

# **Ancestral Remains and Sensitive Holdings from Papua New Guinea in German Museums**

Workshop I 27-28 May 2026

## Venue

MARKK – Museum am Rothenbaum  
Kulturen und Künste der Welt  
Rothenbaumchaussee 64  
20148 Hamburg | Germany

## Organising team

Jasmin Günther  
Jeanette Kokott  
Vera Benter  
Hanna Lange

In line with ongoing concerns regarding the appropriate care of Human Remains and cultural objects held in European museums, this workshop seeks to address the comparatively high number of so-called collections from Papua New Guinea, with a special focus on Ancestral Remains and other holdings considered particularly sensitive. The latter may include cultural objects identified as secret/sacred or historic photographs, objects, archival materials and data that document violent encounters, often within the context of colonial histories.

By bringing museum practitioners, researchers and knowledge holders from Papua New Guinea, Germany, and other countries together, this workshop opens up a space for exchanging perspectives and strengthening networks of expertise and support.

The workshop will be organised within the framework of a current provenance research project focusing on the first year of the Hamburg South Sea Expedition (1908-1909) and the related extensive holdings from Papua New Guinea at the MARKK. The aims of this project include the tracing of the expedition's colonial context in its complexity and the development of pathways for the present and future care of the holdings together with partners from Papua New Guinea. This is considered particularly important for the Ancestral Remains, while they continue to be in Germany and possibly, but not necessarily, await conversations about a potential return in the future. In relation to the diverse country of Papua New Guinea, conversations about repatriation and alternative paths have been equally multifaceted.

The wide range of discussion themes concerning the (culturally) appropriate care of Ancestral Remains and sensitive holdings further includes their safekeeping, their (non-) visibility in physical and digital spaces such as databases, critical considerations regarding differing research approaches (including bio-anthropological), questions surrounding intellectual property, as well as the language used to address them.

The workshop intends to give space to the continuation of these conversations and the exchange of multiple perspectives and previous experiences. Next to a presentation-Q&A-format, the workshop will conclude with a discussion and the preparation of a shared, written summary to consolidate the results and recommendations.

Confirmed contributors and participants include Maine Goga (Papua New Guinea National Museum & Art Gallery), Paul Voogt (Missiemuseum Steyl), Dr Christiane Falck (University of Göttingen), Bettina von Briskorn (Übersee-Museum Bremen), Ruby Satele (University of Vienna), Dr Holger Stoecker (University of Düsseldorf), and Sarah Fründt (German Lost Art Foundation/ Expert Network on the Care of Human Remains).

If you are interested in listening in, sharing a contribution and/or actively participating in the development of the written summary, we kindly ask you to express your interest until 28.04.2026 by sending an email to Jasmin Günther: [jasmin.guenther@markk-hamburg.de](mailto:jasmin.guenther@markk-hamburg.de).

As speakers and several participants have already been confirmed and room capacities are limited, a brief comment on why a participation would be particularly conducive to you would be appreciated.

The workshop is hosted by the MARKK, with kind support from the National Museum & Art Gallery of Papua New Guinea.

The provenance research project and workshop are funded by the German Lost Art Foundation and the Hamburg Scientific Foundation.



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