

International Conference

From history to present: Dealing with museum collections from colonial contexts in Hesse and beyond

📅 23–24 Sep 24

📍 Museum Wiesbaden



**Museum
Wiesbaden**

DITSU
where science meets people

 **fahari yetu**
Tanzania

 **Deutsches Zentrum
Kulturgutverluste**

HESSEN


Concept

The international conference is an outcome of the German Lost Art Foundation funded project 'Provenance Research on the East Africa Collection of the Museum Witzzenhausen'. Co-financed by the Hessian Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and the Arts (HMWK), it is hosted by the Museum Wiesbaden (MuWi) in cooperation with the project implementing partners German Institute for Tropical and Subtropical Agriculture (DITSL) and fahari yetu Tanzania. The conference aims to advance the academic and public dialogue on how to deal with colonial history and heritage in Hesse, Germany, Tanzania and beyond, and to stimulate collaborative research and exhibition cooperation between German, Tanzanian and other countries' universities, museums, civil society organisations and communities of origin.

The academic programme starts with the presentation of general and specific results from the Witzzenhausen project. The results open up broader thematic avenues for the following panels, exploring the subject and scope of colonial legacies beyond ethnographic collections, conceptual tools and methods to guide provenance research and knowledge production, and approaches to de-colonial international cooperation and knowledge transfer through other projects and cases.

Day 1 – 23 Sep 24

● 9:00–10:00

Morning tea and registration

● 10:00–11:00

Welcome and opening

Welcome note Andreas Henning, Director of the Museum Wiesbaden

Greetings Christian Hülsebusch (DITSL), Jimson Sanga (fahari yetu Tanzania)

Digital greetings Minister of State Katja Keul (Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany)

Greetings Hessian Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and the Arts/Embassy of the United Republic of Tanzania in Germany/
German Lost Art Foundation

● 11:00–12:50

Panel 1 – provenance research on the East Africa collection of the Museum Witzzenhausen

Chair: Valence Silayo, University of Dar es Salaam

1 Jan Kuever (DITSL Witzzenhausen/fahari yetu Tanzania) Presentation and evaluation of project experiences and results

2 Herry Titus (fahari yetu Tanzania) Film documentary: fahari yetu Tanzania provenance research

3 Jimson Sanga (fahari yetu Tanzania) Knowledge sharing and translation: Ethnographic research in possible communities of origin

4 Eliabu Mbonimpa (fahari yetu Tanzania) Endangered stories of enchanted places: Art as a medium of preserving and transmitting oral traditions

5 Kepha Ngakonda (Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Tanzania – Southern Diocese Archives Department) Impacts of the Berlin Mission Society in the Southern Highlands of Tanzania

● 12:50–14:10

Lunch break

● 14:10–16:00

Panel 2 – subject and scope of colonial collecting

Chair: Andy Reymann, MuWi

6 Richard Kuba (Goethe University Frankfurt, Frobenius Institute) Decolonizing the archive, or how to deal with a complicated past

7 Rainer Broemer (Philipps-University Marburg, Institute of the History of Pharmacy and Medicine) Colonization without colonies: Collecting in the hinterland

8 Marion Hulverscheidt/Linda Knop/Maximilian Preuss (Kassel University, Department of History) Between bewilderment, triumph and shame: Provenances and trajectories of colonial hunting trophies in German museums

9 Holger Stoecker (University of Goettingen, Seminar of Medieval and Modern History) Human remains from Tanzania in anthropological collections in Göttingen: Provenances and historical contexts

10 Ina Heumann (Museum of Natural History Berlin) Dinosaurs, labour, ownership: On the politics of natural heritage

● 16:00–17:00

Coffee table

● 19:00–21:00

Evening event

Andy Reymann/MuWI (Museum Wiesbaden) Welcome and introduction

Caligari Movie Theatre Wiesbaden: Film screening and discussion: „The Empty Grave“, Reception

Day 2 – 24 Sep 24

● 9:00–9:30

Morning tea and registration

● 9:30–10:40

Panel 3: concepts and methods for dealing with collections

Chair: Jimson Sanga, fahari yetu Tanzania

11 Josefine Neef (Weltkulturen Museum Frankfurt) Towards systematic provenance research on collections of colonial origin in German museums

12 Eva Kuenkler (Leibniz-University Hannover, Department of History) German normative frameworks for colonial collections and spoils of war

13 Hans Peter Hahn (Goethe University Frankfurt, Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology) What is the value of museum collections from colonial contexts? Notes from the perspective of collection economies

● 10:50–12:30

Panel 4 – case studies

Chair: Mareike Späth, NLMH

14 Martin Nadarzinski (Lippe State Museum Detmold) Cameroon in Detmold: Collection archaeology in the Lippe State Museum

15 Andre Burmann/Markus Scholz (Sankt Georgen Graduate School of Philosophy and Theology Frankfurt) Catholic collecting of cultural assets: Two missionary collections in Hesse and their contested items

16 Valence Silayo (University of Dar es Salaam/Linden Museum Stuttgart) The cultural heritage and possessions of our ancestors define our cultural identity: A glance into the Chagga collection at the Linden Museum

17 Noemie Arazi/Deonis Mgumba (Royal Museum for Central Africa Brussels/fahari yetu Tanzania) Congo-Arab heritage in historical narratives in the Dar es Salaam, Coast, and Tabora regions of Tanzania

● 12:30–13:50

Lunch break

● 13:50–15:30

Panel 5 – international cooperation and knowledge transfer

Chair: Deonis Mgumba, fahari yetu Tanzania

18 Michael Kraus (University of Goettingen, Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology) Reciprocal influences between Iringa and Göttingen: Knowledge exchange on museum work and university teaching

19 Mareike Späth (Lower Saxony State Museum Hannover) From Iringa to Hannover and back again: Connecting people, knowledge, and museums

20 Sebastian Moellers (Museen Stade) The framework determines the possibilities: Lessons from the Karl Braun Amani research project – what cooperation at eye level means and requires

21 Anna-Maria Brandstetter (Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz, Department of Anthropology and African Studies) Against all odds: A plea for slow provenance research

● 15:40–16:30

Conclusion and outlook

Panel chair: Jan Kuever, fahari yetu Tanzania/DITSL

● 16:30–17:00

Coffee table

1 Provenance Research on the East Africa Collection of the Museum Witzenhausen

Jan Kuever

Abstract

The title-giving project was funded by the German Lost Art Foundation and carried out by the German Institute for Tropical and Subtropical Agriculture (DITSL), a successor of the German Colonial School (DKS) and the responsible body for the museum. The project sought to assess, index, and document the approx. 300 objects of East African origin, to investigate the provenance of objects with possible unlawful appropriation context, and to propose ideas for possible restitution and joint exhibition projects between DITSL and Tanzanian community initiatives. The investigation followed three methodical steps: object examination and photography, archive research on possible collectors and appropriation contexts, and ethnographic field research in possible communities of origin. This talk presents insights and results from the procedure through highlighting the stories of three selected object groups – an ivory bangle, a collection of war shields, and a set of masks and other carvings – that shed light on colonial wars in German East Africa.

Bio

Dr. Jan Kuever is an anthropologist and heritage practitioner holding an MA in Sociology and Ethnology from the University of Göttingen and a PhD in Heritage Studies from the BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg in Germany. Since 2007 he has served as a lecturer and administrator at the University of Iringa in Tanzania. From 2013–2016, he managed the EU-funded heritage management project *fahari yetu Tanzania*, for which he oversaw the historical restoration and conversion of a former German colonial building into *Iringa Boma – Regional Museum and Cultural Centre*, and coordinated the development and installation of its permanent history and culture exhibition. Since 2016, he has directed the centre's operation, outreach and further development. Jan also coordinates collaborative provenance research projects on ethnographic collections of colonial origin between *fahari yetu* and German universities and museums, mainly conducting ethnographic fieldwork in possible communities of origin in Tanzania with his team.

2 Film documentary: fahari yetu Tanzania provenance research

Herry Titus

Abstract of the Documentary

The film is a showcase of the provenance research conducted by fahari yetu in various regions of Tanzania. It provides insight into the methods, experiences and achievements of the research team, featuring travel videos, interviews with local communities, and stories about the history and culture of the visited places. One selected storyline are different accounts of the Maji Maji War in relation to investigated collection objects. Departing from a few masks and carvings in the Witzgenhausen collection, another storyline explores the cultural practices of the Makonde people in south-east Tanzania. The documentary aims at preserving and sharing these important stories to make sure that the heritage and traditions of the communities will not be forgotten.

Bio

Herry Titus is a media management professional currently working as Public Relations Officer for fahari yetu Tanzania. Herry handles a variety of tasks to help the organizations achieve its goals, including website and social media maintenance, photographic documentation, and the creation of film documentaries that highlight specific fahari yetu projects. His work generally plays a key role in documenting, preserving, and sharing Tanzania's cultural heritage with a broader audience. Herry has a BA in Journalism from the University of Iringa and is about to complete his MA in Journalism and Media Management at the same university this year.

3 Knowledge sharing and translation – research in possible communities of origin

Jimson Sanga

Abstract

This presentation explores the critical role of knowledge sharing and translation in ethnographic research, particularly in the context of objects with colonial histories. Focusing on provenance research conducted on Tanzanian artefacts housed in the Museum in Witzenhausen, it emphasises the importance of engaging with the communities of origin to foster a deeper understanding of cultural heritage. By employing participatory methods, the research aims to bridge the gap between academic discourse and local narratives, ensuring that the voices of Tanzanian communities are integral to the interpretation and restitution of the objects in question. The presentation highlights case examples from fahari yetu field research, illustrating how collaborative efforts can lead to meaningful exchange of knowledge and the co-creation of narratives that honour the cultural significance of the artefacts. Finally, this contribution advocates for a transformative approach to ethnographic research that prioritises ethical engagement and mutual respect, paving the way for more inclusive practices in the museum and heritage sector.

Bio

Jimson Sanga holds a BA in Ethnomusicology from the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa and an MA in Tourism, Culture and Society from the University of Iringa. He works as a lecturer in cultural anthropology and tourism at the University of Iringa and also serves as Assistant Director of fahari yetu Tanzania and Iringa Boma – Regional Museum and Cultural Centre. He is also a member of the fahari yetu provenance research team and involved in the restitution agenda to enrich the heritage exhibition in Iringa Region and other parts of Tanzania. Currently, Jimson is developing a PhD proposal in medical anthropology at the FU Berlin, where he is planning to research the provenance of Tanzanian worship and healing objects in German museum collections together with their historical and contemporary use and relevance among the communities of origin.

4 Endangered stories of enchanted places: Art as a medium for preserving and transmitting oral traditions

Eliabu Mbonimpa

Abstract

This presentation explores the crucial role of oral narration and storytelling in shaping community values and respect for the environment in the African context. However, colonialism, western religion, and modernity have prompted a cultural shift, challenging the transmission of indigenous knowledge. Elders and younger generations play central roles in preserving these traditions, yet they face major obstacles in doing so. Art emerges as a powerful medium for preserving and transmitting this heritage, serving not only as a creative expression but also as a bridge connecting past and present. This presentation examines the Endangered Stories exhibition series at Iringa Boma – Regional Museum and Cultural Centre as a practical example of turning indigenous legends and beliefs into different forms of art. The examination follows the collection of stories in rural communities, the process of canvas and comic artwork production, and the reactions and feedback from exhibition audiences. It closes with thoughts and prospects for developing the project further.

Bio

Eliabu Mbonimpa works as a museum guide, visual artist and exhibition curator at Iringa Boma – Regional Museum and Cultural Center. He is the lead artist of the “Endangered Stories” exhibition series which also serves as a case study for his MA thesis in Tourism, Culture and Society at the University of Iringa. Eliabu is also a fellow in the MuseumsLab 2024 for which he will attend a workshop in Accra, Ghana and a residency at the Grassi Museum in Leipzig, Germany.

5 Impacts of the Berlin Mission Society in the southern highlands of Tanzania

Kepha Ngakonda

Abstract

The East African collection of the Museum Witzenhausen contains objects with relations to the Evangelical-Lutheran mission in the southern highlands of Tanzania. In 1891, the first expedition of missionaries from the Berlin Missionary Society arrived at the northern shore of Lake Nyasa, then German East Africa. From there they ventured inland and established mission stations all over the regions Mbeya, Njombe, Iringa and Morogoro to spread the gospel. The presence of the mission stations and the missionaries themselves brought profound social, cultural and economic transformations to the various indigenous societies of the region and irrevocably changed the lifestyle of the local people. This presentation explores the positive and negative implications of these transformations and changes from a historical as well as contemporary perspective.

Bio

Kepha Ngakonda works as librarian and archivist for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania – Southern Diocese at the Kidugala Lutheran Seminary in Wanging'ombe District, Njombe Region. He holds a certificate from the School of Library Archives and Documentation Studies in Bagamoyo and successfully attended an A1 German language course at the Goethe Institut in Dar es Salaam in 2024. Apart from his archive work, he is also engaged in environmental conservation by recycling organic remains for the production of natural fertilizer and animal feed.

6 Decolonizing the Archive, or how to deal with a complicated past

Richard Kuba

Abstract

What is the significance of the ethnographic archive today? How can its potential be raised for local or indigenous communities, museums, and the public? The Frobenius Institute in Frankfurt holds vast collections of visual and written documentation, mostly from colonial Africa, produced in the first decades of the 20th century. Twelve research expeditions aimed to document “traditional” African culture, led by the German ethnographer Leo Frobenius, yielded hundreds of largely unpublished field journals, tens of thousands of photographs, drawings, and the world’s largest collection of rock art copies. Sharing these archives with the countries and communities concerned has been identified as an important task of the Institute for many years. Drawing on examples from Africa and Australia, the talk provides an outlook on the potential as well as the possible conflicts that may arise for indigenous communities through access to “colonial” archival material. It also highlights the responsibilities and opportunities that arise in terms of preservation, presentation, and restitution.

Bio

Dr. Richard Kuba is senior research fellow at the Frobenius Institute, Goethe University Frankfurt (Germany) and curator of the Institute’s pictorial and rock art archive. He holds a PhD in Anthropology from Bayreuth University and has conducted extensive fieldwork in Nigeria, Benin and Burkina Faso. His research focuses on pre-colonial history and the European encounter with Africa. He has edited numerous volumes and curated rock art exhibitions in Berlin, Mexico-City, Dakar, Paris and Zurich. Currently he heads a German Research Foundation project on rock art recording in Northwestern Australia in the 1930s and 1950s.

7 Colonisation without colonies: Collecting in the hinterland

Rainer Brömer

Abstract

While Germany only held formal colonies for three decades, emissaries from German lands had been active in other countries' dependencies long before 1884 and after WWI. Collecting institutions benefited from trade networks across subjugated regions outside of Europe and North America, but equally exploited power differentials within their own territories. The concept of 'internal colonialism' had been clearly envisaged by actors like Lenin and Gramsci; formally, the term was introduced in the context of Apartheid in South Africa (Marquard 1957) and subsequently applied to the oppression or forced assimilation of ethnic minorities on all continents (e.g., Blauner 1969). However, comparable dependencies also existed and exist between urban centres and their supply regions (as Jacobs suggested in 1984). This talk analyses the provenance of parts of Marburg University's anatomical collection, mostly appropriated without explicit (or even presumed) consent from local and regional 'donors', under the lens of internal colonialism.

Bio

Dr. Rainer Brömer, historian and ethicist of science and medicine, graduated in history of science (Jena), PhD in Göttingen, teaching experience in Germany, the UK, and Turkey. Among his research interests are the history of human anatomy in the West and the Middle East (Ottoman Empire), including ethical aspects of doing research on deceased (and living) humans. In Marburg, he is part of an interdisciplinary group carrying out research into the colonial past of academic disciplines, particularly those that are based on collections, such as ethnology, physical, social, and cultural anthropology, the study of religions, etc. (<https://www.uni-marburg.de/de/fb16/aesoh>). As a temporary curator of the anatomical collection, Rainer is engaged in the preservation and study of human remains prepared for didactic and research purposes, mostly between the late 18th and the early 20th century.

8 Between bewilderment, triumph and shame: Provenances and trajectories of colonial hunting trophies in German museum

Marion Hulverscheidt, Linda-J. Knop, Maximilian Preuss

Abstract

Hunting in the German colonies was linked to the exploitation of the colonized nature as well as the plundering of people and land. Hunting animals served among other things to acquire colonial land and to break through traditional areas of movement and hierarchies. The exploitation of resources for the European market as well as for settlers and colonial rulers in the colonies is part of the basic framework (not only) of German imperialism. Hunting can therefore be integrated into the (injust) system of European colonialism.

Numerous hunting trophies stored in museum depots refer to this colonial hunting. They are rarely exhibited mainly due to the growing criticism of the trophy cult and with a view to species, nature and environmental protection. Dealing with these objects provides various evidence: about those involved in the hunt, about biodiversity, about preparation techniques, animal-human relationships, collection practices and culture of remembrance. In multi-perspective approaches the project therefore intends to formulate fundamental questions about collection practices and to trace the trajectories of the objects.

Bio

Dr. med. Marion Hulverscheidt, science historian and doctor, has been working for several years on the handling of human remains from the colonial era and on the history of the Witzenhausen Colonial School.

Linda-J. Knop, art historian and artist, with research focus on exhibition research, has been working artistically and scientifically for several years on colonial collecting practices and safari trophies from colonial contexts.

Maximilian Preuss, studied history in the Master's program at the University of Kassel. His research focus includes German colonialism and colonial hunting, the handling of objects from unjust contexts, the German settler movement and animal history topics of the 19th and 20th centuries.

9 Human remains from Tanzania in anthropological collections in Göttingen: Provenances and historical contexts

Holger Stoecker

Abstract

From 2020 to 2024, the “Sensitive Provenance” project investigated the provenance of human remains from colonial contexts in two anthropological collections at the University of Göttingen. These included 71 ancestral remains from what is now Tanzania; they represent the largest convocation of origin from Africa in Göttingen. Provenance research has determined that all of the remains were obtained by grave robbery during the German colonial period, the majority during a research expedition by the geographer Erich Obst and a smaller number by the military doctor. The talk outlines the circumstances of the appropriation of the remains and explains the format of the provenance research carried out together with a Tanzanian fellow. Finally, an outlook is given on the future handling of the ancestral remains from Tanzania in the Göttingen collections.

Bio

Dr. Holger Stoecker, historian, deals with African-German colonial and scientific history as well as provenance research on human remains and natural history collection objects from colonial contexts. From 2020 to 2023, he was a member of the Volkswagen Foundation project Sensible Provenances at the Chair of Modern History at the Georg-August-Universität Göttingen and investigated the provenances of human remains from colonial contexts, including from present-day Tanzania. Since 2024, he has been continuing this research in a joint project between the University of Göttingen and the Museum am Rothenbaum für Kulturen und Künste der Welt in Hamburg funded by the German Lost Art Foundation.

10 Dinosaurs, labour, ownership: On the politics of natural heritage

Ina Heumann

Abstract

This contribution focuses on the story of a paleontological expedition that took place in the early 20th century in an area of south-eastern Tanzania, then part of the colony of German East Africa. Taking advantage of colonial logistics, more than 200 tons of fossils were unearthed and translocated to Berlin between April 1909 and January 1913. The finds, amongst them “the tallest mounted dinosaur skeleton in the world” (Guinness Book of Records), are on display at the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin since nearly one hundred years and have been in the centre of public attention from their European “discovery” onwards. Focusing on the working conditions of the hundreds of local porters, excavators and preparators, the talk uncovers the division of labour and the everyday violence on site. The aim is to explore the multiple and conflicting notions of (intellectual) ownership and heritage associated with the history of the dinosaur.

Bio

Dr. Ina Heumann is a historian of science and head of the Center for the Humanities of Nature at the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin. She studies the politics of natural history and is particularly interested in issues of natural history and empire, economies of collections, and the social and political responsibilities of natural history museums. She has co-authored the following recent publications: “Vipande vya dinosaria. Historia ya msafara wa kipaleontolojia kwenda Tendaguru Tanzania 1906–2018. Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota, 2021; “The Issue of Duplicates,” *British Journal for the History of Science* 55, no. 3 (2022); “Promises of Mass Digitisation and the Colonial Realities of Natural History Collections,” *Journal of Natural Science Collections* 11 (2023); and “Logistical Natures: Trade, Traffics, and Transformations in Natural History Collecting,” *Historical Studies in the Natural Sciences* 54, no. 2 (2024).

11 Towards Systematic Provenance Research in German Colonial Collections

Josefine Neef

Abstract

Provenance research is essential for repatriation and restitutions, yet the German legal system's distinction between lawful and unlawful appropriation is widely insufficient. Ethnographic museums must consider complex aspects of collections, contextualising how objects were removed, collected, and integrated into museum contexts. Understanding the role of these museums during colonial times, including the narratives they upheld or silenced, is crucial. Despite the still prevalent perception of a comparatively brief colonial past, German ethnographic collections reveal enduring colonial influences. Provenance research can address deeper questions about these collections by comparing practices across museums and examining collectors' motivations. Using Grimme's study of the Linden Museum collections from 2018 as a model, I will discuss the ongoing provenance project at the Weltkulturen Museum Frankfurt. By categorising collectors and highlighting regional differences in collections from colonial contexts, we'll try to understand the particularities of the Frankfurt collections as well as the influences of the museum founders.

Bio

Josefine Neef, M.A., specialises in provenance research, focusing on sensitive collection items from colonial contexts and human remains in museums. After studying ethnology and cultural anthropology at the University of Göttingen, she worked on several short-term projects, including sensitive and sacred artefacts from Australia, human remains of various origins in a small rural Lower Saxony collection, and digitization of Oceanic artefacts. She is currently conducting historical and provenance research on colonial collections at the Weltkulturen Museum Frankfurt.

12 German normative frameworks for colonial collections and spoils of war

Eva Künkler

Abstract

This contribution scrutinises ethnographic war booty as a structural phenomenon of colonial military actions and collection material for German ethnological museums by analysing German normative frameworks and legal debates on colonial collections and war booty. In particular, it is demonstrated that the term war booty in the German colonial context first and foremost referred to ethnographic objects, i.e. private property or collective cultural property, and that these colonial spoils of war were considered legitimate state property. While the appropriation of private property by the enemy state was prohibited in the European context of war during the German colonial period, the same appropriation of private property was a state-enforced concern in the German colonial context. Then again, the indeed illegal looting by members of the colonial military under the German Military Penal Code, which was explicitly extended to the German colonies in Africa in 1896, was obviously not punished, but tolerated.

Bio

Eva Künkler, M.A., is a historian specialising in German colonial history and provenance research. After publications on military violence and looting of cultural objects and human remains in German colonial territories in Africa (DOI: 10.25360/01-2022-00001) and Oceania (DOI: 10.25360/01-2022-00056), she has been working on the significance of colonial war booty from German East Africa as a source of supply for German museum collections as part of the project “Ethnographic and Anthropological Spoils of War from Military Expeditions in German East Africa as Collection Items for German Museums”. The provenance research project is based at Leibniz University Hannover and funded by the German Lost Art Foundation.

13 What is the value of museum collections from colonial contexts? Notes from the perspective of collection economies

Hans Peter Hahn

Abstract

In everyday language, museum collections are often described as hidden treasures. Exhibiting them is thus seen as looking at precious objects. The matter-of-fact assumption of a high value has been questioned by Larissa Förster and others when they referred to “sensitive objects” from colonial contexts. This idea needs to be developed further, and the value of objects should be fundamentally reconsidered historically.

Museums intend to preserve the value of their collections and increase it through exhibitions. But a precise analysis of the objects sometimes reveals that it is not so much a matter of increasing values, but of challenges. On the material side, this can concern the problem of preservation, but it can also concern contexts, meanings and questions of legitimacy. The question is: what obligations are associated with the preservation? An obligation is a credit, i.e. a negative value that particularly emphasises the character of a challenge. Against this background, provenance research is a measure to secure value.

Bio

Hans Peter Hahn is Professor for Anthropology with regional focus on Africa at Goethe University of Frankfurt/M., Germany. He did ethnographic fieldwork in West Africa (Togo, Ghana, Burkina Faso), covering a wide range of themes, especially on colonial history, crafts, local craftsmen and rural economies. His research interests are oriented towards material culture, consumption, migration and mobility in non-western societies. He participated in the organisation of several exhibitions on culture, society and materiality in Africa and in Germany. Current research activities are about the postcolonial perspectives on museums in West Africa. He is the spokesperson for an RTG on the topic of ‘Representing the Other’. The RTG deals with the question of what significance material objects have with regard to collective identities. Recent publications include an edited volume entitled “Things as a Challenge” (transcript 2018) and “The New Home. Households and Everyday life After Migration” (Campus 2019) and “Values in Things” (Oxbow 2022).

14 Cameroon in Detmold. Collection archaeology in the Lippe State Museum

Martin Nadarzinski

Abstract

The Cameroon holdings of the Lippisches Landesmuseum consist largely of donations from the married couple August and Hedwig Kirchhof. August Kirchhof worked as a judge and later district official in the former colony of “German Cameroon”, and his wife accompanied him in his various professional positions between 1905 and 1914. Today, the collection consists of over 200 objects, which were catalogued between 2021 and 2024 as part of a provenance research project funded by the German Lost Art Foundation. and examined for morally questionable acquisition circumstances. Based on this investigation, the talk uses selected case examples to present possible acquisition contexts and the methodological features for analysing a collection that is insufficiently documented in writing.

Bio

Dr. Martin Nadarzinski studied ethnology at the Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main. During and after his studies he worked on the ethnographic collections of the Museum Wiesbaden, the German Institute for Tropical and Subtropical Agriculture, the Badisches Landesmuseum Karlsruhe, and the Lippisches Landesmuseum Detmold. He is currently completing his PhD on the ethnographic collection of the Badisches Landesmuseum from 1875 to the present day under Hans-Peter Hahn. In addition to dealing with their colonial heritage, Martin’s work on ethnographic collections from South and West Africa focuses on questions regarding the relationship between humans and material culture as well as memory culture.

15 Catholic collecting of cultural assets: Two missionary collections in Hesse and their contested items

Markus Scholz, André Burmann

Abstract

This paper presents the results of a research project on the provenance of two missionary collections held by Catholic congregations in the German federal state of Hesse. The Oblates of Hünfeld as well as the Pallottine sisters of Limburg were both carrying out missions in former German colonies in the age of imperialism (Namibia and Cameroon) and in territories of other colonial powers (e.g. Sri Lanka, Canada, Belize and South Africa) or independent nation states (e.g. Paraguay). Their collections reflect these different missionary contexts through space and time and also contain cases of culturally and historically sensible items that are discussed by way of examples. Furthermore, the presentation intends to give insights into the history of both collections as they formed part of permanent exhibitions within the monasteries and of traveling exhibitions.

Bio

Dr. Markus Scholz is a cultural anthropologist and historian specialized in South American Indigenous peoples and Latin American history from the Early Modern Period onwards. He is currently working on a project about missionary ethnographic collections at the Sankt Georgen Graduate School for Philosophy and Theology in Frankfurt. He also worked at the Übersee-Museum Bremen, where he co-curated the permanent exhibition on the Americas and started focusing on the history of anthropology and anthropological museum collections.

André Burmann is an archaeologist, provenance researcher, curator and project coordinator. His ongoing PhD project at the University of Frankfurt aims to synthesize and compare the archaeological data of pre-colonial West African figurines. During his studies, Burmann worked as a curator and provenance researcher for museums in Herne, Frankfurt, Cologne, Angoulême and Windhoek. Additionally, he has professional experience in development cooperation and public relations.

16 Our ancestors' cultural heritage and possessions define our cultural identity: A glance into the Chagga collections at Linden Museum.

Valence Silayo

Abstract

Cultural heritage encompasses the legacy of physical artefacts and intangible attributes inherited from one generation to another. In contrast, cultural identity refers to a person's sense of belonging to a particular culture or group. It encompasses various aspects such as nationality, religion, social class, generation, locality, gender and any social group with its own distinct culture. This may encompass self-perceptions, group membership, dynamics and evolution, cultural knowledge and social connections, behaviour and formation. Understanding cultural identity is crucial for appreciating the diversity and complexity of human societies. It also significantly affects how individuals navigate social environments and interact with others. Linden Museum in Stuttgart, Germany, houses a vast collection of ethnographic objects belonging to different Tanzanian cultural groups. Among them is the Chagga of Kilimanjaro. These belongings represent the Chagga lifestyle in its entirety. This paper surveys these collections and shows how colonial collectors destroyed the community's cultural identity.

Bio

Valence Silayo is a lecturer at the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. His research interests span various aspects of African archaeology, pre-colonial defence systems, socio-political structures, social complexities, the materiality of pre-colonial societies, restitution and reparation of human remains, ethnographic objects, and community heritage management. Currently, Dr. Silayo is also a Gerda Henkel fellow at the Linden Museum to research the Chagga ethnographic objects. The project focuses on the cultural history, significance and use of the objects at their time, their relevance for today's societies, and the context in which they were collected. It is also expected to contribute to the development of a transparent collection database that appropriately details the provenance of the museum's collections, including information about concerned ethnic groups and regions from which the materials were taken during colonial times.

17 Congo-Arab heritage in historical narratives in the Dar es Salaam, Coast, and Tabora regions of Tanzania

Noemie Arazi, Deonis Mgumba

Abstract

During the second half of the 19th century the eastern Congo became entangled in territorial conquest, predatory extraction and the global trade in natural resources, initially led by Swahili and Arab merchants from the Indian Ocean coast and taken over shortly afterward by the agents of the Congo Free State. Objects from the eastern Congo – many of them seized during the Congo Free State’s military operations – constituted significant additions to the collections of the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren and the Royal Army Museum in Brussels. The investigation of these ‘historically sensitive’ objects requires dialogue and engagement with the communities of origin. This presentation reports on fieldwork carried out in the Maniema Province of DRC and along the central caravan route in Tanzania. The examination illustrates the shared histories between the coastal merchants and the populations of the Upper Congo region and sheds new light on the circulation of objects, peoples and ideas in East and Central Africa.

Bio

Noemie Arazi holds a PhD in African Archaeology from University College London. Her practice usually combines archaeological data, archival research and the collection of oral histories and memories. She currently works at the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren (Belgium) as lead researcher of the project Congo-Arab Heritage in Historical Narratives.

Deonis Mgumba teaches cultural anthropology and tourism at the University of Iringa and also works as a principal curator at Iringa Boma – Regional Museum and Cultural Centre. He holds a BA in Cultural Anthropology and Tourism and an MA in Tourism, Culture and Society both from the University of Iringa. His research interests include provenance research, tourism anthropology and museum exhibition design.

18 Reciprocal influences between Iringa and Göttingen: Knowledge exchange on museum work and university teaching

Michael Kraus

Abstract

Cooperative provenance research is now an ideal aspired to by many institutions, even if in practice actual cooperation is often only possible in certain project phases. University collections have the advantage of being able to integrate research questions and the results of research projects into university teaching in addition to purely researching object biographies and their contexts. The talk reports on the cooperation between the two partner universities in Iringa and Göttingen and the attempt to mutually enrich the knowledge and training situation at both institutions through joint museum initiatives.

Bio

Dr. Michael Kraus studied ethnology, religious studies and sociology at the universities of Tübingen, Guadalajara and Marburg. In his academic work, he initially focused on the history of science, material culture, exhibition theory and practice, visual anthropology and the cultures of indigenous peoples in Amazonia.

Since 2016, as Director of the Ethnographic Collection at the University of Göttingen, he has furthermore been working with a collection comprising objects from all continents, which in recent years has been involved in a large number of comprehensive provenance research projects on the history of acquisition in colonial contexts.

19 From Iringa to Hannover and back again: Connecting people, knowledge, and museums

Mareike Späth

Abstract

In 2022, fahari yetu Tanzania/Iringa Boma – Regional Museum and Cultural Centre and the Lower Saxony State Museum Hanover signed a Memorandum of Understanding, agreeing to plan mutual visits, engage in cooperative activities, develop joint research activities and promote joint exhibition projects. Ever since, in order to fulfil this promise, the staff of both museums engage in the endeavour to transfer a number of cultural belongings and weapons back to Iringa, that have once been moved from Iringa region to Hanover. Through the transfer of objects to Iringa as well as the transfer of all sorts of knowledge in all kinds of directions, we seek to close material and memory gaps created by colonial violence. This talk illustrates the joys and challenges of this ongoing project.

Bio

Mareike Späth is a social and cultural anthropologist. Her research focuses on historiography and practices of dealing with the past in the present. She is particularly interested in entangled histories and heritage of Africa and Europe, their (non/mis)representation in public places, spaces and history, as well as unofficial, underrepresented and alternative narratives. Having spent some years researching and lecturing at different universities, she has shifted her engagement to museums as heritage-producing institutions. She is working at the Lower Saxony State Museum Hanover as curator for the ethnographic collection. It is from that position that she engages in a collaborative project with colleagues from fahari yetu Tanzania in Iringa.

20 The framework determines the possibilities: Lessons from the Karl Braun Amani research project – what cooperation at eye level means and requires

Sebastian Möllers

Abstract

For some years now, various new funding programmes have led to a significant increase in research projects on collection items from colonial contexts in the German museum landscape. Great importance is attached to the cooperation with partner institutions in the respective research regions and many German museums therefore seek to establish partnerships in the countries of origin of the objects. Potential cooperation partners are often only sought during the course of the project but are not involved from the outset, as is the case when no explicit funding is provided for this. The framework guidelines of the programmes also do not take into account the research guidelines in the partner countries. In some cases, approval processes take longer than the project duration covers. In addition, the institutions in the partner country have to subordinate themselves to the German Federal Budget Act (Bundeshaushaltsgesetz). A problematic starting position from a decolonial perspective!

Bio

Dr Sebastian Möllers studied prehistory, ethnology and European anthropology. He has been Director of the Museen Stade since 2010. In 2014, he discovered an ethnographic collection during renovation work, which has been under investigation since 2016. In 2021, a research project was developed together with the National Institute for Medical Research (NIMR) in Tanzania and funding was applied for from the German Lost Art Foundation. Since May 2022, the 600 objects have been comprehensively researched under the project title "The Karl Braun Collection and the Role of the Amani Institute during the German Colonial Period in Tanzania" and the ongoing process has been documented in a project wiki: <https://sammlung-braun.museen-stade.de>

21

Against all odds: A plea for slow provenance research

Anna-Maria Brandstetter

Abstract

The opportunities and challenges of conducting international and collaborative research into colonially extracted cultural heritage have been the subject of extensive debate recently. There has been a tendency for the same mantra to be repeated, namely the requirements for meeting these challenges. In my contribution, I would like to focus on one aspect, namely the resource of time. We need time for everything, if data governance is to be in the hands of the people whose cultural heritage is kept in museums and collections (in the Globalized North). We need time to share experiences and knowledge, to engage with the relevance, the terms, the rhythm of the people we work with. We need time to develop methods of research and restitution together with them. I will use an example from my work as curator of the Ethnographic Collection in Mainz to explore what this means.

Bio

The anthropologist Dr. Anna-Maria Brandstetter was curator of the Ethnographic Collection at the University of Mainz from 1992 to 2024. Her research focuses on political anthropology, history and memory studies, the anthropology of things, the history of ethnographic collections and ethnological provenance research. Her research trips have taken her to the Congo (Kinshasa), southern Ethiopia and Rwanda. Her publications include 'Nicht nur Raubkunst! Sensible Dinge in Museen und universitären Sammlungen' (2018), published with Vera Hierholzer (open access). This spring, she co-curated the exhibition 'Tiny unpredictable material objects: Postcolonial perspectives on Georg Forster herbarium specimens (1772–1775)' at the University of Mainz.



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