sup>92</sup> See for this concept and for the consequences of this ruling utopia: Zimmerer 2004.

term “native” finally biologically defined. “Natives” were: “all the blood relatives of a primitive people, including the descendants of native women fathered by white men, even if there have been several generations of mixed race. As long as ancestry from a member of a primitive people can still be proven, the descendant is a native”<sup>93</sup>.

Thus, the principle of biological origin had pushed aside any idea of “civilising” the “native” population that would have required Africans to be “educated” as “Europeans”.

The two longest and most costly colonial wars were conducted at the beginning of the 20th century in the two largest colonies of South West and East Africa (now Namibia and Tanzania). In the latter case, there was a war of extermination instigated by the German side, with an estimated 250,000 African victims, both through fighting and through the supply shortages<sup>94</sup> triggered by military actions. In the former case, the war even led to the first genocide of the 20th century. It has been estimated that up to 80 percent of the Herero and 50 percent of the Nama were killed<sup>95</sup>. A significantly higher number of German soldiers were used in South West Africa (an estimated 19,000, of whom about 1,500 lost their lives), while in East Africa the war was waged on the German side mainly by African mercenary units, the Askari. Apart from the different perception of German South West Africa as a German settlement colony, it appears mainly to be the number of German victims and the number of German soldiers affected which has assigned the war in southern Africa a prominent position in the German collective memory<sup>96</sup>.

Contrary to widespread views, German violent excesses not only occurred in these two wars. A campaign of extermination in German East Africa had already taken place around 1897 against the Wahehe<sup>97</sup>. Even in the supposedly peaceful South Seas, the German colonial authorities responded to every form of resistance with unconditional severity, such as the suppression of the “insurrection” on Ponape (1910/11)<sup>98</sup>. The conduct of the German Expeditionary Force in suppressing the “Boxer Rebellion” in China, which was encouraged to exercise brutality by Kaiser Wilhelm’s “Hun speech,” no longer appears to be a one-off lapse in this context:

“If you come before the enemy, then they will be defeated! Pardon will not be given! Take no prisoners! Kill whoever falls into your hands! Just as a thousand years ago the Huns made a name for themselves under their King Etzel, which still makes them appear powerful in traditions and fairy tales, may the German name in China be

---

93 Verdict of the District Court of Windhoek, 26.9.2007. National Archives of Namibia, Windhoek, GWI 530 [R 1/07], gazette 23a – 26a.

94 Becker and Beez 2005; Giblin and Monson 2010.

95 Zimmerer and Zeller 2016.

96 See Zimmerer 2013 for the place of the colonial in the German collective memory.

97 Also Baer and Schröter 2001.

98 Also Krug 2005; Morlang 2010.

confirmed for a thousand years by you in such a way that the Chinese never dares to look at a German with suspicion!"<sup>99</sup>

The inhumane actions of Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck in the "defence" of East Africa during the First World War also belong in this context. Against the orders of his civilian superior and without any strategic relevance or chance of victory, he waged a four-year war of attrition, in the wake of which 700,000 people, most of them civilians, died in East Africa alone.

There, as in the other German colonies, the First World War marked the end of the first German colonial empire. In the Treaty of Versailles, Germany was deprived of all colonies because of "proven inability to colonise" and they were handed over as mandates to the newly formed League of Nations for trusteeship.

However, this was not the end of the age of German colonialism. Not least out of outrage over the "colonial guilt lie", the colonial movement continued to gain in popularity, as shown by the number of memoirs, colonial novels, lectures, etc. Many joined the National Socialists upon their coming to power in the hope of recovering the colonies. However, this was of secondary importance to the new regime. Rather, the geographical focus of the German colonial empire moved from the south to the east, symbolised by the slogan "Volk ohne Raum" (people without space). Originally the title of a novel set in southern Africa, it became the slogan for the Malthusian and Social Darwinian fears of the Germans before and during the Third Reich. The sought-after space was eventually found in eastern Europe, and with the invasion of the Soviet Union began the even shorter-lived "second German colonial empire"<sup>100</sup>. Nevertheless, German colonial enthusiasm, as it was mainly reflected in literature, art, and science, reached its peak in the years before the Second World War.

Colonialism was both practice and discourse. Both are reflected in colonial collections: on the one hand, they can be seen in the forms of acquisition that were possible in the context of formal colonial rule, or against the background of the colonial situation that was establishing itself. On the other hand, they are mirrored in the purpose of collecting and exhibiting, which stemmed from a curiosity about foreign regions and an enthusiasm for colonialism, but, at the same time, could also strengthen the colonial mentality. Especially in its epistemic structures, in its discursive expressions, colonialism has an effect far beyond its formal end, in some ways even to the present day.

---

<sup>99</sup> Quote from Thoralf Klein, *Die Hunnenrede* (1900), in Zimmerer 2013, pp. 164–176; in general terms to the colonial wars: Kuss 2010.

<sup>100</sup> See this debate: Zimmerer 2011; Baranowski 2011.

## References and selected further literature

- Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin** (eds.), *Post-Colonial Studies. The Key Concepts*, 2nd edition, London 2007.
- Shelley Baranowski**, *Nazi Empire. German Colonialism and Imperialism from Bismarck to Hitler*, Cambridge 2011.
- Martin Baer, Olaf Schröter**, *Eine Kopffagd. Deutsche in Ostafrika. Spuren kolonialer Herrschaft*, Berlin 2001.
- Felicitas Becker, Jigal Beez** (eds.), *Der Maji-Maji-Krieg in Deutsch-Ostafrika 1905 – 1907*, Berlin 2005.
- Sebastian Conrad**, *Deutsche Kolonialgeschichte*, Munich 2008.
- Andreas Eckert**, *Kolonialismus*, Frankfurt 2006.
- James Leonard Giblin, Jamie Monson** (eds.), *Maji Maji. Lifting the fog of war*, Leiden 2010.
- Thoralf Klein**, *Die Hunnenrede (1900)*, in: Zimmerer (ed.), *Kein Platz an der Sonne. Erinnerungsorte der deutschen Kolonialgeschichte*, Frankfurt am Main 2013, pp. 164 – 176.
- Alexander Krug**, „Der Hauptzweck ist die Tötung von Kanaken“. *Die deutschen Strafexpeditionen in den Kolonien der Südsee 1872 – 1914*, Tönning and others 2005.
- Susanne Kuß**, *Deutsches Militär auf kolonialen Kriegsschauplätzen. Eskalation von Gewalt zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin 2010.
- Thomas Morlang**, *Rebellion in der Südsee. Der Aufstand auf Ponape gegen die deutschen Kolonialherren 1910/11*, Berlin 2010.
- Jürgen Osterhammel**, *Kolonialismus. Geschichte – Formen – Folgen*, Munich 2006.
- Wolfgang Reinhard**, *Dialektik des Kolonialismus. Europa und die Anderen*, in: Klaus J. Bade, Dieter Brötel (eds.), *Europa und die Dritte Welt*, Hanover 1992, pp. 5 – 25.
- Wolfgang Reinhard**, *Kleine Geschichte des Kolonialismus*, Stuttgart 2008.
- Wolfgang Reinhard**, *Die Unterwerfung der Welt. Globalgeschichte der Europäischen Expansion 1415 – 2015*, Munich 2016.
- Edward W. Said**, *Orientalism. Western Conceptions of the Orient*, London 1995 (1978).
- Winfried Speitkamp**, *Deutsche Kolonialgeschichte*, Stuttgart 2005.
- Dirk van Laak**, *Über alles in der Welt. Deutscher Imperialismus im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Munich 2005.
- Jürgen Zimmerer**, *Deutsche Herrschaft über Afrikaner. Staatlicher Machtanspruch und Wirklichkeit im kolonialen Namibia*, Münster *inter alia* 2004.
- Jürgen Zimmerer**, *Von Windhuk nach Auschwitz? Beiträge zum Verhältnis von Kolonialismus und Holocaust*, Berlin 2011.
- Jürgen Zimmerer**, *Expansion und Herrschaft. Geschichte des globalen, europäischen und deutschen Kolonialismus*, in: „Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte“ 44 – 45, Berlin 2012, pp. 10 – 16.
- Jürgen Zimmerer** (ed.), *Kein Platz an der Sonne. Erinnerungsorte der deutschen Kolonialgeschichte*, Frankfurt am Main 2013, pp. 9 – 38.

**Jürgen Zimmerer**, Kolonialismus und kollektive Identität. Erinnerungen der deutschen Kolonialgeschichte, in: Jürgen Zimmerer (ed.), Kein Platz an der Sonne. Erinnerungsorte der deutschen Kolonialgeschichte, Frankfurt am Main 2013, pp. 9–38.

**Jürgen Zimmerer, Joachim Zeller** (eds.), Der Völkermord in Deutsch-Südwestafrika. Der deutsche Kolonialkrieg in Namibia (1904–1908) und seine Folgen, Berlin 2016.

## COLLECTION HISTORY: THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF MUSEUMS AND THEIR “(POST-) COLONIAL HERITAGE”

L. Förster, M. Glaubrecht, K. Horst, S. Reuther, H.-J. Czech,  
V. Didczuneit, C. Grunenberg

European expansion promoted the expansion of trade links to the Far East and fostered intellectual change.

The authority of antiquity and that of a Christian world order were challenged in equal measure by empirical research. The more exotic the goods and objects that came to Europe, the greater was the need to collect them and gain knowledge from comparative studies. The consumption of exotic luxury goods, which grew steadily in the 16th century, played a large role in the emergence of cabinets of art and curiosities. They were structured in line with a classification system based on different intellectual disciplines. The essential categories were natural objects, the creations of God, and the artificial creations of the human hand. Curiosities and exotica were also popular exhibits in the cabinets. In the course of this development, a lively trade arose in these types of objects, and many merchants in the trading metropolises became collectors themselves with their collections subsequently also finding their way into the museums.

From the 18th century onwards, collecting took on a new form: the gains in knowledge and scientific advances led to a dwindling interest in curiosities. The cabinets of curiosities were replaced by special collections which evolved into art galleries, collections of antiquities, numismatic collections, or natural history collections. The history of the various types of museum has, as a rule, been linked to the development of specialist disciplines. They were not rigorously separated at first, though. For example, ethnologists also collected natural history objects, while naturalists collected ethnographic items.

Classification and categorisation have played an important role since the Enlightenment. These were only possible if there was sufficient comparative material. But not until the 19th century did colonial expansion create a veritable “collecting mania”. Colonial networks and infrastructure contributed to the acquisition of objects, as did missions and military operations. For example, local workers were employed, new transport facilities for all kinds of collection items and access to excavation sites were created. In addition, missionaries put many ritual objects onto the market and into museum collections, while “punitive expeditions” and expropriations caused a considerable growth in the collections of European museums.

In addition, travel reports, souvenirs, and trophies as well as weapons, uniforms, means of transport, and the like were added to the collections. The import of food and beverages (e.g. cocoa, sugar) as well as the artistic exploration of foreign countries and cultures left their traces in museums.

In the following texts, the significance of colonial expansion in the history of collecting in seven types of museum is briefly outlined. The range of the various disciplines highlights the common roots as well as the heterogeneity of museum holdings as a result of colonialism.

## ETHNOGRAPHIC COLLECTIONS

*Larissa Förster*

The oldest holdings in ethnographic collections are often objects and collections in royal cabinets of art and curiosities. In addition to this, larger ethnographic departments at existing museums or specialist societies as well as independent ethnological museums emerged, especially in the 19th century and the early 20th century. The ethnological museum in Munich, for example, was founded in 1862, followed by Leipzig in 1869, Berlin in 1873, Hamburg in 1879, Cologne in 1901, and Frankfurt in 1904. By 1919, numerous German cities had established ethnological museums and erected appropriate buildings, thus allowing the middle classes to demonstrate their cosmopolitan outlook. The resulting collections and museums were focal points not only of ethnological practice, but also of ethnological theory. Although ethnography was also established at universities in the 19th century (partly also with its own collections), it was often part of disciplines such as geography, anthropology, prehistory, and early history, etc. In many places, it was not until the 1920s and 1930s that separate Chairs of Ethnology were established at universities. The discipline, which had long been the domain of museums, thus began to separate from them.

The emergence of ethnographic collections – and thus the development of ethnology (today also: social and cultural anthropology) as a science – is closely linked to European colonial expansion, both in the German-speaking world and beyond. Colonial expansion enabled, encouraged, and “required” people to travel around the world and especially to collect objects on a grand scale. While categorisation and classification have played an important role in the sciences since the Enlightenment, it was not until the 19th century that a kind of “collecting mania” arose in relation to (non-) European objects, specimens and human remains. The collection of extensive holdings was due not least to the search for (historical) lines of development and an orientation towards empirical, quantitative, and comparative methods. For theoretical approaches such as evolutionism, diffusionism, and *Kulturkreislehre*, in particular, which dominated ethnology at the time, collecting, describing, and analysing large volumes of data and objects seemed absolutely essential. In particular, salvage anthropology tried to forestall the purported “extinction” of colonised societies and to “secure” material cultural heritage for research and museums.

Many resulting forms of collection, purchase, trade, and exchange (sometimes under pressure, coercion, or threat of violence), but also of theft and robbery were only possible through colonial development and expansion. Researchers and collectors made use of colonial infrastructure and networks and, in return, provided knowledge

for colonial development through their publications. Museums initiated expeditions into the colonies, encouraged colonial actors (soldiers, administrators, traders, settlers, and missionaries) to collect – through written instructions, for example – and acquired objects from wars and colonial “punitive” expeditions, either from their own participants or through trade. In addition, they popularised images of “foreign cultures” and the resulting stereotypes in their exhibitions and events – in the same way as the “world exhibitions” and “ethnological expositions”. Not infrequently, ethnological and anthropological theories of “levels of civilisation” and “races” underpinned colonial and racist ideologies, even though ethnology encompassed anti-colonial and anti-racist currents at the same time. Therefore, ethnological museums were part of the colonial infrastructure and networks as well as places where colonial knowledge was produced and presented.

The ties between museum ethnology and colonial politics were sometimes close: for example, a Bundesrat decision of 1891 stated that all objects acquired with state funds or by officials and soldiers of the German Empire should go to the Berlin Ethnological Museum. Later, individual ethnologists also supported the colonial revisionist movement of the 1930s and 1940s. Ethnologists, like other academics, played an ambivalent role in the colonial project, even though they invoked humanistic and enlightened ideals and sometimes bemoaned or even sharply criticised colonisation and colonial violence.

Today, up to half of the collections in some museums date back to the period before 1919, including substantial holdings from formerly German (as well as British, French, and other) colonial territories<sup>101</sup>. The collections, often acquired as described above in a short space of time, could seldom be inventoried or studied quickly enough or with the required thoroughness. This is one of the reasons for the insufficiently documented provenance of many objects by today’s standards.

The study of the colonial contexts in which a part of their collections originated (also beyond the colonial activities of the German Empire) is a central challenge for ethnographic collections and museums today. Ethnological museums can only become places where post-colonial knowledge is produced if they adopt an appropriate stance in the relevant discourses within society, step up the historical research into collections and knowledge production that has been done in this field (for instance in the context of theoretical debates on post-colonialism and transnational entangled history), and in particular if they focus on collaborative forms of research, preservation, exhibition, and communication.

---

101 E.g. Grimme 2018, p. 18.

## NATURAL HISTORY COLLECTIONS

*Matthias Glaubrecht*

In contrast to the cabinet of curiosities, for example, natural history collections partly stem from the possessions of citizens or scholars, who became increasingly independent of secular rulers and church leaders during the Enlightenment. Typically, these possessions were displayed as cabinet collections (this arrangement even having an impact on monographic works, such as the famous “Conchyliya Cabinet” of the Shell Atlas authored by Rumphius and illustrated by Sibylle Merian).

The first systematic natural history collections were established in close collaboration with scholarly societies and natural history associations (such as the Association of the Friends of Natural History, founded in Berlin in 1774, or the Natural Science Association, founded in Hamburg in 1842). Occasionally, having one’s own collection was the admission ticket for membership of such associations and societies.

Other natural history collections (later mostly belonging to universities) were established as teaching collections. For instance, in Berlin the zootomic-anatomical collection went to the Museum of Natural History of the newly founded university after 1819. In Hamburg, the collection at the Johanneum grammar school became part of the Natural History Museum.

The content of individual collections often depended on the interests of the respective owners. For example, some were specifically and exclusively created as collections of shells (i.e. mussels and snails), others as collections of rocks and minerals. In the meantime, not only pieces of the (for example taxonomic) classification in use at that time, but also occasionally items from other systematic groups were found there. Herbaria, whose origins date back to the herbal collections of pharmacists, also played a special role.

The natural history museums founded at the end of the 18th century in Europe’s capitals, for example in Paris, London, Vienna, and Berlin (i.e. in those countries which had become colonial powers), became the principal “clients” of such private collections. They were later supplemented by collections specifically commissioned or directed by these museums. The respective colonial powers and their administrations issued permits for collection and export, if they were regulated at all and it was necessary; often collectors simply “helped themselves” to what nature had to offer. Indigenous communities were very seldom asked, and usually the displeasure and resistance of the local people concerned were documented only in connection with the removal of human remains, if at all (but were also just as frequently ignored).

Increasingly, the motivation for such collections – with the Enlightenment in the second half of the 18th century and the “Humboldtian Science” operating in the first half of the 19th century – was the foundation and documentation of a world view

based on natural history and the development of the respective disciplines. At the same time, the natural history objects from non-European regions increasingly came into focus, as these increasingly revealed the enormous scope of biological diversity as well, which is far greater in the tropics than in temperate zones, for example. Natural history collections are no different from other disciplines in terms of how objects were collected during the colonial period and the circumstances under which this took place.

Natural history objects and collections, which were translocated (“moved”) in great numbers and have formed the basis of European and American natural history museums in particular since the 18th century, were not of particularly significant importance for indigenous communities of origin until very recently; and they have so far rarely been considered to be part of the indigenous heritage. Moreover, natural history objects, in contrast to art items and archaeological finds, for example, are not artefacts and objects of art in the literal sense, but exemplary representations of nature.

These objects and collections therefore stand in stark contrast to those human remains which were traditionally stored and exhibited in anthropological/medical or ethnographic (but not natural history) collections and museums in the German-speaking world<sup>102</sup>.

A most recent, well-known exception to claims for restitution which have not yet been made are the claims in respect of the iconic Tendaguru fossils of dinosaurs in the Museum für Naturkunde in Berlin<sup>103</sup>.

Meanwhile, it goes without saying that knowledge of the acquisition contexts, such as issues relating to permits, hunting regulations, export restrictions, and similar framework conditions, as well as a transparent way of caring for collection items from colonial heritage in particular, in the field of natural history as well, are an issue for research institutions such as museums in particular, as is the exhibition of parts of their collections. An example of these context-based and contextualised representations of collection items, by way of example for many, is the documentary information in large natural history museum collections, such as those in Berlin<sup>104</sup> and Hamburg<sup>105</sup>, which supplement those for example in London<sup>106</sup> and Oxford<sup>107</sup> or elsewhere<sup>108</sup>.

---

102 E.g. Stoecker et al. 2013; Redman 2016.

103 Heumann et al. 2018, and discussions hereon, e.g. “Die Zukunft der Dinos” in: *Die Zeit*, 31 Jan. 2019, p. 39; “Ist das Kunst, oder muss das wieder weg?” in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 15 August 2018, No. 188, p. N3; “Auf dem Hügel der Schreckensechsen” in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 18 Oct. 2017, No. 242, p. 12 ([https://www.academia.edu/35906303/FAZ\\_18.10.2017\\_Auf\\_dem\\_H%C3%BCgel\\_der\\_Schreckensechsen](https://www.academia.edu/35906303/FAZ_18.10.2017_Auf_dem_H%C3%BCgel_der_Schreckensechsen)).

104 Hermannstädter et al. 2015.

105 Glaubrecht 2018.

106 E.g. Fortey 2008.

107 Diston and Zimmons 2018.

108 E.g. Kemp 2017, Grande 2017.

A dimension of natural history objects and collections which has so far been the subject of little discussion shall be explicitly emphasised here in addition to the aspects of international colonial history and institutional collection history. Many of their regions of origin lie in the tropics of the so-called Global South, i.e. in the global and functional regions of the Earth which are particularly relevant in terms of species abundance and biodiversity (with the three levels of genetic, species and ecosystem diversity). On the one hand, the preservation of these habitats and populations and species too, is becoming more and more important with respect to functional biology, and on the other hand it is a challenge of global dimensions<sup>109</sup>.

Reference collections play a key role for research and conservation, which go hand in hand, since the loss of biodiversity in the countries of origin means that it is quite often the case that scientific data can only be obtained and interpreted with the aid of the stored objects and collection documentation. In addition to research from a cultural science point of view, object provenance research is of fundamental significance for natural science research, too. With regard to the future and the preservation of biodiversity, historical considerations of translocation become less important than the heuristic significance, if they ever have been or are now focused on concrete objects in natural history collections at all.

## ANTIQUITIES AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL COLLECTIONS

*Katarina Horst*

With the onset of humanism and the Renaissance, archaeological excavations and the collection of ancient objects began in Italy in the 14th century. When the Roman city of Pompeii was discovered in the 18th century, an enthusiasm for antiquity also reached Germany, which was enhanced by the publication in 1764 of “History of the Art of Antiquity” by Johann Joachim Winckelmann.

The era of public antiquities collections began at the end of the 18th century. The British Museum was opened in 1759, followed by the Louvre Museum, which was established in the wake of the revolution in 1793 in parts of the city palace. In Berlin, it was decided to build a new museum (known today as the Altes Museum), that would only house antiquities. These had previously been spread in and around Berlin in the various buildings belonging to the King. In Munich, the new “Forum” of antiquity was built on Königsplatz, with the Glyptothek and the State Collections of Antiquities opposite. Greek originals came into the collection in 1813 with the famous pediment figures of the Aphaia temple on Aegina, at a time when Greece was still part of the Ottoman Empire.

Until the mid-19th century the “collection concept” of the archaeological museums focused on classical antiquity with objects from the Mediterranean region. Objects

---

<sup>109</sup> Glaubrecht 2019.

from “marginal cultures” or “marginal eras” came into the collections more by chance. Archaeologists and local artists were charged with procuring archaeological evidence. The numerous donations from archaeologists’ collections were another source of new acquisitions.

In Germany, state-organised excavations began only after the founding of the Empire in 1871. Institutions were created to carry out excavations and obtain antiques for German museums. Owing to the close political relations with the Ottoman Empire, interest shifted to ancient Near Eastern cultures. The first excavations began in 1878 in Pergamon, followed by expeditions to Assyria and Mesopotamia. As patron of the acquisition of antiques, Kaiser Wilhelm II founded the German consulate in Baghdad in 1887. The excavation sites were secured by the German Orient Society, which was founded in 1889 as an excavation company. The excavations took place in areas that belonged to the Ottoman Empire, which was regarded by the people living there as a dictatorship.

In its period of decline, the Ottoman Empire sought allies in the fight against the Russian Tsarist Empire. By 1882, it had found such an ally in the German Empire. The construction of the Baghdad Railway (1892–1898), which ran from Constantinople to Baghdad via Ankara and Konya and was financed by Deutsche Bank, was a great help to German expeditions in Turkey, the Levant and Iraq. A law of 1902 granted Deutsche Bank the right to mine “natural resources” in a 20-kilometre zone on either side of the track. Thus, major architectural objects were removed, for example from Tell Halaf in northern Syria.

After the First World War, the Conference of San Remo in 1920 redefined the spheres of influence in the Middle East: with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, France took over the League of Nations mandate for Syria and Lebanon, which amounted to colonial rule and continued until independence in 1946 (Lebanon 1943). France received southern central Anatolia from the heartland of Turkey. Britain had a mandate to administer the territory of present day Iraq until 1958 when the country gained independence. Palestine and Jordan also became British territories (until 1946).

The island of Cyprus was part of the Ottoman Empire from 1571–1878. There was German interest in antiquities there from 1878 onwards, when the island came under British control. While Cyprus was a British Crown colony (1925–1960), large quantities of ancient objects were excavated and found their way into North American and European museums. Even in the newly founded republic, controls on the export of antiquities were not always possible because of the civil war. Since 1974, when the Turkish occupation of the northern part of the island began, many ancient and, above all, Byzantine Cypriot objects have come onto the market.

As a result of the race among the great powers for control of Africa, the territories of the former ancient world of North Africa came under colonial rule – especially

Algeria, which came under French rule after the invasion of 1840. The colonial powers France (Maghreb), Italy (Libya) and Britain (Egypt) divided the fertile areas (the coastal regions and areas along the Nile) among themselves, with Spain gaining (and indeed still retaining) a small area in Morocco.

Thus, the acquisition of individual antique objects is in most cases closely related to the respective political powers. In all these countries, collections of antiquities were in the hands of representatives of the European and North American diplomatic corps. Their position made it possible to build up collections of antiquities, which earned them social prestige and personal profit through the resale of the collected objects.

## COLLECTIONS OF APPLIED AND EAST ASIAN ART

*Silke Reuther*

The cabinet of curiosities became an important part of royal representation in Europe in the 16th century. It had its origins as an early modern form of collection in the Renaissance and was the foundation for the subsequent museum art collections of the 19th century, in particular the museums of applied art. The exhibited objects were intended to show off wealth and to help acquire knowledge. Like the collections of scholars, the cabinet of curiosities was based on an all-inclusive concept of collection and provides an image of the world on a small scale or of one particular field.

The emergence of art collections required the circulation of exotic materials and luxuries. The basic catalyst of this development was international maritime trade. The “discovery” of America in 1492 ushered in the commercial and colonial expansion of European maritime powers, which came under Spanish and Portuguese domination in the 15th century and was largely dominated by the Netherlands and its trading companies from the 17th century.

The Dutch East India Company (VOC), which emerged from a merger of merchant companies in 1602, was the most important supplier of Chinese porcelain and Asian products to Europe. Porcelain, which had previously been found primarily in court collections, became the status symbol of the upper bourgeoisie far beyond the Netherlands. This led to the development of export porcelain. This dinnerware was designed to meet the requirements of European eating habits. The result was China porcelain in underglaze blue with Dutch tulips or typical scenes. Porcelain jugs with metal lids, which resembled a type of Persian jug in purely formal terms, were also in demand. The porcelain jugs were made in China, while the metalwork was done in India. The trade in Chinese porcelain and the influence of European taste point to a flourishing business with Chinese porcelain in the “Golden Age” of the Netherlands, in which Chinese porcelain manufacturers were directly involved.

As this trend evolved, the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century saw many merchants working in the trading centres and private European citizens who were living there, become collectors. International trading companies increasingly had branches in China in the 19th century. Their local staff amassed their own collections of art. Diplomatic representatives, missionaries, or scientists, such as the Berlin geographer Georg Wegner and his wife Olga-Julia Zaluskowski, travelled through China and collected as well as traded in Chinese art. When these people returned home, many collections were sold on the European art market, either by the collectors or their heirs. This includes the collection of Joseph Maximilian Hartl, the German consul in Chinese Foochow, which was auctioned in Berlin in 1936. Other private collections were used to found a specialist museum, as happened in Cologne (Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst), or integrated into existing collections, as happened in Hamburg and Berlin (Museum für Asiatische Kunst).

In Germany, trade and financial centres such as Augsburg and Nuremberg were involved in this development in addition to the port cities. Luxury goods and art objects were also made and exported here. Business relations were important because the transfer of goods was connected with the transfer of cultural goods. The close link between world trade and the art trade shifted within Europe over the centuries but remained relevant as an important engine. As a result, the collections from which the arts and crafts museums emerged can have a direct colonial context, because the countries of origin of the exhibits were subjected to a formal colonial system or were still feeling the impact of colonial structures.

At the beginning of the 20th century, art trading companies which specialised in the trade in Asian art were increasingly trading in the political and economic metropolises. These included the Chinese art dealer C. T. Loo, trading in Paris and New York, the Hamburg art dealer Siegfried Bing in Paris, or the Japanese art dealers Yamanaka with branches in London, Boston, and New York. In Berlin, Dr Otto Burchard & Co. and China-Bohlken were among the most prominent dealers in Chinese Art. Both these art dealers profited from the economic collapse in China and stocked up locally with objects.

The court collections supplied the exhibits for the specialist museums, as was the case in Dresden, Munich, or Berlin for example. In the second half of the 19th century, mercantile cities such as Hamburg, Leipzig, or Frankfurt am Main began to set up arts and crafts museums at the instigation of local arts and crafts associations. The holdings of these museums were largely supplied by donations and legacies from private collections and were expanded by their founding directors through acquisitions in the international art trade or, for instance, at the world exhibitions in Paris and Vienna. These museums also focused on non-European cultures. The preferred objects included those from East Asia, mainly from China and Japan, as well as art and cultural objects from Islamic countries. Important figures who were working in German museums and were active in the German trade with Asian art were Otto

Kümmel, first director of the Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst in Berlin, Ernst Grosse, also a private collector, who was involved in various museum activities involving Asian art, and Leopold Reidemeister, Kümmel's successor in Berlin. They not only traded in Asian art, they also worked on auction catalogues, acted as consultants for many collectors, and assisted with purchases and sales. These persons therefore had a great deal of influence on the different museum collections.

Individual museums – for example, the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg and the Grassi Museum in Leipzig – included the antiquities in their collections. Training institutions for prospective artisans and craftsmen were affiliated to many arts and crafts museums, for example in Vienna (MAK) and Hamburg (MK&G). This had a great impact on the collections, which consisted of the greatest possible range of arts and crafts products from all eras and corners of the world, including the African continent.

## HISTORY AND CULTURAL-HISTORY COLLECTIONS

*Hans-Jörg Czech*

In Europe, the preservation and presentation of objects of historical or cultural importance can be traced back to ancient times. Today's museums owe many of their oldest objects to the fact that in the Middle Ages, relics and secular objects were preserved for subsequent generations. Originally, these were often kept as personal testimonies or material evidence of legal acts or claims to power in modern royal or municipal collections. However, they were subsequently increasingly regarded as testimonies to history and other objects such as weapons, armour, coins, sculptures, or ceremonial objects were added. As early as the 16th century, Ambras Castle in Tyrol was an outstanding example of how to create collections and galleries explicitly for depicting history, frequently in close collaboration with cabinets of arts and curiosities.

Trophies, travelogues, and memorabilia of all kinds relating to non-European colonial and long-distance trading territories came into local collections from the end of the 15th century with the extension of the European sphere of influence to newly discovered continents, Africa and other overseas territories. However, the triangular trade and its actors, the use of imported food and beverages (i.e. cocoa, sugar) as well as the artistic interest in foreign countries and cultures also left material traces in aristocratic, municipal, or early private collections (for example, maps and prints, tableware) in the centuries that followed. Collecting was systematised under French influence during the Enlightenment, and clearer demarcations between different categories began to prevail. Regional historical holdings gained in shape as part of wide-ranging sovereign art and cultural collections. At the same time, in the course of the 18th century, the first German royal collections, including their history sections, opened to the public, as in the case of the Friedricianum in Kassel.

From the beginning of the 19th century, a changed historical awareness within society led to the founding of bourgeois historical and antiquarian societies in German-speaking countries whose collecting activities were generally aimed at preserving material relics of their own regional past, craftsmanship, and political or economic importance. Up until the early 20th century, many of these collections of middle class origin emerged to become important foundations for the municipal, state, and national museums established in the second half of the century, mostly borne by patriotic sentiments. The fact that the collections of these new history museums were anchored in wider sections of society makes it likely that in many places, personal memorabilia, documents, and later photos, which directly document the work of traders, settlers, soldiers, missionaries, or researchers in colonial contexts, found their way into museums via private donations and bequests from companies.

When such objects were exhibited in museums, the focus was often on the presentation of the biographies of personalities of importance to local history, regional economic relations, or the rise of outstanding family or commercial dynasties – without any in-depth explanation of the colonial background. In many cases, the view of history thus conveyed was accompanied by a distortion or trivialisation, or at the very least a sketchy depiction, of the colonial realities of the time.

The development of advertising for products, brands, and services in Germany also began around the middle of the 19th century and is reflected in the emergence of museum poster and advertising material collections, which mostly exist to the present day. Extending to colonial goods, tobacco, and travel advertising, objects with visual links to pictorial worlds and stereotypes with a colonial background are almost inevitable.

Over the years, specialised museums and special collections emerged in other cultural and historical areas, for example those focusing on business, shipping, toys, or military history. Depending on the genesis and composition of the collection items, the presence of objects with a direct or indirect colonial connection cannot be ruled out here either.

Even nowadays, objects with a link to colonial or post-colonial contexts and their adequate presentation are often a topic of relevance even in more recently founded state history museums in Germany.

## COLLECTIONS OF TECHNICAL MUSEUMS

*Veit Didczuneit*

The establishment and expansion of German colonial rule in Africa, Asia, and the South Seas and its protection would not have been possible for Germany without the use of various modern technologies. A modern transport infrastructure and communication technology were of particular significance, as was a superior weapon armoury. Surveying instruments, installations for water extraction, purification, and distribution, energy supply stations, modern techniques in mining, agriculture, and forestry, modern means of construction, brewing, and refrigeration, and finally a medical infrastructure were all of great importance for the control and economic exploitation of Germany's overseas empire.

Against the background of these wide-ranging and important aspects of colonial rule, it is likely that many technical museums own objects related to the colonial past. These may have been integrated into their collections during the German colonial period from 1884 to 1919 as part of the institution's special interest in colonial matters. The German colonial revisionist movement between 1919 and 1945 also promoted the collection of technical artefacts as evidence of the so-called "German civilising mission" that had taken place in its colonies until 1918 and thus protect Germany against accusations of having been a barbaric coloniser. While the GDR used colonial artefacts as a propaganda tool to denounce West German capitalism and imperialism in particular, the museums of the Federal Republic emphasised the efficiency and superiority of the German technology used in the colonies. German technology museums are only just beginning to address their colonial heritage, both with regard to the history of their objects as well as to the museums' past practices of collecting and exhibiting.

Objects with a colonial provenance or from a colonial context could also be found in the estates of researchers, engineers, and officials involved in or interested in the development, construction, and use of this technology in the colonies. It is also possible that these holdings contain ethnological objects which originated as "tourist souvenirs". The Imperial Post Museum, for example, acquired African news drums, spears, axes, and knives as well as animal horns in order to display them as "exhibits of savages" in its colonial department in the context of German colonial post institutions. In addition to a very large number of stamps, postcards and picture postcards, letters, archive material, maps, and photographs, the collections of the Museum Foundation Post and Telecommunication nowadays also document the colonial activities of the Imperial Post Office until 1918 with several hundred three-dimensional objects, mainly printing plates for stamps stemming from the postal, telegraphy, telephone, and radio services.

## REFLECTIONS OF COLONIALISM IN ART MUSEUMS

*Christoph Grunenberg*

The incorporation of political and theoretical paradigm shifts in the practice of institutions is often characterised by scepticism, resistance, and delay. Post-colonial theory seems to have entered the exhibitions, collections, and presentation practices of art museums – i.e. museums that concern themselves primarily with paintings, sculpture, works on paper, media art, and installations – primarily through the medium of exhibitions, especially of contemporary art. We can thus talk of an “ethnographic turn”. In contrast, the question as to what traces the colonial era has left in museum collections, why and how museums should deal with the colonial heritage, and how to exhibit colonial history, has long been neglected by leading art museums, including international ones.

The heyday of many German museums lies between the founding of the German Empire and the Weimar Republic, parallel to massive territorial, colonial, and economic expansion. The first two decades of the 20th century in particular witnessed the establishment and construction of numerous museums, the expansion of collections, and the professionalisation of art history and museum work. Rapid industrialisation, the growth of global trade relations, and the exploitation of the colonies created the basis of the wealth which enabled patronage and the purchase and donation of works of art. This is precisely the reason that it is worthwhile examining the complex links between colonial history, bourgeois patronage, and the history of art, collecting, and taste from the 19th to the early 20th century. The traces are there in the collections and the institutional history, though often hidden and only visible at a second glance.

It is important to remember that it was the intercontinental trade routes that allowed direct contact with non-European cultures and the trade in art and artefacts. Unlike the situation with ethnographic or natural history collections, however, objects from non-European cultures were usually not exhibited in art museums. In art museums, the fascination and contact with unknown cultures, as celebrated in the numerous world, trade, art, and industrial exhibitions, primarily took the form of exotic depictions of distant cultures and people. For example, global networks are also mirrored in the depiction of exotic products that indicate the local and regional importance of certain commodities or industries as well as travel and trade links.

It was not until the reception of non-European cultures and their inspiration of modern art that they were occasionally seen in art museums, primarily through the medium of exhibitions. An early example is the juxtaposition of Japanese woodcuts with the Post-Impressionist paintings and prints they influenced. The inspiration that Cubist and Expressionist artists found in African sculpture, Asian objects, South Sea art, or pre-Hispanic artefacts was also explored in exhibitions and, occasionally, items were acquired for collections. In particular, the preferences of individual

private collectors, such as Karl Ernst Osthaus, went beyond a strict hierarchical separation according to geographic, chronological, and taxonomic categories as practised in most public institutions.

The objective of a critical reflection of one's own institutional history must not only be to question the interaction of economic and cultural life at the time of European colonialism, but also to analyse how colonial images stubbornly persist in art and everyday life. In works of high modernist art in particular, the approach to and presentation of "the Other" can be examined in an exemplary manner, usually revealing a mixture of artistic admiration and the projection of escapist utopias and exotic fantasies. The inclusion of critical positions of contemporary art is instructive as it adds an aesthetic dimension to a historical examination.

Against the background of the present-day effects of globalisation and migration, a reflection on the historical legacy of colonial trade, industry, and emigration should also provide an explicit impetus to ask new questions about cultural difference and identity. A critical examination can not only generate surprising historical insights, heighten awareness, and change attitudes among the public, academia, and museums, but also open institutions to new audience groups. The intensive involvement of – in terms of concept and content – as well as the cooperation with various ethnic communities, post-colonial activists, political parties, responsible public administrations, and university partners is essential in order to allow new perspectives and to lend any examination authenticity and credibility.

## References and selected further literature

### Ethnographical collections

- Felicitas Bergner**, Ethnographisches Sammeln in Afrika während der deutschen Kolonialzeit. Ein Beitrag zur Sammlungsgeschichte deutscher Völkerkundemuseen, in: *Paideuma* 42, Mitteilungen zur Kulturkunde, Frankfurt am Main 1996, pp. 225 – 235.
- Larissa Förster, Iris Edenheiser, Sarah Fründt, Heike Hartmann** (eds.), *Provenienzforschung in ethnografischen Sammlungen der Kolonialzeit. Positionen in der aktuellen Debatte*, Berlin 2018.
- Gesa Grimme**, *Provenienzforschung im Projekt Schwieriges Erbe: Zum Umgang mit kolonialzeitlichen Objekten in ethnologischen Museen, final report*, Linden-Museum, Stuttgart, 2018.
- Beatrix Hoffmann**, *Das Museumsobjekt als Tausch- und Handelsgegenstand. Zum Bedeutungswandel musealer Objekte im Kontext der Veräußerungen aus dem Sammlungsbestand des Museums für Völkerkunde Berlin*, Kulturwissenschaften vol. 33, Berlin 2012.
- Anja Laukötter**, *Von der „Kultur“ zur „Rasse“ – Vom Objekt zum Körper. Völkerkundemuseen und ihre Wissenschaften zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhundert*, Bielefeld 2007.

- Glenn H. Penny**, *Objects of Culture. Ethnology and Ethnographic Museums in Imperial Germany*, Chapel Hill 2002.
- Christine Stelzig**, *Afrika am Museum für Völkerkunde zu Berlin, 1873–1919. Aneignung, Darstellung und Konstruktion eines Kontinents*, Herbolzheim 2004.
- Andrew Zimmerman**, *Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany*, Chicago 2002.

### Natural history collections

- Dominik Collet, Marian Füssel, Roy MacLeod** (eds.), *The University of Things. Theory – History – Practice*, Stuttgart 2016.
- Ian Convery, Peter Davis** (eds.), *Changing perceptions of nature*, Woodbridge 2016.
- James Delbourgo**, *Collecting the world. The life and curiosity of Hans Sloane*, Allen Lane 2017.
- Kate Diston, Zoe Simmons**, *Rare and Wonderful. Treasures from Oxford University Museum of Natural History*, Oxford University Museum of Natural History, Oxford 2018.
- Richard Fortey**, *Dry Store Room No. 1. The Secret Life of the Natural History Museum*, London 2008.
- Matthias Glaubrecht** (ed.), *Das Centrum für Naturkunde im Aufbruch. Centrum für Naturkunde*, University of Hamburg 2018.
- Matthias Glaubrecht**, *Das Ende der Evolution. Der Mensch und die Vernichtung der Arten*. C. Bertelsmann, Munich 2019.
- Lance Grande**, *Curators. Behind the Scenes of Natural History Museums. The University of Chicago Press*, Chicago, London 2017.
- Anita Hermannstädter, Ina Heumann, Kerstin Pannhorst** (eds.), *Wissensdinge. Geschichten aus dem Naturkundemuseum*, Berlin 2015.
- Ina Heumann, Holger Stoecker, Marco Tamborini, Mareike Vennen** (eds.), *Dinosaurierfragmente. Zur Geschichte der Tendaguru-Expedition und ihrer Objekte, 1906–2018*, Göttingen 2018.
- Nicholas Jardine, Anne Secord, Emma Spary** (eds.), *Cultures of natural history*, Cambridge Massachusetts 1996.
- Christopher Kemp**, *The lost species. Great Expeditions in the Collections of Natural History Museums*, London 2017.
- Susanne Köstering**, *Das Naturkundemuseum des deutschen Kaiserreichs 1871–1914*, Cologne 2003.
- Susanne Köstering**, *Ein Museum für Weltnatur. Die Geschichte des Naturhistorischen Museums in Hamburg*, *Abhandlungen des Naturwissenschaftlichen Vereins in Hamburg*, vol. 46, Hamburg 2018.
- Samuel J. Redman**, *Bone Rooms. From Scientific Racism to Human Prehistory in Museums*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge 2016.
- Susan Sheets-Pyenson**, *Cathedrals of Science. The development of colonial natural history museums during the late nineteenth century*, Kingston, Montreal 1988.
- Holger Stoecker, Thomas Schnalke, Andreas Winkelmann** (eds.), *Sammeln*,

Erforschen, Zurückgeben? Menschliche Gebeine aus der Kolonialzeit in akademischen und musealen Sammlungen, Berlin 2013.

**Anke te Heesen, Emma C. Spary** (eds.), *Sammeln als Wissen. Das Sammeln und seine wissenschaftsgeschichtliche Bedeutung*, Göttingen 2001.

### Antiquities and archaeological collections

**Katja Goebs, Susanne Voss** (eds.), *The History and Impact of German Archaeology in the Near and Middle East and Beyond*, Cambridge 2020.

**Elisabeth Goring**, *A Mischievous Pastime. Digging in Cyprus in the Nineteenth Century*, Edinburgh 1988.

**Brigitte Kuhn-Forte**, *Antikensammlungen in Rom*, in: *Römische Antikensammlungen im 18. Jahrhundert*, Ausstellungskatalog, Wörlitz/Stendal 1998, p. 30 et seq..

**Thomas Macho**, *Sammeln in chronologischer Perspektive*, in: *Theater der Natur und Kunst, Wunderkammern des Wissens*, exhibition catalogue Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin 2000, pp. 63 – 74.

**Sabine Rogge**, *Raubgräber oder Forscher? Archäologische Aktivitäten auf Zypern im 19. Jahrhundert*, in: *Sabine Rogge* (ed.), *Begegnungen, Materielle Kulturen auf Zypern bis in die römische Zeit*, conference proceedings, Hamburg 2005, pp. 197 – 230.

**Charlotte Trümpler** (ed.), *Das Große Spiel. Archäologie und Politik*, exhibition catalogue Ruhr Museum, Essen 2010.

### Collections of applied and East Asian art

**Anna-Maria Brandstetter, Vera Hierholzer** (eds.), *Nicht nur Raubkunst! Sensible Dinge in Museen und universitären Sammlungen*, Göttingen 2018.

**Gabriele Beßler**, *Wunderkammern. Weltmodelle von der Renaissance bis zur Kunst der Gegenwart*, extended edition, Berlin 2012.

**Martin Eberle**, *Die Kunstkammer auf Schloss Friedenstein Gotha*, Gotha 2010.

**Andreas Grote**, *Macrocosmos in Microcosmos. Die Welt in der Stube. Zur Geschichte des Sammelns 1450–1800*, Opladen 1994.

**Georg Laue**, *Die Kunstkammer. Wunder kann man sammeln*, Munich 2016.

**Georg Laue**, *Tresor. Schatzkunst für die Kunstkammern Europas*, Munich 2017.

**Michael Matzke**, *Une espèce d'Histoire métallique. Münz- und Medaillensammlungen in Basel*, in: *Burkhard von Roda, Die große Kunstkammer. Bürgerliche Sammler und Sammlungen in Basel*, Historisches Museum Basel, Basel 2011, pp. 109-120.

**Patrick Mauriès**, *Das Kuriositätenkabinett*, Cologne 2011.

**Sabine Schulze, Silke Reuther** (eds.), *Raubkunst? Provenienzforschung zu den Sammlungen des Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe*, Hamburg 2014.

**Wilfried Sepel**, *Exotica. Portugals Entdeckungen im Spiegel fürstlicher Kunst- und Wunderkammern der Renaissance*, Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna, Vienna 2000.

- James J. Sheehan**, Geschichte der deutschen Kunstmuseen von der fürstlichen Kunstkammer zur modernen Sammlung, Munich 2002.
- Burkhard von Roda**, Die große Kunstkammer. Bürgerliche Sammler und Sammlungen in Basel, Historisches Museum Basel, Basel 2011.
- Julius von Schlosser**, Die Kunst- und Wunderkammer der Spätrenaissance. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Sammelwesens, Leipzig 1908.

### Historic and cultural-historic collections

- Eva Bahl, Sarah Bergh, Tahir Della, Zara S. Pfeiffer, Martin W. Rühlemann** (eds.), Decolonize München. Dokumentation und Debatte, exhibition catalogue Münchner Stadtmuseum, Munich 2013/14.
- Susanne Bäuml** (ed.), Die Kunst zu werben. Das Jahrhundert der Reklame, Münchner Stadtmuseum/Altonaer Museum Hamburg exhibition catalogue 1996/97.
- Rosemarie Beier** (ed.), Geschichtskultur in der Zweiten Moderne, Frankfurt/New York 2000.
- Deutsches Historisches Museum** (ed.), Deutscher Kolonialismus. Fragmente seiner Geschichte und Gegenwart, exhibition catalogue, Berlin 2016.
- Larissa Förster, Dag Henrichsen, Michael Bollig** (eds.), Namibia-Deutschland. Eine geteilte Geschichte. Widerstand – Gewalt – Erinnerung, exhibition catalogue Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum für Völkerkunde Cologne und Deutsches Historisches Museum Berlin, Berlin 2004/05.
- Bernd-Stefan Grewe, Markus Himmelsbach, Johannes Theisen, Heiko Wegmann**, Freiburg und der Kolonialismus – Vom Kaiserreich bis zum Nationalsozialismus, Freiburg im Breisgau 2018.
- Hans-Martin Hinz, Christoph Lind** (eds.), Tsingtau. Ein Kapitel deutscher Kolonialgeschichte in China 1897–1914, exhibition catalogue Deutsches Historisches Museum Berlin/Eurasburg 1998.
- Hans Ottomeyer** (ed.), Das Exponat als historisches Zeugnis. Präsentationsformen politischer Ikonografie, Berlin/Dresden 2010.
- Krzysztof Pomian**, Der Ursprung des Museums. Vom Sammeln, Berlin 2001.

### Collections of technical museums

- Anne Brüggemann** (collaborator), Der unterbrochene Draht. Die Deutsche Post in Ostafrika – Historische Fotografien, eine Publikation des Deutschen Postmuseums Frankfurt am Main. Heidelberg 1989.
- Veit Didczuneit**, „Wilde Menschen haben keine Posten“ – Das Reichspostmuseum im Dienste der Kolonialidee, in: Michael Eckardt (ed.), Mission Afrika: Geschichtsschreibung über Grenzen hinweg, Festschrift für Ulrich van der Heyden, Stuttgart 2019, pp. 207–217.
- Veit Didczuneit**, Postkolonialer Sammlungseifer. Ein Beitrag zur Restitutionsdebatte, in: Das Archiv. Magazin für Kommunikationsgeschichte, volume 2, Frankfurt am Main 2019, pp. 46–49.

**Veit Didczuneit**, Mit Ochsenkraft durch Südwestafrika. Die Museumsstiftung erforscht ihre Objekte aus kolonialen Kontexten, in: Das Archiv. Magazin für Kommunikationsgeschichte, volume 3, Frankfurt am Main 2018, pp. 76-78.

### Reflections of colonialism in art museums

**Tanya Barson, Peter Gorschlüter** (eds.), Afro Modern. Journeys through Black Atlantic, Tate Liverpool exhibition catalogue 2010.

**Tim Barringer, Tom Flynn** (eds.), Colonialism and the Object. Empire, Material Culture and the Museum, New York 1998.

**Julia Binter** (ed.), The Blind Spot. Bremen, Colonialism and Art, Kunsthalle Bremen exhibition catalogue, Berlin, 2017.

**Clémentine Deliss, Yvette Mutumba** (eds.), Ware und Wissen (Or The Stories You Wouldn't Tell a Stranger), Weltkulturen Museum exhibition catalogue, Frankfurt am Main/Zurich 2014.

**Anna Greve** (ed.), Museum und Politik – Allianzen und Konflikte, Göttingen 2011.

**Urmila Goel**, Postkoloniale Perspektiven auf (museale) Repräsentationen, in: Anna Greve (ed.), Weißsein und Kunst. Neue postkoloniale Analysen, Göttingen 2015, pp. 9-18.

**Tom Holert**, Unterm Tropenhelm. Ethnografische Wenden und andere Bewegungen in den Beziehungen zwischen bildender Kunst und Wissenschaft, Gegenworte 27, Berlin 2012, pp. 72 – 75.

**Alexandra Karentzos**, Postkoloniale Kunstgeschichte. Revisionen von Musealisierung, Kanonisierungen, Repräsentationen, in: Alexandra Karentzos, Julia Reuter (eds.), Schlüsselwerke der Postcolonial Studies, Wiesbaden 2012, pp. 249 – 266.

**Ivan Karp, Steven D. Lavine** (eds.), Exhibiting Culture. Poetics and Politics of Museum Display, Washington 1991.

**Ivan Karp, Corinne A. Kratz, Lynn Swzaja, Tomás Ybarra-Frausto** (eds.), Museum Frictions. Public Cultures/Global Transformations, Durham, North Carolina 1991.

**Belinda Kazeem, Charlotte Martinz-Turek, Nora Sternfeld** (eds.), Das Unbehagen im Museum, Postkoloniale Museologien, Vienna 2009.

**Alexis von Poser, Bianca Baumann** (eds.), Heikles Erbe. Koloniale Spuren bis in die Gegenwart, Niedersächsisches Landesmuseum exhibition catalogue, Hanover/ Dresden 2016.

**Sally Price**, Primitive Art in Civilized Places, Chicago 1989.

**Alison Smith, David Blayney Brown, Carol Jacobi** (eds.), Artist and Empire. Facing Britain's Imperial Past, Tate Britain exhibition catalogue, London 2015.

**Peter Weibel** (ed.), Inklusion: Exklusion. Versuch einer neuen Kartografie der Kunst im Zeitalter von Postkolonialismus und Migration, Steirischer Herbst Graz exhibition catalogue, Cologne 1997.

**Peter Weibel, Andrea Buddensieg** (eds.), Contemporary Art and the Museum. A Global Perspective, Ostfildern, 2007.

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ART AND *AT.ÓOW* OF THE TLINGIT OF SOUTHEAST ALASKA

*Rosita Kaaháni Worl*

The art of the Tlingit, along with that of the Haida and Tsimshian of Southeast Alaska, has received international acclaim and was aggressively collected by visitors who came to our country beginning in the late 1700s and early 1800s. These visitors saw that art adorned everything from monumental structures and ceremonial regalia to basic utilitarian objects. It is a distinctive art form that evolved over thousands of years in the rich rain forests of the Pacific Northwest of North America and within the ancient and complex indigenous societies. The simplicity of the components, which are combined according to established rules to comprise an aesthetic system known as formline design – belie the complexity and sophistication that was achieved in this two-dimensional Northwest Coast art tradition. Douglas Cole (1985) documents the rush of collectors to the Northwest Coast seeking the exquisite art objects, many of which are now held in museum collections throughout the world. So, enthralled about the art and with little regard for the beliefs of the indigenous populations, collectors had no qualms about removing sacred objects from burial sites.

While the Southeast Alaska Indians appreciate the artistic and aesthetic qualities of these art pieces so eagerly sought after by art and museum collectors, the greater value to them, like many other indigenous societies, lay in their sacred and social significance. Until recently, it was assumed that the Tlingit did not have a word for “art.” However, in a recent meeting of clan leaders and elders, a clan leader used a word with which the translator was not familiar. When asked the meaning of the word, the clan leader responded that it referred to an “iconic event.” The iconic event referred to ancient encounters between humans and supernatural entities usually in the form of an animal like a bird or fish. The visual representation itself is “art.” The right to depict the visual representation of the encounter was purchased with the life of an ancestor, more often the ancestor who was involved in the encounter. A ceremony was then held that transforms the visual representation into a “crest.” The clan of the individual who sacrificed his/her life claims exclusive ownership of the crest and maintains a relationship with the supernatural entity involved in the iconic event.

When a clan intends to create a visual representation of the iconic event and the supernatural entity involved in the encounter on a physical object, it commissions a clan from the opposite moiety whose membership includes an artisan to create the piece<sup>110</sup>. Upon completion of the artisan’s work, the object with its design is ritually presented at a ceremony in which both Eagle and Raven clan members of the Tlingit moiety system are present. During this ceremony, the newly created cultural object is ritually present-

---

<sup>110</sup> The Tlingit society is divided between Eagle and Raven moieties, which are then subdivided into clans. Tlingit custom requires an Eagle clan to commission a Raven clan, which is identified as an “opposite” to create the object and vice versa.

ed, imbuing it with the spirits of the supernatural entity and the ancestor involved in the event, and moving it from the metaphysical to the natural world. The ritual presentation is followed by the distribution of gifts and cash by the host clan together with a response and acknowledgement by the guest clan or clans of the opposite moiety. The object with its crest design and associated spirits is transformed into an *at.óow*, which Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer<sup>111</sup> have translated as “an owned or a purchased thing”.

This ceremony is also a legal transaction in which title to the *at.óow* is validated as the property of the host clan. The presence of the guest clan from the opposite moiety legalises the host clan’s ownership of the *at.óow* in the same way that a deed of title is recorded in Western legal systems. This same ritual and this same legal process are repeated generation after generation. The sacred significance of the *at.óow* is reaffirmed and the clan ownership is re-validated within each succeeding ceremony as the trusteeship transfers from uncle to maternal nephew.

The *at.óow* is multidimensional in that it represents both supernatural and natural phenomena. It includes the crest art design symbolising the supernatural entity and the physical object on which it is represented. It includes the spirits of both the human and the supernatural entity involved in the encounter. It also includes the land and natural features that played a role in the legendary event as well as the site at which the event occurred. The intellectual property rights associated with the *at.óow* include the crest art design, the names of the individuals and the spirit who played a role in the acquisition of the crest, and the stories and songs recounting the legendary event.

*At.óow* or ceremonial objects and regalia are perhaps the greatest prized possessions of the Tlingit of Southeast Alaska. They are central to their social and religious life. They are the spiritual threads that unite the living with their ancestors and provide the bonds with future generations. They record the deeds of ancestors and represent titles to sacred sites and land. In the past, alienation of *at.óow* was impossible except in the settlement of legal disputes.

*At.óow* continue to play a significant role in the ceremonial life of the Tlingit. Regalia and ceremonial objects are brought out during the round of memorial ceremonies that begin with the death of a clansperson and culminate in a larger ceremony, often referred to as the *ku.éex*<sup>112</sup> a year or so after the death. They are also used in major secular events. The Tlingit continue to believe that the spirits of their ancestors are embodied in their *at.óowu*<sup>113</sup>, which is the primary reason why the Tlingit have sought the return of their sacred objects from American museums under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990.

The Tlingit continue to identify themselves as a member of the Eagle or Raven moiety

---

111 Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1990, p. 14.

112 Often referred to as a “potlatch” in the anthropological literature.

113 *At.óow* refers to the sacred clan objects and regalia. *At.óowu* is the possessive form.

and with their clans in their everyday life. Children are taught from their very early years whether they are Eagle or Raven and their clan membership. They are taught about crests they own and are entitled to wear. Today, the Tlingit will often wear jewellery or modern-day clothing depicting their moiety affiliation and their crest designs. A Tlingit raised in his or her homeland can immediately tell whether someone they meet is an Eagle or a Raven and their clan membership through the designs on their jewellery or clothing. If an individual sees another wearing the same crest, they assume that they are clan-related and will recognise them as kin-related.

### Shamans

Tlingit shamanism as it was once practised no longer exists. Despite the absence of practising shamans, the basic ideological principles underlying the traditional shamanic complex persist into the present-day period. Some forms of the ancient rituals and shamanic practices have been transformed and incorporated into modern-day ceremonies and activities.

The *łxt'* (shaman) served as the primary ritual practitioner within the shamanic complex. Shamans possessed the power to communicate directly with supernatural entities. They acquired their powers directly through their contact with supernatural entities. Each clan had its own shaman whose responsibility was to cure illnesses and to care for the general welfare of their clanspeople. Great shamans are said to have had up to eight spirits. The shaman essentially served as the medium for spirits. During shamanic rituals, they summoned their spirits to assist them and they transformed into the spirits. The shaman was able to travel both in physical and spiritual form to seemingly inaccessible sites and even under water. They also battled with other shamans and their spirits as rivals. The shaman served as the intermediary between the natural and supernatural world.

### Shamanic objects

The Tlingit continue to believe that all of nature is endowed with spirits. Humans and living creatures possess spirits, as do natural phenomena such as mountains, glaciers, the sun, moon, and the northern lights. Spirits reside in and are depicted on shamanic objects, and today, even in the absence of shamans, they are considered to be articles of great power. Shamanistic objects had powers of their own and could move of their own volition.

Shamanic articles such as the rattle, drums, tapping sticks, and the rattling of the accessories on the clothing, headdress, and jewellery worn by the shaman made the necessary percussion sounds to summon spirits. Shamanistic objects served to connect shamans to the spirit world. The designs on the shaman's clothing, masks and other shamanic objects represented various spirits. Some objects, such as the rattle, were placed upon their patients in order to cure them. In other periods during the ceremony, a prophetic bone was used to see the future. Warriors' clothing and weapons were used by the shaman to fight evil spirits.

The shaman as a religious practitioner succumbed to the missionary zeal of the Russians and the Americans who settled among the Tlingit beginning in the 1800s. Government officials and the military imposed cruel, repressive practices to eradicate shamanism. Shamans were subjected to punishments and even imprisoned for practising their ancient traditions<sup>114</sup>. These acts of repression, together with the inability of the shaman to cure the new diseases and epidemics brought by the Europeans and Americans that swept through the Southeast Alaska villages killing thousands of Tlingits, contributed to the ultimate demise of shamanism, which persisted until the 1950s.

Shamanic objects were collected as aggressively as were other forms of Tlingit *at.óow* or art. Today, all remaining shamanic objects are held in museums or private collections. To the general museum visitor, they may be viewed as curios, but to the Tlingit, shamanic objects remain powerful. The Tlingit continue to believe that shamanic objects can cause great harm to individuals who are not members of the shaman's clan which owned the shamanic objects. The Sealaska Heritage Institute Council of Traditional Scholars reversed their initial position in opposing the exhibition of shamanic objects in museums. In 2008, the Council adopted a resolution outlining the protocols for the ceremonial care and exhibition of shamanic objects in the hopes of educating the public about shamanism and shamanic objects and safeguarding the Tlingit viewer.

## Art

As a means of economic survival, the Tlingit turned to producing art objects for sale in the public market in the 1880s. The major customers were members of the society responsible for suppressing the use of sacred objects that they sought as works of art. The Natives make a distinction between objects produced for their own use and those made for the Western consumer. Artists are able to sell art work with generic forms of Northwest coast art but are prohibited from designing and selling art with clan crest designs depicting the supernatural encounters.

The arts and craft market – separate from the ceremonial context – has become an established aspect of contemporary Tlingit society. Today the Sealaska Heritage Institute, a tribal organisation whose mission is to perpetuate and enhance the indigenous cultures of Southeast Alaska, has identified more than 300 individuals who produce and sell arts to the general public. Additionally, some of the artists continue to be commissioned by Tlingits to make ceremonial objects and regalia for use in the traditional ceremonies. Today, this ancient Northwest Coast formline art continues to evolve through the work of contemporary Northwest Coast artists. The Sealaska Heritage Institute is urging the United States Congress to designate Northwest Coast arts as a national treasure.

---

<sup>114</sup> A clan grandfather of the author was imprisoned. Her son now carries his name, *Sx'andu.oo*.

The recognition of artists is a new phenomenon, but appreciation of aesthetics is not. As noted above, the commissioning of new works is between clans. However, should a clan wish to retain someone who is known for their artwork but is not of the right moiety, a ceremony is held in which a proxy artist of the right moiety is designated and identified as the artist in name. Artists are never recognised or named when their created pieces are ceremonially presented or used.

The recognition of artists arose with the Western market. Every two years since 1982, the Sealaska Heritage Institute sponsors an event in which the Indians of Southeast Alaska gather to celebrate their culture and to sell their art products. Two thousand dancers and an equal number of observers assemble in Juneau for three days of singing, dancing, and story-telling. They come dressed in their ceremonial regalia. The theme of Celebration 2002 was “*Haa At.óow*: Our Treasures” referring to the clan-owned sacred objects. Coinciding with the 2002 Celebration and the Native Arts Market was the first Sealaska Juried Art Show and Competition with the internationally acclaimed Haida artist, Robert Davidson, serving as the lead juror. The Juried Art Show was entitled “*At.óow* and Art,” to emphasise the distinction they make between these two practices.

The Sealaska Heritage Institute is sponsoring its first exhibit featuring the works of a Tlingit master artist, Nathan Jackson, who has been producing art for sale for more than 40 years. With the exception of two ceremonial hats and Nathan’s personal regalia and cultural objects, the other items in the exhibition were made for sale to both Tlingit and non-Tlingit individuals and organisations. One of the ceremonial hats on exhibition is one that Nathan made for his clan, the Raven *Lukaax.ádi*, which became his clan’s *at.óowu* through its ritual presentation at a ceremony. To ensure that social and spiritual balance would be maintained, an Eagle ceremonial hat was also required to be exhibited along with the Raven ceremonial hat in accordance with Tlingit custom.

David Katzeek, who is the clan leader of the *Shangukeidí* and whose grandparents are *Lukaax.ádi*, was invited to exhibit his Eagle clan hat to balance the *Lukaax.ádi at.óowu*. David, whose Tlingit name is *Kingeesti*, spoke at length about the works of Nathan Jackson. Through his words, which were initially recorded in the Tlingit language and then translated into English, we can see that the Tlingit have come to accept that artists create works of art for sale. However, they also continue to believe that their art made for the market is inspired by social and spiritual meanings. The following are highlights abstracted from *Kingeesti*’s commentary:

*... the work of this grandfather of mine,  
Nathan Jackson.  
The way he composes things,  
The way his work shines with a brilliance,  
It is just as if  
the ancestors  
have been present in his mind.*

*Kingeestí* asserts that Nathan's art is inspired by his ancestors and draws from their knowledge and wisdom, which he says are all embodied within Nathan. He says that the ancestors speak to us through his art and that we can gain strength from the objects and the ancestors. His art, which is imbued with spirits, symbolises our relationship to our homeland and the creatures of the land and seas. He invites visitors to see the objects through the eyes of a Tlingit:

*the brilliance of his work.  
It is not only him, only his work, here.  
His ancestors,  
You can see the results of their efforts.  
Indeed that is a true form of strength.  
Because the ancestors are within him,  
because the ancestors are within him,  
that is why his work  
is so strong  
and so beautiful.*

*Kingeestí* concludes by giving thanks to Nathan and to his clan, the *Lukaax.ádi*.

It is the hope of the Tlingit that Westerners can gain an appreciation and understanding of Tlingit art and that they are no longer viewed as curios or as forms of primitive art.

Rosita Kaaháni Worl, Ph.D. Dr. Worl is Tlingit of the Eagle moiety, *Shangukeidi* Clan, House Lowered from the Sun in Klukwan and Jilkaat Kwáan and a Child of the *Lukaax.ádi* Clan. She serves as president of the Sealaska Heritage Institute.

## References

- Douglas Cole**, *Captured Heritage – The Scramble for Northwest Coast Artifacts*, Norman, Oklahoma 1985.
- Nora Marks Dauenhauer, Richard Dauenhauer**, *Haa Tuwunáagu Yís*, for Healing Our Spirit, Seattle and London and Sealaska Heritage Foundation, Juneau, Alaska, 1990.
- David Katzeek**, *Yéil Yadi Ji.eetí Daat Kingeestí Yoo Xeiwutaaní*. David Katzeek Speaking About the Work of Nathan Jackson, Nathan Jackson Retrospective Exhibit, Sealaska Heritage Institute, Juneau, Alaska 2019.
- Rosita Worl**, Art, *At.óow* and Artifacts, unpublished paper, Sealaska Heritage Institute, Juneau, Alaska 2004.
- Rosita Worl**, The *Íxt'*: Tlingit Shamanism, in: Susan W. Fair, Rosita Worl (eds.), *Celebration 2000. Restoring Balance Through Culture*, Sealaska Heritage Foundation, Juneau, Alaska, 2000, pp. 159-172.

## DECOLONISING COLLECTIONS AND EXHIBITION MANAGEMENT

*S. Akeli, Z. Rimmer, N. Kautondokwa, F. Pereira*

This collection of essays from New Zealand, Namibia, Australia, and Samoa discusses the key issues relating to decolonising museum collections and exhibition management in the 21st century. The authors contend this practice requires action, collaboration, and dialogue between communities of origin, institutions, and overseas partnerships. The role of the state is vital to enable the negotiation of museum practices and the development of culturally appropriate protocols. The museum as a colonial construct represents the shifting role of institutional practices that now centre on careful representation and articulation of objects, contested narratives, and recognition of community voices. The decolonising space requires the reorientation of storytelling to be articulated by, and in collaboration with, communities associated with museum collections. The role of indigenous governing bodies is to guide institutional discussions to facilitate the creation of transparent aims and outcomes, and new ways of producing and sharing knowledge. The diverse governance structures across the four contexts also require parameters of focus and frameworks which take into account indigenous cultural references, community advocacy, capacity building, information sharing, ownership rights, and context. The German Museums Association is to be commended for moving discussions in this direction, and these case studies aim to further enhance dialogue towards collaborative discourses that will help shape national and international debates.

### DECOLONISING COLLECTIONS AND EXHIBITION MANAGEMENT IN 21ST CENTURY SAMOA

*Safua Akeli Amaama*

#### Introduction

In January 2019, Samoa's Ministry of Education, Sports, and Culture (MESC) first launched the National Culture Framework (2018–2028) which incorporates the following policies; the National Heritage Policy 2018–28, the National Cultural Industries Policy 2018–28, and the National Culture in Education Policy 2018–28. Each of these policies outlines the scope and objectives of the government to support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which 'acknowledges culture as an integral part of the international development agenda for sustainable development'. Cultural heritage is broadly defined as 'a social and cultural practice' which is 'enacted by communities and individuals, in which histories are selected or rejected'<sup>115</sup>. Thus, historical knowledge has powerful dimensions in how this is acknowledged, interpreted, and articulated. Similarly, for Samoa, cultural spaces have multiple trajectories depending on the relationships, location, and structures. Recently, in 2013, the Samoa Law Reform Commission report suggests 'Heritage'

---

115 Rodenberg and Wagenaar 2018.

should be defined as ‘places, objects, and practices of cultural significance or other special value to the present community and future generations’<sup>116</sup>. This essay briefly outlines the concept of decolonising collections and exhibition management in the context of 21st century Samoa, and its broader implications.

### Cultural landscape of Samoa

At the outset, for Samoa, the process of decolonising collections and exhibition management acknowledges the international dispersal of collections and objects outside of Samoa’s shores. Since the late 18th century, objects have travelled as part of human activity and the colonial project<sup>117</sup>. Thus, for Samoa’s colonial period in particular, major collections are found in overseas public institutions and private collections. Therefore, the seminal work by Maori indigenous scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith titled *Decolonizing Methodologies* (1999) features prominently in the decolonising space, as it relates to how research is conceptualised in terms of culturally appropriate ways, and the importance of collaboration with communities. By using this as a departure point, this essay briefly outlines the cultural landscape of Samoa and the opportunities to explore partnerships.

During New Zealand’s early colonial period, a Samoa Research Society was established in 1923 to institutionalise knowledge about Samoan traditions and customs for preservation purposes<sup>118</sup>. However, it was not until the late 1960s, with the opening of the Nelson Memorial Public Library – in memory of Ta’isi Olaf Frederick Nelson (1833–1944) who was a ‘Samoan leader, businessman and patriot’ – that more extensive library services were provided<sup>119</sup>. A National Archives and Records Authority (NARA) was established in 2013, and is undertaking an extensive project to digitise government records. Currently, Samoa has three museum institutions, each with its own governance structure; firstly, the government Museum of Samoa, which was established in 1999, and comes under the Culture Division of MESC<sup>120</sup>. It holds a collection of about 350 objects – carved objects, woven textiles, and handicrafts, photographs, colonial souvenirs, and gifts from various Pacific Islands<sup>121</sup>. The building is a heritage site, since it was constructed during the early German period for a local school. Secondly, the Robert Louis Stevenson Museum was established in 1991 in memory of the Scottish writer, and is managed by the Robert Louis Stevenson Museum/Preservation Foundation with oversight by the government. The museum attracts a number of visitors, both local and international, who visit the restored and modified home which Stevenson built in the 1890s. The Museum of the Congregational Christian Church was constructed in 2011, at a cost of 5.7 million dollars, and is closely linked to the Leulumoega Fou Fine Arts School, displaying many of the art

---

116 SLRC 2013.

117 Thomas 1991.

118 Akeli 2017.

119 Turner 1965.

120 Ministry of Education, Sports, and Culture, Government of Samoa.

121 Museum report 2014.

works produced by students. Although a ‘cultural village’ under Samoa’s Tourism Authority exists, the government, with funding from China, is building Samoa’s Arts and Cultural Centre which is due to open in 2020. At the ground-breaking ceremony, Samoa’s Prime Minister, the Honourable Tuilaepa Malielegaoi, highlighted that the new cultural centre ‘will house the national treasures of our culture and heritage, a venue for performing arts and orchestra, an art shop, exhibition space, and a restaurant’. These focal points of museum and cultural institutions are emerging spaces, with insufficient and unequal funding and support services when you compare the different institutions, and which rely heavily on collaborative opportunities.

### Collaborative partnerships

Museums as ‘contact zones’ are extended to acknowledge new spaces which provide a platform for contact<sup>122</sup>, and in the case of Samoa, these are primarily transnational in nature. As the broad umbrella organisation of museums in the region, the Pacific Island Museum Association (PIMA) has developed a Code of Ethics for Pacific Islands Museums and Cultural Centres to provide guiding principles for professional museum workers<sup>123</sup>. Institutions such as museums, libraries, and galleries need to work together in order to shed light on the collections housed in the institutions and make these available to source communities<sup>124</sup>. Hence, partnerships and co-curating encourages reciprocity and collaborative activities between various groups and institutions<sup>125</sup>. Therefore, co-developing community protocols for working with collections is an important step towards understanding collection histories and responsibilities. However, Samoa is yet to develop community protocols, although existing regional examples will help guide these discussions. Cross-cultural partnerships involve community consultations, stakeholder meetings, and the development of information about collections and associated items for potential exhibition display and audience engagement.

The return of objects to source communities is a deeply complex issue and has implications for countries with resource constraints such as Samoa. However, the digitisation of objects as a method of repatriation bodes well for the future, particularly since digital partnerships between institutions provide dialogue opportunities which can benefit different groups<sup>126</sup>. Engaging or re-engaging indigenous peoples with their artefacts and objects is a development which has emerged in multiple settler contexts such as Australia, the United States of America, and New Zealand. In the Pacific, this process has been a contested space<sup>127</sup>. While museums and cultural centres were established in the region during the post-colonial era, many institutions face financial, security, and infrastructure constraints.

---

122 Boast 2011.

123 PIMA 2006.

124 Fox 2014.

125 Harker 2015.

126 Crouch 2010.

127 Stanley 2007.

Since 2006, the Centre for Samoan Studies (CSS) at the National University of Samoa (NUS) has offered the Archaeology and Cultural Heritage Programme, with a postgraduate course on Cultural Heritage Management offered under the Development Studies Programme. This programme supplements the broader work of the centre, particularly through the NUS-Creative New Zealand Artist in Residency Programme. With the centre's exhibition space, the CSS has provided a platform for local and international exhibitions. This work complements the government museum collections, since it has an active audience engagement programme online and on the exhibition floor<sup>128</sup>.

In the last decade, the care of museum collections has undergone changes in respect of how communities and institutions manage and view collections. Scholars suggest reframing collections involves 'confronting the dark sides of colonial history'<sup>129</sup>. Hence, the role of the museum and cultural centres in providing a community participatory function is now a key part of institutional and scholarly discourse, particularly since community engagement plays a vital role in the work of museum professionals and institutions<sup>130</sup>. This is important for Samoa since historical collections are held overseas.

## Conclusion

In briefly exploring Samoa's cultural landscape, it has been shown that the key pathway to decolonising collections and exhibition management is through collaboration and partnerships. Information sharing of inventories and databases are vital towards understanding the collections and complicated histories. For Samoa, these are important opportunities to help support the work of ministries and universities, in order to better inform the public about aspects relating to Samoa's global history and culture. Moreover, staff and student exchanges provide a platform for sharing decolonising information and contributing to more in-depth conversations about the circulation of objects and their associated stories.

## CHALLENGING THE COLONIAL CONSTRUCT OF MUSEUMS: A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

*Zoe Rimmer*

While the issues discussed in this article relate to First Nation communities and their experiences with museums and similar colonial institutions around Australia, the specific examples given are from my country, Lutruwita (Tasmania); and my community, the Tasmanian Aboriginal context.

For approximately 500 Aboriginal nations living in Australia prior to British arrival, life was imbedded in ancestral lore that had governed sophisticated societies and

---

128 Museum report 2014.

129 Arainikasih and Hafnidar 2018, p. 106.

130 Fu et al. 2017.

systems of environmental management since creation – in archaeological terms for at least 65,000 years. Australia is still coming to terms with the nation's relatively recent history of invasion, frontier violence, and colonisation. Museums are undeniably part of that history, both as benefactors of objects from the colonial frontier and dispossession and as the international dealers in ancestral remains and cultural material. The ongoing curation of Australia's First Nations people and culture was also heavily informed by ideologies of "primivity" and "extinction", both narratives that are used to justify colonisation<sup>131</sup>. Museums all over the world that hold material culture from this continent therefore share a colonial archive and are often considered to be sites of conflict and trauma for Aboriginal people.

Weighed down by years of false narratives, museums in Australia have, over the past few decades, begun to redress past wrongs and slowly build better relationships with Aboriginal communities. Protocols have been developed to guide museums in culturally appropriate collection development, care, research, curation, and display<sup>132</sup>. All state museums actively engage in Indigenous Repatriation Programmes for the unconditional return of ancestral remains and secret sacred objects. As museums in Australia have become more inclusive, curatorial practices are shifting from mere consultation to one of engagement and collaboration. It is generally recognised that, regardless of the collecting context and current legal custodianship, First Nations cultural material is inextricably linked to community, country (land) and culture, and that for many communities surviving the eras of invasion, colonisation, and assimilation, access to cultural items and archives can help rebuild cultural foundations<sup>133</sup>.

The Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG) is one of the oldest museums in Australia. Its founding collections were established by the Royal Society of Tasmania (the first Royal Society formed outside of the United Kingdom) and have arguably undergone one of the most significant transformations. The frontier violence in Tasmania and attempted genocide of Tasmanian Aboriginal people is akin to TMAG's horrific history in its treatment of Tasmanian Aboriginal people and culture. From 1904 until 1947, TMAG displayed Aboriginal woman *Trukanini's* skeletal remains alongside cultural objects, in a cabinet of curiosity; memorialising a supposedly extinct culture and labelling her the last of her race – an unfounded legacy that continues to haunt her and traumatise Tasmanian Aboriginal people. From 1931 until 2005, a naïve diorama of a solitary Aboriginal family camped on an isolated beach formed the predominant representation of the Tasmanian Aboriginal experience. Rather than an authentic depiction, the diorama confined Aboriginal people to prehistory, and perpetuated enduring myths of the "wandering savage"<sup>134</sup>.

In response to Aboriginal political activism, repatriation claims, and the assertion of

---

131 Poll 2018.

132 Museums Australia 2005 & 2000; GERAIS 2012.

133 Griffin and Paroissien 2011.

134 Lehman 2018.

Aboriginal sovereign rights, the past two decades of curatorial work at TMAG have been focused on increasing Aboriginal connection to, and voice within, the collections and exhibitions. In effect, decolonising the collection through Aboriginal-led curatorship, research, and projects that assist in the maintenance and revitalisation of cultural practices. In 2008, TMAG's landmark exhibition '*ningina tunapri: To Give Knowledge and Understanding*', the institution's first gallery to be developed by Aboriginal curators in collaboration with the Aboriginal community, centred on continuity and survival. It disputed 160 years of TMAG's interpretation of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community by privileging Aboriginal knowledge, voice, and perspective. The heart of the exhibition was a large *tuylini* (bark canoe), the first constructed in 175 years through a cultural revival project that utilised the museum's collection of 19th century models and archival records. The *tuylini* is emblematic of the broader reclamation of the gallery that empowers the Aboriginal community, linking the past with the present and actively counteracting stereotypes. The use of Aboriginal language within exhibition didactics and a narrative in the first person was, at the time, a unique approach.

By 2013, TMAG had the confidence to develop a second, harder hitting permanent gallery. '*Our Land: parrawa parrawa! Go Away!*' examines the frontier conflict of the Black War 1824–1832 from both an Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal perspective for the first time in a public space. The very building that the exhibition occupies, the 1820s Bond Store, was once the engine room of the British empire in Tasmania; where military campaigns against the Aboriginal population such as 'the Black Line'<sup>135</sup> were devised and launched. Integral to the exhibition experience is contemporary art by Tasmanian Aboriginal artist Julie Gough, whose work *The Consequence of Chance* (2011) critically examines the colonial propaganda of the 1829 Proclamation Boards<sup>136</sup>. Incorporating contemporary artwork intrinsically reflects an ongoing and adaptable culture as well as recognising the importance of Aboriginal people interrogating historical collections and archives to interpret the shared colonial history, just as it is important that we Aboriginal people interpret our own cultural heritage objects.

Positive relationships, and genuine engagement between TMAG and the Aboriginal community, have also fostered community driven cultural revitalisation projects which culminated in acclaimed touring exhibitions; '*tayenebe: Tasmanian Aboriginal women's fibre work*' (2008–2009)<sup>137</sup> and '*kanalaritja: An Unbroken String*' (2016–2020)<sup>138</sup>. Both exhibitions document the journey of Aboriginal (re)connection to cultural material held in the museum and the maintenance and revival of important cultural practices assisted by access to collections and archives. The exhibitions focus on the process of creation and on the communal value of the objects. The objects were not segregated by age but displayed together to reflect familial or cultural affiliation as opposed to a lineal timeline that imposes notions of traditional versus

---

<sup>135</sup> A north-south chain of soldiers, settlers and prisoners for the violent eviction of Aborigines in Tasmania.

<sup>136</sup> Gough 2016.

<sup>137</sup> Gough 2008.

<sup>138</sup> Rimmer, Tew and Kleinert 2016.

contemporary. Dr Julie Gough, curator of, explains that ‘by orientating [the baskets] in relation to cultural resurgence, the very meaning (and presentation) of these historical objects shifted from the solemn remains of a lost culture to inspirational evidence of contemporary practice. The baskets being emblematic of [our] Ancestors’ willpower and defiance in the face of massive cultural disruption and dislocation’<sup>139</sup>.

The most recent of the exhibitions, *kanalaritja*, further challenges traditional museum practice, by transforming standardised museum labels, moving from describing necklaces of “unknown” or “unprovenanced” makers to necklaces “made by our Ancestors”. Exhibition content was developed from oral histories and presented in the first person as opposed to an authoritative and removed curatorial tone. The process of asking Aboriginal people what story they wanted to tell through the display of their cultural collections shifted the emphasis from the collector, academic, historical, or curio value to one of honouring the maker (known or unknown) and the broader community and culture to which the object belongs. The physical design and presence of the exhibitions were considered as important as the content and envisioned through a cultural lens. Considering the display methods as part of the story telling helped place the objects as more than ethnographic artefacts or art, and as “ancestral cultural treasures”.

Generally, museums continue to be a construct of colonialism and symbol of imperial power. However, TMAG’s current practice is informed by the Aboriginal community through its Tasmanian Aboriginal Advisory Council and Aboriginal curators. Rather than memorialising, we are honouring the Aboriginal community, which has endured, survived, and proudly asserts a continuing presence and diversity. The approaches outlined above ensure that TMAG’s collections and exhibitions today reflect Aboriginal priorities, values, worldviews, and diversity; and accurately reflect our stories. Key guiding principles of these decolonising practices include: respect; self-determination; community engagement and consent; cultural integrity and authenticity; benefit sharing; supporting continuing cultures; and the recognition and protection of intellectual property rights<sup>140</sup>.

Dealing with the legacy of collections and practices inherited from an era of mass, often violent, imperial expansion is complex and perhaps even more so in institutions whose First Nations collections are out of their home context. Decolonising methods utilised in collection management and exhibition development are therefore multifaceted and often require resourceful and creative responses. Regardless of the context of the institution, projects and exhibitions developed from a foundation that respects and champions First Nations’ rights to self-determination present more balanced, powerful, and engaging experiences. The key to changing the disconnect

---

139 Berk 2015.

140 Australia Council for the Arts 2019.

between colonial context collections, their original owners, and the institution, is investing time and resources in building genuine partnerships through a collaborative approach to every aspect of museum business.

## CURATING WITH COMMUNITIES: A COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION OF NAMIBIA AND NAMIBIA SAN COUNCIL

*Nehoa Hilma Kautondokwa*

The Namibian heritage sector is diverse, ranging from museums, art galleries, cultural villages, and archives as well as other institutions tasked with safeguarding Namibia's heritage. The heritage institutions have diverse forms of governance as they are owned by private companies, municipalities, the state, or individuals. The majority of these institutions are members of the Museums Association of Namibia (MAN), an umbrella body responsible for regional museum development in Namibia. MAN "... strives to ensure that museums in Namibia become educational resources, centers of creativity, dialogue and forums that serve as cultural contact zones and windows on the wider world, ... and provide access to knowledge, focusing on Namibia's unique tangible and intangible cultural and natural heritage", MAN argues that this is "... best achieved by involving the communities that they serve ...". One of the strategies that MAN has recently embarked upon as a collaborative project is based on 'Photo-elitiation, visual repatriation, virtual repatriation'<sup>141</sup>. This is considered a best practice in cases where the artefacts in collections are familiar to some Namibians, but are no longer produced, or in use. Such collections are of great cultural value and an important educational resource that can be used to fill in the knowledge gaps between the older and younger generations<sup>142</sup>. However, when such projects are implemented it is important to read the collection against the colonial grain in three ways: by critically reviewing the classification of the 'origin' communities, the classification of objects, and the process of provenance research and exhibition development. Collaborative projects need to be based on principles of equal partnerships and dialogue in the processes of knowledge production. Participants must also fully appreciate hurdles to effective collaboration, not only as challenges, but as lessons that can be used to help improve future projects.

'Knowing the San' is a current project facilitated by the MAN as a component in the 'Museum Development as a Tool for Cultural Rights in Namibia', sponsored by the Delegation of the European Union to Namibia. The project is intended to demon-

---

<sup>141</sup> Although the Africa Accessioned Project is not a campaign for repatriation of collections held outside Namibia, it is still believed that there are collections and objects that are of spiritual and historical importance to Namibian communities. The processes of "return could be used to develop new relationships between the museums that return objects and the museums and communities that receive them" (Akawa-Shikufa 2019). Any community and/or museum that wishes to open a dialogue about the restitution of cultural artefacts should contact the National Museum of Namibia as the institution that is responsible for the physical return of objects.

<sup>142</sup> To date, MAN has facilitated two successful projects, with collections based in Finland as presented by Silvester (2018), see also Silvester, Jeremy. "The Africa Accessioned Network." *Museum Cooperation between Africa and Europe: A New Field for Museum Studies* 33 (2018): 111, pp. 55 – 68.

strate that Namibian museums can play an important role in promoting cultural rights. The project involves the development of a mobile exhibition and catalogue reflecting the history and culture of Namibia's San communities, based on Dr Louis Fourie's collection currently held at MuseuMAfricA, in South Africa. The collection, which is the largest museum collection documenting different Namibian San communities, comprises 3,367 individual artefacts and 388 photographs.

The mobile exhibition and catalogue have been developed at the request of the //Ana- Djeh San Trust youth leaders. The Trust approached the MAN and expressed concerns that many of their peers no longer wanted to be identified as San. It was further argued that, since most exhibitions and publications about San communities depict San heritage as static, the combination of material culture from various eras, angles, and cultures should be carefully designed to show how San communities are part of the historical development and how changes impacted on their lives and culture. The Trust therefore requested an exhibition that should be curated in manners that encourage and reflect the creativity and achievements of the different San communities.

The lengthy processes of research, knowledge-sharing, and negotiations led to an agreement that the exhibition should be based on the Fourie collection, which is to be photographed and visually repatriated to Namibia. It was also agreed that more photographs were to be obtained from the National Archives of Namibia, as well as capturing contemporary photographs, all for possible use in the exhibition and catalogue. It was agreed that a section of the catalogue would also highlight some of the ways in which San communities have been involved in significant events in Namibian history and not 'outside' of history. Photographs were selected as the medium of engagement, as it is believed that they would prompt the re-learning of forgotten knowledge and skills, provide opportunities for the transmission of cultural knowledge across generations, and thus enable the youth to work with older generations to compile fragmented historical narratives, and material evidence of cultural identity, historical struggles, and triumphs<sup>143</sup>. Therefore, the project was set up to provide communities with the freedom to propose exhibition themes and guide the narrative, providing a unique opportunity for "facilitating genuine partnerships and collaboration beyond superficial consultation, that in most cases amounts to passive collusion"<sup>144</sup>.

Although Fourie recorded extensive field-work notes, they mainly consist of labels (in English) for the objects and, often misspelled, names for the communities and the places where the objects were acquired. Some of the records were published in 'Natives of the South West African Tribes' (1928), and the collection is infused with

---

143 Brown and Peers 2013.

144 Clifford 1997, in Golding and Walklate 2013, pp. 190–192.

the legacy of colonial agendas that promoted 'imperial spectacles'<sup>145</sup>. For example, part of the collection was used to create displays, in 1924, for the British Empire Exhibition in London. Ann Wanless has argued that the collection reveals more about Fourie's interests than it provides an accurate representation of the communities that it is intended to represent<sup>146</sup>. A team from the Namibian San Council and MAN travelled to South Africa, to initially access the collection, and select key objects to be showcased in the exhibition and catalogue. The object selection process was headed by the San Council Members<sup>147</sup>, who identified objects beyond the parameters of museum and collector-produced captions. The captions in most cases showed the name of objects and the (often misspelled) name of the community they had been collected from. At MuseuMAfricA, the team further engaged in dialogue with the museum curators about misinformation and about storage and display protocols. For instance, there were some religious objects that were on display to the public, which culturally should only be seen and touched by a selected few. There are also objects in storage which belonged to women and some to men, which should not be kept in the same space. The MuseuMAfricA team appreciated the advice and vowed to make the necessary changes to incorporate new storage and display protocols.

The objects selected were photographed by MuseuMAfricA's professional photographer and the high-quality photographs were sent to Namibia. Two workshops brought together members of the Namibian San Council, who are representatives of different San communities. It was during the first workshop that the exhibition title, themes, narrative, launch, and circulation were discussed and finalised. The second workshop further contextualised objects, selected images from the draft catalogue for display in the mobile exhibition, and reviewed the draft section that contained insights into San histories. The focus of the selection of artefacts was on bringing out the social and cultural significance and value of the objects to the communities. The discussions also focused on how best to use the photographs in the exhibition and catalogue, to forge a positive and unique San identity. Finally, an analysis of historical photographs in the collection evoked and moderated new debates on how best to use them. While they are important historical and cultural evidence, the context under which they were taken, as many depict the San communities in a racist way as 'specimens', created a debate about how best to reflect violent representations, without reproducing the abuse. Both objects and historical photographs provoked conversations about the objects, which turned into a dialogue between, and amongst, project stakeholders. The exhibition and the catalogue will both be bilingual, in English and Ju/'Hoansi, and thus will also be tools that can be used for mother tongue transmission.

---

145 Wintle 2013, p. 190.

146 Wanless 2008.

147 While it is ideal to engage traditional authorities of the source communities, San communities are spread across Namibia, and the Namibian San Council and Office of the Prime Minister, Marginalised Communities Directorate are the largest national institutions that represent and coordinate San communities in Namibia.

We believe that the project is a model of collaboration between source communities and museums. The project was initiated by community members and is driven mainly by their community consultations to create new knowledge. Symbolic gestures such as waiving their copyright fees demonstrated the museum's commitment to making collections available to source communities. The exhibition and catalogue narrative will reflect the different communities' social needs and cultural values. Diverse stakeholders are brought together, but each respects the others' expertise, perspectives, and experiences, and this leads to mutual capacity building. The exhibition development process is therefore seen as a product in itself. However, cross-border and cross-cultural collaborations and project management can be delayed by bureaucratic governance structures and policies, which can make the attainment of working agreements difficult. Such barriers can be removed easily if there is transparent communication at all times.

In conclusion, the project is based on several principles. The projects allow the creation of educational exhibitions, 'neither about nor for, but rather by' the San communities and enable a holistic "access to a museum experience"<sup>148</sup>, both as curators and audiences. The project acknowledges that communities, as defined by Watson (2007), are neither simple nor uncontested<sup>149</sup>. Different changes in demographics, ethnic composition, and religious and cultural value systems are generated by different forces over time. Some communities have changed or disappeared (rather than changing their self-identification) since the period when the objects were collected. However, by acknowledging such realities right from the beginning and through the adoption and adaption of flexible curatorial modes, it has been possible to transform the exhibition and catalogue "to become spaces where diverse intellectual, professional, and cultural communities engaged to yield new ways of thinking"<sup>150</sup>. At one level, objects and collections are evidence of the creativity, resilience, diversity, and religious beliefs of communities. Yet, at another level, objects and collections can also be seen as evidence of violence, plunder, or trade relations between Europe and Africa. The engagement with a historical collection provided the opportunity for Namibia's San communities to interpret their past through the images of material culture and to produce their own reflections on their history and identify.

---

148 Akawa-Shikufa 2018.

149 Watson 2007, p. 3.

150 Golding and Walklate 2013, p. 2.

## DECOLONISING COLLECTION AND EXHIBITION MANAGEMENT – ENHANCING PARTNERSHIPS IN THE CARE OF MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

*Fulimalo Pereira*

The following suggestions and aspirations offered are based on the work of Auckland Museum's Pacific Collection Access Project (PCAP)<sup>151</sup>. PCAP was envisioned by Pacific curatorial and collection management teams as a practical application of the Museum's document *Teu Le Va: The Pacific Dimension* at Auckland War Memorial Museum<sup>152</sup>. The project is part of the 20-year Future Museum Plan that envisioned a collaborative, open, and meaningful connection between museums, the collections they hold in trust, and stakeholders, of which source communities are a core part.

An underlying principle of PCAP was a commitment to capacity and capability building. Opportunities were made available to further develop our talented practitioners in the Pacific Island galleries, libraries, archives, and museum (GLAM) sector. Therefore, for example, alongside a relevant university degree there was a requirement to speak or understand a Pacific Island language; furthermore, as well as database and cataloguing experience, value was placed on experience of having worked within Pacific communities and so forth.

I am grateful to senior management and the Auckland Museum Trust Board for having the wisdom and foresight to facilitate and support this important project. PCAP's processes evolved over time, external partnerships were forged or strengthened, and opportunities for tertiary study, community tours, and temporary community-led displays have been highlights of the project. These kinds of endeavours can sometimes be difficult, but the rewards exceed the expectations to such a great extent, the impact within source communities is so profound, and the implications for a collaborative, meaningful, and nuanced future make it all worthwhile<sup>153, 154</sup>.

### Collection management base framework

Mentorship and training opportunities should be made available by the 'guardian' institutions in Germany.

- Establishment of a Working Group or Consultative Committee within the descendant community for ongoing dialogue and communication throughout the projects
- Establishment of Processes and Procedures must be in equal partnership with descendant communities

---

151 [http://www.aucklandmuseum.com/discover/research/research-projects/pacific-collection-access-project/about-the-project-\(1\)](http://www.aucklandmuseum.com/discover/research/research-projects/pacific-collection-access-project/about-the-project-(1)).

152 <http://www.aucklandmuseum.com/getmedia/1f0cb555-8206-4cb3-adce-3e8cd838f026/auckland-museum-teu-le-va-the-pacific-dimension-2016>.

153 <http://www.aucklandmuseum.com/discover/research/research-projects/pacific-collection-access-project/>.

154 <http://www.aucklandmuseum.com/discover/stories/pacific/fijian-treasures-that-are-treasured-%E2%80%93-our-shared>.

- Processes must include participation by members of descendant communities
- Easy to read and well indexed 'How To' manuals should be produced for ease of workflow
- Set of outcomes and time frames agreed to at outset

### Collection management

Opportunities must be made available to graduates in relevant degrees or current museum staff from descendant communities to have a voice in how their material is stored, cared for and accessed.

- Internships for descendant community members for upskilling or training in collection management
- Mentoring of current museum or arts sector workers by German museum professionals
- Establishment of roles within German institutions for indigenous people
- Traineeships

Ideally, source community members should be invited to work within the German institutions that hold their treasures until such time as the treasures are returned if this comes to pass. Training in best practice museum methodology, which should be flexible enough to integrate or accommodate cultural beliefs and worldviews regarding the treasures:

- Research (the museum's archives and paper-based holdings it owns, provenance documents, manuscripts, original donor information, published historical accounts etc.)
- Cataloguing (introduction to databases on which information is held, adding data into appropriate fields etc.)
- Assessment (conservation assessment, condition report etc.)
- Photography (e.g. for the Pacific Collections Access Project at Auckland Museum there are separate imaging standards that sit alongside; how detailed should they be framed and who is the audience/viewer play a large part in this – indigenous craftspeople, weavers, and carvers are our primary audience for the detailed images)
- A cultural permissions process should be encouraged to give mandated authority for the use and reproduction of ancestor images to descendant communities<sup>155</sup>
- Packing
- Storage (orientation, proximities, rationale)
- Access (ease/restrictions; encourage access by descendant communities etc.)

<sup>155</sup> <http://www.aucklandmuseum.com/discover/library/image-ordering-service>.

The voice of the descendant groups must be prioritised, and indigenous cultural frameworks must take precedence in the care of their collections. This may mean the construction and fitting out of new storage spaces, the identification and fitting out of visitation rooms, or space to enable ceremonies and rituals to be carried out by communities. Following descendant group advice:

- Separation if necessary, of treasure types (ritual, men's secret society material and women's goods etc.)
- Spatial orientation of stored material, relational storage of cultural material according to cultural beliefs. For example, in New Zealand it is inappropriate for carvings of ancestors to be stored on their heads, as often happened as the most stable section of a carving is the head; open dialogue meant that a culturally acceptable and conservation-friendly orientation was agreed on
- Proximity to other items or rooms deemed culturally appropriate (e.g. in New Zealand access to water near or within visitation rooms is imperative for cleansing rites)

### Other considerations

The ability to indigenise any database used is a key opportunity. Databases should be fit for purpose, appropriate menu windows for cultural knowledge and information should be included, and access and engagement should be a priority.

Loans process should encourage requests, this is another way of improving access by indigenous communities to their treasures.

- Indigenous languages in particular should be included to improve ease of access for communities
- Perhaps joint 'ownerships' can be agreed to ensure physical, environmental, and scholarly care is maintained by 'lending' institution
- Conservation work is to be negotiable

### Exhibition management of colonised collections

Exhibiting indigenous material today is a fraught undertaking, even if you are of the culture from whence the treasures come. Current discourse centres on the fact that museums have never been neutral spaces, that the neutrality museums insist on is itself a political and social statement. In this vein, let us step into a new world of inclusion, collaboration, and partnership.

An exhibition team can be a fairly large team but all too often the exhibiting of indigenous treasure has occurred without the indigenous voice or indigenous people. This must change moving forward.

- Opportunities must be made available for indigenous curators or community groups to curate their own shows with their treasures. There must be full partnership in relation to the content framework, the interpretation, and any potential

public programmes. These invitations will be opportunities to establish and build ongoing relationships between the institutions and indigenous communities. They will need the support and encouragement of the hosting institution, so do not absent yourself or the expertise your institution has to offer. This is a form of restitution – the upskilling, training, and mentoring of indigenous communities.

- The indigenous voice and perspectives will come through these curatorial experiences, and so too should indigenous language use. Bilingual or multilingual labels broaden the potential access and interest, particularly if there is a catalogue or an online presence.
- Attempts should be made to include indigenous gallery designers, graphic designers, label editors, or set builders in exhibition teams. They will bring cultural knowledge and enhanced experiences of indigenous places, colours, sounds, and so forth that are invaluable for conceiving a spatial experience. These are more opportunities to upskill, train, or give further experience to members of descendant communities.
- Indigenous knowledge is given precedence.
- Gallery layouts and design, if not by indigenous designers, should include an indigenous world view, recommended colour palette, lighting etc.
- Production of exhibition catalogues and online exhibitions will broaden the reach of these exhibitions and allow those for whom museums are intimidating and foreign places, those in the home countries, and/or otherwise unable, to visit the exhibition.

The above are small changes that will have an immense impact for indigenous communities today and into the future. We have seen pride boosted, identities renegotiated, and an excitement among the local descendant communities here in New Zealand through our endeavours to decolonise museum practice here.

## References

### [Decolonising Collections and Exhibition Management in 21st Century Samoa](#)

**Safua Akeli**, Samoa 'on show': re-examining Samoa-New Zealand relations through display from 1923 to 2007. PhD Thesis, School of Historical and Philosophical Inquiry, The University of Queensland, 2017.

**Ajeng Arainikasih, M. Hum Hafnidar**, Decolonising the Aceh Museum: Objects, Histories and their Narratives, *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review*, vol. 133, iss. 2, 2018, pp. 105 – 120.

**Robin Boast**, Neocolonial Collaboration: Museum as Contact Zone Revisited, *Museum Anthropology*, vol. 34, iss. 1, 2011, pp. 56 – 70.

**Michelle Crouch**, Digitization as Repatriation?: The National Museum of the American Indian's Fourth Museum Project, *Journal of Information Ethics*, supplement, Special Issue, vol. 19, 1, 2010, pp. 45 – 56.

**Government of Samoa**, National Culture Framework (2018 – 2028), Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, 2019.

- Government of Samoa**, National Heritage Policy (2018 – 2028), Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, 2019.
- Government of Samoa**, National Cultural Industries Policy (2018 – 2028), Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, 2019.
- Government of Samoa**, National Culture in Education Policy (2018 – 2028), Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, 2019.
- Government of Samoa**, National Heritage Board Report (2013), Samoa Law Reform Commission 2013.
- Heather Fox**, The Importance of Being Human: A Case Study of Library, Archives, and Museum Collaboration, *Collections: A Journal for Museum and Archives Professionals*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2014, pp. 183 – 192.
- Yi Fu, Kim Sankyun, Mao Ruohan**, Crafting Collaboration: Conflict Resolution and Community Engagement in the Hangzhou Arts and Crafts Museum Cluster, *International Journal of Intangible Heritage*, vol. 12, iss. 12, 2017, pp. 60 – 75.
- Richard Harker**, Museums Connect: Teaching Public History through Transnational Museum Partnerships, *Public History Review*, vol. 22, 2015, pp. 56 – 58.
- International Council on Archives**, Reference Dossier on Archival Claims, Proceedings of the Twenty-ninth, Thirtieth and Thirty-first International Conference of the Round Table on Archives. Special Issue JANUS. International Council on Archives, Dordrecht, 1998, pp. 209 – 268.
- Pacific Islands Museums Association (PIMA)**, PIMA Code of Ethics for Pacific Islands Museums and Cultural Centres, *International Journal of Cultural Property*, vol. 13, 2006, pp. 415 – 417.
- Jeroen Rodenberg, Pieter Wagenaar** (eds.), *Cultural Contestation: Heritage, Identity and the Role of Government*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.
- Linda Tuhiwai Smith**, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, New York: St Martins, 1999.
- Nick Stanley** (ed.), *The Future of Indigenous Museums: Perspectives from the Southwest Pacific*, New York, Berghahn Books, 2007.
- Nicholas Thomas**, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1991.
- Bruce Turner**, *Library Services in Western Samoa*, *New Zealand Libraries*, 1965, pp. 159 – 163.
- The Museum of Samoa**, Assessment Report, January 2014.
- Challenging the Colonial Construct of Museums: A Collaborative Approach**  
**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library**, Information and Resource Network Inc. (ATSILIRN), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocols for Libraries, Archives, and Information Services 2005 (<https://atsilirn.aiatsis.gov.au/protocols.php>, last download 18 June 2020)
- Christopher Berk**, This Exhibition is about now: Tasmanian Aboriginality at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, in: *Museum Anthropology*, Vol 38, Issue 2, American Anthropological Association, 2015, pp. 149 – 162.

- Des Griffin, Leon Paroissien** (eds.), *Understanding Museums: Australian Museums and Museology*, National Museum of Australia 2011, (PDF [https://nma.gov.au/research/understanding-museums/\\_lib/pdf/Understanding\\_Museums\\_whole\\_2011.pdf](https://nma.gov.au/research/understanding-museums/_lib/pdf/Understanding_Museums_whole_2011.pdf), last download 18 June 2020).
- Julie Gough**, *The Possessed Past. Museum: infiltration and Outreach and the Lost World* (Part 2), in: Carroll, Khadija von Zinnenburg (ed.), *The importance of being anachronistic: contemporary Aboriginal art and museum reparations*, Discipline in association with Third Text Publications, Melbourne, Victoria, 2016, pp. 51 – 102.
- Julie Gough**, *Tayenebe: Tasmanian Aboriginal Women’s Fibre Work*, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart, 2008.
- Gregory Lehman**, *Tasmania’s Black War: Undermining the Foundations of Terra Nullius*, in: Artlink Indigenous: Kanarn Wangkiny Wanggandi Karlto – Speaking From the Inside, Issue 38.2, Contemporary Art of Australia and Asia Pacific, June 2018, pp. 30-35.
- Matt Poll**, *Songlines, museology and contemporary Aboriginal Art*, in: Artlink Indigenous: Kanarn Wangkiny Wanggandi Karlto – Speaking From the Inside, Issue 38.2, Contemporary Art of Australia and Asia Pacific, June 2018, pp. 36-41.
- Zoe Rimmer, Liz Tew, Sylvia Kleinert** (eds.), *kanalaritja: An Unbroken String*, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart, 2016.

## Policies

- Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies**, *Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Research (GERAIS)*, Revised Second Edition, 2012, (PDF <https://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-09/gerais.pdf>, last download 18 June 2020).
- National Museum of Australia**, *Indigenous Cultural Rights and Engagement Policy*. 2015 (reviewed 2017). ([https://www.nma.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0009/558927/POL-C-054\\_Indigenous\\_cultural\\_rights\\_and\\_engagement\\_policy.pdf](https://www.nma.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/558927/POL-C-054_Indigenous_cultural_rights_and_engagement_policy.pdf), last download 18 June 2020).
- Museums Australia**, *Previous Possessions, New Obligations. Policies for Museums in Australia and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People*, 2000. ([https://www.amaga.org.au/sites/default/files/uploaded-content/website-content/SubmissionsPolicies/previous\\_posSESSIONS\\_policy\\_2000.pdf](https://www.amaga.org.au/sites/default/files/uploaded-content/website-content/SubmissionsPolicies/previous_posSESSIONS_policy_2000.pdf), last download 18 June 2020).
- Museums Australia**, *Continuous Cultures, Ongoing Responsibilities. Principles and guidelines for Australian Museums Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage*, 2005. (PDF [https://www.nma.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0020/3296/ccor\\_final\\_feb\\_05.pdf](https://www.nma.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/3296/ccor_final_feb_05.pdf), last download 18 June 2020).

Curating with Communities: A Collaborative Partnership between the Museums Association of Namibia and Namibia San Council

**Martha Akawa-Shikufa**, “Chairperson of the Museums Association of Namibia Remarks.” Speech, Exhibition and Catalogue Launch, Nehale Secondary School, Onayena, April 15, 2018.

**Alison K. Brown, Laura Peers** (eds.), *Museums and Source Communities: A Routledge Reader*, Routledge, 2005.

**Viv Golding, Jen Walklate** (eds.), *Museums and Communities: Diversity, Dialogue and Collaboration in an Age of Migrations*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013.

**Jeremy Silvester**, “The Africa Accessioned Network.” *Museum Cooperation between Africa and Europe: A New Field for Museum Studies* 33: 111, 2018, pp. 55 – 68.

**Ann Wanless**, “The silence of colonial melancholy: the Fourie collection of Khoisan ethnologica.” PhD Thesis, 2008.

**Sheila Watson** (ed.), *Museums and their Communities*. Routledge, 2007.

**Claire Wintle**, “Decolonising the museum: The case of the imperial and commonwealth institutes.” *museum and society* 11, no. 2, 2013, pp. 185 – 201.

## PROVENANCE RESEARCH – RESEARCH SOURCES, METHODS, POSSIBILITIES

*Jonathan Fine & Hilke Thode-Arora*

Provenance research investigates the circumstances of an item's possession and ownership from its creation to the present. Researching provenance is a basic obligation of museums – regardless of whether or not collection items are subject to requests for restitution or repatriation – and it must be carried out with “due diligence”<sup>156</sup>.

Researching the provenance of collection items from colonial contexts (in the narrower sense, collection items from cases 1 and 2, cf. p. 31 et seq.) often does not differ fundamentally from researching those from other contexts. To understand the possession and ownership circumstances of a collection item, it is often necessary to understand the circumstances under which the item was sold, acquired, or appropriated, and not merely to know the chain of owners and possessors. In order to grasp this context, it is often necessary to draw on and interpret a wide range of written and oral sources from Europe and from other regions, as well as to examine the collection item and its materials. The collection item itself is thus often a source that can help illuminate the context of its provenance. Nonetheless, existing sources relating to each step of the chain of ownership are often not adequate to give a complete picture of the facts. Well-founded contextualisation and interpretation play an important role in provenance research. The investigation of how an item has changed hands can always be advanced by new sources, information, and interpretations. Therefore, provenance research should not be regarded as a process that can “clarify” the history of an item, but rather as a research process that often leads to provisional conclusions regarding a collection item's history.

It is important to bear in mind the following issues when researching the provenance of collection items from colonial contexts:

- colonial contexts were often, but not always, characterised by violence;
- knowledge and the expertise of people from countries of origin or communities of origin from which the items originate should be considered important sources, especially with regard to aspects of the history of the items before they were acquired.

A number of things can serve as the impetus to investigate the provenance of collection items from colonial contexts: systematic cataloguing and making an inventory of the museum's collections; preparation of exhibitions; inquiries regarding objects from scholars or other interested parties; as part of a larger research project; possible

---

<sup>156</sup> ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums, Section 2.3, 2010.

acquisition of a new object<sup>157</sup> or in response to a request that the object be restituted or repatriated. Regardless of where the impetus for the provenance research originates, the same questions must be posed and investigated in detail: Where does the collection item come from? Who had possession of it and to whom did it belong? When and under what circumstances did it change its owner or keeper?

This section of the Guidelines is intended to serve as an introduction to investigating the provenance of collection items from colonial contexts. It considers four main topics: the sources for research and how to interpret them critically; dealing with incomplete or unclear provenances; incorporating the knowledge and expertise of people from the item's countries of origin/communities of origin; and effectively communicating information about the provenance of collection items to museum visitors and the interested public through museum exhibitions, the educational work of the museum, as well as through academic and other publications.

### Different kinds of sources

A variety of sources are relevant to investigating the provenance of collection items from colonial contexts. Primary written sources that relate to the change of possessors and owners and shed light on the context of the respective acquisition are unquestionably important. As with any historical research, other sources such as wills, historical newspaper articles, photographs, letters, diaries, books (such as memoirs), and other publications may be relevant as well. Secondary sources, such as academic articles, books, and contemporary newspaper articles should also be consulted. In museums, information about changes in ownership or possession is often found in acquisition records and other kinds of museum documentation. The museum's own files often document the last link in chains of ownership and possession; often they also point to other relevant sources in external archives or libraries or collections.

Written documents and records are not the only relevant sources for provenance research. Oral information (oral history and auricular tradition) can have been preserved in families, villages, associations, and other institutions, and handed down from generation to generation. Such oral information is a living source – in Europe and in other parts of the world. The collection item itself can also be a source of information about its history, which can be unlocked through different kinds of investigation into its materials, form, and material context. Such investigations can reveal information about the item's age, what it is made of, its archaeological context, its use (or lack thereof) in ritual or other contexts, or the historical and geographical environment where it was found. For instance, the fact that an item carved from old wood was collected in an abandoned forest or in a war-torn village can provide important clues about its age and about the possible circumstances under which it changed hands or owners.

---

157 ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums, Section 2.3, 2010.

The sources that are relevant for provenance research on collection items are often not only in Europe. Information about the history of the collection item can sometimes be found only in the countries from whence it originated. This holds for both written and oral sources, information about the materiality of the collection item, and about its physical environment. Such information is an important basis for reconstructing, contextualising, and understanding the origins of an object and the circumstances under which it came to Europe.

### Critical interpretation of sources

As in any research, the critical evaluation of sources is an important step in investigating the provenance of collection items from colonial contexts. Since the attitudes of many European actors in colonial contexts were characterised by racism and a sense of superiority as well as by a sense of the legitimacy of their actions, contemporary sources must be interpreted taking account of these biases. It is often necessary to read between the lines and to be aware that colonial contexts were frequently (but not always) characterised by violence. Military force was often used to conquer regions, and further acts of violence (such as “punitive expeditions”) maintained the ‘colonisers’ rule. Resistance to colonial rule was often crushed. Colonial violence did not always involve force of arms. “Softer” forms of violence and exploitation were common. Since Europeans often took such racist and violent contexts for granted, they are not always described in detail in the written sources. It is necessary to interpret the sources critically and to read them “against the grain”. Consulting additional sources in order to contextualise, verify, and question the facts presented is recommended, as with any historical investigation with primary sources.

Of course, even in the period when contact was first made, some objects were made or commissioned especially for Europeans because the different communities of origin with which they came into contact often quickly became aware of Europeans’ desire to collect objects. Europeans did not always recognise this adaptation to their demands, and they often believed these to be “authentic” objects used in daily life or in rituals by the persons who made them. Careful examination – especially of the objects themselves – reveals that some of them were early souvenirs, non-functional, unused, or models of tools and implements. Moreover, even under conditions of colonial structural inequality, objects could be transferred among persons under circumstances in which the exchange occurred on fair or equal terms and/or was embedded in an indigenous system of exchange and reciprocal gifts.

In many situations, the circumstances of an acquisition could be interpreted differently today than they were by the actors involved. Thus, the way acquisitions were described at the time, especially by Europeans, may not reflect today’s perspective. Moreover, new interpretations may emerge from knowledge gleaned from new research that can also draw on information from the collection item’s communities of origin. It is therefore crucial to critically review sources relating to colonial events

and contexts. In provenance research, we therefore also have to ask the question whether the historical accounts of the different actors/players correspond to today's assessments.

### Dealing with incomplete or unclear provenances

It is often not possible to find documentation for every link in the chain of an item's provenance, especially for collection items from colonial contexts. Often, not all provenance steps were documented<sup>158</sup>. Frequently this is because different motivations and different academic or scientific methodologies lay behind the assembly of collections in the colonial era. In addition, relevant records were sometimes not archived, were lost, or were destroyed over time. It is therefore important to be aware that in many cases it will be impossible to obtain a complete picture of a collection item's history. Nonetheless, museums should seek to publicise even limited insights that they gain through provenance research, even if this does not give a complete picture of the provenance. Future research by others, perhaps with new sources, may be able to build on earlier, incomplete work, thus advancing the state of knowledge more generally.

### Including the knowledge and expertise of people from countries of origin and communities of origin from which the collection items come in provenance research

Information about the history and acquisition of collection items in colonial contexts may be found not only in Europe, but also in the items' countries, societies and communities of origin. It can be (sometimes) methodologically challenging to access and interpret such sources<sup>159</sup>. But nevertheless, such sources may be highly relevant and it may be crucial to include these in provenance research wherever possible. In addition to facts and histories that cannot be known from sources in Europe, they can also reveal new perspectives and interpretations. This knowledge and the resulting contacts can help to better understand the items' history as well as to help develop just and practicable solutions for possible acquisitions or requests for restitution or repatriation.

Local scholars or partner institutions, such as museums, government agencies, or universities can often assist in finding contacts in local communities. If there are no contacts with such partner institutions in other countries, specialised ethnological museums, other kinds of museums in Europe, or public authorities in Germany can often help establish them. But in many cases such assistance may not be enough. Research in other countries can also pose ethical and legal issues. Researchers must abide by applicable local ethical guidelines and laws, and some investigations must be approved in advance by the national authorities in the countries concerned. Before investigations are undertaken on site, for instance, the German museum concerned should find out about the governing ethical standards and the legal steps

---

158 Basic Position of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation for the Handling of its Non-European Collections and the Study of Provenance 2015, p. 1.

159 Complex local social conditions may require complex sensitive methods of locating and raising using sources.

to obtain a research permit, if necessary<sup>160</sup>. Often relevant laws, standards, or guidelines can be found on the Internet.

Including the views of people from the collection items' countries of origin or communities of origin collaboratively in provenance research usually requires (specialist) ethnological expertise: national institutions may not always be the most suitable contacts when it comes to questions regarding collection items from colonial contexts. Nor is every representative of a community or ethnic group able to speak in a well-founded way about every object – it is important to find persons who possess knowledge of the items in question. Depending on the individual case, these can be individuals, families, descendants, clan spokespersons, village representatives, religious practitioners, or others. It is not always possible to communicate directly with them in a European language. Those with authority to speak are often not highly visible or able to communicate effectively through European media. One should be mindful that there may be several competing interpretations of and claims to the same objects in European museums in the countries and communities from which the collection items come. When there are competing demands and prerogatives of interpretation, culturally influenced forms of communication and negotiation must be taken into account. For instance, sometimes seniors or elders will not be contradicted by members of their own community; instead of confronting them openly, more subtle ways of negotiation are sought.

The results of provenance research in collaboration with representatives of the communities of origin from which the collection items come is an open-ended process. Investigating the provenance of items should be independent of requests for repatriation or return, and should not be seen as an inevitable step toward deaccessioning the items in question in order to return them<sup>161</sup>.

### Communication of provenance research

Communicating the results of provenance investigations through disclosure and transparency are central dimensions of provenance research. There are different and complementary ways to make the knowledge gained accessible to the public. Each museum should decide how to focus its communication effectively. For instance, different goals for communicating information about provenance can be to provide information on individual objects or collections; to cover the history of the collection; to shed light on the historical context of colonialism; to establish closer links with local groups from countries and regions of origin, or to present provenance research as one of the museum's tasks. One should not underestimate the fact that the non-academic public often does not know what provenance means and how provenance research is conducted – there is also a need for communication here.

---

<sup>160</sup> For example, there are ethics committees at New Zealand universities, to which university research projects must be submitted for consideration.

<sup>161</sup> Cf. section "Legal Aspects" in this volume, pp. 153–164.

Traditional approaches to conveying the results of provenance research include information in object and exhibition texts, audio guides, thematic tours, as well as workshops, publications, and entries in online and printed catalogues on museum collections and exhibitions. Provenance information can also be an integral part of museum exhibitions and installations. Some museums have devoted entire exhibition areas to the subject. In addition, the museums' own positions on provenance and provenance research can be posted on museum websites and included in mission statements. Newer ways of communicating provenance research are online portals and interventions in museum exhibitions themselves. Regardless of the form and focus of the communication, collaboration with staff from the museums' public relations and publicity departments is important so that they are able to respond to questions from visitors and interested parties.

### References and selected further literature

- Elizabeth Bonshek**, *Tikopia Collected*. Raymond Firth and the Creation of Solomon Islands Cultural Heritage, Canon Pyon, 2017.
- International Council of Museums (ICOM)**, *Code of Ethics for Museums*, 2010 (PDF at [https://www.museums.ch/assets/files/dossiers\\_d/Standards/ICOM\\_Ethische\\_Richtlinien\\_D\\_web.pdf](https://www.museums.ch/assets/files/dossiers_d/Standards/ICOM_Ethische_Richtlinien_D_web.pdf), last download 18 June 2020).
- Maria Nugent, Gaye Sculthorpe**, *A shield loaded with history*. Encounters, objects and exhibitions, *Australian Historical Studies* Vol. 49 (1), 2018, pp. 28 – 43.
- Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation (SPK)**, *Basic SPK positions on dealing with its non-European collections and on researching the provenances*, Berlin 2015 (online <https://www.preussischer-kulturbesitz.de/newsroom/mediathek/dokumente/dokument-detail/article/2015/06/9/media-grundpositionen-der-spk-zum-umgang-mit-ihren-aussereuropaeischen-sammlungen-und-zur-erforschung.html>, last download 18 June 2020).
- Nicholas Thomas**, *A case of identity*. The artefacts of the 1770 Kamay (Botany Bay) encounter, *Australian Historical Studies* Vol. 49 (1), 2018, pp. 14 – 27.

## COLLECTIONS FROM COLONIAL CONTEXTS: LEGAL ASPECTS

*Carola Thielecke & Michael Geißdorf*

The discussion about collection items from colonial contexts often concerns itself with the “legality” of acquisitions made during the colonial period. The term “legality” is used in a very broad, moral-ethical sense here and this can lead to the misunderstanding that the issues here are also legal issues in the strict sense. This essay is intended to provide a very brief insight into the relevant legal background. Three aspects are considered. The first part considers how the law developed during the colonial period from a legal history perspective. The second part then discusses the issue of whether there are nowadays any legally enforceable claims for the return of cultural items which were acquired in colonial contexts, i.e. whether museums can be successfully sued for the return of such collection items. The question as to whether museums are allowed to return collection items even when they cannot be legally obliged to do so must be clearly separated from this. This question shall be addressed in more detail in the third part.

### Legal developments during the colonial period

A complete presentation of the legal developments during the colonial period would go far beyond the scope of this publication. In the following we therefore consider by way of example which legal developments occurred in the German colonies. Primary consideration shall be given to the legal provisions on ownership. It goes without saying that German museum collections contain numerous items which were not acquired in the German colonies, but in regions which were governed by other colonial powers. Here as well, the desire to provide a complete overview would be far too great an undertaking. Also by way of example, a brief outline of the development in the British colonies shall be given. In contrast to German law, which is continental European in character, the law there followed the principles of so-called Common Law. It therefore seems expedient to present some essential differences in the development.

To begin with, it should be made clear that what were later to become colonial regions were not areas devoid of any law whatsoever before the Europeans arrived. Of course, the societies which the conquerors encountered when they first arrived had rules about communal life and the power of disposal over objects and judicial authority, even when these often did not correspond to the European ideas of law. Not much is known about the detailed form of these legal systems and hardly any research has been undertaken<sup>162</sup>. As the observations of the colonial authorities<sup>163</sup> on local law showed, however, the relevant concepts of ownership, possession, and power of disposal were often comparable only to a limited extent or not at all with

---

<sup>162</sup> Förster 2018.

<sup>163</sup> Harald Sippel 1997.

the European legal systems. The colonial rulers incorporated these legal systems into the law they created to different extents.

It has been pointed out by scholars that the establishment of colonial law was not primarily about law and justice, but about the stabilisation of colonial rule. It had been recognised that efficient government is conditional upon consistency in the exercise of power. The aim was to replace state arbitrariness with a bureaucratic administration and to create structures through which domination could be exercised.

After the end of colonial rule, the newly founded states did not return to the pre-colonial legal systems. Rather, the law and the ownership situation in these states today are based on the law established by the colonial powers in question. Critical lawyers point out that current international law in particular, but also the law of most former colonies, has its roots in European, Christian legal systems, with barely a trace of other legal traditions. It has also been posited that international law as we know it today could not have developed without colonialism. Therefore, colonial and imperial structures are inherent to international law. As a result, international law not only maintains but also reproduces colonial asymmetries and thus renders it more difficult to enforce reparations, for example. In this context, the neutrality and universality of human rights are also called into question. For example, the guarantee of private property helps maintain ownership that was established in the colonial period and favours the inhabitants of the northern hemisphere<sup>164</sup>.

Whilst such observations are certainly relevant in many respects and worthy of consideration, they have yet to lead to any significant change in legislation or in the application of the law. Rather, these are voices which still form a minority in international jurisprudence and are encountered almost exclusively among legal scholars, as opposed to in legal practice.

### Development of the legal system in the German colonies

Owing to the relative brevity of German colonial rule, the development of a colonial legal and administrative system for the German colonies did not progress beyond the fundamental elements. In addition, due to foreign policy and security considerations, the German Government had no interest in becoming an overseas colonial power until 1884. This was due to its relatively weak naval forces and the associated fear that Germany would be drawn into an unwinnable conflict with the established colonial powers such as Britain.

---

<sup>164</sup> One specific example worth mentioning here are legal scholars in the (informal) group Third World Approaches to International Law (TWAAIL). See among others: Antony Anghie 2005; Makau W. Mutua 2001.

Since Germany did not become an overseas colonial power until 1884, the German government initially preferred to leave overseas trade and land acquisitions to private commercial and colonial companies. These usually concluded extremely one-sided “contracts” regulating land ownership and other rights with local rulers. This view later changed, a change demonstrated, for example, by the issuance of so-called letters of protection to companies and by the division of Africa agreed upon by the European colonial powers in the Congo Act of 26 February 1885. As a result, the colonial actors on their part perceived a need for state regulations in the newly developing German colonial territories. After the initially unregulated situation, the Protectorate Act (SchGG) for the German colonies was enacted in 1886, in order to define the legal situation in the colonies. These areas were considered to be domestic, not foreign territory. However, the Protectorate Act did not simply bring into force the German legal system. Rather, in the colonies, the Kaiser had far-reaching authority to regulate and could often govern without the involvement of the Reichstag/Bundesrat. In this regard, the Protectorate Act represented an enabling act, which incidentally was only abolished when the Act on the Dissolution, Winding Up, and Deregistration of Colonial Companies was passed by the Bundestag on 20 August 1975. The right to issue statutory instruments was not exercised by the Kaiser himself, but delegated to (various) subordinate bodies. This led to a very diverse legal situation in the colonies.

In the field of private law, the Kaiser’s right to issue statutory instruments was clearly limited. The Protectorate Act stipulated differing legal regulations for locals and non-locals.

For non-locals, especially the Germans in the colonies, Section 3 of the Protectorate Act contained a reference to Section 19 of the Act on Consular Jurisdiction. This, in turn, stipulated the application of the law of the German Reich. Thus, initially, the Preussisches Allgemeines Landrecht and then, as of 1900, the Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch (German Civil Code), still on the statute books today, applied to legal transactions between non-locals (mainly but not exclusively Germans).

According to Section 4 of the Protectorate Act, the reference in Section 3 of the Protectorate Act, and therefore the law of the German Reich, was only applicable to the local population if the Kaiser so decreed. However, such a decree, which would have fully brought into force the Reich law, was never issued. According to the statute, the local population’s own law therefore remained in force. This was, however, amended by imperial decrees on various individual issues. Ultimately, colonial officials had great freedom to lay down or formulate their own laws. An order of 1896 by the Governor of German East Africa is indicative of the attitudes of the time: “For the decisions (of the colonial officials for the local population), the valid legal principles among educated peoples, common sense, and local customs and traditions prevail. In difficult and especially important cases, the district captain is entitled and obliged

to obtain the opinion of a learned judge of his district or province.”<sup>165</sup>. For so-called “mixed legal disputes”, German law was largely applied, and in cases where local law was also applied alongside German law, it was certainly not allowed to diminish the legal rights of non-local persons. This legal situation was by and large known at that time, as proven by a comprehensive publication carried out on the basis of questionnaires evaluated in 1893 on behalf of the “International Association for Comparative Law and Economics” and published in 1903<sup>166</sup>. This enterprise was repeated on a large scale on the initiative of the Reichstag in 1907, this time on a government basis, but it did not prove possible to publish the results until after the end of the German colonial era. Nevertheless, responses from local colonial officials and other interviewees clearly show extensive knowledge of local law, so it can generally be assumed that Europeans were aware when they “illegally” acquired sacred objects from locals, for example, which should not have been for sale<sup>167</sup>. As the “letters of protection” and the private “land purchases” at the beginning of German colonial history have already shown, European legal concepts and their effects were often unknown to the representatives of the population. A concept of ownership in the European sense of an ownership code under civil law often did not exist, rights were mostly embodied collectively and not (permanently) transferable. Even when things seemed to be comparable on the surface, it was clear to even the Europeans that certain legal rights could not be sold or transferred. In the case of sacred objects, the analogous concept of “*res sacra*”<sup>168</sup> was known in European law. The concept of public property<sup>169</sup> or objects which could not be (privately) appropriated or could not be taken into private custody<sup>170</sup> were known to colonial administrations as well as private “buyers” from the European legal contexts as obstacles to acquisitions. Human remains and funerary items could also not be held as private property and this, with only a few exceptions, is still the European legal view today<sup>171</sup> and can often

165 Excerpt from the statutory instrument, betreffend die Gerichtsbarkeit und die Polizeibefugnisse der Bezirkshauptleute vom 14. Mai 1891 A. Gerichtsbarkeit gegenüber Farbigen, I. Bürgerliche Rechtsstreitigkeiten. Published under No. 56, pp. 196–198 in Die Landes-Gesetzgebung des Deutsch-Ostafrikanischen Schutzgebiets, Systematische Zusammenstellung des in Deutsch-Ostafrika geltenden Gesetze, Verordnungen usw. Published by Kaiserliches Gouvernement von Deutsch-Ostafrika 2nd edition 1911, Tanga/Dar es Salaam.

166 Regarding the development Dr. Erich Schultz-Ewerth and Dr. Leonard Adam, “Das Eingeborenenrecht”, published by von Strecker and Schröder, Stuttgart 1929, Volume 1, there Foreword pp. V ff.

167 For example, the collectively owned oruzo property of Otjherero speakers, in this case sacred cattle, sheep, calabashes, ancestral items, and those items to look after the sacred fire in “Das Eingeborenenrecht”, see above, Vol. 2, p. 235.

168 Cf. the church property guarantee in accordance with Art. 140 Basic Law in conjunction with 138 Para. 2 WRV (Weimar Constitution) e.g. in BVerwG 7th Senate, judgement of 15 Nov. 1990, ref.: 7 C 9/89, subs. BVerfG, ruling of 13 Oct. 1998, ref. 2 BvR 1275/96 on the restitution of the church of St. Salvator in Munich to the Free State of Bavaria, but severely restricted in BVerwG, ruling of 19 May 2009, ref.: 5 B 6.09 on the restitution of altar panels.

169 Differences in current administration of justice, not accepted in the case of the Hamburg (historical) city seal, BGH judgement of 5 October 1989, ref.: IX Z 265/88, accepted in the case of power of administration in respect of public authority files, OVG Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania decision of 27 May 2008, Ref.: 3 M 117/05 “a special relationship under public law superimposed on private ownership legislation, whose strongest form is dedication.”

170 Current examples are “special fissile materials” according to Art. 197 EURATOM treaty or in respect of the ban on keeping weapons of war under the Kriegswaffenkontrollgesetz (German War Weapons Control Act) (cf. BVerwG judgement of 16 September 1980, ref.: I C 1.77).

171 Comp. only to the “thefts of dental gold” in the crematoria (e.g. BGH, ruling of 30 June 2015, ref.: 5 StR 71/15) and punishable under § 168 StGB.

be found in many legal systems of societies which were formerly colonised, often strengthened by spiritual or religious arguments.

In the field of public law, there was an almost unlimited imperial right to issue statutory instruments in the spheres of state, administrative, and military law.

It is quite conceivable that private citizens, for instance explorers or military personnel outside their official capacity, made acquisitions which were not allowed under the law applicable at that time nor under today's law. Thus, even in the colonial period, a theft did not constitute the acquisition of ownership, even if the owner was a local and the thieves non-local. In contrast, it can be assumed that appropriations by public authorities were always covered by the formal colonial law applicable at that time.

### Legal development in the British colonies

No legislative acts such as the Protectorate Act were introduced in the British Empire. This was due to the case law system prevalent in the Anglo-American world. Over time, the courts developed views on which law should apply. Differing doctrines developed, in the context of which local law remained applicable to various degrees. First and foremost, a distinction was made on the basis of how the crown had acquired a particular territory.

If the territory had been acquired through “settlement”, British law had to be applied in full. The idea behind this was that by settling, settlers had acquired previously uninhabited land so that there could be no pre-existing law. However, this doctrine was also applied to areas with populations considered to be so uncivilised that it was assumed that there could be no legal system there in the true sense. One example of this is Australia, which – in complete disregard of the Aborigines – was regarded as “terra nullius” and thus as an uninhabited area. Even in areas treated according to this doctrine, elements of local law were sometimes declared effective.

If land was acquired by conquest or cession, the existing law initially retained its validity until expressly replaced by British law. Here, too, there are very few instances where local law was replaced in full. Elements of local law remained in force.

In each individual case, the court had to determine which law was applicable based upon these doctrines. Any legal rules in conflict with basic British values were to be set aside. The fact that British courts applied local law meant that it was reshaped in many different ways, as judges often did not have complete information on local law and thus applied their own perceptions of the law, etc.

### Restitution claims for collection items from colonial contexts

As in all academic disciplines, there are different views on many issues in jurisprudence as well, for example on the question of whether the existing law permits claims for the return of collection items which were acquired in colonial contexts.

The following comments are based on the current practice of the courts and the majority view of jurisprudence.

### Restitution claims under German law?

At present, the only legal basis for claims would be the general provisions for return under private law, since there is no special legislation for cases of this nature. Attention is drawn at this point to the fact that the key issues paper passed on 13 March 2019 by the German federal government, the federal states, and the local authorities is a political statement and not a formal legal regulation, and thus does not provide a legal basis for claims for restitution. According to the general provisions of the German Civil Code, the owner of an object may demand that the person/entity in possession of the object surrender it. In other words, firstly, the person demanding the return of an item must prove that they themselves are the owner according to German law and that they acquired ownership of the item correctly and effectively. Secondly, it must be determined that the person currently in possession of the item is not the owner. The judicial enforcement of claims for the return of collection items acquired in colonial contexts is therefore likely to encounter a whole series of problems.

One challenge for the legal analysis of the ownership of collection items acquired during the colonial period is simply that some of the objects were acquired 100 years ago or even much longer.

This firstly makes it difficult to clarify the actual circumstances of an acquisition, which are of course essential as the basis for the assessment of the legal situation. The law provides rules of evidence for cases in which the facts can no longer be clarified, so that courts can come to a decision nevertheless. These stipulate who has to prove specific facts in each case and to whose detriment it would be when the facts can no longer be proven. Under these rules, the person making the claim has to prove that they used to be the owner, and hence most legal actions would probably fail at this early stage.

The long time-frame poses particular legal questions as well, however. The issue raised here is whether the acquisition process in question must be judged according to current law or according to the law applicable at the time of the process at issue. Without exception, the courts answer this question in favour of the relevant historical law. This principle of continental European law goes back to Roman law and is referred to as “intertemporal law”. According to this principle, new legislation shall only apply to such circumstances as arise after the amendment of an act or the law. Old law still applies for matters that were already completed before the respective changes to the law. The reason is that the law applicable at any one time needs to be reliable. Retroactive application of new regulations would lead to barely manageable shifts in legal rights. Collection items often change ownership several times over the course of their history, for example. If the legal basis was removed retrospectively from an earlier change of ownership, the whole subsequent chain would break down

and all contracts relating to the object would have to be reversed. Consequently, any acquisition of ownership that had taken effect under old law remains valid as a matter of principle despite any later changes to the law. In analysing the legal situation in line with the earlier law, not only must the old legal text be used, but the legal practice of that time must be observed, even if it is no longer compatible with today's legal views. In this sense, colonial law has to be applied, even if it is no longer compatible with today's views on law and justice.

Of course, the legislator is free to enact legislation that restricts or even revokes existing legal rights prospectively, among other things to correct past mistakes. These laws then also only take effect in the future. One such example is the German Act on the Settlement of Unresolved Property Issues, adopted in 1989, which corrected asset movements in GDR times. However, these shifts were not declared invalid retroactively. Rather, the former owner was reinstated prospectively. The legislator in the Federal Republic of Germany has not (yet) created such a statutory provision in respect of acquisitions in colonial contexts.

If a German court had to decide today on a claim for restitution in respect of a collection item that was acquired in a colonial context, the first step would therefore have to be to determine the legal norms according to which the acquisition of ownership is to be judged. As has been pointed out above in the section "Development of the legal system in the German colonies", the legal situation in the German colonial areas tended to be inconsistent. Even determining which law was applicable in each case would probably pose significant difficulties for the courts.

In individual cases – where diary entries of collectors relating to the process of acquisition exist, for example – it may be possible to sufficiently clarify the circumstances and also determine on the basis of historical law that ownership had not effectively been acquired. This is conceivable in cases where, for example, circumstances are described in the documents which would also amount to theft under contemporary German law. In such individual cases, there may actually be sufficient legal grounds for restitution claims under current law. These cases are probably very rare, however.

Even in the rare cases in which it may be possible to legally ascertain a right to restitution, this is not always enforceable. Claims resulting from ownership generally fall under the statute of limitations after 30 years according to the German Civil Code (BGB). This means that all claims which are based on shifts in ownership during the colonial period now fall under the statute of limitations according to German law. However, the limitation is a so-called plea, which means that the defendant can decide whether they want to invoke the statute of limitations. If the defendant refrains, the statute of limitations is not applied by the court and the ruling will be in favour of the claimant. On the other hand, however, the very example of acquisition in a colonial context highlights the purpose of the statute of limitations: it is not merely intended to establish a degree of legal certainty or "legal peace". Rather, the courts

should not have to deal with lawsuits in which it is almost impossible to determine the facts and the applicable law can be determined only with great difficulty, which means that there is a considerable danger that an incorrect decision will be made.

### Return claims under international law?

Recently, there have been various attempts to achieve redress for colonial injustice through international law. First of all, there was the complaint brought before the International Court of Justice by the Republic of Nauru against Australia in 1989 concerning the mining of phosphate-bearing rocks during the period of the trustee mandate and the resulting environmental damage. Furthermore, 14 Caribbean countries have joined together in the CARICOM association and have announced their intention to take various European countries to the International Court of Justice. The focus here is the injustice caused by the slave trade. Finally, in January 2017, representatives of the Herero and Nama in the United States sued the Federal Republic of Germany. Within the framework of the Alien Torts Claim Act (ATCA), this concerns claims which may arise from the genocide against the Herero and Nama. In none of these cases has there hitherto been a court hearing or even a ruling. To date, there have been no legal proceedings on the basis of international norms on the return of assets taken from colonies to Europe. Against this background, the question arises as to whether there could be a claim for the return of collection items under international law.

As in German law, the intertemporal principle is applied in international law. There is widespread agreement upon this. This means that facts must also be assessed in international law under the law that was valid at the time they occurred, not under the law in force at the time of the decision.

This principle was called into question during the preparation of the United Nations' 2001 World Conference against Racism. Efforts were made there to achieve the retroactive effect of certain international rules of law. The focus was on slavery and colonialism in particular. The conference was prepared by four regional conferences. The possibility of retroactivity was discussed at both the African and the Asian regional conferences. Ultimately, however, this position did not prevail.

In order to achieve the return of collection items through international law, either the acquisition would have to have been prohibited under international law at the time of acquisition, or there would have to have been a subsequent rule of international law providing for the return of collection items acquired during formal colonial rule.

It is unanimously agreed that there are no rules under international law which prohibited the acquisition of collection items during colonial rule. There are now a number of agreements under international law which deal – either exclusively or in part – with the protection of cultural property. These include the Hague Convention on Land Warfare of 1907 and the Hague Convention of 1954, the UNESCO Conven-

tion on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property of 1970, and the Unidroit Convention of 1995. In view of the dates of their entry into force, these instruments of international law can be of no relevance to the colonial period. What is more, some contain provisions expressly limiting their validity to the time after their entry into force. It should be noted that in the negotiations on the UNESCO Agreement there was also an effort by some states to make the Convention's validity retroactive, but this was ultimately not successful.

Owing to its wording, the 2007 UN Declaration on Indigenous Rights appears most pertinent. Articles 11 and 12 contain statements regarding the cultural rights of indigenous peoples. Among other things, restitution is mentioned. For example, Article 12 (2) states that the states shall seek to enable the access to and/or repatriation of ceremonial objects and human remains in their possession through fair, transparent and effective mechanisms. Article 11 (2) contains a similar statement in relation to "cultural, intellectual, religious and spiritual property". Unusually, there is no time limit here on the removals that are covered. However, the declaration – like all other UN declarations – is not legally binding. Although it has occasionally been argued that by now the declaration has the status of customary international law and has therefore become binding, this is likely to be a minority opinion. Certainly, the declaration cannot directly serve as a basis for claims for return, as it only asserts that the states have to develop restitution mechanisms and does not prescribe the return of cultural property. Difficulties regarding its application to colonial contexts are also due to the fact that the term "indigenous people" is not synonymous with local populations. Nevertheless, there is a partial congruence, so that an application would be conceivable for a certain group of people even in a colonial context.

The declaration addresses "the states". This raises the question of whether only the states in which indigenous groups live today are meant or whether it is only about the relationship between the respective "home country" and the indigenous group. The wording here definitely suggests, for example, that the former colonial powers could also be included.

Finally, it would be conceivable to derive a claim for the return of collection items that were stolen in the context of a genocide as an annex from the prohibition of genocide. Even here, however, the problem of the intertemporal principle arises. The fact that a ban on genocide under international law has existed since the 18th century has occasionally been posited in legal research publications. However, it is generally assumed that it did not become a rule of customary international law with binding effect until the early 20th century.

## Conclusion

The current legal system – this applies to both German and international law – does not provide suitable instruments for deciding ownership issues surrounding acqui-

sitions from colonial contexts. Of course, it would be conceivable to create such legal instruments at both levels. However, it is very questionable whether the political will to enact such instruments exists.

### Are museums allowed to return collection items from colonial contexts, even when no legal right to restitution exists?

Even though in most cases no legally enforceable rights to the return of items from collections from colonial contexts exist, there is meanwhile a broad political consensus that such returns can be appropriate on ethical grounds. The legality of the return of collection items depends on the legislation which applies to the institution (e.g. law, regulation, statute), especially the provisions of budgetary law (e.g. Federal Budget Code, budget codes of the federal state). Before a collection item is returned, it is necessary to examine whether it is lawful to deaccession assets and who is responsible for making the decision. Usually, the body overseeing the particular institution decides whether assets are to be deaccessioned. Budgetary legislation, in particular, has led to a great deal of uncertainty to date; the budgetary laws have not provided clear information on whether deaccessions are permitted.

In the key issues paper of 13 March 2019, the signatories have now announced they will put things right<sup>172</sup>. It is urgently to be hoped that this announcement is implemented in order to provide the institutions concerned with the necessary certainty.

### References and selected further literature

- Antony Anghie**, *Imperialism, Sovereignty, and the Making of International Law*, Cambridge 2005.
- Kerstin Assmus**, *Ansprüche indigener Völker auf Rückführung rechtswidrig ausgeführten Kulturgutes*, Baden-Baden 2011.
- Helmut Bley**, *Kolonialherrschaft und Sozialstruktur in Deutsch-Südwestafrika 1894–1914*, Hamburg 1968.
- Andreas Buser**, *Colonial Injustices and the Law of State Responsibility. The CARICOM Claim for Reparations*, in: *Heidelberg Journal of International Law*, vol. 2, KFG working paper no. 4, Heidelberg 2017, pp. 409–446.
- Ignacio Czeguhn**, *Das Verordnungsrecht in den deutschen Kolonien*, in: *Der Staat*, vol. 47, no. 4, Berlin 2008, pp. 606–633.
- Steffen Eicker**, *Der Deutsch-Herero-Krieg und das Völkerrecht. Die völkerrechtliche Haftung der Bundesrepublik Deutschland für das Vorgehen des Deutschen Reiches gegen die Herero in Deutsch-Südwestafrika im Jahre 1904 und ihre Durchsetzung vor einem nationalen Gericht*, Frankfurt am Main 2009.
- Axel Fichtner**, *Die völker- und staatsrechtliche Stellung der deutschen Kolonialgesellschaften des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Frankfurt am Main 2002.

---

<sup>172</sup> Framework Principles for dealing with collections from colonial contexts, 2019.

- Larissa Förster**, Alles was Recht ist. Anmerkungen zur Debatte um Provenienz und Rückgabe aus der Perspektive der Sozial- und Kulturanthropologie, 2018 (online at <https://blog.uni-koeln.de/gssc-humboldt/alles-was-recht-ist/>, last download 18 June 2020).
- Peter Hinz**, Die Rechtsbegriffe “Inland” und “Ausland” in Anwendung auf die deutschen Schutzgebiete, Dissertation, University of Erlangen, Borna-Leipzig 1908.
- Raoul Jacobs**, Mandat und Treuhand im Völkerrecht, Göttingen 2004 (online at <https://ediss.uni-goettingen.de/handle/11858/00-1735-0000-0006-B34A-A>, last download 18 June 2020).
- Helmut Janssen**, Die Übertragung von Rechtsvorstellungen auf fremde Kulturen am Beispiel des englischen Kolonialrechts, Tübingen 2000.
- Jörn Axel Kämmerer, Jörg Föh**, Das Völkerrecht als Instrument der Wiedergutmachung? Eine kritische Betrachtung am Beispiel des Herero-Aufstandes, in: Archiv des Völkerrechts, 42. vol., no. 3, Tübingen 2004, pp. 294 – 328.
- Makau W. Mutua**, Savages, Victims, and Saviors. The Metaphor of Human Rights, Harvard International Law Journal, vol. 42, no. 1, Cambridge Massachusetts 2001, pp. 201 – 245.
- Klaus Richter**, Deutsches Kolonialrecht in Ostafrika 1885–1891, Rechtshistorische Reihe, vol. 237, Frankfurt am Main 2001.
- Klaus Richter**, Deutsch-Ostafrika 1885 bis 1890: Auf dem Weg vom Schutzbriefsystem zur Reichskolonialverwaltung. Ein Beitrag zur Verfassungsgeschichte der deutschen Kolonien (13 January 2000), in: forum historiae iuris (online at <https://forhistiur.de/2000-01-richter/>, last download 18 June 2020).
- Peter Sack, Rüdiger Voigt** (eds.), Die Kolonialisierung des Rechts. Zur Kolonialen Rechts- und Verwaltungsordnung, Baden-Baden 2001.
- Minister of State for Cultural and Media Affairs, Minister of State at the Federal Foreign Office, Culture Minister of the individual states and the national local authority organisations**, Framework Principles for dealing with collections from colonial contexts, Berlin 2019 (PDF at <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/blob/2210152/b2731f8b59210c77c68177cdcd3d03de/190412-stm-msammlungsgut-kolonial-kontext-en-data.pdf>, last download 15 June 2020).
- Harald Sippel**, Landfrage und Bodenreform in Namibia, in Verfassung und Recht in Übersee (VRÜ) journal, 34th year, Baden-Baden 2001, pp. 292 ff.
- Harald Sippel**, Der Deutsche Reichstag und das „Eingeborenrecht“. Die Erforschung der Rechtsverhältnisse der autochthonen Völker in den deutschen Kolonien, Rabels Zeitschrift für ausländisches und internationales Privatrecht, Vol. 61, No. 4 (October 1997), Heidelberg 1997, pp. 714 – 738.
- Regulations on German colonial areas**  
Das Eingeborenrecht, Vol. 1 Ostafrika, Vol. 2 Togo, Kamerun, Südwestafrika, die Südseekolonien, Stuttgart 1930.

German colonial legislation, compilation of the laws, ordinances, decrees and international agreements relating to the German Protectorates, with comments and index, editor: Riebow, Berlin, 1893 et seq.

The Legislation of the German East Africa Protectorate, Systematic Compilation of the Laws, Ordinances, etc., Valid in German East Africa. Published by the Imperial Governate of German East Africa, 2nd edition 1911, Tanga/Dar es Salaam 1911.

## REMARKS TO LEGAL QUESTIONS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SOCIAL/CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Larissa Förster

Legal questions naturally play a special role in the debate about colonial provenances and the restitution of objects from formerly colonised countries<sup>173</sup>: From the point of view of institutions whose funding is governed by public law, there is a need to determine precisely which laws or ethical standards require or allow a return and consequently what the procedure must and can be in respect of interest groups and claimants. Legal instruments help to put returns on a solid legal footing and thus create a basis for consensus, as well as developing routines and comparable standards. The proposals made so far for legal amendments, new legislative initiatives, or a different interpretation of existing legislation are proof of this<sup>174</sup>. They put the focus on the issue of legislation and legal practice nowadays and in those states which are home to museums which possess colonial collections.

From the viewpoint of social and cultural anthropology, however, the issue is a completely different one: which legal and ethical norms existed in the communities colonised by the German Empire in 1884, 1904, or 1915, for example. Against the background of which formal and informal rules did African actors, for example, make gifts of, exchange, trade in, or consign everyday or cult items to Europeans? Against the background of which legal norms and which sense of justice did indigenous people regard things as stolen, extorted, or robbed, and did they ask for them back or give them up for lost? What kind of reciprocity, redress, and punishment did they regard as appropriate, for example for theft, robbery, and looting? Up to now, such questions tend to have been raised about the historical context of colonial land seizure, when for example, studies have been conducted on “traditional” land law in the 19th century or about taking owners by surprise, coercing them, or defrauding them when buying land. Well known is the “mile swindle” of the Bremen merchant Adolf Lüderitz when he concluded a contract with Nama captain Joseph Fredericks<sup>175</sup>. Of course, local actors in contract negotiations with representatives of the German Empire pursued their own political interests. And they resisted expropriation and expulsion, as shown by the well-known example of the Duala King Rudolf Duala Manga Bell in Cameroon, who wrote – as did several others – petitions to the German Reichstag to defend himself<sup>176</sup>. Although local law was suppressed and colonial law superimposed upon it, local actors even used the rights of appeal available in the colonial state to file a complaint and articulate their own claims.

---

173 This section is an abridged version of the blog article “Whoever’s Right. Remarks on the Debate about Provenance and Return from the Perspective of Social and Cultural Anthropology”, 2018, online at <https://blog.uni-koeln.de/gssc-humboldt/en/whoevers-right/>.

174 Cf. van Beurden; 2017; Erste Eckpunkte 2019; Kaleck, 2018; Sarr and Savoy 2018; Schönberger 2016; Schönberger 2018; Thielecke and Geißdorf in this volume from p. 153 onwards.

175 Whereas Fredericks assumed the English mile when surveying the land, Lüderitz assumed the much longer German mile.

176 Cp. Austen and Derrick 1999.

From the context of the misappropriation of human remains in particular, we know very well that the colonised people repeatedly and sometimes extremely vehemently protested against theft and appropriation<sup>177</sup>. Moreover, demands were made for the return of objects even during the colonial era itself<sup>178</sup>. Furthermore, the decolonised states increasingly made restitutions an issue at the international level in the 1970s – albeit without any real success<sup>179</sup>. The “restitution debate” is therefore not a new one. Hence we should not simply ask what were our own historically developed legal systems and what constitutes international law as established today when we look at the legality and legitimacy at the time the collection items were acquired, but also what the legal concepts and practices of the (formerly) colonised communities were, even when they were called something different or are/were communicated differently than in the Global North<sup>180</sup>. African specialists in international law such as Emmanuel Bello, Yolande Diallo, and Adamou Ndam Njoya have therefore also studied the issue of which norms were applied in respect of the property of the opposing group in armed conflicts in pre- and early colonial Africa, for example<sup>181</sup>. The admittedly difficult historical reconstruction of local norms at the time of colonisation can and must be based on very different sources here: on legal traditions, discourses and practices in post-colonial unitarian states, on publications on legal ethnology, on the historical analysis of colonial legal practice, which incorporated local law in a very ambivalent way, but also on a critical reading of studies of comparative law, as they were drawn up during colonial times themselves.

To examine legal traditions outside our own also means to query some terminological foundations, such as the conventional term of ownership as it developed from the Roman and later European nation-state legal systems and as it forms the basis of our understanding of how to deal with cultural heritage and with institutions to preserve and administer this heritage. It must therefore be assumed that things are/were not everywhere *either* the property of an individual *or* of a collective. Sometimes, a wide variety of claims to co-ownership or different disposal and utilisation rights distributed among different actors are bundled in one object – a constellation that cannot be grasped with a capitalistic concept of ownership<sup>182</sup>. Moreover, things themselves can become legal subjects, as shown by the efforts of Latin American states to grant legally or constitutionally guaranteed rights to nature as well. Modern law as developed in Europe has displaced other legal systems – even in public international law. The European legal traditions were not always so dominant here, however, and are still not the only possibly way to regulate communal life in communities. To historicise and decolonise our way of looking at legal foundations and legal practices, we should

---

177 Förster et al. 2018; Turnbull 2017, Chapter 11; Zimmerman 2001, p. 161.

178 E.g. Peraldi 2017.

179 Fitschen 2004; Paczensky and Ganslmeyer 1984, p. 17; Sarr and Savoy 2018; Strugalla 2019a.

180 Local concepts of law were often enough dismissed in colonial literature as “religion” or “mythology,” because they were not codified, among other things.

181 Cf. Adamou 1988; Jaguttis no year.

182 Hauser-Schäublin 2018; cf. Hann 1998.

acknowledge that objects were acquired in a situation of legal pluralism<sup>183</sup>. The issue is not only to gain a better understanding of this situation and thus the historical transaction and translocation of collection items, but to rehabilitate the producers of the time and those who first used the items as legal and thus acting subjects.

## References

- Ralph A. Austen, Jonathan Derrick**, Middlemen of the Cameroons Rivers. The Duala and their Hinterland, c. 1600 – c.1960, African Studies, Cambridge 1999.
- Thomas Duve**, Was ist „Multinormativität“? – Einführende Bemerkungen: Die Vielfalt der Rechtspluralismen, Rechtsgeschichte 25, 2017, pp. 88–101 (online <http://dx.doi.org/10.12946/rg25/088-101>).
- Thomas Fitschen**, 30 Jahre Rückführung von Kulturgut. Wie der Generalversammlung ihr Gegenstand abhanden kam, in: Vereinte Nationen 2, 2004, pp. 46–51 (online at <https://zeitschrift-vereinte-nationen.de/suche/zvn/artikel/30-jahre-rueckfuehrung-von-kulturgut/>, last download 27 May 2019).
- Larissa Förster, Dag Henrichsen, Holger Stoecker, Hans #Eichab**, Re-Individualising Human Remains from Namibia. Colonialism, Grave Robbery and Intellectual History, in: Human Remains & Violence 4 (2), Manchester 2018, pp. 45–66.
- Chris Hann**, Property Relations: Renewing the Anthropological Tradition, Cambridge 1998.
- Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin**, Ethnologische Provenienzforschung – warum heute?, in: Larissa Förster, Iris Edenheiser, Sarah Fründt, Heike Hartmann (eds.), Provenienzforschung zu ethnografischen Sammlungen der Kolonialzeit. Positionen in der aktuellen Debatte, Open access publication of the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Berlin 2018, pp. 327–334 (PDF at <http://dx.doi.org/10.18452/19029>, last download on 4 June 2019).
- Malte Jaguttis**, Colonialism and its Objects. Remarks on the Framework for Repatriation and Restitution under Public International Law, in: Artificial Facts. A Trans-National Exhibition and Research Project, no year (online at <http://artificialfacts.de/colonialism-and-its-objects-remarks-on-the-framework-for-repatriation-and-restitution-under-public-international-law1/>, last download on 4 June 2019).
- Wolfgang Kaleck**, Das Recht der Mächtigen. Die kolonialen Wurzeln des Völkerrechts, in: Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik 8, 2018, pp. 115–120.
- Adamoun Ndam Njoya**, The African Concept, in: UNESCO (eds.), International Developments of Humanitarian Law, pp. 5 ff., Geneva 1988.
- Gert von Paczensky, Herbert Ganslmeyer**, Nofretete will nach Hause. Europa – Schatzhaus der „Dritten Welt“, Munich 1984.

---

183 Cf. Duve 2017.

- Audrey Peraldi**, Oba Akuenza II's Restitution Requests, in: *Kunst & Kontext* 1/2017, Berlin 2017, pp. 23–33.
- Felwine Sarr, Bénédicte Savoy**, *The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage. Toward a New Relational Ethics*, Paris, 2018 (PDF at [http://restitutionreport2018.com/sarr\\_savoy\\_en.pdf](http://restitutionreport2018.com/sarr_savoy_en.pdf), last download on 15 March 2019).
- Bénédicte Savoy**, *Museen. Eine Kindheitserinnerung und die Folgen*, Cologne 2018.
- Sophie Schönberger**, *Restitution of Ethnological Objects: Legal Obligation or Moral Dilemma?*, in: *Museumskunde* 81 (1), Berlin 2016, pp. 45–48.
- Sophie Schönberger**, *Ein politisches Projekt*, in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Munich 21 June 2018.
- Anna Valeska Strugalla**, *Ein Ding der Unmöglichkeit*, in: *tageszeitung*, 11 May 2019 (online at <https://www.taz.de/Rueckgabe-von-geraubter-Kunst/!5591215/>, last download on 4 June 2019).
- Carola Thielecke, Michael Geißdorf**, *Collections from Colonial contexts: Legal Aspects*, in: *Deutscher Museumsbund* (eds.), *Guidelines for German Museums for the Care of Collections from Colonial contexts*, Berlin 2021, pp. 153–164.
- Paul Turnbull**, *Science, Museums and Collecting the Indigenous Dead in Colonial Australia*, Cham 2017 (in particular Chapter 11).
- Jos van Beurden**, *Treasures in Trusted Hands. Negotiating the Future of Colonial Cultural Objects*, Leiden 2017.
- Andrew Zimmerman**, *Anthropology and Anti-Humanism in Imperial Germany*, Chicago 2001.





# OVERVIEW FORMAL COLONIAL RULES

## OVERVIEW FORMAL COLONIAL RULES

The overview serves to provide an initial temporal and geographical classification of formal colonial rules from roundabout the 15th century onwards<sup>184</sup>. The dates given indicate a time span in which a colonial power maintained colonies, protectorates, concessions or enclaves (trade, military), and factories in certain regions<sup>185</sup>. In the individual case, there is a need for concrete historical research, both in terms of temporal and geographical limits as well as the colonial structure (e.g. direct rule, settlement colony or colonial enclaves, protectorate, concessions) or the power structure. Appropriate specialist knowledge is often required to assess the different regional and historical circumstances.

This compilation also includes territories subject to League of Nations mandates (after the First World War) and United Nations mandates (after the Second World War), as well as territories that even today legally have the status of overseas territories (including overseas regions, overseas departments, and outlying territories), because they are consequences of colonialism. It says nothing about whether the particular inhabitants are now voluntarily or involuntarily under the control of the former colonial power.

The overview also includes territories which were under Chinese rule, or the rule of the Ottoman Empire or Russia. These relationships between ruler and ruled bear structural resemblances to those of colonial rule, but nevertheless the designation colonial rule in the European sense does not fit and should be analysed in more detail. The occupied territories are often considered to be imperial expansions, since they are usually border regions<sup>186</sup>. Over the course of history, there have always been border shifts between neighbouring territories/countries – in Europe as well. The inhabitants of these occupied territories did not always view the rule itself as supremacy, exploitation of resources, and stagnation of their own culture, and thus – comparable with European colonialism – as imperial rule, but rather as “protection” against European colonialism in some cases. In addition, there may also have been a power strategy of equality of the subjects in the “centre” and the “periphery” (see below, Excursus Ottoman Empire).

To assess the various regional historical circumstances, it is recommended that more detailed research is undertaken and the appropriate specialist knowledge is obtained.

---

184 The Guidelines focus on the period starting with European expansion (cf. “What is the geographic scope and the time frame of these Guidelines?”, p. 23).

185 Since the beginning of the 20th century, the term “non-self-governing territories” has been used in international law as a synonym for colonies/protectorates (cf. UN <https://www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/en/nsqt>).

186 Russia’s colonial policy focussed primarily on a continental expansion in North and Central Asia, but also to the Nordic countries and Europe (internal colonisation) in order to incorporate the conquered territories into the empire. Russia only established overseas trade enclaves in Alaska and southern California (Russian America).

As a rule, the overview does not contain territories occupied by another country during a war. Therefore, the territories occupied by Germany during the National Socialist era are not included here.

The overview does not claim to be complete.

### Excursus: Ottoman Empire

The Ottoman conquests since the 14th century were characterised by a form of integration which combined the settlement of Muslims (in regions where none lived) and the retention of earlier cultures and ethnic or religious identities. The probably most revealing difference between the Ottoman and other forms of “imperial” rule consists in the fact that there was no difference between the status of the subjects in the “centre” and on the “periphery”. The differences in status were based on religion. This is an essential difference to Western colonial rule, where right from the start a distinction was made between “metropolis” and the conquered people.

During its greatest expansion in the 17th century, the Ottoman Empire spanned not only its core countries of Asia Minor and Rumelia but also the regions northwards to the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, and towards the west large parts of south eastern Europe, the Mashriq (now: Egypt, Palestine, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq), the Arabian peninsula, and the Maghreb (excl. Morocco, incl. Libya). Under Ottoman rule, cultural artefacts from the Middle East were brought into the Ottoman core territory (e.g. the pillars from the temple district of Baalbek [Lebanon] were incorporated in the Süleymaniye mosque in Istanbul).

The Ottoman Empire long claimed to have a role as a political, military, and economic superpower in Europe. Neither England, France, nor Germany was able to conquer these regions of the Middle East, because they had been occupied by the Ottomans for centuries.

During the decline of the Ottoman Empire (at the latest since the devastating defeat in the war against Russia in 1878), England and France initially were able to assert their political “colonial” interests in the regions of the Middle East ruled by the Ottomans which were located outside its core territory. Free trade agreements brought European capital and technology into the Ottoman occupied territories of the Levant and ensured rich pickings for England and France through the exploitation of resources. After becoming a nation state (1871), Germany likewise used this method and was able to appropriate mineral resources and cultural artefacts of the Middle East through trade agreements with the Ottoman Empire and the construction of the Baghdad railway, which was financed by the Deutsche Bank. Collection items which originate from the modern-day countries of the Middle East (Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, Palestine/West Jordan, and sometimes Saudi Arabia), and which originate from the country of origin after the middle of the 19th century, are to be treated in exactly the same way as collection items from formal colonial rule.

## OVERVIEW FORMAL COLONIAL RULES

CONTINENT	COLONY	CURRENT NAME OF TERRITORY	PERIOD OF TIME	COLONIAL POWER
AFRICA	Algeria	Algeria	1830–1962	France
	Algiers (Algeria)	Algiers (Algeria)	1536–1830	Ottoman Empire
	Aneho (Togo)	Aneho (Togo)	1731–1760	Netherlands
	Anglo-Egyptian Sudan	Sudan incl. South Sudan	1821–1885* 1899–1914	Ottoman Empire (*under Egyptian rule)
	Anglo-Egyptian Sudan	Sudan incl. South Sudan	1916–1956	Great Britain
	Angola	Angola	1575–1975	Portugal
	Angola (coastal areas)	Angola	1641–1648	Netherlands
	Annaba (Bona, Algeria)	Annaba (Bona, Algeria)	1535–1541 1636–1641	Spain
	Annobón (Equatorial Guinea)	Annobón (Equatorial Guinea)	1474–1778	Portugal
	Annobón (Equatorial Guinea)	Annobón (Equatorial Guinea)	1778–1968	Spain
	Antongil Bay (Madagascar)	Antongil Bay (Madagascar)	1641–1647	Netherlands
	Appa (Ekpé, Benin)	Appa (Ekpé, Benin)	1732–1736	Netherlands
	Arguin (island off the coast of Mauritania)	Arguin (Mauritania)	1448–1633	Portugal
	Arguin (island off the coast of Mauritania)	Arguin (Mauritania)	1633–1685 1722–1723	Netherlands
	Arguin (island off the coast of Mauritania)	Arguin (Mauritania)	1685–1721	Brandenburg/Prussia
	Arguin (part of the colony of Mauritania)	Arguin (Mauritania)	1721–1722 1724–1728 1904–1960	France
	Badagry (Benin)	Nigeria	1737–1748	Netherlands
	Bechuanaland	Botswana	1885–1966	Great Britain
	Béjaïa (Bougie, Algeria)	Béjaïa (Bougie, Algeria)	1510–1555	Spain

Benin (British protectorate from 1852)	Nigeria	1486–1852	Portugal
Benin City (Benin)	Nigeria	1705–1736	Netherlands
Bioko (Fernando Póo, Equatorial Guinea)	Bioko (Equatorial Guinea)	1474–1778	Portugal
Bizerte (Tunisia)	Bizerte (Tunisia)	1535–1574	Spain
British Bechuanaland, united with Cape Colony in 1895	South Africa	1885–1895	Great Britain
British Cameroons	Cameroon	1919–1961	Great Britain
British East Africa	Kenya	1895–1963	Great Britain
British Somaliland	Northern Somalia	1884–1960	Great Britain
British Togoland	Ghana	1918–1957	Great Britain
British West Africa	Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Gambia, Ghana	1780s to 1960s	Great Britain
Cameroon	Cameroon	1919–1960	France
Cape Colony	South Africa	1665–1806	Netherlands
Cape Colony	South Africa	1806–1910	Great Britain
Cape Verde Islands	Cape Verde Islands	1456/61–1975	Portugal
Cap-Vert (Senegal)	Cap-Vert (Senegal)	1617–1700	Netherlands
Ceuta (Morocco)	Ceuta (Morocco)	1415–1668	Portugal
Chad (part of French Equatorial Guinea)	Chad	1900–1960	France
Comoros	Comoros	1841–1975	France
Congo (part of the colony of French Equatorial Africa)	Congo	1885–1960	France
Constantine (Algeria)	Constantine (Algeria)	1637–1830	Ottoman Empire
Côte d’Ivoire	Côte d’Ivoire	1843–1960	France
Dahomey (coastal kingdom on the Bay of Benin)	Republic of Benin	1892–1960	France

CONTINENT	COLONY	CURRENT NAME OF TERRITORY	PERIOD OF TIME	COLONIAL POWER
AFRICA	Danish Guinea (West African Gold Coast)	Ghana	1658–1850	Denmark
	Cyrenaica (eastern Libya)	Cyrenaica (eastern Libya)	1521–1911	Ottoman Empire
	Darfur (Sudan)	Darfur (Sudan)	1874–1883	Ottoman Empire
	Darfur (Sudan; affiliated to Anglo-Egyptian Sudan)	Darfur (Sudan)	1916–1956	Great Britain
	Delagoa Bay (Mozambique)	Maputo Bay	1721–1730	Netherlands
	Delagoa Bay (Mozambique)	Maputo Bay	1777–1781	Austria-Hungary
	Djerba (Tunisia)	Djerba (Tunisia)	1551–1560	Spain
	Egypt	Egypt	1517–1798 1801–1914	Ottoman Empire
	Egypt	Egypt	1798–1801	France
	Egypt (British consulate general from 1882)	Egypt	1914–1922	Great Britain
	Epe (Benin)	Nigeria	1732–1755	Netherlands
	Equatoria	South Sudan	1871–1889	Ottoman Empire
	Eritrea	Eritrea	1882–1941	Italy
	Fezzan	Fezzan (province in Libya)	1842–1912	Ottoman Empire
	Fezzan	Fezzan (province in Libya)	1943–1951	France
	French Equatorial Africa	Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Chad, Central African Republic	1910–1958	France
	French Somali Coast/Territory of Afars and the Issas	Djibouti	1896–1977	France
	French Sudan	Mali	1890–1902 1920–1960	France
	Gabon	Gabon	1854–1910	France
	Gambia (coastal base since 1664)	Gambia	1783–1965	Great Britain

German East Africa	Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi and parts of Mozambique	1885–1919	German Empire
German Somali Coast	Somalia (parts)	1885–1918	German Empire
German South West Africa	Namibia and parts of Botswana	1884–1919	German Empire
German West Africa	Togo, eastern Ghana, Cameroon, parts of French Guinea and territory at the West African coast east of Lagos	1884–1919	German Empire
Gold Coast	Ghana	1598–1872	Netherlands
Gold Coast (coastal base since 1621)	Ghana	1874–1960	Great Britain
Grande Comore (Comoros)	Grande Comore (Comoros)	1500–1505	Portugal
Guinea	Guinea	1885–1958	France
Honaine (Oney, Algeria)	Honaine (Oney, Algeria)	1531–1534	Spain
Italian East Africa (A.O.I.)	Eritrea, Somalia, Ethiopia	1935–1941	Italy
Italian Libya	Libya	1521–1911	Ottoman Empire
Italian Libya	Libya	1911–1945	Italy
Italian Libya	Libya	1945–1951	Great Britain
Italian Somaliland	Somalia (southern and central parts)	1888–1950	Italy (UN trust territory from 1950–1960, then independence)
Jaquim (Benin)	Nigeria	1726–1734	Netherlands
Kordofan (Sudan)	Kordofan (Sudan)	1821–1883	Ottoman Empire
Lado Enclave	South Sudan and Uganda	1894–1910	Belgium
Larache (Morocco)	Larache (Morocco)	1610–1689	Spain
Lebanon	Lebanon	1920–1943	France
Lebanon (Beirut, Sidon)	Lebanon (Beirut, Sidon)	1510–1860 1915–1919	Ottoman Empire
Loango (Boary, Congo)	Congo	1648–1686 1721–1726	Netherlands

CONTINENT	COLONY	CURRENT NAME OF TERRITORY	PERIOD OF TIME	COLONIAL POWER
AFRICA	Loango (Boary, Congo)	Congo	1883–1960	France
	Ifni	Ifni (province of Morocco)	1476–1524 1860–1946	Spain (1946–1958 part of Spanish Western Africa)
	Madagascar	Madagascar	1883–1960	France
	Mahdia (Tunisia)	Mahdia (Tunisia)	1550–1553	Spain
	Malindi (Kenya)	Malindi (Kenya)	1500–1630	Portugal
	Massawa (Eritrea)	Massawa (Eritrea)	1557–1884	Ottoman Empire
	Mauritania	Mauritania	1904–1960	France
	Mauritius	Mauritius	1598–1710	Netherlands
	Mauritius	Mauritius	1715–1810	France
	Mauritius	Mauritius	1810–1968	Great Britain
	Mehdya (La Mamora, Morocco)	Mehdya (La Mamora, Morocco)	1614–1681	Spain
	Mers El Kébir (Mazalquivir, Algeria)	Mers El Kébir (Mazalquivir, Algeria)	1505–1732 1708–1792	Spain
	Mogadishu (Somalia)	Mogadishu (Somalia)	1875	Ottoman Empire
	Mombasa (Kenya)	Mombasa (Kenya)	1500–1729	Portugal
	Mombasa (Kenya)	Mombasa (Kenya)	1585–1588	Ottoman Empire
	Monastir (Tunisia)	Monastir (Tunisia)	1540/41–1550	Spain
	Morocco	Morocco	1911–1956	France
	Morocco regions/cities: Ksar el-Kebir (Alcácer-Ceguer), Asilah, Azemmour, El Jadida (Mazagão), Mogador (Essaouira), Safi, Agadir	Morocco regions/cities: Ksar el-Kebir (Alcácer-Ceguer), Asilah, Azemmour, El Jadida (Mazagão), Mogador (Essaouira), Safi, Agadir	1458–1769	Portugal
	Mozambique, aka Portuguese East Africa	Mozambique	1502–1975	Portugal
	Natal (southern Africa, part of Cape Colony)	KwaZulu-Natal (South Africa)	1843–1910	Great Britain
Nigeria	Nigeria	1849–1960	Great Britain	

Northern Rhodesia	Zambia	1911–1964	Great Britain
Nyasaland (southern Africa)	Malawi	1891–1964	Great Britain
Oran (Algeria)	Oran (Algeria)	1509–1708 1732–1792	Spain
Oran (Algeria)	Oran (Algeria)	1708–1732 1792–1831	Ottoman Empire
Orange River	South Africa	1900–1910	Great Britain
Ouadane (Oden, Mauritania)	Ouadane (Oden, Mauritania)	1487–16th century	Portugal
Ouidah (Benin)	Ouidah (Benin)	1670s to 1680s	Netherlands
Ouidah (Benin)	Ouidah (Benin)	1680–1961	Portugal
Peñón of Algiers (Algeria)	Peñón of Algiers (Algeria)	1510–1529 1573–1574	Spain
Perejil Island	Perejil Island	1663 to date	Spain
Portuguese Congo	Angola	1883–1975	Portugal
Portuguese Gold Coast (Accra, Ford Duma, Fort San Sebastian, Fort São Jorge da Mina, Cape Coast Castle, Fort Dom Pedro, Fort Cará)	Ghana	1482–1690	Portugal
Portuguese Guinea	Guinea-Bissau	1614–1974	Portugal
Réunion	Réunion (French overseas department)	1640 to date	France
Rwanda-Burundi	Rwanda and Burundi	1916–1962	Belgium
Saint Helena	Saint Helena (British overseas territory)	1501–1600	Portugal
Saint Helena	Saint Helena (British overseas territory)	1600–1651	Netherlands
Saint Helena	Saint Helena (British overseas territory)	1659 to date	Great Britain
Sao Tome	Sao Tome	1599–1641	Netherlands

CONTINENT	COLONY	CURRENT NAME OF TERRITORY	PERIOD OF TIME	COLONIAL POWER
AFRICA	Sao Tome and Principe	Sao Tome and Principe	1471/72–1975	Portugal
	Senegal	Senegal	1612–1960	France
	Senegambia	Senegambia	1765–1783	Great Britain
	Seychelles	Seychelles	1811–1976	Great Britain
	Seychelles	Seychelles	1756–1811	France
	Sfax (Tunisia)	Sfax (Tunisia)	1540/41–1550	Spain
	Sierra Leone	Sierra Leone	1791–1961	Great Britain
	Sousse (Tunisia)	Sousse (Tunisia)	1540/41–1550	Spain
	South Africa (dominion)	South Africa	1910–1931	Great Britain
	South West Africa (League of Nations mandate of the Union of South Africa, end of mandate 1946, then occupation)	Namibia	1919–1990	Great Britain
	Southern Rhodesia	Zimbabwe	1891–1965	Great Britain
	Spanish Guinea	Equatorial Guinea	1788–1968	Spain
	Spanish Morocco (Rif)	Parts of Morocco	1912–1956	Spain
	Spanish Sahara	Western Sahara (largely annexed by Morocco)	1884–1975	Spain
	Spanish West Africa (association of Ifni and Spanish Sahara)	Ifni (province of Morocco) and Western Sahara (largely annexed by Morocco)	1934(46)–1958	Spain, afterwards again divided into Ifni and Spanish Sahara
Swedish Gold Coast (individual bases around Cabo Corso and Accra)	Ghana	1650–1659	Sweden	
Tanganyika	Tanzania	1922–1961	Great Britain	
Tangier (Morocco)	Tangier (Morocco)	1471–1661	Portugal	

The Belgian Congo	The Democratic Republic of the Congo	1885–1960	Belgium
Togo	Togo	1919–1960	France
Transvaal (South Africa)	Province of South Africa	1902–1910	Great Britain
Tripoli (Libya)	Tripoli (Libya)	1509–1530/ (51)	Spain
Tripoli (Libya)	Tripoli (Libya)	1551–1912	Ottoman Empire
Tunis (Tunisia)	Tunis (Tunisia)	1531–1531 1574–1912	Ottoman Empire
Tunis (Tunisia)	Tunis (Tunisia)	1535–1570 1573–1574	Spain
Tunisia	Tunisia	1881–1956	France
Ubangi-Shari (Ubangui- Chari, part of the colony of French Equatorial Guinea)	Central African Republic	1910–1958	France
Uganda	Uganda	1896–1962	Great Britain
Upper Senegal and Niger	Mali	1904–1920	France
Upper Volta	Burkina Faso (full independence not until 1960)	1919–1932	France
Western Sahara	Western Sahara	1975 to date	Morocco
Wituland (East Africa, also Swahili-land)	northern coast of Kenya	1885–1890	German Empire
Zanzibar	Zanzibar (Tanzania, semi-autonomous)	1503–1698	Portugal
Zanzibar (Sultanate)	Zanzibar (Tanzania, Mrima Coast)	1698–1890	Oman
Zanzibar	Zanzibar (Tanzania, semi-autonomous)	1890–1963	Great Britain
Zeila (Somalia)	Zeila (Somalia)	1548–1884	Ottoman Empire
Ziguinchor (Senegal, handed over to France in 1888)	Ziguinchor (Senegal)	1645–1888	Portugal
Acadia (Canada)	Acadia (Canada)	1604–1710	France

CONTINENT	COLONY	CURRENT NAME OF TERRITORY	PERIOD OF TIME	COLONIAL POWER
AMERICA	Alaska	Alaska (part of the USA since 1867, federal state since 1959)	1741–1867	Russia
	Anguilla	Anguilla (British overseas territory since 1980)	1650 to date	Great Britain
	Antigua and Barbuda	Antigua and Barbuda	1632–1981	Great Britain
	Bahamas	Bahamas	1717–1973	Great Britain
	Barbados	Barbados	1536–1620	Portugal
	Barbados	Barbados	1625–1966	Great Britain
	Bermuda	Bermuda (British overseas territory)	1620 to date	Great Britain
	Brazil	Brazil	1500–1822	Portugal
	British Columbia	British Columbia (Canada)	1848–1871	Great Britain
	British Guiana	Guiana	1831–1966	Great Britain
	British Honduras	Belize	1798–1981	Great Britain
	British Virgin Islands	British Virgin Islands (British overseas territory)	1672 to date	Great Britain
	Canada (dominion from 1867)	Canada	1867–1931	Great Britain
	Carolina	Carolina (USA)	1663–1776	Great Britain
	Cayman Islands	Cayman Islands (British overseas territory)	1503–1661	Spain
	Cayman Islands	Cayman Islands (British overseas territory)	1661 to date	Great Britain
	Cisplatina	Uruguay	1808–1822	Portugal
	Colónia do Sacramento (Uruguay)	Colónia do Sacramento (Uruguay)	1680–1777 1822–1826	Portugal
	Colónia do Sacramento (Uruguay)	Colónia do Sacramento (Uruguay)	1777–1807	Spain
	Connecticut	Connecticut (USA)	1639–1776	Great Britain
Cuba	Cuba	1492–1762 1763–1898	Spain	

Cuba	Cuba (until 1934: USA had a right to intervene in Cuba's internal affairs)	1898–1901	USA
Danish West Indies (Caribbean: Lesser Antilles, Virgin Islands)	Lesser Antilles, Virgin Islands (US-American overseas territory)	1666–1917	Denmark
Delaware	Delaware (USA)	1664–1776	Great Britain
Dominica	Dominica	1748–1763	France
Dominica	Dominica	1763–1978	Great Britain
Dutch Brazil	Brazil (northeast)	1624–1654	Netherlands
Dutch Virgin Islands	British Virgin Islands	1625–1672	Netherlands
Equinoctial France	Maranhão, Brazil	1612–1615	France
Falkland Islands	Falkland Islands (British overseas territory)	1764–1767	France
Falkland Islands	Falkland Islands (British overseas territory)	1833 to date	Great Britain
Florida	Florida (USA)	1513–1763	Spain
Florida	Florida (USA)	1763–1776	Great Britain
Fort Caroline	Fort Caroline (Jacksonville, Florida, USA)	1564–1568	France
Fort Ross	Fort Ross (California, USA)	1812–1841	Russia
France Antarctique	Territory between Rio de Janeiro and Cabo Frio, Brazil	1555–1567	France
French Guiana	French Guiana (French overseas department since 1946)	1801–1809 1817 to date	France
French Guiana	French Guiana (French overseas department since 1946)	1809–1817	Portugal
French West Indies	French Guiana (French overseas department since 1946)	1635 to date	France

CONTINENT	COLONY	CURRENT NAME OF TERRITORY	PERIOD OF TIME	COLONIAL POWER
AMERICA	Georgia	Georgia (USA)	1732–1776	Great Britain
	Greenland	Greenland	1921–1979	Denmark
	Grenada	Grenada	1649–1763	France
	Grenada	Grenada	1763–1974	Great Britain
	Guadeloupe	Guadeloupe (French overseas department since 1946)	1635–1759 1763–1794 1794–1810 1814 to date	France
	Hispaniola	Haiti and the Dominican Republic	1492– 1697/1795 1808–1822 1861–1865	Spain
	Jamaica	Jamaica	1509–1655	Spain
	Jamaica	Jamaica	1655–1962	Great Britain
	Labrador	Labrador (Canada)	1499–1526	Portugal
	Louisiana	Louisiana (USA)	1683–1763 1800–1803	France
	Maryland	Maryland (USA)	1634–1776	Great Britain
	Mississippi Territory	Mississippi Territory (USA)	1783–1795	Spain
	Montserrat	Montserrat (part of the West Indies, Lesser Antilles, British overseas territory since 1962)	1632 to date	Great Britain
	Mosquito Coast	Mosquito Coast (Caribbean coast of Nicaragua)	1655–1850	Great Britain
	Navassa	Navassa (United States Minor Outlying Island)	Since 1857	USA
	Netherlands Antilles	Netherlands Antilles (Dutch overseas territory since 1964)	1948 to date	Netherlands
	Netherlands Guiana	Suriname and Guiana	1616–1775	Netherlands
	New Brunswick	New Brunswick (Canada)	1713–1867	Great Britain

New France	Acadia, Hudson Bay, Newfoundland, Louisiana, territory around Saint Lawrence River)	1534-1759	France
New Hampshire	New Hampshire (USA)	1629-1776	Great Britain
New Jersey	New Jersey (USA)	1664-1776	Great Britain
New Netherland	Region on the US East Coast	1624-1667	Netherlands
New Sweden	Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey (USA)	1638-1655	Sweden
New York	New York (USA)	1664-1776	Great Britain
Newfoundland (dominion from 1907)	Newfoundland (Canada)	1610-1931	Great Britain
Nootka Territory	Nootka Territory (British Columbia, Canada)	1789-1794	Spain
Northwest Territories	Northwest Territories (Canada)	1859-1870	Great Britain
Nova Scotia	Nova Scotia (Canada)	1713-1867	Great Britain
Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania (USA)	1681-1776	Great Britain
Prince Edward Island	Prince Edward Island (Canada)	1763-1873	Great Britain
Puerto Rico	Puerto Rico (free associated territory of the USA since 1952)	1898 to date	USA
Rhode Island and Providence	Rhode Island and Providence (USA)	1636-1776	Great Britain
Rupert's Land	Rupert's Land (Canada)	1670-1870	Great Britain
Saint Kitts and Nevis	Saint Kitts and Nevis	1623-1983	Great Britain
Saint Lucia	Saint Lucia	1650-1814	France
Saint Lucia	Saint Lucia	1814-1979	Great Britain

CONTINENT	COLONY	CURRENT NAME OF TERRITORY	PERIOD OF TIME	COLONIAL POWER
AMERICA	Saint Pierre and Miquelon	Saint Pierre and Miquelon (French overseas collectivity since 2003)	1670–1778 1813 to date	France
	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	1719–1783	France
	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	1783–1979	Great Britain
	Saint-Barthélemy	Saint-Barthélemy (French overseas collectivity since 2007)	1784–1877	Sweden
	Saint-Domingue	Haiti	1697–1804	France
	Terra Nova	Terra Nova (Newfoundland, Canada)	1521–1526	Portugal
	Tobago	Trinidad and Tobago	1498–1814	A minimum of 33 different owners. Only extended periods of colonial power are mentioned as follows:
	Tobago	Trinidad and Tobago	1628–1634	Netherlands
	Tobago	Trinidad and Tobago	1762–1781 1814–1889	Great Britain
	Tobago	Trinidad and Tobago	1781–1793	France
	Trinidad	Trinidad and Tobago	1802–1889	Great Britain
	Trinidad	Trinidad and Tobago	1552–1802	Spain
	Trinidad and Tobago (unified in 1899)	Trinidad and Tobago	1889–1962	Great Britain
	Vancouver Island	Vancouver Island (Canada)	1848–1871	Great Britain
Viceroyalty of New Granada	Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador and Panama	1717–1724 1739–1810	Spain	

Viceroyalty of New Spain	Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Venezuela, Palau, Guam, the Carribean Islands, as well as states in northern America and Asia	1535–1821	Spain
Viceroyalty of Peru (initially founded in 1542 as the Viceroyalty of New Castile, it contained all of Spanish-ruled South America (including Panama) except Venezuela; in 1776, it was subdivided into the Viceroyalties of Peru and Río de la Plata)	Peru, Chile, Panama, Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay, Argentina, parts of Colombia and Ecuador	1542–1823	Spain
Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata	Argentina, Bolivia, Uruguay and Paraguay	1776–1811	Spain
Virginia	Virginia (USA)	1607–1776	Great Britain
West Louisiana	West Louisiana (USA)	1762–1800	Spain

CONTINENT	COLONY	CURRENT NAME OF TERRITORY	PERIOD OF TIME	COLONIAL POWER
ASIA	Abkhazia	Abkhazia (Georgia)	1578–1810	Ottoman Empire
	Aden (Yemen)	Aden (Yemen)	1538–1839	Ottoman Empire
	Aden (Yemen)	Aden (Yemen)	1839–1967	Great Britain
	al-Hasa (Saudi Arabia)	al-Hasa (Saudi Arabia)	1550–1670 1871–1913	Ottoman Empire
	Arad Fort (Bahrain)	Arad Fort (Bahrain)	1521–1602	Portugal
	Armenia	Armenia	1829–1918	Russia
	Asir (Saudi Arabia)	Asir (Saudi Arabia)	1871–1914	Ottoman Empire
	Azerbaijan	Azerbaijan	1784–1918	Russia
	Bahrain	Bahrain	1820–1971	Great Britain
	Baku (Azerbaijan)	Baku (Azerbaijan)	1516–1806	Ottoman Empire
	Bencoolen	(parts of) Indonesia	1825–1949	Netherlands
	Bhutan	Bhutan	1772–1910	Great Britain
	British Bencoolen	(parts of) Indonesia	1685–1825	Great Britain
	British Indian Ocean Territory	Chagos Archipelago (British overseas territory)	1814 to date	Great Britain
	Brunei	Brunei	1888–1984	Great Britain
	Burma	Myanmar	1885–1948	Great Britain
	Ceylon	Sri Lanka	1517–1658	Portugal
	Ceylon	Sri Lanka	1796–1948	Great Britain
	Cilicia	Adana and Mersin (Turkey)	1919–1921	France
	Colombo	Colombo	1658–1796	Netherlands
	Coromandel Coast (India)	Coromandel Coast (India)	1606–1825	Netherlands
	Cho-sen	Korea	1910–1948	Japan, already protectorate from 1905 onwards
Dagestan	Dagestan (Russia)	1645–1730	Ottoman Empire	
Dejima (island off the coast of Nagasaki)	Dejima (Japan)	1641–1857	Netherlands, trading post with approval of the Japanese government	

Dutch India	Republic of Indonesia	1602–1949(54)	Netherlands (under Dutch sovereignty from 1949–1954)
East Turkistan (Xinjiang)	Uyghur autonomous region Xinjiang (PR China)	1757–1911	China
Federated Malay States	Malaysia	1795–1948	Great Britain
Formosa	Taiwan (or Republic of China)	1624–1662	Spain (northern part, displaced by the Netherlands in 1641) Netherlands (southern part, from 1641 whole area)
French India	(parts of) India	1673–1962	France
French Indochina (Cochinchina, Cambodia, Annam, Tonkin, Laos)	Laos, Cambodia and Viet Nam (Annam, Tonkin and Cochinchina)	1862–1954	France Cochinchina from 1862, Cambodia from 1867, Annam and Tonkin from 1884, Laos from 1893
Gamru	Bandar Abbas (Iran)	16th century–1615	Portugal
Georgia	Georgia	1578–1801	Ottoman Empire
Georgia	Georgia	1738–1918	Russia
Guangzhouwan	Guangzhouwan (China)	1899–1943	France
Hejaz	Hejaz (Saudi Arabia)	1517–1803 1812–1916	Ottoman Empire
Hội An	Hội An (Viet Nam)	1636–1741	Netherlands
Hong Kong	Hong Kong (Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China)	1841–1997	Great Britain
Hormuz	Hormuz (Iran)	1507–1622	Portugal
India	India	1756–1947	Great Britain
Iraq	Iraq	1920–1932	Great Britain

CONTINENT	COLONY	CURRENT NAME OF TERRITORY	PERIOD OF TIME	COLONIAL POWER
ASIA	Iraq (Baghdad, Basra, Mosul)	Iraq (Baghdad, Basra, Mosul)	1534–1623 1638–1918	Ottoman Empire
	Jerusalem	Jerusalem (Israel)	1516–1918	Ottoman Empire
	Jiaozhou (China)	Southern part of Shandong province (China)	1898–1914	German Empire, on lease from China
	Jordan	Jordan	1516–1918	Ottoman Empire
	Karabakh	Azerbaijan	1557–1730	Ottoman Empire
	Kars (Turkey)	Kars (Turkey)	1878–1918	Russia
	Kartli (Georgia)	Kartli (Georgia)	1727–1735	Ottoman Empire
	Kazakhstan	Kazakhstan	1865–1918	Russia
	Korea (protectorate from 1905)	Korea	1910–1945	Japan
	Kuril Islands	Kuril Islands (Russia)	1945 to date	Russia
	Kuwait	Kuwait	1534–1914	Ottoman Empire
	Kuwait	Kuwait	1899–1961	Great Britain
	Kyrgyzstan	Kyrgyzstan	1865–1918	Russia
	Lebanon	Lebanon	1920–1943	France
	Lorestan (Iran)	Lorestan (Iran)	1587–1639	Ottoman Empire
	Macao	Macao (Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China)	1553–1999	Portugal
	Malabar Coast (India)	Malabar Coast (India)	1661–1790	Netherlands
	Malacca (Malaysia)	Malacca (Malaysia)	1511–1641	Portugal
	Malacca (Malaysia)	Malacca (Malaysia)	1644–1824	Netherlands
	Maldives	Maldives	1558–1573	Portugal
	Maldives	Maldives	1654–1796	Netherlands
Maldives	Maldives	1796–1965	Great Britain	
Maluku Islands (Ambon, Bacan, Banda Islands, Ternate)	Maluku Islands (Ambon, Bacan, Banda Islands, Ternate)	1512–1861	Portugal	

Manchukuo	Three north-eastern provinces of the PR China	1931–1945	Japan
Manchuria	Manchuria (China)	1858–1905	Russia
Muscat (Oman)	Muscat (Oman)	1507–1648	Portugal
Muscat (Oman)	Muscat (Oman)	1507–1650	Portugal
Muscat (Oman)	Muscat (Oman)	1550–1551 1581–1588	Ottoman Empire
Nagasaki	Nagasaki (Japan)	1571–1638	Portugal, trading post with Japanese approval
Najd	Najd (Saudi Arabia)	1817–1819 1837–1902	Ottoman Empire
Dutch Formosa	Taiwan	1624–1662	Netherlands
New Guinea	New Guinea	1528/45–1606	Spain
Nicobar Islands	Nicobar Islands	1756–1848	Denmark (with interruptions)
North Borneo	Sabah (Malaysia)	1882–1963	Great Britain
Oman	Oman	1891–1958	Great Britain
Palestine	Palestine	1920–1948	Great Britain
Pescadores	Penghu Islands (China)	1624–1661	Netherlands
Philippines	Philippines	1565–1898	Spain
Philippines	Philippines	1898–1946	USA
Portuguese India	Goa, Damão, Diu (India)	1498–1961	Portugal
Portuguese Timor	East Timor	1586–2002	Portugal
Qatar	Qatar	1868–1971	Great Britain
Qatar	Qatar	1871–1916	Ottoman Empire
Sanjak of Alexandretta	Hatay (Turkey)	1516–1918	Ottoman Empire
Sanjak of Alexandretta	Hatay (Turkey)	1918–1938	France
Sarawak	Sarawak (north-west Borneo)	1888–1963	Great Britain
Siberia	Siberia (Russia)	since 1557	Russia

CONTINENT	COLONY	CURRENT NAME OF TERRITORY	PERIOD OF TIME	COLONIAL POWER
ASIA	Singapore	Singapore	1946–1963	Great Britain, already trading post from 1824 onwards, self-governing crown colony from 1959
	Sho-nan-to-/ Syonan-to	Singapore	1942–1945	Japan
	Socotra (Socotra, Yemen)	Socotra (Socotra, Yemen)	1507–1511	Portugal
	Sohar (Oman)	Sohar (Oman)	1507–17th century	Portugal
	Songhkla	Songhkla (southern Thailand)	1685–1688	France
	Straits Settlements	Penang, Singapore and Malacca	1867–1946	Great Britain
	Sunda Islands	Sunda Islands	1512–1861	Portugal
	Sur, Oman	Sur, Oman	1507–17th century	Portugal
	Surat (India)	Surat (India)	1616–1795	Netherlands
	Syria	Syria	1920–1946	France
	Syria (Damascus, Aleppo)	Syria (Damascus, Aleppo)	1516–1918	Ottoman Empire
	Tabriz (Azerbaijan)	Tabriz (Azerbaijan)	1585–1639	Ottoman Empire
	Taiwan and Peng-hu Islands	Taiwan and Peng-hu Islands	1895–1945	Japan
	Tajikistan	Tajikistan	1868–1924	Russia
	Tonkin (Viet Nam)	Tonkin (Viet Nam)	1636–1699	Netherlands
	Transjordan	Jordan	1922–1946	Great Britain
	Trucial States (states on the southern coast of the Persian Gulf)	Part of the United Arab Emirates	1835–1971	Great Britain
	Turkmenistan	Turkmenistan	1894–1924	Russia
Governor-Generalship Kazakh Steppe (northern Turkmenistan)	Parts of Kazakhstan	1882–1917	Russia	

	Governor-General-ship Turkestan	Part of Uzbekistan	1868-1917	Russia
	Uzbekistan	Uzbekistan	1868-1918	Russia
	Viet Nam (part of French Indochina)	Viet Nam	1858-1954	France
	Weihai (city in north-east China)	Weihai (city in north-east China)	1898-1930	Great Britain
	Yemen	Yemen	1517-1636 1872-1918	Ottoman Empire
	Yerevan	Yerevan (Armenia)	1514-1618	Ottoman Empire

CONTINENT	COLONY	CURRENT NAME OF TERRITORY	PERIOD OF TIME	COLONIAL POWER
EUROPE	Albania (Shkodër, Vlorë, Uskub)	Albania (Shkodër, Vlorë, Uskub)	1410–1912	Ottoman Empire
	Azores	Azores	1427–1766	Portugal
	Baltic governorates (Estonia, Livland and Courland)	Estonia and Latvia	1721–1918	Russia
	Belarus	Belarus	1793–1918	Russia
	Bessarabia	Moldavia and Ukraine	1488–1812	Ottoman Empire
	Bessarabia	Moldavia and Ukraine	1878–1917	Russia
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Bosnia and Herzegovina	1463–1908	Ottoman Empire
	Bulgaria (Vidin, Danube River, Rumelia)	Bulgaria (Vidin, Danube River, Rumelia)	1395–1908	Ottoman Empire
	Canary Islands	Canary Islands	1479	Spain
	Congress Poland, Vistula River region	Poland	1815–1916	Russia
	Crete	Crete (Greece)	1669–1898	Ottoman Empire
	Crimea	Crimea	1475–1783	Ottoman Empire
	Cyprus	Cyprus	1570–1914	Ottoman Empire
	Elba	Elba (Italy)	1557–1709	Spain
	Faroe Islands	Faroe Islands	1814–1948	Denmark
	Finland	Finland	1808–1917	Russia
	Greece (Athens, Salonica, Thessaloniki)	Greece (Athens, Salonica, Thessaloniki)	1460–1822	Ottoman Empire
	Hungary	Hungary	1541–1699	Ottoman Empire
	Iceland	Iceland	1814–1918 (1944)	Denmark
	Kosovo	Kosovo	1389–1912	Ottoman Empire
	Macedonia (Skopje)	Northern Macedonia	1371–1913	Ottoman Empire
	Madeira	Madeira	1580–1834	Portugal
	Mani (Greece)	Mani (Greece)	1453–1822	Ottoman Empire
Moldavia	Moldavia	1541–1877	Ottoman Empire	
Moldavia	Moldavia	1792–1856	Russia	

Montenegro	Montenegro	1516-1878	Ottoman Empire
Otranto	Otranto (Italy)	1480-1481	Ottoman Empire
Podolia (region in Ukraine)	Podolia (Ukraine)	1672-1699	Ottoman Empire
Rhodes	Rhodes (Greece)	1522-1912	Ottoman Empire
Rumelia (European part of the Balkan peninsula)	Part of Greece and Bulgaria	1363-1908	Ottoman Empire
Samos	Samos (Greece)	1475-1912	Ottoman Empire
Serbia (Belgrade, Niš, Kalemegdan)	Serbia (Belgrade, Niš, Kalemegdan)	1459-1878	Ottoman Empire
Transylvania	Transylvania (region in Romania)	1538-1699	Ottoman Empire
Ukraine	Ukraine	1667-1917	Russia
Wallachia (region in Romania)	Wallachia (region in Romania)	1541-1877	Ottoman Empire

CONTINENT	COLONY	CURRENT NAME OF TERRITORY	PERIOD OF TIME	COLONIAL POWER
OCEANIA	American Samoa	American Samoa (US-American overseas territory)	1899 to date	USA
	Australia (Commonwealth of Australia) (dominion from 1907)	Australia	1770–1931/1986	Great Britain
	British New Guinea	Papua New Guinea (south-eastern part)	1884–1902	Great Britain
	Caroline Islands	Federated States of Micronesia and Palau	1526–1899	Spain
	Caroline Islands	Federated States of Micronesia and Palau	1899–1919	German Empire
	Caroline Islands	Federated States of Micronesia and Palau	1919–1944	Japan (as League of Nations mandate, 1933 Japan's withdrawal from the League of Nations)
	Cook Islands	Cook Islands (independent in free association with New Zealand)	1888–1901	Great Britain
	Cook Islands	Cook Islands (independent in free association with New Zealand)	1901–1965	New Zealand
	Easter Island (Rapa Nui)	Easter Island (Rapa Nui, Chile)	1888 to date	Chile
	Ellice Islands	Tuvalu	1877–1978	Great Britain (1892 part of the British protectorate Gilbert and Ellice Islands; protectorate up to 1915, colony from 1915)
Fiji	Fiji	1874–1970	Great Britain	

French Polynesia	French Polynesia (French overseas territory since 2004)	1842 to date	France (1842 establishment of the French protectorate Tahiti, French colony from 1880, conquest of the remaining islands in 1881, on UN list of Non-Self-Governing Territories since 2013)
German New Guinea	Papua New Guinea (north-east with Bismarck Archipelago), Solomon Islands (northern part), Marshall Islands, Nauru, Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, Caroline Islands	1889–1919	German Empire (already administered from 1885 by New Guinea Company under letter of protection)
German Samoa	Samoa (western part of the archipelago)	1900–1914	Chile
Gilbert Islands	Kiribati	1892–1979	Great Britain (declared a British protectorate together with the Ellice Islands in 1892; protectorate up to 1916, crown colony from 1916)
Guam	Guam (US-American overseas territory)	1521–1898	Spain
Guam	Guam (US-American overseas territory)	1898 to date	USA
Hawai'i	Hawai'i (US state since 1959)	1898 to date	USA
Mariana Islands	Northern Mariana Islands	1667–1898/99	Spain
Mariana Islands (as part of German New Guinea)	Northern Mariana Islands	1899–1919	German Empire

CONTINENT	COLONY	CURRENT NAME OF TERRITORY	PERIOD OF TIME	COLONIAL POWER
OCEANIA	Mariana Islands	Northern Mariana Islands	1919–1944	Japan (as League of Nations mandate, 1933 Japan's withdrawal from the League of Nations)
	Mariana Islands	Northern Mariana Islands (free association territory of the USA)	1944 to date	USA
	Marshall Islands	Marshall Islands	1919–1944	Japan (as League of Nations mandate, 1933 Japan's withdrawal from the League of Nations)
	Nauru	Republic of Nauru (governed by Australia as League of Nations mandate)	1920–1968	Great Britain
	Nauru	Republic of Nauru	1947–1968	New Zealand
	Netherlands New Guinea	Part of Indonesia (annexed in 1961)	1885–1962	Netherlands
	New Caledonia	New Caledonia (French overseas territory)	1853 to date	France
	New Hebrides	New Hebrides	1887–1980	France (governed as a condominium with Great Britain)
	New Hebrides	Vanuatu	1906–1980	Great Britain (governed as a condominium with France)
	New Zealand (dominion from 1907)	New Zealand	1840–1931	Great Britain
	Niue	Niue (in free association with New Zealand)	1901–1974	New Zealand
	Niue	Niue (in free association with New Zealand)	1900–1901	Great Britain

Palau	Republic of Palau (associated with the USA)	1526–1899	Spain
Palau	Republic of Palau (associated with the USA)	1899–1914	German Empire
Palau	Republic of Palau (associated with the USA)	1914–1947	Japan
Phoenix Islands	Part of Kiribati	1889–1979	Great Britain
Pitcairn	Pitcairn (British overseas territory)	1838 to date	Great Britain
Solomon Islands	Solomon Islands	1899–1978	Great Britain
Spanish East Indies	Caroline Islands, Mariana Islands and Palau	1565–1898	Spain
Territory of New Guinea (governed by Australia as League of Nations mandate)	Provinces of Papua New Guinea: Enga, Western Highlands, Simbu, Eastern Highlands, West Sepik, East Sepik, Madang, Morobe, Bougainville, West New Britain, East New Britain, New Ireland, Manus	1919–1975	Great Britain
Territory of Papua and New Guinea (British New Guinea became the Territory of Papua in 1906, League of Nations mandate for German New Guinea from 1920 (excluding the Micronesian Islands) as Territory of New Guinea; unification as the Territory of Papua and New Guinea in 1949)	Papua New Guinea	1906–1972	Australia
Tokelau (administration under Western Samoa)	Part of New Zealand	1926–1949	New Zealand

	Tokelau (under the name of Union Islands, included into the Gilbert and Ellice Islands colony in 1893)	Tokelau	1877–1926	Great Britain
	Tonga	Tonga	1900–1970	Great Britain
	United States Minor Outlying Islands (today US overseas territory)	Part of New Zealand	1857 to date	USA
	Wallis and Futuna (official French protectorate not until 1888)	Wallis and Futuna (French overseas territory since 1961)	1842 to date	France
	West Papua	Irian Jaya	1962 to date	Indonesia
	Western Samoa (initially League of Nations mandate, trust territory from 1946)	Samoa	1914–1962	New Zealand



**ABOUT THE  
GERMAN MUSEUMS  
ASSOCIATION**

## ABOUT THE GERMAN MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION

After the publication of the first edition of the Guidelines, the German Museums Association (DMB) was repeatedly asked about its authority to issue the Guidelines and about the federal system of the Federal Republic of Germany, which shapes the German cultural landscape. For this reason, both are briefly explained below:

The German Museums Association is a national, non-governmental organisation of German museums. Outside funding (e.g. from federal ministries) is often obtained for the work involved in the DMB's projects, such as these Guidelines. The German Museums Association, however, makes independent decisions concerning the content of its publications and is not subject to directives from its funding providers. Publications can relate to political questions, but the German Museums Association has only a limited right to participate in political decision-making and it does not have the authority to issue binding directives to German museums.

The Guidelines and handouts are primarily intended for German museums. They serve first and foremost to convey information and provide practical help for day-to-day work in museums. The Guidelines are not binding on the museums, and they do not have the force of law. Only the federal government or the state government may create legal bases for action – particularly in relation to the return of collection items.

# THE FEDERAL SYSTEM IN GERMANY

## THE FEDERAL SYSTEM IN GERMANY

The judicial system in Germany is a federal system: the duties of government are divided between the federal government (*Bund*) and the semi-sovereign individual states (*Bundesländer*), i.e. the individual states are responsible for certain functions laid down by the federal constitution. Each individual state has its own state constitution and autonomous political institutions (sovereignty). Under the federal constitution, education and culture (which includes museums) are matters for the individual states. It is not only cultural policy which is up to the individual states, but the ownership of the museum collections is also vested in the individual states. There are very few national museums and museums owned jointly by the federal government and the individual states. The majority are federal state and municipal museums.

Since the individual states are responsible for matters (legislation and administration) pertaining to culture and education, the federal government has only limited authority to regulate or legislate in these areas.

In Germany, laws which apply to the whole of Germany must be passed by the *Bundestag* (federal parliament) as well as the *Bundesrat* (representation of the individual states). A law must pass through various committees between being drafted and being passed, which can sometimes make the legislative process very time-consuming. If a law is to be made which applies to the whole of Germany and thus encroaches on the cultural sovereignty of the individual states, the constitution must be amended accordingly beforehand.

As a voluntary body, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany (KMK) coordinates the education, research, and cultural matters of the individual states. In matters of significance for the whole of Germany, the task of the KMK is to ensure a necessary degree of common ground among the individual states. Since 2019, the ministers and senators responsible for cultural policy meet in their own Standing Conference of the Ministers of Cultural Affairs (Culture MK) under the umbrella of the KMK. The main task of this new body is to represent and promote the joint interests of the individual states in respect of culture.

The KMK as a constitutional body does not issue legally binding resolutions. The decisions and agreements are considered to be political obligations and provide guiding principles for the actions of the individual states.

# ANNEX

## REFERENCES AND SELECTED FURTHER LITERATURE

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library**, Information and Resource Network Inc. (ATSILIRN), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocols for Libraries, Archives, and Information Services, 2005 (online <https://atsilirn.aiatsis.gov.au/protocols.php>, last download 18 June 2020).
- Sebastian Conrad**, Kolonialismus und Postkolonialismus, in: APuZ Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte 44 – 45, Berlin 2012, pp. 3–9.
- Coordination Centre for Scientific University Collections**, Besitz- und Eigentumsfragen, Berlin 2015.
- Martha De la Torre**, Values and heritage conservation, in: *Heritage & Society*, 6(2), London 2013, pp. 155–166.
- Federal Agency for Civic Education**, Kolonialismus, in: APuZ Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte 44 – 45, Berlin 2012.
- Federal Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection**, Act on the Protection of Cultural Policy Assets (online at [http://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/englisch\\_kgsg/index.html](http://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/englisch_kgsg/index.html), last download 15 June 2020).
- Iris Edenheiser, Larissa Förster** (eds.), *Museumsethnologie. Eine Einführung. Theorien, Debatten, Praktiken*, Berlin 2019.
- Lisa Elkin, Christopher A. Norris** (eds.), *Preventive Conservation. Collection Storage*, Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections, Washington D.C. 2019.
- Sophie Engelhardt**, *Nachrichtenlose Kulturgüter*, Berlin 2013.
- European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)**, National legislation to combat racism and racial discrimination. Revised General Policy Recommendation No. 7, Strasbourg 2017 (PDF <https://rm.coe.int/compilation-of-ecris-general-policy-recommendations-march-2018/16808b7945>, last download 15 June 2020).
- Sarah Fründt, Larissa Förster**, Menschliche Überreste aus ehemals kolonisierten Gebieten in deutschen Institutionen. Historische Entwicklungen und zukünftige Perspektiven, in: Joachim Zeller (ed.), Marianne Bechhaus-Gerst, *Deutschland postkolonial? - Die Gegenwart der imperialen Vergangenheit*, Berlin 2018, pp. 505–531.
- Günther Fuchs, Hans Henseke**, *Das französische Kolonialreich*, Berlin 1988.
- Jakob Fuchs, Diana Gabler, Christoph Herm, Michael Markert**, *Menschliche Überreste im Depot. Empfehlungen für Betreuung und Nutzung*, Koordinierungsstelle für wissenschaftliche Universitäts-sammlungen, Berlin 2020 (PDF [https://wissenschaftliche-sammlungen.de/files/3515/7987/3438/Menschliche\\_bereste\\_im\\_Depot.pdf](https://wissenschaftliche-sammlungen.de/files/3515/7987/3438/Menschliche_bereste_im_Depot.pdf), last download 15 June 2020).
- German Historical Museum Foundation** (ed.), *Deutscher Kolonialismus, Fragmente seiner Geschichte und Gegenwart*, German Historical Museum exhibition catalogue, Berlin 2016
- German Museums Association**, *Leitfaden für die Dokumentation von Museumsobjekten*, Berlin 2011.

- German Museums Association**, Leitfaden Nachhaltiges Sammeln. Ein Leitfaden zum Sammeln und Abgeben von Museumsgut, Berlin 2011.
- German Museums Association**, Provenienzforschung und Restitution – eine Empfehlung, Berlin 2014.
- German Museums Association**, Guidelines. Care of Human Remains in Museums and Collections, Berlin 2021.
- German Lost Art Foundation**, Guideline for the Funding of Provenance Research Projects on Collections from Colonial Contexts, Magdeburg 2019 (PDF at [https://www.kulturgutverluste.de/Content/03\\_Forschungsforderung/EN/Funding\\_Guideline\\_Colonial\\_Goods.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=2](https://www.kulturgutverluste.de/Content/03_Forschungsforderung/EN/Funding_Guideline_Colonial_Goods.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=2), last download 23 October 2020).
- Christian Geulen**, Weltordnung und “Rassenkampf”, in: Stiftung Deutsches Historisches Museum (ed.), Deutscher Kolonialismus. Fragmente seiner Geschichte und Gegenwart, German Historical Museum exhibition catalogue, Berlin 2016.
- Bernhard Gißibl**, Paradiesvögel: Kolonialer Naturschutz und die Mode der deutschen Frau am Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts, in: Johannes Paulmann, Daniel Leese, Philippa Söldenwagner (eds.), Ritual - Macht - Natur. Europäisch-ozeanische Beziehungswelten in der Neuzeit, TenDenZen Übersee-Museum, Bremen 2005, pp. 131-154.
- Ina Heumann, Holger Stoecker, Marco Tamborini, Mareike Vennen**, Dinosaurier Fragmente. Zur Geschichte der Tendaguru-Expedition und ihrer Objekte 1906-2018, Museum für Naturkunde Berlin und Technischen Universität Berlin, Berlin 2018.
- Hermann Hiery** (ed.), Lexikon zur Überseegeschichte, Stuttgart 2015.
- Christine Howald, Léa Saint-Raymond**, Tracing Dispersal. Auction Sales from the Yuanmingyuan loot in Paris in the 1860s, in: Journal for Art Market Studies Vol. 2 (2), 2018 (PDF <https://www.fokum-jams.org/index.php/jams/article/view/30/92>, last download 06 July 2020).
- International Council of Museums (ICOM)**, The Code of Ethics for Museums, 2017 (PDF at <https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ICOM-code-En-web.pdf>, last download 15 June 2020).
- Lower Saxony Ministry of Science and Culture**, Leitfaden zum Erwerb von Museumsgut. Eine Handreichung für die Museen im Land Niedersachsen, Hanover 2013.
- Minister of State for Cultural and Media Affairs, Minister of State at the Federal Foreign Office, Culture Ministers of the individual states and the national local authority organisations**, Framework Principles for dealing with collections from colonial contexts, Berlin 2019 (PDF at <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/blob/2210152/b2731f8b59210c77c68177cdcd3d03de/190412-stm-m-sammlungsgut-kolonial-kontext-en-data.pdf>, last download 15 June 2020).
- Sandra Mühlenberend, Jakob Fuchs, Vera Marušić** (eds.), Unmittelbarer Umgang mit menschlichen Überresten in Museen und Universitäts-sammlungen. Statements und Fallbeispiele, Hochschule für Bildende Künste Dresden 2018.

- Salvador Muñoz Viñas**, *Contemporary Theory of Conservation*, Oxford 2005.
- Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen**, *Return of Cultural Objects: Principles and Process*, Amsterdam, Berg en Dal, Leiden, 2019.
- Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA)**, Public Law 101 – 601, 101st Congress, 1990 (online at 101st Congress, 1990 (online <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1335/index.htm>), last download 15 June 2020).
- Franz Nuscheler**, *Die Entkolonisierungsbilanz der Vereinten Nationen*, in: *Vereinte Nationen* 6/81, p. 195 – 199, 1981 (PDF at <http://www.dgvn.de/veroeffentlichungen/publikation/heft/die-entkolonisierungsbilanz-der-vereinten-nationen/>, last download 15 June 2020).
- Jürgen Osterhammel, Jan C. Jansen**, *Kolonialismus. Geschichte, Formen, Folgen*, 7th edition, Munich 2017.
- Robert Peters**, *Ohne Ethik nicht mehr zu denken*, in: *ICOM Mitteilungen Deutschland* 2018, pp. 25-29.
- Jessie V. Ryker-Crawford**, *Towards an Indigenous Museology: Native American and First Nations Representation and Voice in North American Museums*, Dissertation, Washington 2017 (PDF <https://digital.lib.washington.edu/researchworks/handle/1773/40830>, last download 21 June 2020).
- Edward W. Said**, *Orientalismus*, Fischer, 5th edition, Berlin 2009.
- Felwine Sarr, Bénédicte Savoy**, *The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage. Toward a New Relational Ethics*, Paris, 2018 (PDF at [http://restitutionreport2018.com/sarr\\_savoy\\_en.pdf](http://restitutionreport2018.com/sarr_savoy_en.pdf), last download 15 June 2020).
- Claudia Schnurmann**, *Vom Inselreich zur Weltmacht*, Stuttgart 2001.
- Philipp Schorch, Conal McCarthy** (eds.), *Curatopia: Museums and the Future of Curatorship*, Manchester 2018.
- Udo Scholze, Detlef Zimmermann, Günther Fuchs**, *Unter Lilienbanner und Trikolore. Zur Geschichte des französischen Kolonialreiches. Darstellung und Dokumente*, Leipzig 2001.
- Sensitive Heritage**, *Ethnographic Museums, Provenance Research and the Potentialities of Restitutions*, *Museum & Society* Vol. 18(1), University Leicester, 2020 (online <https://journals.le.ac.uk/ojs1/index.php/mas/issue/view/197>, last download 15 June 2020).
- Hilke Thode-Arora**, *Interethnische Ehen. Theoretische und methodische Grundlagen ihrer Erforschung*, Berlin 1999.
- UNESCO**, *Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property*; adopted by the General Conference at its sixteenth session, Paris, 1970 (PDF at <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000133378>, last download 15 May 2020).
- United Nations**, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Resolution 61/295)*, (PDF at [https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfi/documents/DRIPS\\_en.pdf](https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfi/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf), last download 15 June 2020).
- United Nations**, *Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories* (online at <https://www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/nsgt>, last download 15 June 2020).

**Jos van Beurden**, Treasures in Trusted Hands. Negotiating the Future of Colonial Cultural Objects, CLUES Interdisciplinary Studies in Culture, History and Heritage vol. 3, Leiden 2017.

**Glenn Wharton**, Indigenous Claims and Heritage Conservation – An Opportunity for Critical Dialogue, in: Public Archaeology 4, Leeds 2005, pp. 199-204.

**Regina Wonisch**, Reflexion kolonialer Vergangenheit in der musealen Gegenwart? Kuratorische Herausforderungen an der Schnittstelle von ethnologischen Museen und Kunst, Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen e. V. (ifa) (ed.) ifa-Edition Kultur und Außenpolitik, Stuttgart 2017.

**Olaf Zimmermann, Theo Geißler** (eds.), Kolonialismus-Debatte: Bestandsaufnahme und Konsequenzen, Aus Politik & Kultur Nr. 17, Deutscher Kulturrat e.V., Berlin 2019 (PDF [https://www.kulturrat.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/AusPolitikUndKultur\\_Nr17.pdf](https://www.kulturrat.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/AusPolitikUndKultur_Nr17.pdf), last download 25 June 2020).



Further information on policies, guidelines, recommendations, legal regulations, and practical examples from a museum's fields of responsibility can be found in the **E-reader**.

## Credits

- p. 32 I: Corset belt of a Herero woman, Namibia, Collection August Engelbert Wulff, 1901. Übersee-Museum, Photo: Volker Beinhorn
- p. 32 II: Calabash, Herero, Namibia, Collection Eduard Hälbich, 1909. Übersee-Museum, Photo: Volker Beinhorn
- p. 32 III: Head of a Queen Mother, Edo Kingdom of Benin, Nigeria, Collection Hans Meyer, 1936. Übersee-Museum, Photo: Volker Beinhorn
- p. 32 IV: Looted art? The Benin Bronzes in the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg. Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, Photo: Michaela Hille
- p. 32 IV: Syrian glasses, collected by the Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum between 1912 and 1914. They may have been found during the construction of the Baghdad railway. Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum, Mainz, Photo: V. Iserhardt
- p. 34 I: Central: King brown snake, collected in Queensland/Australia, lateral: Fiji Ground Frogs collected on the Fiji Islands for the Museum Godeffroy. UHH, RRZ/MCC, Photo: Mentz
- p. 34 II: Knife with sheath of Wilhelm Behrens (1881-1956)  
Inscription "*Deutsch-Süd-West-Afrika*" (German South West Africa) and "*Zur Erinnerung an meine Dienstzeit*" (In memory of my period of service). From 1904-1907, Behrens was with the mounted troops in the former German South West Africa, Collection Susanne Siepl-Coates, 2016. Übersee-Museum, Photo: Volker Beinhorn
- p. 34 III: Medal bar of Wilhelm Behrens (1881-1956)  
The braces "*Grossnamaland*", "*Hereroland*", "*Omaheke*" on the commemorative medal "*Südwest-Afrika 1904-06*" (Southwest Africa), for example, document the battles in which he took part with the mounted troops. Kaiser Wilhelm II. donated this 1907, Collection Susanne Siepl-Coates, 2016. Übersee-Museum, Photo: Volker Beinhorn
- p. 34 IV-V: Rupee German East Africa 1916, obverse side and reverse side. Museumsstiftung Post und Telekommunikation, Photo: Peter Boesang
- p. 34 VI: Official seal of the Windhoek post office. Museumsstiftung Post und Telekommunikation, Photo: Peter Boesang
- p. 37 I: Porcelain vase with cherry blossoms, China, 17th/18th century. Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, Photo: Martin Luther, Dirk Fellenberg
- p. 37 II: Bird skins, collected in Oceania on behalf of the Museum Godeffroy. UHH, RRZ/MCC, Photo: Mentz
- p. 40 I: Wall map for schools "*Deutschlands Kolonien*" (Germany's colonies). Übersee-Museum, Photo: Volker Beinhorn
- p. 40 II: Advertising poster for an ethnic show with Sami people, Poster of A. Friedländer No. 468. Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, Photo: J. Hiltmann
- p. 40 III-IV: Impressions from an ethnic show by Hagenbeck, Hamburg, Atelier J. Hamann, Johann Hinrich W. Hamann. Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, public domain

## INDEX

- Access restriction 20, 50, 52, 53, 61, 62, 91, 141
- Acquisition 4, 5, 19, 20, 27, 31, 36, 49, 50, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 64, 66, 67, 70, 71, 73, 74, 75, 78, 82, 83, 84, 99, 102, 105, 109, 111, 112, 124, 148, 149, 150, 157, 158, 159, 160
- Capacity building 80, 129, 139, 140
- Cases (of colonial contexts) 4, 13, 14, 23, 25, 29, 30, 31, 36, 39, 49, 50, 56, 57, 73, 76
- Collection 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18, 19, 20, 21, 25, 26, 27, 30, 31, 33, 36, 37, 42, 43, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 55, 56, 57, 59, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 86, 87, 90, 95, 102, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 123, 126, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 150, 151, 152, 153, 160, 161, 162, 165
- Collection item 4, 5, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18, 19, 20, 21, 30, 31, 35, 36, 38, 42, 43, 46, 47, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 78, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 105, 109, 115, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 153, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 166, 167, 173
- Colonial goods 18, 33, 39, 76, 77, 78, 115
- Colonialism 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 30, 31, 33, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 41, 43, 46, 47, 52, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 82, 83, 84, 89, 91, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 129, 130, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 144, 149, 151, 153, 154, 155, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 165, 166, 172, 173, 14
- Community of origin 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 25, 43, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 74, 77, 79, 80, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 91, 109, 129, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151
- Conservation 50, 51, 61, 62, 63, 69, 90, 91, 110, 141, 142
- Contact point 9, 48, 63, 80
- Context, colonial 4, 5, 8, 9, 12, 13, 15, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 26, 30, 39, 42, 43, 46, 48, 49, 50, 54, 55, 56, 57, 61, 62, 65, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 81, 83, 14, 107, 113, 115, 116, 135, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 153, 157, 158, 159, 161, 162
- Cooperation 48, 64, 67, 87, 98, 118, 136
- Database 15, 47, 53, 56, 62, 71, 72, 132, 140, 141, 142
- Deaccession 60, 80, 85, 151, 162
- Decolonisation 5, 13, 14, 26, 73, 96, 97, 129, 130, 132, 134, 135, 143, 166
- Digitisation 4, 10, 48, 50, 53, 78, 130, 131
- Documentation 20, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 60, 67, 69, 78, 85, 90, 108, 110, 115, 116, 134, 140, 148, 150
- Education 15, 47, 78, 97, 100, 136, 139, 148
- Ethics 14, 19, 20, 47, 48, 49, 50, 53, 54, 56, 58, 61, 62, 64, 81, 83, 85, 91, 131, 147, 148, 150, 151, 152, 153, 162, 165
- Eurocentrism 25, 41, 42, 51, 52, 77
- Exhibition 4, 5, 10, 13, 14, 15, 25, 41, 46, 47, 48, 50, 51, 52, 54, 55, 56, 62, 70, 71, 78, 79,

87, 91, 102, 107, 109, 113, 116, 117, 126, 127, 129, 130, 131, 132, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 142, 143, 147, 148, 152

Exoticism 42, 77

Handling restriction 50, 53

Human remains 19, 20, 21, 22, 42, 43, 49, 61, 64, 65, 69, 80, 82, 84, 106, 108, 109, 156, 161, 166

Indigenous 22, 24, 25, 26, 36, 38, 43, 46, 47, 48, 54, 55, 64, 74, 75, 77, 83, 96, 97, 109, 123, 126, 129, 130, 131, 141, 142, 143, 149, 161, 165

Inventory 50, 52, 53, 60, 62, 72, 78, 80, 132, 147

Legislation 4, 5, 11, 14, 15, 19, 38, 56, 57, 58, 60, 71, 72, 81, 83, 85, 88, 91, 114, 124, 133, 150, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 165, 166

Loans 56, 69, 72, 81, 87, 91

Military 18, 24, 31, 35, 66, 96, 97, 98, 101, 105, 115, 126, 134, 149, 157, 172, 173

Missionary work 24, 38

Orientalism 41, 77

Ownership 5, 14, 24, 58, 59, 64, 87, 88, 91, 99, 123, 124, 129, 147, 148, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 161, 166

Permission 54, 59, 67, 68, 75, 108, 109, 141, 151, 157

Post-colonialism 4, 13, 19, 23, 24, 25, 56, 76, 77, 97, 107, 115, 117, 118, 131, 166

Preservation 13, 46, 50, 61, 80, 115, 130, 166

Prioritisation 42, 43, 65

Provenance research 4, 5, 9, 10, 13, 14, 42, 43, 49, 52, 54, 55, 58, 59, 60, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 69, 70, 71, 72, 78, 82, 87, 107, 110, 116, 136, 141, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 165

Publication 8, 14, 50, 54, 55, 56, 61, 63, 65, 68, 69, 72, 78, 79, 87, 90, 107, 110, 137, 148, 152, 153, 156, 161, 166

Racism 4, 20, 23, 25, 26, 39, 52, 76, 77, 78, 79, 95, 107, 138, 149, 160

Research 4, 9, 10, 13, 31, 36, 38, 46, 47, 49, 50, 51, 52, 54, 55, 57, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 73, 84, 86, 87, 88, 90, 91, 105, 106, 107, 109, 110, 130, 133, 134, 137, 140, 141, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 153, 161, 172

Restoration 47, 51, 61, 63, 90

Return 4, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 18, 22, 39, 42, 43, 46, 56, 64, 65, 68, 69, 72, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 89, 90, 91, 106, 124, 131, 133, 136, 151, 153, 154, 157, 158, 160, 161, 162, 165, 166

Sovereignty of interpretation 15, 22, 48, 54, 60, 62, 64, 99, 134, 142, 147, 149, 150, 151, 165

## CONTRIBUTORS

### Head of the Working Group of the German Museums Association

**Prof. Wiebke Ahrndt**, Director, Übersee-Museum Bremen, formerly Vice-President of the German Museums Association, Bahnhofplatz 13, 28195 Bremen, w.ahrndt@uebersee-museum.de

### Members of the Working Group of the German Museums Association

**Prof. Hans-Jörg Czech**, Director and board of the Historic Museums Hamburg Foundation, Holstenwall 24, 20355 Hamburg, hans-joerg.czech@mhg.shmh.de

**Jonathan Fine**, Curator, Collections West Africa, Cameroon, Gabon, Namibia, Ethnological Museum Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, Arnimallee 27, 14195 Berlin, j.fine@smb.spk-berlin.de

**Dr Larissa Förster**, Head of the Department for Cultural Goods from Colonial Contexts, German Lost Art Foundation, Berlin office, Seydelstrasse 18, 10117 Berlin, larissa.foerster@kulturgutverluste.de, Associate Member (CARMAH), Institute for European Ethnology, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Unter den Linden 6, 10099 Berlin, larissa.foerster@hu-berlin.de

**Diana Gabler**, Conservator, Chair of the Working Group Ethnographic Objects – Folklore and Ethnology, Verband der Restauratoren e. V. (German Association of Conservator-Restorers), Berlin office, Taubenstraße 1, 10117 Berlin, info@dianagabler.com

**Michael Geißdorf**, Legal Adviser, Dresden State Art Collections, Residenzschloss, Taschenberg 2, 01067 Dresden, michael.geissdorf@skd.museum

**Prof. Matthias Glaubrecht**, Director, Centre of Natural History, University of Hamburg, Martin-Luther-King-Platz 3, 20146 Hamburg, matthias.glaubrecht@uni-hamburg.de

**Mara Hofmann**, Project Coordinator, German Museums Association, In der Halde 1, 14195 Berlin, hofmann@museumbund.de

**Dr Katarina Horst**, Chief Curator and Head of Department of Antiquities, Badisches Landesmuseum Karlsruhe, Schloss, 76131 Karlsruhe, katarina.horst@landesmuseum.de

**Melanie Kölling**, Research Assistant, German Museums Association, In der Halde 1, 14195 Berlin, melaniekoelling@gmail.com

**Dr Silke Reuther**, Head of the Provenance Department, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, Steintorplatz, 20099 Hamburg, [silke.reuther@mkg-hamburg.de](mailto:silke.reuther@mkg-hamburg.de)

**Anja Schaluschke**, Director, Museum for Communication Berlin, Leipziger Straße 16, 10117 Berlin, [aschaluschke@mspt.de](mailto:aschaluschke@mspt.de)

**Carola Thielecke**, Legal Adviser, Department of the President – HV J1, Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, Von-der-Heydt-Str. 16-18, 10785 Berlin, [c.thielecke@hv.spk-berlin.de](mailto:c.thielecke@hv.spk-berlin.de)

**Dr Hilke Thode-Arora**, Head of the Oceania Department, Adviser on Provenance Research, Museum Fünf Kontinente, Maximilianstraße 42, 80538 Munich, [hilke.thode-arora@mfk-weltoffen.de](mailto:hilke.thode-arora@mfk-weltoffen.de)

**David Vuillaume**, Managing Director, German Museums Association, In der Halde 1, 14195 Berlin, [vuillaume@museumsbund.de](mailto:vuillaume@museumsbund.de)

**Dr Anne Wesche**, Research Assistant, on behalf of the German Museums Association, Am Hang 18, 27711 Osterholz-Scharmbeck, [wesche@museumsbund.de](mailto:wesche@museumsbund.de)

**Prof. Jürgen Zimmerer**, Department of Global History, University of Hamburg, Historisches Seminar, Überseering 35, #5, 22297 Hamburg, [juergen.zimmerer@uni-hamburg.de](mailto:juergen.zimmerer@uni-hamburg.de)

### External Authors

**Dr Veit Didczuneit**, Head of the Collection Department, Museum for Communication Berlin, Leipziger Straße 16, 10117 Berlin, [v.didczuneit@mspt.de](mailto:v.didczuneit@mspt.de)

**Prof. Christoph Grunenberg**, Director, Kunsthalle Bremen, Am Wall 207, 28195 Bremen, [grunenberg@kunsthalle-bremen.de](mailto:grunenberg@kunsthalle-bremen.de)

### Experts from communities of origin

**Togialelei Dr. Safua Akeli Amaama**, Head of New Zealand and Pacific History and Cultures, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, 55 Cable Street, Te Aro, Wellington 6011, New Zealand, [safua.akeli.amaama@tepapa.govt.nz](mailto:safua.akeli.amaama@tepapa.govt.nz), former Director, Centre for Samoan Studies, National University of Samoa, PO Box 1622, Le Papagalagala Campus To'omatagi, Apia, Samoa

**Nehoa Hilma Kautondokwa**, Chief Education Officer for Culture at the Namibia Commission for UNESCO (NATCOM), Ministry of Higher Education, Technology and Innovation, [nehoa.kautondokwa@mheti.gov.na](mailto:nehoa.kautondokwa@mheti.gov.na), [knehoa@gmail.com](mailto:knehoa@gmail.com)

**Fulimalo Pereira**, Curator Pacific, Auckland Museum, The Domain, Private Bag 92018, Victoria Street West, Auckland 1142, New Zealand, fpereira@aucklandmuseum.com

**Zoe Rimmer**, Senior Curator Indigenous Cultures, Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery, Dunn Pl, Hobart TAS 7000, Australia, zoe.rimmer@tmag.tas.gov.au

**Dr Rosita Kaaháni Worl**, President, Sealaska Heritage Institute, 105 S. Seward St., Juneau, Alaska 99801, USA, rosita.worl@sealaska.com

**HRH Prof. Gregory Akenzua**, the Enogie of Evbobanosa, Benin City, Nigeria

**Prof. Edhem Eldem**, Professor of History, Collège de France, 11 Place Marcelin Berthelot, 75231 Paris, France, edhem.eldem@college-de-france.fr, Boğaziçi University, Bebek, 34342 Beşiktaş//Istanbul, Turkey, eldem@boun.edu.tr

**Emmanuel Kasarhéro**, Director, Musée du Quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, 37 Quai Branly, 75007 Paris, France

**Marcos R. Michel López**, Professor, Antropológicas y Arqueológicas program, Instituto de Investigaciones Arqueológicas y Antropológicas, Universidad Mayor de San Andrés, J. J. Perez, La Paz, Bolivia

**Flower Manase Msuya**, Curator, National Museum of Tanzania, 5 Shaaban Robert St., Daressalam, Tanzania

**Caroline Mutahanamilwa Mchome**, Principal Legal Officer, National Museum of Tanzania, 5 Shaaban Robert St., Daressalam, Tanzania

**Dr Ching-Ling Wang**, Curator Chinese Art, Rijksmuseum, Museumstraat 1, 1071 XX Amsterdam, Netherlands, c.wang@rijksmuseum.nl

### Scientific Support and Editing

**Dr Anne Wesche**, Research Assistant, on behalf of the German Museums Association, Am Hang 18, 27711 Osterholz-Scharmbeck, wesche@museumsbund.de

### Project Coordination

**Mara Hofmann**, Project Coordinator, German Museums Association, In der Halde 1, 14195 Berlin, hofmann@museumsbund.de

**David Vuillaume**, Managing Director, German Museums Association, In der Halde 1, 14195 Berlin, vuillaume@museumsbund.de

**We would also like to express our heartfelt thanks to the following for their committed support in the form of ideas and suggestions, critical analyses, and research:**

**Dr Christine Howald**, TEAA - Tracing East Asian Art - Technische Universität Berlin, Provence Research Asian Collections, Central Archive - Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Museum für Asiatische Kunst, Takustr. 40, 14195 Berlin

**Dr Lilla Russell-Smith**, Curator for Central Asian Art, Museum für Asiatische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin - Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Takustr. 40, 14195 Berlin



## Guidelines of the German Museums Association

The German Museums Association regularly publishes guidelines on current challenges for the museum sector. This multifaceted series providing practical information and recommendations is developed by museum professionals for museum professionals. It addresses all museums, offers an introduction to various fields of knowledge, and gives practical advice. The guidelines of the German Museums Association not only facilitate museum work, they also recommend quality standards and deal with issues of cultural policy.

At [office@museumsbund.de](mailto:office@museumsbund.de) we welcome your feedback to these Guidelines as well as suggestions for future publications.

- Leitfaden. Bildung und Vermittlung im Museum gestalten, 2020 (German)
- Leitfaden. Professionell arbeiten im Museum, 2019 (German)
- Guidelines for German Museums. Care of Collections from Colonial Contexts, 2nd edition, 2019 (also available in German and French)
- Hauptsache Publikum! Besucherforschung für die Museumspraxis – Leitfaden, 2019 (German)
- Guidelines on Dealing with Collections from Colonial Contexts, 1st edition, 2018 (also available in German and French)
- Leitfaden für das wissenschaftliche Volontariat am Museum, 2018 (German)
- Museums, migration, and cultural diversity, 2015 (also in German)
- Recommendations for the Care of Human Remains, 2013 (also in German)
- Das inklusive Museum – Leitfaden für Barrierefreiheit und Inklusion, 2013 (German)
- Leitfaden zur Erstellung eines Museumskonzepts, 2011 (German)
- Nachhaltiges Sammeln. Ein Leitfaden zum Sammeln und Abgeben von Museumsgut, 2011 (German)
- Dokumentation von Museumsobjekten, 2011 (German)
- schule@museum – Handreichung für die Zusammenarbeit, 2011 (German)
- Bürgerschaftliches Engagement im Museum, 2008 (German)
- Museumsberufe – Eine europäische Empfehlung, 2008 (German)
- Qualitätskriterien für Museen – Leitfaden für die Bildungs- und Vermittlungsarbeit, 2008 (German)
- Standards für Museen – Leitfaden, 2006 (German)



**For museums. With museums.  
With your interests at heart.**

We stand for a diverse and sustainable museum landscape and represent the interests of the museums and their employees.

Deutscher Museumsbund e. V.  
In der Halde 1 · 14195 Berlin  
[museumsbund.de](http://museumsbund.de)

